

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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JONES







# THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## SERMONS

FROM THE GERMAN, ADAPTED AND EDITED

BY THE

REV. EDWARD JONES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE  
MOST REV. JOHN IRELAND, D.D.

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# THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## SERMON I

### THE SACRED SEPTENARY OF THE SACRAMENTS

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life.”—ROM. 6, 22.

The following words of our divine Saviour, concisely and beautifully tell us His sublime mission to men: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” Innumerable are the ways men go, but there is only one right way, only one that leads to eternal happiness, and that way is Christ. Innumerable opinions govern men, shadowing forth various truths, but only one truth shows us the greatness of God, and our own destiny, and that truth Christ taught, and the Catholic Church still teaches. How varied is the life of man? But there is only one life pleasing to God, one that leads to eternal life, one that is a life with and for Christ.

Men lived in various ways, but none of them brought them to God before the Saviour came; they believed

innumerable teachings, but none of them brought them to the true knowledge of God.— This life was not a life, with and for God, nor was it a transition to eternal life. Their ways led them rather farther and farther from God,—their teaching more and more to error and infidelity,—their life to sin and destruction. Therefore Christ assumed our human nature in order that we and all mankind might imitate His life, and attain unto God again. He lived visibly on earth, and by His example showed us the way; He taught visibly the eternal truths in order to bring us to the true knowledge of God. He lived visibly in order that we might learn to know how we have to live. And in consequence of the way which He lived, of the truths He taught and practiced,— of the life He led, He was the first among all mankind to ascend into Heaven, and as a reward, was placed by His heavenly Father in the eternal possession of the highest power and glory. Thus and not otherwise, will we Christians become blessed, and share in His glory and power, if we follow His way, His truth, and His life.

When the disciples asked the Saviour: “Whither goest Thou?” He rightly answered owing to His life, His obedience and His suffering: “I go to Him who sent me.” And to-day we can ask every Christian: “Whither goest thou?” The good Christian answers: “I follow Jesus. I want to live a holy life, He is the way. I want to believe, to believe with my whole heart and soul. I want to hope; He is the truth. I want to be blessed; He is the life. I want

to be without sin; His way preserves me from sin. I want to be without error; His truth makes me free from error. I don't want to die eternally; His life is my life. By His obedience He has taught me to practice obedience to God and His Church; by His patience, to practice patience; and by His charity, to be charitable towards all mankind. He left me an example of every virtue."

"Whither goest thou?" Thus many surprised ask the good Christian because he often receives the sacraments. But his answer is: "I follow Jesus." "Whither goest thou?" And full of joy and confident hope he gives the answer when dying: "I go to Jesus; He is the way, the truth and the life."

Yes, Jesus still lives on earth, as our way, our truth and our life. He is our way, by His example and by His Holy Church; our truth, by the Catholic faith, and our life by the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments.

Here we receive His life and His grace and therefore St. Paul says: "Being made free from sin, you have your fruit unto sanctification and the end everlasting life." I will therefore speak to-day on the sacred septenary of the sacraments.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

I. Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, is the sole object of the glorious plan of God's providence. Everything in Heaven and on earth is directed towards Him. The angels were created for His sake; and if part of them found grace and admission into the

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bliss of Heaven, and part of them were cast away, it was done for the sake of Jesus Christ. On His account the earth was created, and man placed in Paradise, enriched with heavenly graces, just as to-day the little child is clothed in baptism with heavenly innocence, and becomes an object of delight to God.

On account of the Saviour, and His foreseen merits our first parents found grace and mercy after the fall. Therefore the Apostle St. John calls Jesus Christ: "The lamb of God that was slain from the beginning," or as St. Paul calls Him: "The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things, the Inheritor of the past centuries, the Father of the times to come, Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day, the same forever." His foreseen blood and merits, made as it were, from the beginning the rounds of the world. Not the blood of the innocent Abel first stained the virgin earth, and called to God. No; it was the blood of Christ which called to God, ever since Adam's sin made the coming of the Saviour a necessity to shed His blood for the atonement of the sins of the world. Abel, who on account of his longing for the Redeemer, was agreeable to God and murdered by Cain from envy, was in truth the first martyr of the promised Saviour, just as St. Stephen was the protomartyr of the Saviour after His coming. It was the suffering of Jesus Christ that brought grace, contrition, and consequently salvation to the souls of thousands and thousands of men who were destroyed in the waters of the deluge. And

even if their bodies were destroyed in the waters of the deluge on account of their sins, their souls were saved. It was the merits and the blood of Christ that preserved all those souls in limbo, who died in the hope of the Saviour. It was the Saviour who filled with joy and sweetened the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the prophets, and the just ones of the Old Law. It was His blood and His merits that turned God's mercy and His holy providence even to the pagans, so that if they were not guilty of a grievous offense against the natural law they were not cast away for eternity, but found grace and salvation.

The blood of Jesus Christ passed through the world from the beginning until the awful moment on Mt. Olivet, in the sweat of blood it trickled in reality to the earth and took away partly the curse of sin, before it flowed in streams from the cross for the salvation of the world. And now it flows in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and will flow until the end of time for every soul that desires to be saved from the curse of sin and to be adorned with heavenly grace. "This is the blood of the New Testament, which will be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sin. Do this for a commemoration of Me." Thus this precious blood still flows in holy Mass. Here is Jesus Christ always the great high Priest, Who offers His body and blood, as on the cross, even though not in a suffering, visible, bloody manner. In holy Mass He is always our Intercessor and gathers up and unites the prayers of each and

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every one of the faithful, and presents them to His heavenly Father before the throne of God. In the Mass salvation and grace is applied to each well disposed individual soul. The Sacrifice of the Cross contains all the riches of the graces and merits of Christ, and holy Mass is the golden key to them.

And so it is also, my brethren, in the holy Sacraments. They are the channels, through which especially the blood, the merits and the grace of the Saviour flow into the soul. They give the soul a new life, the life of grace, through which our Saviour makes individual souls capable of receiving salvation and enjoying eternal bliss. And let no one imagine the Saviour disappeared entirely from the world when He ascended into Heaven over eighteen hundred years ago, so that we only commemorate Him on feast days, like Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, just as we are wont to commemorate the memory of celebrated men on certain days. No; as He constantly offers the holy Sacrifice, and is our high-Priest and Mediator in holy Mass, so He continues the work of salvation in the holy Sacraments. He it is, Who in holy Baptism, incessantly makes souls children of God, His co-heirs and members of His Church; He forgives the penitent sinner in Penance his guilt and his sins; He imparts in Confirmation to the maturing youth the strength of the Holy Spirit. In Matrimony He inspires the bride and groom with nobler views of married life; He unites to Himself all who approach the sacrament of the altar with faith and love; He consoles the dying with Extreme

Uction, and He ordains and consecrates His servants in Holy Orders, by means of which He constantly works with indefatigable activity for the salvation of souls.

2. And now my friends, why did our divine Lord institute exactly seven Sacraments, neither more nor less? This number seven must have evidently a special importance and significance. And so it is in reality. Even in the old Testament the number seven was considered a sacred number. After creation God Himself appointed the seventh day as a day of rest. The Israelites, after the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, called seven years a year week, and the seventh year was a holy year. There stood before the Covenant in the tabernacle, and later in the temple at Jerusalem, a candle-stick with seven arms, as a symbol of the seven sacraments which surround the sacrifice of the altar, and as a symbol of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The sacred number seven found its completion in the institution of the seven sacraments by which all the graces and merits of our divine Saviour are communicated to the human race and to individual souls. Like unto a celestial spring, the number of sacraments rises in the Catholic Church and pours forth over the world the divine and quickening waters of grace. What the springs of health are which God commands to well forth from the hidden recesses of the earth, as a work of commiseration for the well being of humanity, bringing health and happiness to numberless afflicted men and women,—that are the Sacra-

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ments in the Catholic Church. They are the most marvelous remedy for the welfare of souls, and the best defence in their maladies consequent upon passion and sin.

3. There are two sacraments necessary for the regeneration, for the resuscitation from the death of the soul by sin. These are baptism and penance, and for that reason we call them the sacraments of the dead. As man by his birth contracts the universal guilt of original sin, which we inherit from Adam, so he must by his spiritual regeneration enter into the life of grace by Jesus Christ and His holy Church. And this takes place in baptism. In baptism we are born again as children of God, as heirs of heaven, as the redeemed and as Christians,—consequently purified from original sin, sanctified and filled with grace and justice by the Holy Ghost.

And if the Christian, if the child of God, by his own personal guilt or sin, loses again grace and brings death to his soul,—our blessed Saviour in His sweet mercy has instituted a second means of salvation, a second baptism, as it were, the baptism of tears, that is, the sacrament of penance. This sacrament cleanses the Christian from sin again, restores to him the lost grace, awakens him from spiritual death and regenerates him again. What would become of us sinful men without this sacrament of penance? It is in reality a wonderful means of protection from shipwreck — a plank extended, as it were, by the hand of God to us in order that we may raise ourselves from



the deluge of sin to the blessed land of grace, and after death to the celestial paradise.

4. But man, regenerated by the sacraments of baptism and penance, should not only be free from sin, but also by his Christian life become rich in merits for a greater bliss. And he grows rich in merit by virtues and good works, especially by the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity. And to do this the Holy Ghost must strengthen us in a particular manner, for of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are too weak to practice these virtues and perform good works. The first strengthening we need is in our faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God and live a Christian life.

How many enemies menace our faith. There lie in wait for it our own scepticism and pride, and the depravity of our hearts; there lie in wait for it the errors and wicked principles of the world; there lie in wait for it the scorn of godless men, bad papers, evil examples; and open persecution not infrequently shakes the faith of the Christian, and snatches from him grace and eternal life. Oh, how very much we need the strength, the grace and the assistance of the Holy Ghost. This grace is imparted to our souls in the sacrament of Confirmation.

Here the Christian is strengthened in grace by the Holy Ghost, in order that he may steadfastly profess his faith and live up to it. Just as one who has arrived at the age of adolescence should choose a calling which will have a decisive influence upon his

future good fortune, so must he, as soon as he begins to think for himself and to outgrow the direction of parents and school, decide for himself to be a soldier of Christ, and to live and die a Christian. He is made strong and strengthened for this resolution in Confirmation, just as the glorious martyrs and confessors were marvelously strengthened by the Holy Ghost, and endured for their faith all kinds of sufferings and the most cruel of deaths.

However, as the Christian is strengthened in faith for entrance into mature years and public life, in order that he can live up to his faith, thus he must be strengthened by the Holy Ghost in hope at his exit from life, lest in the presence of death and judgment he fall into despair over his sins and consequently be robbed of the virtue of hope. On the death bed when everything leaves us, and when we must leave all, there remains to the dying only aches and pains of the body, and agony and anxiety of soul. Oh, how terrible is often the retrospective view of a past life, and the prospective view of judgment and eternity. Yes, the dying man needs far more the heavenly physician than the earthly one who can help him no more. This divine physician is Jesus, and His remedy for the poor soul is the sacrament of Extreme Unction. In the reception of this sacrament the sick man is strengthened in hope for the last battle of life, receives the grace of God for the welfare of his soul and often for his body too.

5. But between the entrance of man upon an independent state of Christian life and his demise, there

often intervenes a long series of years, from youth to old age. The Christian must labor and struggle, sow and plant for eternity, and gather for himself treasures of merits which will take him to the kingdom of heaven; he must not only work and earn for his earthly life and worldly calling, but for his Christian life and heavenly calling.

Oh, there is needed especially obedience to and love of God in order not to forget in the acquisition of earthly goods, God and eternity. Many enemies menace this Christian virtue of love (of God) without which a Christian life is unthinkable. These are the passions, the bad examples, worldliness and avarice which entail severe struggles and grave dangers. How very much we need then the special grace of God to persevere in His love. This grace Jesus grants to us in the sacrament of His love, in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. As the body needs frequent nourishment for work and strength, for growth and health, lest it faint and grow weak, so does the soul need spiritual nourishment and strength in order that it remain fresh and healthy, pure and strong, and not grow weak and torpid, and lose all love and grace. This celestial food our divine Saviour gives to the soul in holy communion; here the soul is strengthened and preserved in the divine virtue of charity.

The last two sacraments were instituted for the two most important states of Christian society without which society could not be maintained. The sacrament of holy orders gives to Christianity its

priests and bishops who administer the sacraments, instruct the faithful and dispense salvation and will continue to do so until the end of the world. They are the servants and dispensers of the holy mysteries, as St. Paul says, and therefore they must be ordained to the end of the world, because salvation will be announced by them until the day of judgment, the holy sacrifice will be offered, and the sacraments administered. For this they need a special and proper consecration and grace, and these they receive in the sacrament of holy orders.

The second most important state of life, is the married state, the foundation of Christian society. The parents are not only called to live a holy and true life themselves, but also to bring up their children for God, for the Church, and for eternal life. To do this they truly need special graces. For this reason our divine Saviour raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, to an image of His union with His holy Church in order that the blessing and grace of God might rest upon marriage, and the family be truly Christian. Therefore our divine Lord has provided in a wonderful manner for all the needs of His faithful followers, and just as wonderfully the holy sacraments circumscribe the whole life of man, from the beginning to the end, from birth until death.

6. Unless you receive the sacraments, my friends, you would hope in vain to work out your salvation in faith, and hope, and to steadfastly persevere in love, and to participate in the merits of Christ. With-

out grace one can neither do good nor avoid evil, nor perform meritorious works for heaven. How deplorable therefore is the blindness of many Christians who wish to be saved and to possess the grace of God, and yet do not receive the sacraments, especially the sacraments of holy Eucharist and penance.

What remorse of conscience will not the thought in eternity bring to them when they realize that they always had the springs of grace before their eyes, but did not draw refreshment from them, and consequently let so many means of salvation go unused. The compassionate love of the Saviour is truly great, since it works unceasingly in the sacraments, calls, heals and speaks sweet words of peace and comfort to faithful loving souls. How great therefore will the accounting be, if we consider what suffering, what humiliation and agonizing shedding of His precious blood, the institution of the sacraments cost our Lord.

Therefore let at least you, my friends, frequently approach the fountains of grace, which will spring up into eternal life in your hearts and souls. May you joyfully and worthily receive the holy sacraments in order that the merits, the blood and the grace of Jesus, may flow over your souls, make them holy on earth and glorify them in the bliss of Heaven. For the Apostle St. Paul says: Being made free from sin, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life. Amen.

## SERMON II

### THE VISIBLE SIGN, THE INVISIBLE GRACE AND THE INDELIBLE MARK OF THE SACRAMENTS

“Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.”—I COR. 4, 1.

The sacraments are the instruments chosen by our Divine Saviour to impart to us the fullness of His grace. And as Jesus Christ alone could redeem the world, so He alone had the power to institute the sacraments as a means to convey to our souls salvation. In the septenary of the sacraments He has admirably provided for the development and the necessities of man from his birth until his death. Baptism awaits man at his birth into this life in order to bring him to a higher and nobler birth unto the Christian and eternal life. The sacrament of Extreme Unction provides for his departure from this life by preparing the soul of the dying Christian to enter into an eternity of bliss. This it accomplishes by conferring an increase of grace and by removing the stains and remains of sin. It is, moreover, especially intended to consecrate the body for a glorious resurrection. But between the beginning and the end of the Christian's life the other sacraments are most intimately connected with the most momentous circumstances of his career in life. Confirmation

strengthens him for his free and independent choice to live and die a Catholic. The sacrament of Penance cleanses him from sin and restores to him the grace he has lost. Holy Communion is the food for which his soul craves. The sacrament of Matrimony blesses and sanctifies his espousals, and the sacrament of Holy Orders gives and perpetuates the priesthood and the ministry of Christ.

It is thus that the sacraments sanctify our lives and accompany us on this earthly pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave. In the seven sacraments our Divine Saviour manifests Himself in an amiable and adorable manner. Oh, that every Christian heart would show itself loving and grateful towards Him for the institution of the sacraments and give expression to this love and gratitude by a frequent and worthy reception of the sacraments!

In order to gain a more complete understanding of the sacraments we shall to-day consider the visible sign, the invisible grace of the sacraments and the indelible mark which some of them imprint upon the soul.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Three things are essential to every sacrament: Firstly, the visible sign, secondly, the invisible grace and thirdly, the divine institution by Jesus Christ. The visible signs — thus in Baptism, the pouring of the water and the speaking of the words by the priest, in Confirmation the anointing with holy chrism, the sign of the cross and the words of absolution in Pen-

ance, the species of bread in holy communion, the anointing with holy oil in Extreme Unction etc.—indicate to us that if we receive these visible signs in a worthy manner we shall also receive the invisible grace for the sanctification and salvation of our souls.

The sacraments by their union of visible signs and invisible grace, are an image both of man and of Our Divine Saviour. We men are also composed of a visible body and of an invisible soul. And just as the body can not exist upon earth without a soul, and the soul without the body, so there is no sacrament without a visible sign and invisible grace. And this is why the Christian commits a sacrilege whenever he receives a sacrament unworthily, because he destroys, as it were, its being just as the murderer destroys human life.

But the sacraments are more than that—they are an image of Our Divine Saviour Himself. In Him humanity and divinity are substantially united to form one Divine Person. In this humanity the Son of God appeared visibly on earth, taught, performed miracles of mercy and offered Himself in a visible manner upon the cross for our redemption. But it was His invisible Divinity that gave His bloody passion and His death on the cross the infinite merit and the adorable heavenly consecration that enraptures heaven and earth. Without His humanity Jesus Christ could not have lived on earth, taught and suffered for us, and without His divinity He could not have redeemed us. It is the same with the sacraments.



Without their visible signs, we men could not receive them, and without their invisible grace we could not be sanctified.

2. However, it was not the intention of Our Divine Saviour to merely typify by the union of visible sign and invisible grace, the admirable union in Him of the human and the divine, or the union of body and soul in us; but He wished thereby also to express and establish our threefold relation to God, to our fellow-men and to ourselves.

Man is bound to serve God not only with his soul, but also in a visible manner with his body, and hence he needs visible means to help him in the fulfillment of his Christian duties and in the attainment of his eternal destiny. The sun, the moon and the stars and the whole of creation are the visible manifestations of the omnipotence, the wisdom and the glory of God, and therefore lead men to the knowledge and the adoration of the invisible God. But for the Christian the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross was, in a higher manner, the visible sign of his redemption and of all grace. For this reason our redemption and all grace are to find their perpetuation and unite us most intimately with God by means of visible signs, namely, by the sacraments.

Faith and grace are the two life elements of the Christian, for without faith it is impossible to please God, and without grace salvation and sanctification are not possible. Our Divine Saviour taught upon earth and announced His heavenly doctrines in a visible manner. In a like manner He has attached the

further propagation of the faith to the visible ministry of the Church — to the Pope, the Bishops and the Priests: “Going therefore teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matth. 28, 19, 20.) It is not different with the grace which Our Divine Saviour has merited for us. He has attached to the visible signs of the sacraments its preservation and propagation through all ages until the consummation of time. And further, He has established His visible priesthood in order to administer the sacraments to the faithful: “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.” (1 Cor. 4, 1.)

Faith brings us into most intimate union with God and His eternal truths. But the sacraments effect a still more vital union between us and God the Father by making us His children, between us and God the Son by constituting us His redeemed, and between us and God the Holy Ghost by rendering us His sanctified. Therefore it is just as impossible to enter into and to maintain vital and divine relations with God without the sacraments, as it is impossible to please God without faith.

However, we have not only duties to fulfill towards God, and are bound to enter into closest union with Him; we also have obligations towards our fellow-Christians, and are bound to manifest to them our faith and redemption and with them openly serve God and profess our faith. How can this be possible without some visible signs and usages that are the mark

of every Catholic? These marks are, besides the profession of the one faith that we hold in common, especially the holy sacrifice of the mass and the sacraments. By means of them we share alike in the benefits of Redemption, we are bound together in the same grace, go together to holy communion, to confession, to confirmation. They further give us the consciousness that we are far more closely united as Christians, as faithful, as sanctified, as children of God and heirs of heaven, than the bonds of flesh and blood or of relationship and friendship can ever unite us. The sacraments are the noblest tie that visibly binds men together as the holy people of God. Herein likewise the necessity, the grandeur and the precious efficacy of the sacraments manifest themselves. We experience this in ourselves and find it confirmed in the Catholic Church throughout the world. Verily we have reason enough to praise and thank the Lord for this infinite mercy.

But if we cast a look upon ourselves and upon the necessities and yearning of our own soul, we find that every man who is not entirely dead to God and to the salvation of his soul, has within him the desire of seizing upon God, as it were, with his very hands, and would find neither rest nor peace if he were not actually able to do so. Let us again give praise to our Lord that He has so lovingly and effectually corresponded to this yearning of ours. How Mary Magdalen and the other sinners rejoiced when they heard from the lips of Jesus Himself the consoling words: "Be comforted, thy sins are forgiven thee,

thy faith hath made thee whole." He conferred on His Apostles the power of forgiving sins in a visible manner, and visibly did the Holy Ghost come down upon them on the feast of Pentecost. In like manner He has attached His salvation, grace and mercy for every man to the visible signs of His sacraments.

Oh, how often does not the Christian who is tortured by his sins, desire audibly to hear the words: "Be comforted, thy sins are forgiven thee." Behold this divine voice comes to him in various ways through the sacraments. They sanctify him, give him grace and blot out his sins. The visible signs give him the perfect assurance that invisible grace has been conferred on him, and the renewed peace of soul and the calm joy that possesses him confirm in him this glorious truth. Without this visible sign and without this visible pledge of grace and forgiveness of sin the uncertainty with regard to the state of his soul would drive almost any Christian to despair, and life would be to him an unending torture. But no, thanks to the mercy and goodness of Jesus, every sinner, every Christian, who receives the sacraments worthily, may rejoice and cry out with the prophet Habacuc: "But I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus." (Hab. 3, 18.)

3. Our Divine Lord and Saviour, therefore, has attached to visible signs His invisible grace, so that the sacraments have their efficacy out of their own divine strength, provided no obstacle is put in the way either on the part of the minister, or of the faithful who receives them. The priest must have the

intention of administering the sacraments as Jesus Christ instituted them and as the Church commands them to be administered. The recipient, however, must have faith, hope and charity or contrition, and prepare himself in such a worthy manner as the different sacraments require. A soul well prepared for the reception of the sacraments is what the fuel is to the fire, the good appetite for the food, the thirst for the drink. The fire inflames the fuel, the food sates, nourishes and gives renewed strength, the drink refreshes. Just so is a soul that is well prepared filled with God's grace.

The grace bestowed is sanctifying grace, which is given either whole, where it has not yet been or where it was lost, or it is increased where the soul is already in possession of it. In Baptism sanctifying grace is bestowed for the first time on the recipient, but in the sacrament of Penance it is restored to the sinner who has lost it. Therefore we call Baptism and Penance the sacraments of the dead, because those who receive them have hitherto been dead to salvation and heaven. The remaining five sacraments are called the sacraments of the living, because those who receive them must be in the state of grace, therefore living for God and their Redeemer.

The sacraments of the living are intended to foster and develop the germ which God has planted in the soul by means of the sacraments of the dead. They may be compared to the dew of heaven and to the sun, that develop and bring to blossom the seed that has been planted in the earth. But their efficacy is

nil where the germ is missing. In like manner the sacraments of the living nourish the soul that is already endowed with sanctifying grace by the sacraments of Baptism or Penance, and prepare it as a fruit of heaven for the great harvest-day of the general judgment. The effect, therefore, of the sacraments of the living is to increase sanctifying grace, and the greater the increase, the greater also the merit and the happiness of the faithful. All the sacraments are intended to unite the Christian with divine redemption. But this union is only accomplished by means of sanctifying grace, consequently it is the ultimate purpose of the existence of all the sacraments and is imparted by them all.

As by corporal birth a child is like to its parents and this likeness is increased by education, so by sanctifying grace we become like to God. This likeness is increased in us by a frequent reception of the sacraments and hence by the increase of sanctifying grace. For this reason the saints were so like to God, and that is why they are so near to Him in heaven, because they possessed sanctifying grace in so large a degree. With this grace the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity increase; with it increase the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Christian virtues, the holiness of life, the merits of good works and thereby eternal happiness.

But besides this wonderful privilege, which all the sacraments possess in common, every sacrament has its own special grace in which the other sacraments do not participate. This is called sacramental

grace. This sacramental grace is adapted to the state in life, the vocation, the age, the necessities of the Christian. The sacramental grace which Baptism confers is different from the sacramental grace of Confirmation, of Penance, of Holy Eucharist, of Extreme Unction, of Holy Orders and of Matrimony. The mercy of the Saviour and the wealth of His grace is wonderfully made manifest in this, so that all may, from the cradle to the grave, in every condition of life, and in every vocation, be able to fulfill their duties for the honor and glory of God and for the salvation of their own souls, and the souls of their neighbors and combine harmoniously the temporal with the Christian life, until the moment arrives when they will be found worthy, as children and heirs of God, to behold His glory in heaven.

4. There is still one particular effect of the sacraments that remains to be considered. It is the indelible mark that the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders imprint upon the soul. For this reason these three sacraments can never be repeated, that is, they can be received only once in life. They are the holy indelible seal that God stamps on the soul, and by which it is consecrated to God in a special manner. The one who has been baptized becomes a child of God, the one who is confirmed becomes a soldier of Christ, and the priest becomes a leader in the battle and the dispenser of the mysteries of God. By Baptism we enter into a special relationship with God the Father, by Confirmation with God the Son, and by Holy Orders with God

the Holy Ghost. Hence St. Paul writes: "Now he that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and that hath anointed us, is God: Who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. I, 21, 22.)

The seal which God imprints on the soul in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, consecrates it as the special property of God. Just the same as a prince or a nobleman places his coat-of-arms, or any other man places his mark or his name on his property, by which it can be known, so does God place His seal on the soul. The property may be stolen; it will always rightfully belong to him whose escutcheon it bears. The son may disobey his father, but he will forever remain his son. The soldier may become a coward, may desert his flag to which he has sworn allegiance, he remains a soldier as long as the oath binds him. The steward may squander the goods of his master, no dishonesty will excuse Him from his duty. In like manner the Christian by Baptism remains forever a child of God, by Confirmation forever a soldier of Christ in the holy war, the priest forever the minister and steward of God. The mark of the sacrament or its consecration can never be destroyed, be it by sin, apostasy or death. In heaven it will shine in a marvelous manner and will become there the cause of greater glory, provided the Christian has loyally kept it and in conformity with the full import of the seal he has shown himself a child of God, a soldier of Christ, a priest of God. Great is his merit, glorious his crown and unending his



bliss in heaven. As a badge of honor the indelible mark will adorn his soul in imperishable glory.

But if a Christian has proven himself unfaithful to his vocation, if as a child of God he has left his heavenly Father, if as a soldier of Christ he has ignominiously betrayed the interests of his divine Lord, and if, as a priest, he has been a cowardly leader, a faithless steward and unworthy of his consecration, — then the indelible mark on his soul will bring him greater damnation, it will be to him a badge of dishonor, an incentive to greater despair and the subject of everlasting contempt and mockery of all the inhabitants of hell.

May God grant that the indelible seal that has been imprinted on our souls to mark us as God's own may become by our fidelity a mark of eternal honor, glory and happiness. In heaven after a brief battle on earth, a wonderful bliss awaits us; where the child of God will delight in his eternal Father, the Christian in his divine Saviour, the consecrated one in the Holy Ghost. And here upon earth we behold and find in the sacraments the riches of God's grace and mercy. In seven vessels, as it were, He tenders us the infinite merits of Jesus Christ and the treasure of sanctifying grace. And though weakness may overcome us on our journey through this burdensome life, and though sin may have ensnared us, we still have in every condition, in every vocation, in every age the sacraments that will strengthen us, console us, and uplift us. The child, the youth, the old man, the dying — they all find the means of salvation proper

to their needs. Penance and Holy Eucharist accompany us through life like faithful friends and benefactors. Be the sins ever so numerous and grievous, the passions many and great, the wounds of the soul deep, and the anxiety torturing, never grow faint of heart, O Christian! Help is always near, the mercy of God is ever ready, and from His wonderful store He tenders us with loving hand the remedy we most need in the sacraments. He alone who frequently receives the sacraments has heavenly grace, and he who possesses grace has truly child-like faith, real religion and a happy conscience. He alone who worthily receives the sacraments gives Our Lord his best thanks for His mercy and love. May the sacraments therefore also strengthen us, comfort and uplift us and fill us with grace, so that they may bring us to eternal bliss where Jesus gives us Himself in the fulness of His grace and glory to the delight of the soul for all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON III

### BAPTISM AND ITS GRACES

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—  
MATTH. 28, 19.

When our Divine Saviour had completed His adorable mission in the sublime work of our redemption, He ascended into heaven with His glorified humanity. But before He took leave of His Apostles, He gave them the great commission to go forth into the world vested with His power and in His name to teach all nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Our Divine Lord desires to embrace all men within His divine heart. He wishes to have all men share in His redemption and in His merits. All shall taste the riches of His grace and of His love. He wishes all, without exception, to enter into His kingdom of truth on earth, His holy Church, and into His kingdom of eternal salvation. If all men could only comprehend the infinite love of Christ, earth itself would be changed from a place of misery and tribulation, from a scene of crime and profligacy, into an abode of peace and harmony and happiness, as fully as the limitations of this mortal life would permit.

But baptism is the first and most necessary condition to this. It is by corporal birth alone that man enters into this visible world, and becomes a member of the human race. In like manner baptism alone gives him the right of entry into the kingdom of God, into holy Church, and constitutes him a member of Christ. And just as man solely by his corporal birth shares in the rights and privileges of a child of the family, of a member of the community, and of a citizen of the state, so likewise by baptism he has a claim to the advantages of a child of God, of a Christian and of a member of the Catholic Church, and thereby to redemption, to grace, to the sacraments, to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and to the communion of saints.

What the door is to the house, the key to the lock, the gate-way to the fortress, that is baptism to the entrance into the Church of God, to the participation in redemption and to the reception into eternal happiness. Just as the ark of Noah had but one door through which all, who wished to be saved from the deluge, were obliged to enter, so also heaven and the Church of God have but one door through which we must all enter, if we wish to escape the deluge of this world and eternal damnation. This door is holy baptism.

It is my purpose, therefore, to speak to you to-day about baptism and its graces, leaving for the next time the ceremonies and promises of baptism.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

.I. When Noah was commanded by God to build the ark and to warn men of the impending judgments of God, his words fell on heedless ears and were uttered in vain, for men presumptuously hoped in the longanimity of God. But when the deluge came, and rose higher and ever higher, many of them bewailed their folly and their sins. The deluge indeed destroyed their bodies, but saved their souls. They were detained in limbo, until Jesus, after His death, descended to them and announced to them their liberation. With the just of the Old Law they accompanied the divine Redeemer in His glorious ascension, and with Him they entered rejoicing into heaven. St. Peter gives us this comforting assurance in these words: "In which also coming he preached to those spirits that were in prison: Which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noah, when the ark was a building." (1 Peter 3, 19, 20.)

Who would then not glorify the infinite bounty of God who directs all things for the salvation of souls and can make even His most terrible judgments serve this purpose.

St. Peter himself is a second Noah. He also directs an ark, whose bosom harbors the hope of the human race. This ark is the Catholic Church. She harbors all the peoples of the earth who believe in the divine Redeemer. Gradually built up since the beginning of the world by the Patriarchs and the Prophets, and completed by Christ and His Apostles, she has ruled the troubled oceans of the world for more

than nineteen hundred years, and everyone that is outside of her pale, knowingly and willingly, goes down to destruction in the deluge.

The visible sign that receives men into the Church and incorporates them with her, is holy Baptism. The deluge was the prototype of Baptism. The deluge obliterated the sins of those who were truly contrite. In like manner baptism obliterates all sin and foremost of all, original sin. It accomplishes this for all those who believe, who are of good will, and who yearn for truth and redemption. St. Peter adds to the words we have already cited above: "Whereunto baptism being of the like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3, 21.)

2. The question here presents itself: what is Baptism? The catechism gives us the best answer: Baptism is the first and most necessary sacrament in which by the water and the word of God man is cleansed from original sin and all those other actual sins which he may have committed before baptism, born again to everlasting life and sanctified.

Just as our corporal birth is the first and most necessary condition for our entry into the visible world, for our becoming members of the family and of human society, so in like manner baptism is the first and most necessary condition for our entry into salvation and into the Church and for attaining the dignity of a Christian and of a child of God and life eternal. Hence, in a word, baptism is the sacrament

that regenerates the soul and makes a new creature of it. It further cleanses it in a wonderful manner, endows it with grace and enlightens it. For this reason no other sacrament can be received before Baptism, whether it be Penance or Holy Eucharist, Confirmation or Extreme Unction, Holy Orders or Matrimony. In our bodily existence life must be present if we are to reap any benefit from our food or medicine. In like manner baptism must precede all other sacraments if the soul is to profit by their special graces. What food and medicine are for the body, that the other sacraments are for the soul, and what our physical birth is in the natural and human order of things, that is our spiritual regeneration by baptism in the supernatural and Christian order.

The mercy of God manifests itself in a special manner in all things that concern the salvation of man. It does so no less adorably in the sacrament of baptism. The other sacraments can be administered only by the bishops or the priests, but anybody, be he Jew or Gentile, can validly baptize in case of necessity, because it is the first and most necessary sacrament without which we can hope for neither grace nor salvation. How often would it not happen that children and even adults would die in pagan countries without baptism before a priest could be readily found, did not Our Divine Saviour confer on every human being the right of baptizing? But now in danger of death, or in case of supreme necessity, when no priest is obtainable, anybody, father, mother, nurse, servants, neighbors, boys, girls, yea even Jews or

pagans, can baptize the dying child or adult, *provided* they have the intention of doing what the Church does, and use the proper words while they pour the water on the forehead of the one to be baptized. The formula of baptism is very clear and simple: I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

In consequence of this mercy of Christ an untold number of children are annually saved for heaven, especially in pagan countries. It is impossible to count the number of Jews and pagans who are thus baptized before their death. Where no priest can enter or where bloody persecutions reign, there sympathizing Christians become the saviours of countless souls. Verily, in this also the amiable mercy of Christ and the yearning of His sacred heart for the salvation of souls manifests itself. It is because the necessity of baptism is so great that He has granted such great privileges to sympathizing men.

3. However, it is not at all times possible to have a priest or a kind-hearted Christian, much less a pagan, who, in times of danger or persecution, are able or willing to baptize a dying person who yearns for the sacrament. And yet this sacrament is so absolutely necessary for salvation that Our Lord Himself asseverates: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3, 5.) Is there then no means of replacing the actual baptism of water in the case of a Jew or Turk or pagan when in his supreme need it is physically im-



possible for him to have any human being administer to him the sacrament for which his soul thirsts? God certainly wills that all men be saved; He will therefore not withdraw His mercy from those who are ready to receive the faith and baptism, but who without any fault of their own are prevented from doing so. In such an exceptional case the baptism of desire, and more so that of blood can replace actual baptism, and that in accordance with the greatness of the mercy of God.

Baptism of desire is a perfect love of God and perfect contrition for all sins actually committed, accompanied with the determination of doing all that God has commanded for our salvation and hence to receive baptism, even there where pagans, Jews and Turks have no clearer knowledge of the Christian faith. Who can count the souls that, in the hour of death, have been saved by this yearning desire? God alone, who knows the secrets of the human heart, can do so. But one thing remains eternally true — the adorable mercy of God; for the baptism of desire takes away sin with the eternal punishments due to it, just the same as in an urgent case of necessity perfect contrition will obtain the pardon of our sins without the reception of the sacrament of penance.

The baptism of blood is even more effective, because it takes away, not merely sin with the eternal punishment due to it, but also the temporal punishments that would have to be expiated in purgatory. To receive the baptism of blood means to suffer martyrdom for the sake of Christ. Those receive the

baptism of blood, who, though they are not baptized Christians, gladly lay down their lives for the sake of their Divine Saviour. Wherefore Our Divine Lord solemnly assures us that those who lose their life for His sake will find it.

The child that has been murdered because of the Christian faith of its parents glorifies the Lord, if not in word at least in deed, even though it be not baptized. Hence it is that the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the Holy Innocents, who were ruthlessly slaughtered by the orders of king Herod because of the divine Child. She celebrates the memory of St. Emerentiana, who, although unbaptized laid down her young life for Our Divine Saviour. The number of those who, being only under instruction, suffered death for Christ before they were baptized is not few. The same can be said in our day of the catechumens in heathen countries. They have received the baptism of blood, and with it grace and life eternal.

Wonderful, therefore, is baptism as the door into the Catholic Church, as the entry into redemption, as the key to the treasures of God's graces and as the gate of heaven. This is fully demonstrated by the effects and the graces of holy baptism. These graces and effects are all the more glorious the more necessary baptism is for admission into the Catholic Church and to salvation.

4. The first effect of holy baptism is the remission of original sin and of all actual sins committed before baptism. If we wish to appreciate this benefit

in its full grandeur we must know what original sin is. It consists in the loss of all the supernatural gifts which God bestowed upon Adam as the head of the human race. He was destined to transmit them to his posterity after proving himself faithful and obedient, just the same as a good father leaves his children an honestly gained and maintained inheritance.

These supernatural gifts of Adam consisted in the grace that was to lead him to eternal happiness, in the immortality of the body, in the perfect subjection of the senses to the soul and of the soul to God, in the absence of all sickness and evils, in the wonderful comprehension of all things and in the complete lordship over all creatures. By sin Adam lost all these supernatural gifts and graces, which were a heavenly inheritance entrusted to him by God. In addition to the guilt of his sin he sank into all the short-comings and weaknesses of human nature, such as afflict us daily.

If, therefore we wish to understand the greatness and nature of original sin, we have only to measure the height of grace and perfection from which we have fallen. If Adam had not sinned, we too would have been born in the state of grace, of innocence, of immortality, of perfection, of knowledge, of kingship over creatures, without passions, without inclination to evil and without these everlasting trials and sufferings, afflictions and sicknesses, just the same as God created Adam. We must, however, bear in mind that each of us in turn would have been subjected to the same probation as Adam and Eve, and

like them we could have lost grace and fallen into sin and death. It is, however, an entirely different question whether we would then have found mercy as Adam found it and we in Adam. It is likewise a question, if we like the disobedient angels, would not have been cast away for all eternity. But as matters now stand we have, with Adam, received a Redeemer and through this Redeemer holy baptism, which takes away original sin from us, restores to us sanctifying grace, innocence of soul and the right to eternal happiness. Furthermore, it makes us children of God and consequently regenerates us as new creatures according to the image of God and of Jesus Christ. Herein consists the wonderful greatness of holy baptism and the splendid mercy of God, which sweetly ordains all things for the salvation of man.

But here another question confronts us, and rightly so: What becomes of the children who die without baptism? The answer to this is, that but two truths are known concerning their eternal destiny. Our Divine Saviour Himself announces the first truth: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3, 5.) Children who die before baptism, will therefore not enter into possession of the beatific vision and of heavenly happiness. But the second truth is that they will not go to purgatory and much less to the hell of eternal damnation. It is therefore the general opinion of the doctors of the Church that a special place has been prepared for such children—possibly like the one to which the souls of the just

of the old Law were relegated before the coming of the divine Redeemer — where they will forever remain free from pain, but without the bliss of the saints in heaven. At all events their destiny is such that Christian parents, through whose neglect or culpability one of their children dies without baptism, are highly criminal and will have to render a strict account to God, on the day of judgment, for the soul of their child, unless they have sincerely repented of their culpable negligence. When there is a question of eternal salvation there can be no room for delay.

5. Holy baptism has still another effect. It does not merely take away original sin, but it also obliterates all the actual sins committed before baptism with all the punishments both temporal and eternal due to them. Hence if an adult pagan, Turk or Jew, who believes and is well prepared, and truly contrite for his sins, is baptized, all sin, original and actual, is taken away from him. "I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness," says God in Ezechiel 36, 25. Hence the Pope St. Gregory the Great writes: "All sins disappear in baptism as a spark disappears in the waters of the ocean, for nothing damnable remains in those who are united with Jesus Christ through baptism." If therefore a grown-up person dies immediately after baptism he will have to suffer no purgatory, but like an innocent child enters instantly into heaven. So grand is this first and most necessary sacrament.

However, none of us must believe that on account of this a baptized pagan or Jew has any advantage

over us Christians, who have received baptism in our earliest infancy. By no means. During the days of our Christian life we can gain for ourselves a great many merits, and if we die in the grace of God our happiness will be grander and more glorious, even though we have to suffer some time in purgatory, than the happiness of children or of those adults who have died shortly after baptism. The reason is very simple. These have had no time to gather for themselves merits by a Christian life. But the measure of our eternal happiness is the measure of the greatness of our merits.

6. But the catechism also teaches us that in baptism man becomes a new creature and is regenerated and sanctified to eternal life. In what does this regeneration consist? It consists in this that by the power of the Holy Ghost the soul is made more like to God and is constituted His child and heir. It is the Holy Ghost who bestows on the baptized person a new spiritual and higher life. The old man of sin disappears and the life of holiness is enkindled in him. Corporally he is indeed still the same man, but an immense change has taken place in his soul. The paternal inheritance belongs to the child, therefore the heritage of heaven belongs to the regenerated child of God. When Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost came down upon Him, so that we may know that by baptism heaven has become our portion and the Holy Ghost has come down upon us. Our Divine Saviour said to Nicodemus: "Unless a man be born again

of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3, 5.) St. Paul in these words embraces this regeneration and reconstitution, the adoption as a child of God by the communication of the Holy Ghost and the granting of the heirship of heaven: "Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost; whom he hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting." (Titus 3, 5-7.)

The reconstitution and renovation of the soul is effected by sanctifying grace, which the Holy Ghost pours into the soul at baptism. It imprints upon the soul the likeness to God; it breathes into it a new heavenly life, it enlightens the understanding and strengthens the will. It is the sublime gift of heaven that God bestows upon His child, the dowry of his new and Christian life and the well-spring of all his virtues and merits. It is the life of the Christian soul, just as the soul is the life of the body.

7. Along with sanctifying grace the Holy Ghost infuses into the soul the three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity, so that the baptized person may make a plentiful use of them and believe, hope and love in a living manner. Just as God when He created the soul bestowed upon it all the powers that were indispensably necessary for him to attain his destiny as man, such as intelligence, will and mem-

ory, so does He grant every baptized person all those virtues which are necessary for the proper fulfillment of his Christian vocation, such as faith, hope and charity. And just as the intelligence, the will and the memory of the child are gradually developed by education and instruction, so must likewise the virtues of faith, hope and charity develop and manifest themselves in deeds by the Christian instruction and the practice of the baptized person. They are the highest virtues of the Christian. They surpass all other virtues and indeed bring them along in their retinue. They are the ornament of the soul, the foundation of Christian life, the fountain of glorious merits, the bond that unites us with the Triune God and the cause of our eternal happiness. Faith is merged in the beatific vision of God, hope becomes the eternal possession of heaven's bliss, but love is changed into everlasting and inexpressible love and joy.

8. Great and wonderful, therefore, is the sacrament of baptism. It is the second ark in the deluge, the door to the Catholic Church, the key to heaven, the fountain of salvation for the soul and the bath of regeneration. It imprints upon the soul an indelible mark, like the seal of the Triune God, whereby the baptized person will be forever distinguished from the unbaptized one, as the child of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost. In heaven this mark will be the occasion for greater glory, in hell it will be the cause of greater damnation and despair.

This sacrament is wonderful in its graces. It sanc-





tifies and justifies the soul before God; it obliterates original sin and all other sin; it confers sanctifying grace, true innocence and the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity. The graces shine resplendent from the souls of Christian children and manifest themselves in their innocence, piety and gladness. Baptism makes the children like soft wax in the hands of Christian parents, and as the dewdrop reflects the sunbeam in beautiful colors, so does the reflection of heavenly grace and the innocence of the Divine Child shine forth from the souls of the children sanctified by baptism.

Moreover, baptism is a beneficent protection for the poor helpless children. In numberless cases it is the thought alone that there is no salvation possible without baptism that disarms the hand of unnatural mothers who were in the act of murdering their child begotten in sin. For the sake of baptism Christian associations have been formed with the purpose of sending missionaries into those pagan countries where children are freely exposed to death in the streets and the jungles. Verily, if these barbarous parents knew the blessing of baptism they would treat their children more humanely. It is the sacrament of baptism that also protects Christian children, for their names are entered not only in heaven, but also in the baptismal register on earth, and thus their life, their right to inheritance and their future are secured against violence. To whom do the poor orphans owe the watchful care they receive and the orphan asylums? To the sacrament of baptism. To whom do

the children owe the Christian education and the Christian instruction that prepares them to fulfill their mission in life in a manner that will make them and others better for their having lived? Holy baptism. To whom do we owe it that as Christians we are the equals of any man, even though the conditions of life may be different? Holy baptism. Our names are entered on the baptismal register without distinction of rank. There we find the children of princes, of kings, of the rich, of citizens, of laborers, on a footing of equality as children of God and as Christians.

Let us, therefore, remember the misery from which baptism frees us, the dignity and the happiness to which it has raised us, and the graces it has conferred upon us. May this grace grow in us; may faith, hope and charity ever animate us, so that baptism may become for us the door into everlasting happiness, where, in company with the triumphant Church, we can see God, possess Him and love Him forevermore. Amen.

## SERMON IV

### THE CEREMONIES AND PROMISES OF BAPTISM

“For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.” — GAL. 3, 27.

The wealth of grace and redemption manifests itself especially in the sacraments. The mercy of God presents to us the treasures of the infinite merits of Christ in seven vessels. And lest weariness overtake us, or the inclination to sin overcome us, or discouragement gain the upper hand, God has placed His holy sacraments as so many means of strength and comfort at every step along the journey of our life. The child and the old man, the youth and the maiden, husband and wife—they always find the means needed for the salvation and the peace of their souls.

No matter how great and deep the wounds of our soul: let sorrow and worry and despair surfeit us—we will only then fall a victim to them if we refuse to partake of the sacraments as the safest and the happiest remedies of our souls. The man whose vitals are gnawed with hunger, or whose tongue is parched with thirst, craves no more after food and drink than does the soul, that image of God, that daughter of heaven, yearn from its innermost depths for these heavenly fountains of grace. But if her yearning is not satisfied, she sinks from the height

of her celestial dignity down to the condition of a poor slave of sin, just as the noble daughter of a king, who has fallen into degrading captivity, gradually pines away in her misery.

But since the sacraments have so great a destiny and dignity in the Christian religion, they are surrounded by mysterious ceremonies. If the nature of the sacraments is so great and venerable, if they are the creation of Our Divine Saviour, and are the means of dispensing to us the graces of eternal life, they must be accompanied by ceremonies that correspond to their nature, just the same as a holy soul reflects itself in the dignified bearing of the body. The ceremonies best express the inward emotion of the minister and awaken in the heart of the Christian a greater respect, devotion and recollection.

The same holds true for the sacrament of baptism. The more wonderful this sacrament is, the greater its effects and its graces, all the more expressive and rich in meaning are the ceremonies which accompany its ministration. It is therefore my purpose to speak to you to-day about the ceremonies and the promises of baptism.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. To-day, as in ages long past, it is the pious custom to bring the children to church. Here they are to be born again, here they are to be received into the communion of saints. Here is the house of their heavenly Father, their new and better birth-place, but also the gate of heaven whence they are some

day to enter eternal happiness, which becomes their heritage in holy baptism. Wherefore, when the Catholic has passed from this life he is borne once again into the church, there to receive the last blessing of the Church. And if the church has been truly his house of God during life, it will also be for him the gate into heaven after death.

Before the priest proceeds with the baptism, he asks the child, or rather its sponsors, what is to be its name. If it is to be born again in holy baptism, it should likewise receive a new name, the name of a saint, who is to be its patron in life and in death, but also its model. The priest then asks: "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" The answer is: "Faith." "What doth faith bring thee to? Life everlasting." "If therefore thou wishest to enter life everlasting, keep the commandments." It is indeed only the Catholic Church who can impart the true faith. She teaches it in God's stead. She is destined to protect and preserve the faith, but she forces no one to accept it. But he who has received the faith from her is obliged to observe its commandments and to hear the Church. And if the parents and sponsors ask for it in the child's name, they are as much obligated to raise it in a Christian manner as they are obliged by its natural birth, before God and the civil authorities, to care for its nourishment, instruction and welfare.

The priest breathes thrice over the child, following in this the example of Our Divine Saviour Who breathed upon the Apostles in order to confer upon

them the Holy Ghost. The unclean spirit, who by virtue of original sin is still the master over the one to be baptized, is adjured to depart, so that a new spirit, the spirit of innocence and grace, the Holy Ghost, may enter into the soul and constitute it the temple of the Holy Ghost. The same Spirit of God who vivified and sanctified Adam at his creation, now sanctifies us at our regeneration in holy baptism.

The priest makes the sign of the cross on the forehead and the breast of the child and lays his hand upon its head in order to consecrate it to God. Then he places a few grains of salt in its mouth. As Christ by His example and His teaching, was the salt of the earth in order to preserve it from the decay of sin; as the Apostles, by preaching the gospel, became the salt of the earth, so must every Christian by his life and his faith become a consecrated salt that will preserve not only himself but also others from the ruin of sin. In ancient times the victims offered in sacrifice were obliged to be salted. In imitation of this Our Divine Saviour bore His bitter sufferings upon the cross. In like manner the newly baptized one must make of his body and soul a sacrifice to God, but his sacrifice will cost him many sufferings, struggles and persecutions.

As mediator between God and man the priest now lays the stole upon the child. This indicates that the child from now on belongs to God in a special manner. This visible bond will soon be followed by that heavenly and higher tie which baptism establishes between God and the one baptized. Hence the

sponsors pray aloud with the priest the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father, for these prayers contain within themselves the fullness of faith and hope and consequently the foundation of the Christian and eternal life. For this reason the priest, in imitation of the example of Our Divine Saviour in the gospel, touches the ears and the nostrils of the child with saliva. This is to indicate that the child's ears are to be opened to all heavenly truth, that they should listen to the divine commandments and the words of eternal life, and that by his life on earth he should spread abroad the good odor of Christ.

2. The words and ceremonies become more solemn as the time for baptism draws nearer. Can you grasp the significance and the solemn obligation laid upon the one to be baptized when the priest asks: "Dost thou renounce Satan? and all his works? and all his pomps?" He who wishes to belong to God, who wishes to honor, love and serve Him, must first of all, renounce the prince of this world, sin and Satan. Baptism effects the holiest union between God and man, but not before the old bond with Satan has been destroyed. When the person to be baptized has made these promises in presence of the Church and of God, the priest anoints him with holy oil on the breast and shoulders. His breast is destined to be the seat of grace, of faith and of love, whilst his shoulders are to be strengthened so that they can carry the cross of Christ, the new yoke and the new burden of the Christian life. Many and terrible are the combats he must wage during the course of his Chris-

tian life. They will be all the more terrible the more determined he is to renounce Satan and all his works. But the oil of the grace of God will strengthen him, and the victor's prize of eternal life is already promised him when he is being anointed.

Until this moment the priest wears the violet stole, the color of penance, because sin is not yet obliterated from the soul of the one to be baptized. But now he puts on the white stole, the color of joy. He asks the child: "Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty? Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord, who was born and suffered for us? Dost thou also believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?" The answer is: "I do believe." The light of faith follows the darkness of Satan or unbelief, the renunciation of Satan is followed by the solemn profession of faith in Jesus Christ. These are the promises made at holy baptism. Upon their proper fulfillment depends the reward or the punishment we are to receive on the day of judgment.

Untrammelled and of our own free will we are to serve God. The Church forces nobody to do so, but once we have taken these obligations upon ourselves we are bound to fulfill them if we would not incur the just punishment due to perfidy. Our Divine Saviour Himself addressed these words to the sick: "Dost thou wish to be healed?" and to those who implored Him for His help He said: "Dost thou believe?" For this reason the priest, in the name of



God and of His Church, now asks the one to be baptized: "Wilt thou be baptized?" And only after the sponsors in the name of the child have said, "I will," does the priest baptize the child in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

By baptism man becomes a child of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost and a member of the Catholic Church. Hence the priest now anoints the head of the baptized one with holy Chrism. He is a Christian, that is, one who is anointed, for Christ means the Anointed One. Every church is consecrated with Chrism, and by his reception into the Catholic Church the neophyte enters into the communion of the faithful to whom St. Peter addresses these glorious words: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people." (1 Pet. 2, 9.) Can any dignity be greater than that of a Christian, or can the ceremonies which the Catholic Church uses at holy baptism have a grander meaning and consecration? By baptism we become truly, not in the worldly but in the spiritual sense, kings, priests and prophets or teachers. We are kings whose heritage is the kingdom of heaven and the crown of everlasting happiness. We are priests, who in the words of the Prince of the Apostles "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2, 5.) We are prophets or teachers, who not only direct themselves and theirs to heavenly things, but who also proclaim the faith and the truth by word and example.

After the conferring of baptism the priest places

on the child a cloth, representing a white robe. This is a splendid symbol of the innocence with which the soul is adorned by the sacrament; it is the nuptial robe with which we must be vested if we wish to enter into the glory of God; it is the most beautiful expression of that peace, that joy and grace with which baptism endows the soul. In like manner the priest puts a lighted candle into the hand of the one baptized. This is symbolical of faith which is the light from heaven; it is the symbol of the love that should fill the soul for God; it typifies the nuptial torch that should burn at the espousals of the soul with Christ; and finally it is the type of that eternal light which we are all called to behold in the eternity of bliss.

3. Furthermore, the Church demands sponsors, who shall take the place of spiritual parents with regard to the one who is baptized. It is self-evident that they can only be practical Catholics. And in fact the newly-born child needs the assistance of its parents, if it should live, grow up and enter on its temporal vocation. Now by baptism it enters upon a new and Christian life, and for this it needs just as much spiritual care and bringing up that it may learn to fulfill its Christian duties. Next to the parents the sponsors have the obligation of directing the child in the paths of virtue, indeed they, as the child's spiritual father and mother, are bound to have pity on the child for the sake of its eternal salvation. Those sponsors who only give a present at baptism and take no further interest in their god-child would render

themselves guilty of a grave neglect of duty — a duty they have solemnly undertaken in presence of God and of His Church — if, in case of necessity or of the parents' death, they failed to care for the one confided to them at baptism. In days gone by the relation between sponsors and their god-child was a particularly touching and paternal one, one that proved exceedingly fortunate and beneficial for the child. And to this day there exists a spiritual relationship between them, that forbids marriage between them.

Such are the ceremonies of holy baptism. They have been instituted for the purpose of surrounding this first and most necessary sacrament with all due reverence and devotion. They are beautiful and instructive, for they have been ordained by the Catholic Church under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. How grand the meaning they harbor, and how comforting it is to know them! May all that they signify ever be accomplished in us, and what they now merely show us in figure become a reality for us in a happy eternity. As surely as the promises of God are un-failing, so surely will this be the case if we fulfill the promises we made at baptism.

4. Jesus Christ, however, was given us by His heavenly Father not only as the Redeemer, but also as our model. For this reason it is the duty of every Christian, no matter what his station, sex or age in life may be, to follow Jesus Christ. St. Paul writes: "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that he

might be the firstborn amongst many brethren." (Rom. 8, 29.)

By baptism we are born again to the life of grace and made conformable to the divine Redeemer. This is the covenant that God concludes with us: "And I will espouse thee to me in faith: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." (Osee 2, 20.) The dower which the Triune God confers upon the soul is newly gained innocence, sanctifying grace and the three divine virtues. But not content with this, God raises the happy soul to the dignity of His child, to the image of the divine Redeemer, to the dignity of a Spouse of the Holy Ghost and of a sister to the angels and the saints. He promises us His protection in dangers, His grace in temptations, His blessing for a Christian life and the recompense of everlasting happiness. "I will espouse thee to me in faith: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." And verily we experience it often enough in life, in joy and in sorrow, in grace and in sin if we truly regret it, in life and in death, and later on we shall experience it forever, that God on His part, will faithfully keep His promises.

But the one who is baptized likewise solemnly promises in the presence of God, of the Church, of the priest and the sponsors: "I will pay my vows to the Lord before all his people." (Ps. 115, 14.) The neophyte promises to renounce forever Satan, the bitter enemy of God and of the soul; he renounces all his pomps, vanity, pride, voluptuousness and sinful pleasure, and all the other worldly enticements that Satan knows so well how to display in order to catch

the unwary fools and to spread the seductive maxims of a godless world. He promises to renounce the works of Satan, sin in thought, word and deed, disobedience against God and His Church.

But not content with these first promises the one who is baptized vows something still more holy and sublime, namely that as a child of God he will believe in God the Father, as one of the saved, in God the Son, as one of the sanctified, in God the Holy Ghost, as a Christian in the holy Roman Catholic Church. Hence he joyfully and solemnly answers the threefold question, "Dost thou believe?" with, "I do believe." In accordance with this faith I desire to live, in this faith I wish to die, for blessed are they who believe. I will keep the mandates of this faith as a child of God, as one who is saved, as one who is sanctified, as a Christian, because Jesus is my way, my truth and my life.

5. These are the solemn vows that we all who have been baptized have taken. God has entered them on His great book of Life, just as the priest has entered our names in the baptismal register. The promises of holy baptism are an oath of allegiance that we have sworn to God. Yea, they are the greatest of all vows, because they contain all that is grandest and holiest, that is most necessary and important for the salvation of our souls, and what is more, they are made in the presence of heaven and of earth. Their obligation, therefore, is more serious and binding and their violation is more grievous and terrible than the worst perjury. Hence many saints tell us that on

the last day of judgment God does no more than confront the Christian with his promises of baptism, and to the one who has broken them He says these terrifying words: "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant." (Luke 19, 22.) Thou hast promised as a child, to honor God thy Father, as one who was redeemed, to believe in God the Son and to keep His commandments, as one who was sanctified, to love the Holy Ghost as a Christian, to obey the Church, to listen to her teachings and to receive her sacraments. Thou hast promised to renounce Satan with all his works and all his pomps. In word and in deed, in life and in death thou hast violated thy most sacred obligations: "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

And in truth, he who fails to keep the promises he made at holy baptism, he who repeatedly deserts God, the Church, grace and the faith, is like unto the raven which Noah sent out of the ark with the intention that it should return. But once the raven had found his carrion amidst all the devastation of the earth, he felt far too comfortable to think of returning to the one who had sent him out. It is in just such a manner that God, after baptism, sent us forth upon the earth in order to see if we would remain faithful to our vows, if we would renounce the carrion of the world, sin and disobedience, and direct our lives towards God and heaven. If we remain true to our promises we are like the dove that Noah also sent out, but that winged its flight back to the ark. The ark for us Christians here on earth is the Catholic

Church and in heaven eternal happiness. To such a Christian God will say the consoling words: "Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matth. 25, 21.)

6. We should, therefore, often remember the promises we have made at baptism, and often renew them, especially on the days when we go to holy communion, on Sundays, on the anniversary of our baptism, in dangers and temptations or in sickness, in order to show by our whole disposition that we are really glad of the grace of God and of the covenant which He has concluded with us in holy baptism. But we must also be mindful of our own great and holy obligations that we have assumed with the baptismal vows.

It is customary in the world to celebrate joyously the anniversary of one's birth. Have we Christians not a greater reason to remember with deepest gratitude the day on which, by baptism we became the children of God and the heirs of heaven? During the course of the ecclesiastical year the Church commemorates in a solemn manner the days on which we receive the greatest benefits of redemption. Thus we have Christmas, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost, the feast-days of Our Blessed Lady and of the other great saints of God. Yea, she annually celebrates the consecration of a church, which thus became really and truly the house of God. Now, should not a faithful Catholic celebrate the day on which he was born again as a child of God, an heir of heaven and unto eternal

salvation? St. Paul tells the faithful: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth." (Eph. 4, 23, 24.)

It is thus that the priests annually remember with greater joy and devotion the day of their ordination; it is so that the bishop does, and so the religious, in order to remind themselves all the better and more earnestly of their weighty obligations. It is thus that those Christians do, who are thoroughly imbued with the idea of their Christian vocation and who fully understand the import of the vows they have taken. If there are times that you find it difficult and wearisome to fulfill your Christian duties, repeat the words: "I renounce Satan." If evil thoughts and temptations come over you, repeat anew: "I renounce all his pomps." If the world entices you to sin and to the transgression of the commandments of God or of the Church, remember your vow: "I renounce all his works." If the world or impious men tempt you to doubt your faith, or want you to scoff at the teachings and the practices of the Church or picture to you the seeming advantages of unbelief, renew your vow: "I believe."

No tongue can tell the strength and the grace that repose in the renewal of our baptismal vows. A pious bishop, in the midst of the many difficulties created by the evil times, frequently repeated to himself: "When the work bears heavily upon you, think of the reward." Yea indeed, if the labors, the hardships, the warfare and the temptations incidental to



the Christian life seem at times unbearable, think of your vows and look upon the reward. And if we have persevered in the practices of a Christian life and have preserved the faith, then, when we are about to pass the threshold of time into eternity, will be verified the words spoken to us by the priest at our baptism: "Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life." Amen.

## SERMON V

### CONFIRMATION — ITS GRACES AND CEREMONIES

“But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.”—JOHN, 15, 26.

“When the Paraclete cometh, the Spirit of truth, he will give testimony of me.” Thus spoke our Divine Saviour to His Apostles. What can this mean? Did not the miracles, the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ and more especially His bitter passion and death sufficiently testify to the divinity of His person and His mission? Yea, but the Jews did not believe, the Gentiles were not converted, and even the Apostles did not grasp everything. The Holy Ghost was destined to confirm this testimony by His descent upon men. He accomplished His purpose, and does so still through the Church, by her wonderful propagation, preservation and government, by the unity of her teaching and her sacraments. But the Holy Ghost also bears witness to Jesus in the hearts of every individual Christian by His grace and inspirations, and by the three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity. But our Divine Saviour demands that His Apostles, disciples and faithful also give testimony to the truth of His divine person and His doctrine: “Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will

also confess him before my Father who is in heaven.”  
(Matth. 10, 32.)

The change that took place in the Apostles after the Holy Ghost had descended upon them was marvelous. They rejoiced to suffer ignominy for the name of Jesus, they gladly went forth into the world and did not hesitate to undergo even a bloody death. Behold the noble spectacle of the holy martyrs. Men and women, old men and children gladly laid down their lives for Jesus and for the truth of the Catholic faith. The cross was their standard; it was the watchword of the day. The Christians gathered around the Cross; they fought for the Cross and died for it. But their blood was the seed of new Christians and it sanctified the earth. But in the later ages the heresies furnished opportunities enough to confess the faith. And when was it more necessary than at the present day to profess the faith by word and deed, for now more than ever our holy faith is reviled and abused in the public prints, in the theater, in vile dram shops, on the platform, in fact in every conceivable place?

We are the advocates of God, the defenders of the honor of Jesus Christ against the hordes of impiety, just the same as the first Christians were against the Jews and the pagans. What made the just of the Old Law immortal, if it was not their defence of the honor of God? What has made the Apostles, the martyrs and countless thousands of Christians so glorious and so happy, if not their splendid testimony for Jesus and His doctrine? We have the same holy and glorious vocation. For this we have already been

consecrated in holy baptism. For this purpose we especially receive the sacrament of confirmation, so that we may have the necessary grace and courage. I shall therefore speak to you to-day about the sacrament of confirmation, its graces and ceremonies.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. What is the sacrament of Confirmation? Confirmation is the sacrament in which, through the Bishop's imposition of hands, unction and prayer, those already baptized are strengthened by the Holy Ghost, in order that they may steadfastly profess their faith, and faithfully live up to it.

The Holy Ghost therefore completes in confirmation what He has begun in us in baptism. In baptism we were born again to the life of grace, here we are confirmed in it; there the virtue of faith was infused into us, here we are strengthened unto a steadfast profession of the same faith. In confirmation we are called upon, after due deliberation and understanding and with our own free choice, to renew the pledges that were made in our name by our sponsors at baptism, namely, to renounce Satan completely and to believe with our whole heart, and to profess that faith by word and deed. Just as the boy or the girl, entering upon the years of greater discretion, becomes more independent and must decide upon a calling, a trade or profession, so must every Christian when he receives confirmation, of his own choice and free will decide himself to fulfill his Christian vocation and to serve God. Hence this sacrament is called confirma-

tion, that is, strengthening, because it is the Holy Ghost who strengthens us with His grace in faith and for our decision. It is called a consummation because it completes in us what baptism has already begun. Yea, the Fathers of the Church call it beautifully and truly the Seal of the Lord, wherewith our covenant with God is finally sealed. Because of the manner in which it was administered, the ancient Christians also gave it various other names: the Laying on of hands, the mystery of the Unction, the Sign of salvation, or also the Sacrament of holy Chrism. All these names loudly proclaim the sublime significance and holiness of this sacrament.

2. In fact the sublime significance of this sacrament becomes marvelously manifest, when we remember that the Catholic Church herself was confirmed by the Holy Ghost in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But the great and wonderful things that then took place in the Church, are renewed, although in a smaller measure, in the soul of every Christian who receives the sacrament of confirmation worthily. The fullness of grace which was then poured out on the Church in Jerusalem by the Holy Ghost, finds its reflex in the graces which the same Holy Ghost bestows on the souls of those who are confirmed.

The Church was indeed already instituted by Jesus Christ, the Apostles were elected, the doctrine was announced, the Holy Sacrifice and the sacraments were instituted and the Church was baptized in the blood of Christ upon the Cross; but it was only on the day of Pentecost, the day of her confirmation, as it were,

that she began to appear independent, to openly confess the Christ, to administer His sacraments and to proclaim His faith to all the world. Then it was that the Holy Ghost came down in the shape of fiery tongues and with the rushing of a mighty wind upon the Apostles, the disciples and on all those present, filled them with His grace, transformed them wonderfully into teachers of mankind and into heroes of the Christian faith, and bestowed on them the gift of speaking in divers tongues. Not one people, but all peoples are called to share in redemption and to speak one tongue, the tongue of the one true Catholic faith. Not for one people has the Church been established the teacher, but for all peoples. Not for one people alone is she to be the guide on the road to salvation, but for all. Hence the Holy Ghost remains in and with the Church until the consummation of ages, just the same as sanctifying grace remains in the soul of the Christian, unless by his own deliberate sinful act he drives it out. This is the Church's indelible mark, the Seal of the Lord, the fulfillment of the promise that the Holy Ghost would remain with her and guide her in all truth. He confirms her in the faith, so that she cannot err; He strengthens her so that she can always profess and defend this faith before the whole world and would rather suffer and be persecuted than deny Christ. And verily, what is there on earth more wonderful than the Catholic Church, which, from the days of her origin until the present time, has borne the most terrible persecutions for Christ's sake and still bears them, especially in our day, and yet unwaver-

ingly, immovably, steadfastly teaches the same faith? The Holy Ghost is the reason of this, because when He came down upon her in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost He confirmed her and strengthened her forevermore in grace. Her example and steadfastness has maintained thousands and millions of the faithful in the faith, and saved them for an eternity of bliss. If there is to-day still a spark of Christian faith left on the earth, the world owes it to the sufferings, the constancy and the loyalty of the Catholic Church.

3. What the Holy Ghost accomplishes in a large way for the sanctification and strengthening of the Church of Christ since His descent upon the Apostles, He does for the souls of us all in the sacrament of confirmation. This sacrament first increases in us sanctifying grace, which must already be in us either by means of baptism or of penance, because confirmation is a sacrament of the living, consequently it must be received in the state of grace. However, the special grace which confirmation confers, is this strengthening of the faith so that we may be able to profess the faith steadfastly and live in accordance with its dictates. And verily, if ever a sacrament was necessary, especially in our day, it is the sacrament of confirmation. The world has scarcely ever seen such a time of impiety, of scoffing, of apostacy from the faith and of persecutions as just now. The faithful, it is true, are not brought to court, dragged into prison and put to death because of their faith as was the case during the bloody persecutions of the pagans, of the religious wars and the revolutions, but all around

them lurk dangers and temptations that would rob them of their faith and their constancy. How can thousands of Catholics persevere unto the end of their lives, when an unbelieving world opens every flood-gate of malice, of falsehood, of calumny, of mockery and petty torture in order to lead Catholics astray? In newspapers, books, pictures, on the stage, in public places, in the schools, in assemblies, in societies, in families, everywhere, we find that the most sacred things, the sublimest teachings of our holy faith, God, the Church, the sacraments, the priests, the commandments, prayer and divine worship, are blasphemed, ridiculed and scoffed at.

My God, how can a Catholic remain steadfast under such circumstances? or how can he do otherwise than lose courage, joy, zeal and even faith, unless he receives a special assistance from the Holy Ghost? He has this assistance; the sacrament of confirmation gives him the special grace of loyally professing his faith and of living according to its dictates. In fact it is the Holy Ghost, who guides and rules the Catholic Church, who leads her in all truth, and who strengthens and protects her in the most terrible persecutions; the same Holy Ghost also strengthens and protects the individual faithful. The same Holy Spirit who, on the day of Pentecost, changed the Apostles from cowardly, doubting men, to teachers of the world, to witnesses of the divine Redeemer, and to heroes of the Christian faith, transforms us also and assists us, so that we may be able to steadfastly profess our faith for the honor of the Redeemer and the salvation of our souls



and possess the strength and the courage to openly defend it by word and deed. The same Holy Ghost who could encourage men and women, boys and girls to become glorious martyrs like SS. Stephen, Lawrence, Agnes, Agatha, Catharine and countless others for the glory of God, the honor of Jesus Christ and the pride of the Catholic Church—can and will also assist us and strengthen us to such an extent that we will be prepared to undergo calmly and confidently even suffering and persecution for the sake of our holy Catholic faith. He accomplishes this chiefly in the sacrament of confirmation.

And indeed, if in our day we behold the religious orders, consecrated virgins, dispersed to the four winds of the earth, when we see them cast into prison and robbed of their property, and still hear no complaint, no malediction or expression of hatred for their persecutors pass over their lips; when we see them suffer calmly, resignedly, patiently, filled with faith and hope—we must confess with wonder and admiration: Truly, here rules the Holy Ghost as mightily and splendidly as during the times of the bloody persecutions of the first centuries. He rules in truth in the souls, and that in consequence of the sacrament of confirmation.

We find, furthermore, numberless Christians of every age, condition and sex, down to the very children, who bear their sufferings and trials with heavenly patience and resignation. They do not grow despondent amid afflictions and visitations of every kind, they do not lose their faith and their hope, they do not burst out into complaints and maledictions.

The reason for it all is, that here dwells the grace of the Holy Ghost, conferred upon the soul in confirmation. It is particularly in the moments of the greatest necessity and danger that this grace manifests its greatest power and influence on the soul.

The grace of the Holy Ghost shows itself especially grand in the matter of feeling and knowing the truth of the faith. For three years the Apostles were the disciples of the divine Redeemer; they heard His teachings as they fell from His divine lips and they witnessed the miracles that He worked. And for all that they often misunderstood Him, and were frequently reprimanded for their slowness of belief. Far different was it when they were confirmed on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them. From that moment they were wonderfully enlightened, they understood the mysteries of the faith and were so filled with them, that they were able to convince the whole world of them. The same holds true for Catholics, who receive the sacrament of confirmation worthily. How many, even of the simplest Catholics, are often wonderfully penetrated, enlightened and filled with their holy faith, so that they frequently surpass the greatest scholars of the world in the knowledge of the faith. Children, girls, poor servants, simple peasants are often so strong and alive in the faith, that no objections, no arguments can confuse them or lead them astray. This is due to the grace of the Holy Ghost, of whom our Divine Saviour says: "But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth . . . and the

things that are to come, he shall show you.” (John 16, 13.)

It was therefore, not without reason that the Christians of old called confirmation the completion of baptism, in which the virtue of faith is infused into our souls. For the same reason that the Catholic Church on earth is called the militant Church, because she is engaged in a constant warfare against the powers of impiety, we become, by confirmation, the soldiers of Jesus Christ. From the cradle on we are destined to combat and are exposed to all the dangers of the soul. Baptized children are warriors without weapons, but also without combat. But once they are grown up the struggles against Satan, the world and the flesh begin of themselves. It is the sacrament of confirmation that will arm them so that they can victoriously wage the battle and win for themselves the crown of justice. Like unto the militant Church we also become the soldiers of Christ, and confirmation ranges us under the glorious standard of Jesus Christ. It is the seal of the Lord and imprints on us an indelible mark. It is, as it were, the uniform of the divine Redeemer, Who confers upon us the power and the strength to conquer with Him beneath the standard of the Cross, the prince of this world, Satan and hell, and gain heaven for ourselves. Hence, confirmation can be administered only once. St. Paul beautifully says: “Now he that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and that hath anointed us, is God: who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.” (2 Cor. I, 21-22.)

4. The very ceremonies with which the Bishop ad-

ministers confirmation indicate to us the grace and the significance of the sacrament. He spreads out his hands over those who are to be confirmed and implores Almighty God to send down from heaven "the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, of Counsel and of Fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and Piety, that He fill them with the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord and sign them with the sign of the cross." Then the Bishop anoints the one to be confirmed with these words: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." He next gives him a slight blow on the cheek, and at the end he again implores God to bestow on those who were confirmed the grace of the Holy Ghost. He then concludes the whole by bestowing upon them all the Episcopal Benediction.

The sacred symbol of the cross is made on our foreheads that we may never be ashamed of Jesus Christ or of our holy Faith. It is further intended to remind us that our only hope of salvation is in the holy Cross. But the cross is formed with holy Chrism to signify to us that, no matter how heavy the cross may be, the unction of grace will make it lighter and sweeter. St. Paul expresses this beautifully: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. 1, 16.) The slight blow on the cheek should always remind us, that we must ever be ready to bear patiently many sorrows and insults for the sake of the faith, just the same as Jesus Christ has suffered for

us. But the deepest significance and truth is contained in the unction with the Chrism. It repeats to us forcibly what St. Peter has already taught us, namely, that we are a royal, priestly and chosen race. We are the brethren of Jesus Christ, the children of God and the heirs of heaven, the soldiers of Christ, who have been anointed as are the kings at their coronation.

We are a priestly race that is called upon to offer up the spotless sacrifice at holy Mass. But we are further destined to offer the sacrifice of our bodies and our souls, of our life and our death. That is why we are anointed. We are a chosen people, who are bound to proclaim everywhere the glories and the truths of God, especially in our own circles. It is thus that we fulfill the mysteries of confirmation; it becomes for us our completion, our strengthening and the seal of the Lord, which is to remain upon us intact until we reach the crown of our promised happiness.

5. We are also obliged to have sponsors at confirmation. Just as the neophyte needs the assistance of sponsors in order to preserve the new life and the grace, which he has received in baptism, and to fulfill his baptismal vows, so does the one who has been confirmed need the special help of pious Christians in the battle of Christian life to which he is consecrated, in the fearless profession of his faith and in the loyal fulfillment of his Christian duties. The sponsors at confirmation, like the sponsors at baptism, take upon themselves the sacred obligation of being shining examples, in word and deed, to their spiritual children. They are further obliged to instruct and encourage

their charge, so that he will be prepared to fight the good fight, to preserve the faith and grace and to acquire the crown of eternal life. In sign of their solemn obligation the sponsors lay their right hand on the right shoulder of the one to be confirmed. They hereby signify that they are willing to take him under their protection and charge and then to direct his steps in the path of salvation. In consequence of this there exists a spiritual kinship between the sponsor and the one confirmed. Moreover, it is the desire of the Church that the sponsors of confirmation be different from those of baptism.

6. Let us never forget that by confirmation we become the Anointed of the Lord, a royal race, that is called to conquer Satan and to chain sin and hell to its triumphal car. Remember that you are a priestly people, and for that reason bound to annihilate your passions with the fire of the Holy Ghost and to offer clean and spotless sacrifices to God. You are a race of prophets, whose glorious mission it is to give testimony of Jesus Christ, and to proclaim the truth of the Catholic faith to the world by your steadfast profession of the same. The cross that was imprinted on our foreheads is our real crown, which recalls to everyone of us the words of the Apostle: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6, 14.)

Thus, in confirmation, the seal of the Lord is imprinted on us and perfects what baptism has begun in us. If we have been loyal and steadfast as Christians, as soldiers of Christ, as the anointed of the Lord,

then at the end of our lives we can say the glorious and consoling words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day." (2 Tim. 4, 7, 8.) Amen.

## SERMON VI

### THE POSSIBILITY AND NECESSITY OF HOLY EUCCHARIST

“If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.”—JOHN,  
6, 52.

On the fourth Sunday in Lent and the sixth Sunday after Pentecost the Catholic Church calls our attention to the miraculous multiplication of the loaves by our Divine Saviour. Five thousand men had followed Him into the desert in order to hear His divine words. He had compassion on the multitude and gave them bread by the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and sent them away filled with joy and gladness. Touching are the words of the Royal Prophet: “The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord: and thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature.” (Ps. 144, 15, 16.) During Lent the eyes of the whole Christian world are naturally turned to our Divine Saviour, who nourishes all with the bread of eternal life, provided they listen to His teachings and keep His commandments.

And in the Pentecostal tide the whole world again turns to God, and He satiates man and beast with His richest blessings. In this season falls the time of harvest. It is a time when Divine Providence



bountifully provides in field and meadow, the bread that will rejoice the heart of every living creature, and causes the supplies for a new year to grow. Yes, verily, in harvest time the eyes of all hope in the Lord, and He gives them meat in due season. He opens His bountiful hand and every living thing is sated with His blessing.

God Himself praises His providence that includes even the most insignificant of His creatures in the following words addressed to Job: "Who provideth food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, wandering about, because they have no meat?" (Job 38, 41.) And again David answers in the name of all living beings: "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord; and thou givest them meat in due season."

Now if the Providence of God provides so well and so wonderfully for the temporal life of His creatures, should it not manifest itself all the more splendidly and adorably in all that regards the everlasting happiness of our immortal souls? The Saviour Himself, in view of the needs of our soul, has taught us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread;" He further spoke these touching words: "I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way." (Mark 8, 2, 3.) Yea indeed, if divine mercy and Providence had prepared no other food than a bodily one for us in the desert of this earthly life, what would happen to our poor souls? If God is mindful of the hunger of the brute beasts, will He not

a hundred thousand times more have pity on our souls, for which the Saviour shed His Precious Blood? Christ Himself asks His Apostles: "Are not you of much more value than they?" namely, the beasts of the earth. (Matth. 8, 26.) Therefore the same God, who so wonderfully bethinks Himself of the food of His creatures, has provided in a still more wonderful manner for the meat of the soul. And as the soul surpasses a millionfold all animals and the temporal life of the body, so does the food of the soul infinitely surpass the food of man and all living creatures. The meat of the soul is the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."

I shall therefore speak to you to-day of the possibility and necessity of the Holy Eucharist.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. Many will think it peculiar that there should be any question about the possibility of the Holy Eucharist. It seems to be so clear and evident that our Divine Saviour instituted it. For nineteen hundred years men and women have believed it, and all the practices of the Catholic Church have been in constant accord with this belief. We can see the perfect truth of this with our own eyes. Hence it would appear to us as entirely superfluous that at this late date we should be obliged to demonstrate its possibility. This is all very true, but in our day there are a great many who doubt, who scoff, and many Catholics who are weak in the faith. It will therefore not be superfluous, and

for many it will be necessary, to bring the proofs. For this reason I shall prove the possibility of the Blessed Sacrament by the multiplication of the loaves related in the gospel, and by that other multiplication of material bread that we see going on in the time of the harvest.

In the ordinary course of nature we receive the increase of bread from the grain that has been planted in the soil. Here under the influence of warmth and moisture it begins to germinate; the germ draws its nourishment from the earth and the air. It sprouts from the ground, forms the stalk and the ears that multiply the seed-grain a hundredfold. Once the harvest is passed, the grain is taken to the mill where it is ground into flour, then it is kneaded into dough, placed in the heated oven whence it comes forth as bread. What is here obtained by a slow process in the ordinary course of nature, our Divine Saviour, the Lord of creation, has accomplished in an instant by the multiplication of the loaves in the desert. He, Who gives the increase to the seed in the earth, has in a moment so multiplied the five loaves that they are sufficient to sate five thousand men. This multiplication was nothing remarkable to the Lord whose omnipotence knows no bounds. Not so, however, to those who had been so miraculously fed in the wilderness, for they exclaimed: "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world." (John 6, 14.) And in fact, as the watchmaker can advance the hand of the clock twelve hours without waiting until the mechanism that he has constructed brings it

forward in its regulated progress, so God can still more easily hasten the course of nature as He likes. If God would let bread rain down from heaven as He did the manna, we would be accustomed to it as something natural. Indeed, we would declare it a miracle if we saw grain sprouting out of the earth the first time.

The same holds true for man. The little child gradually develops and in the course of twenty years it grows up to man's estate. What is the cause of this? The food. The food is converted into flesh and blood and so furthers the growth of the child. God could evidently accomplish this in a moment, just as He created Adam as a perfect man. Our Divine Saviour wished to be born a small child and grow up in accordance with the ordinary course of nature. But what happened to our Divine Saviour, and what happens to us, namely, that food, in the natural way is changed into our flesh and blood, that happens instantly and in a supernatural manner in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, just the same as the multiplication of the loaves in the desert was accomplished by the omnipotence of God in an instant.

2. This instantaneous change of bread into the body of our Divine Saviour is assuredly a great miracle, and we are forced to exclaim with the Jewish people: "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world."

But, just as Christianity could not begin to exist without visible miracles, so it cannot continue to exist without invisible miracles. Touching miracles were

the birth of the Son of God, the angels and the star in the heavens; splendid were the miracles of the resurrection of Lazarus, the healing of the blind and the deaf mute; great miracles happened at the crucifixion of Christ, when the earth trembled, the rocks were split, and the sun was darkened; glorious were the miracles of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, His ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of fiery tongues. But the Apostles and disciples of the Lord also filled the Jews with astonishment and admiration over the many miracles which they performed before their very eyes in the name of Jesus. It was just these miracles that converted thousands upon thousands and gave the victory to Christianity over the pagan and the Jewish world.

But an equally great and powerful miracle is the preservation until the present day of the Catholic Church in the unity of her faith and her sacraments, or the unbroken line of Sovereign Pontiffs, in spite of all the persecutions, the heresies and the malice of the world. The preservation of the Church is the unceasing miracle which the Holy Ghost constantly shows to the world, so that it may know and acknowledge her truth and divine origin, and so give her the homage of their faith. Admirable though invisible miracles are the effects of baptism in every human soul. The pardon of sin in confession, the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, sanctifying grace, every conversion of a sinner, every sanctification of a soul — what else are they but miracles of the mercy of God, infinitely greater and more adorable than the multiplication of the loaves

in the wilderness or the sudden healing of the sick. But the grandest and most splendid miracle is God and Jesus Himself.

The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is assuredly a great miracle, but it is just as possible as were the Incarnation of Christ and the multiplication in the desert. "Because no word shall be impossible with God" (Luke 1, 37), said the Archangel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary when he came to announce to her that she was to become the mother of God. And thus he speaks to us and to everyone who harbors any doubt about the possibility of the Holy Eucharist: "No word shall be impossible with God." This should suffice to banish every doubt. But for all that I shall endeavor for the sake of the grandeur of this sacrament and for your own good to make this point clearer.

3. In Holy Eucharist we have the body of Jesus Christ. He appears to us under the species of bread. In like manner in nature we find water under different appearances. As ice it lies hard and heavy on the ground; in its liquid state it flows rapidly away; it glitters in the dew-drop or the rainbow like colored fire; as vapors and clouds it rises far above the mountain-tops high into the skies; as steam it drives powerful engines; as rain it fructifies the earth, as snow it covers it with a funeral pall, and as sleet and hail it beats down everything. But no matter how different its appearances may be, it always remains water. The cold steel, the flint, the dark lowering cloud in the heavens — they all hold concealed in them fire, but

we only become aware of the fact when the sparks fly or the lightning pierces the clouds.

In the Blessed Sacrament we also see with the eye something different from what is actually present. Such was the case with the three Wise Men from the Orient; they beheld the new-born child in the manger. Mary Magdalen, at the sepulcher of the Saviour, thought to behold the gardener; Saul, on his way to Damascus, saw a beam of light — but always it was the divine Redeemer, just the same as He shows Himself to us under the appearance of bread. If, therefore, the presence of the divinity of Christ was there not merely possible, but actually present, why should it alone here be impossible? Remember, that with God no word is impossible. Remember also, that our Divine Saviour not only solemnly promised us the Blessed Sacrament, but that He actually instituted it.

Verily, here is hidden rich, wonderful, yea divine life, the life of our Divine Lord and Saviour. But His life alone brings true life to the soul and gives the body a pledge of a glorious resurrection. “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.” (John 6, 55.) No more can we see life in the dry seed. The life is really there, for as soon as the seed is put into the earth it sprouts up to become a beautiful flower. We cannot see intellectual life in a sleeping man, and much less can we see in the universe the mighty life of God and His Presence, that preserves and rules all things.

In Holy Eucharist our Divine Saviour communicates Himself to millions of men, and yet He always remains the same and never leaves heaven. So does the preacher clothe his thoughts in words and communicate them to thousands of hearers. For all this the preacher does not lose his thought, nor is it necessary for him to come down out of the pulpit. And still he and his thought live whole and undivided in the soul of every single hearer. The sun also remains in the heavens, although it dispenses its warmth and light and life to countless creatures. So does the Son of God remain forever the same, even though He fills the souls of His faithful with His presence and His grace.

The Blessed Sacrament is undoubtedly marvelous, but if so many mysteries are possible in nature and redemption, why should this mystery alone not be possible? Wherefore it is nothing short of blasphemy and a denial of the divine Redeemer for man with his limited intelligence to wish to set the bounds on what is possible and what impossible for God. Yea, I will say more. The very species of bread under which Jesus conceals Himself are a proof of His adorable love and condescension towards us. If he showed Himself to us in all His splendor and glory, who of us would dare to appear before Him or approach Him, much less receive Him in holy communion? The greatest saints would recoil. And yet this sacrament is so necessary for our souls that without it, we can neither maintain ourselves in the state of grace nor attain eternal salvation. Beautiful, therefore, are the words



which our divine Saviour addressed to St. Thomas, when he doubted the possibility of His resurrection: "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." (John 20, 29.) We do not indeed see the Saviour with our bodily eyes, but we believe, and it is particularly this faith that brings us to the Vision of God and to eternal happiness.

4. The Holy Eucharist, however, is not only possible, but is also necessary. In fact it is this very necessity that proves the possibility and its actual institution at the Last Supper. We need but briefly contemplate our soul and our innermost being. Our poverty and our sinfulness, which we will discover, will make us admit that there is no hope of our attaining everlasting life, unless the Saviour in person will assist us and bestow upon us His grace. With regard to the salvation of our souls we are like new-born children who, deprived of the nourishment which their mothers give them, will certainly go to ruin. Hence our Divine Saviour says to Nicodemus: "Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." (John 3, 5, 6.) Baptism gives us a new life, the life of grace, and a new Spirit, a heavenly one. This new life must be nourished, this new spirit strengthened, and that is accomplished by Holy Eucharist. As necessary as corporal food is for the body and bodily life, so necessary is also this spiritual food for the life of grace in

our souls. The food of the body must be taken from the earth as the body itself is taken from the earth, but the food of the soul must come from heaven, because the new life that we receive in baptism comes from heaven. Our Divine Saviour clearly and tritely expresses this necessity in these words: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (John 6, 51, 52.)

The necessity of this holiest of sacraments becomes all the more evident to us when we consider that for our regeneration the life of Christ must pass over into us as much as the life of Adam is necessary for our human existence. We are as closely united with Adam, as the least twig is connected with the tree, the leaf with its branch and the whole tree with its roots, whence it draws all its vital juices. Wherefore the sin, the disgrace and the death of Adam have been ingrafted upon us, because we are descended from Adam. Now, if the life, the obedience, the death of atonement, the grace and the power of the resurrection of Christ are to pass over to us, we must be ingrafted on Christ and enter into blood-relationship with Him in just the same degree in which we are united with Adam by our corporal birth. This living union, this blood-relationship, is effected in us by means of Holy Eucharist: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." (John 6, 58.) As the temporal life of the parents is transmitted to the children by the corporal birth, so is the heavenly life of Jesus trans-

mitted to us by the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Therefore, Holy Eucharist is necessary.

5. This necessity becomes still more evident when we consider the relationship in which we stand with Jesus Christ as the new Adam. St. Paul writes to the faithful in Corinth: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member." (1 Cor. 12, 27.) Hence the Church with all her faithful is called the body of Christ, of which He is the head. In a living body, however, the blood flows from the heart into all the members, and thence back again to the heart. As soon as a member is deprived of its supply of blood or else is incapable of receiving it, it dies off, just the same as the branch of a tree that no longer receives the benefit of the sap. Who is the living blood in the great body of Christianity, through which this body and every one of its members, every individual Christian, lives and grows in the life of grace? This blood is none other than Jesus Christ, Who is the fountain of all life. He is the head, He is the heart, He is the life of the Church and of every Christian: "I am the vine; you are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." (John 15, 5.) This admirable union with Jesus Christ and this heavenly kinship, without which no Christian can possess the true supernatural life, is effected by Holy Eucharist, therefore it is necessary.

Our Divine Saviour has indeed taught and suffered on earth, He has instituted the holy Sacrifice and the sacraments and established His true Church, but He

has not forever withdrawn Himself from her. Thus has God created the world, but He constantly preserves it by His omnipresence and His providence. The world could not exist a moment without God, as little as daylight could exist without the sun. No more could the Church or any Christian exist, if the Saviour should wholly withdraw Himself. Hence He remains always with His Church, although our bodily eyes cannot see Him: "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matth. 28, 20.) In and by the Church He continues the work of redemption for every soul, and the Saviour accomplishes this in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The Blessed Sacrament is therefore necessary for the existence of the Church, for salvation, for grace and faith.

Our Divine Saviour, at one time, spoke thus to His Apostles: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see." (Luke 10, 23.) These words find their fulfillment in us. Our eyes behold the accomplishment of the things which once the prophets and the just of the Old Law desired in vain to see, and which they could foresee only in spirit, namely, redemption, the holy sacrifice and the Church. Although we cannot see the Saviour in His person, still we are privileged to possess Him in the Blessed Sacrament, where He remains with us until the end of all time. The words of the Royal Prophet find a beautiful application here: "For what have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the

God that is my portion for ever." (Ps. 72, 25, 26.) Behold, the yearning of the soul for God and salvation is already partially answered in the Blessed Sacrament. It is here that the soul sees Jesus in spirit, feels His presence, finds His grace, and where His words find their most tender accomplishment: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. 11, 28.) It is here that He takes pity on us, that He encloses us all in His Sacred Heart, and refreshes all, who approach Him worthily, unto life everlasting. Let us therefore frequently repeat: "For what have I in heaven? and besides thee do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever." Amen.

## SERMON VII

### THE SEVENFOLD MANNER IN WHICH THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR MANIFESTS ITSELF

“Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.”—HEB. 12, 2.

How beautiful is the encouragement which St. Paul gives us in these words: “Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith?” Yes, in very truth, it is Jesus Christ Himself Who has taught us the faith, and who has brought it from heaven to earth as man’s most precious inheritance. Oh, how sublime a gift is the faith, the living faith that calls us to the knowledge of God. It is the celestial power that transforms man from a sinner, from a pagan, from a reprobate, into a child of God, a companion of the angels and an heir of heaven. Faith appears like a messenger of peace or a consoler from above in the midst of suffering humanity, or in the souls of those who are on the verge of despair or deprived of all comfort. It points out to us God and His providence, the shortness of this earthly life and the eternity of an unspeakable happiness. Be our sufferings and sorrows on earth ever so great, faith has a healing balm for every pain. Be the trials and burdens of life ever so severe, faith, the living faith, inspires us ever and again with consolation and

courage, and, like a heavenly light, procures for us short intervals of beatific peace. Faith is the shining column of light that precedes us on the journey of life and guides our faltering steps in perfect safety along the brink of the yawning abyss. It is the telescope with which we can often look into heaven unto the very throne of God, unto Jesus our Saviour, unto our Blessed Lady, to the choirs of angels, into the circle of the saints where we may also behold our own sainted ones. Hence the Apostle admonishes us so urgently: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith?"

However, we should not only look up to Jesus in heaven, but also to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Here the author of our faith is personally present; but here is also the touchstone of our faith, and the better we have here accomplished the words of Jesus, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed," (John 20, 29) the more He will complete our faith to the full, the wonderful vision of God in heaven.

For the strengthening of our faith I shall speak about the sevenfold manner in which the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar manifests itself.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. The sublime Sacrament of the Altar is indeed the queen of all devotions, which can only flourish in the Church. Yea, it is their life, and without it they could not exist. But more than this: the Holy Eucharist embraces the whole Church and extends

itself to all the necessities of Christendom. It manifests itself in a sevenfold manner; each is different from the other, and each one contains the mysteries of the mercy of God.

The first and the most splendid manner in which it manifests itself is the holy Mass, where Jesus Christ Himself is both priest and victim in His own divine person. It is the great sacrifice of praise, wherein all creatures, the Church and the world honor and praise God. It is the wonderful sacrifice of petition, in which the prayers of the Church and of countless Christians are joined and rise to heaven through Jesus Christ as the Mediator between God and man. It is the sublimest sacrifice of thanksgiving, where the gratitude of the universe and of all the faithful are gathered together and thus reach God. It is the most powerful sacrifice of atonement, which satisfies the justice of God, keeps away His judgments, calls down His mercy and merits for millions of sinners the grace of conversion. What there is of grace, of help, of mercy in the world, what souls have been saved, sanctified and received into an eternity of bliss — all find their origin in the holy Mass. It is the first and the most sublime manifestation of the Holy Eucharist.

2. Communion is its second manifestation. Old naturalists tell us of a bird of the desert, the pelican, which, when its young have been bitten by a poisonous snake and are near death, tears open their veins and allows the envenomed blood to flow out, then inflicts on itself a mortal wound in order to preserve the



life of its young with its own blood. How beautiful an image of Jesus Christ is contained in this touching story. Yea, in truth, on the Cross He inflicted on himself a mortal wound, so that with His blood He might render sound our blood that had been poisoned by sin, and that by that same blood He might nourish us for eternal life. Jesus accomplishes this in holy communion. How small and lovely does Jesus there show Himself, smaller and more wonderful than in the manger at Bethlehem or in the little house of Nazareth. He annihilates Himself, as it were, in holy communion so that like a divine germ, He may spring up anew and bring forth heavenly fruit in the souls of all those who receive Him worthily. Jesus is present here with body and blood, and no soul that is under His protection will be lost. Yes, here is Jesus, who upon earth lived so wonderfully pure, humble and holy a life. This divine life is now buried there and awaits its resurrection. This happens in holy communion. It revives in the soul of the worthy communicant and expresses itself in his faith and virtues. And truly, how grandly did it not manifest itself in the holy martyrs, the confessors and the virgins and in all pious Christians. Our soul is once again His Bethlehem, where He is born again; His Nazareth, where He grows up; His Promised Land, where He teaches and performs His miracles of grace; His Calvary, where He offers Himself, and His sepulchre where He rests in sweet peace. Holy Eucharist is wonderful and the manner of its manifestation in holy communion is most loving.

3. The third manner in which it manifests itself is in benediction. This benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is, as it were, the vesper sacrifice, just as holy Mass is the morning sacrifice. It would appear as though the affection and devotion of Catholics towards the Blessed Sacrament were not content with its manifestation in the holy Mass, but that they also wished to experience Christ's love in the evening. The evening benediction closes the Christian day in a beautiful manner. St. Philip Neri once saw our Divine Saviour bless the kneeling throng, as He formerly blessed the children and His Apostles before His ascension into heaven. And this benediction of the Lord in the blessed Sacrament pours itself out over all our cares and hardships, our labors and sufferings, over us and ours, which we recommend to Him at this moment. He strengthens, sanctifies and consoles us, and if ever in the midst of the trials of life it is true that the blessing of God is of paramount importance to us it is especially true of the hallowed hour when we receive His own personal blessing. May we never forget this, so that the Saviour may extend over us His hands and bestow upon us His blessings for time and eternity.

4. The tabernacle is the fourth manner in which the Holy Eucharist manifests itself to us. Oh, how lovely and beautiful is here the silent, patient life of Jesus in this prison of His love. The Divine Child in the manger of Bethlehem or in the workshop of Nazareth was not so small and humble, so lovable and adorable, as He is here in the tabernacle. Called

by the voice of our guardian angel like the shepherds of old, or led by the light of faith as the three Wise Men were led by the star, we can come at any hour of the day to adore Him under the appearance of bread. Hither, to Jesus in the tabernacle, we can at all times bring our cares and worries, our troubles and sorrows, our temptations and weaknesses and unburden our hearts to Him. Oh, what power and peace lie hidden in this absorption before the tabernacle. All is hushed and awed there, and only the angels witness the intercourse of the soul with the Saviour. Some like to kneel before the tabernacle and remain silent. But though the lips be mute, the soul speaks with its faith, its hope and love: it speaks with its contrition, its need for help and its utter forlornness. Others approach to confess to our Lord, as though He were their confessor, in order to hear His divine assurance, "Arise, go thy way; for thy faith hath made thee whole." (Luke 17, 19.) Others render Him here the homage that is His due as their Saviour and their King. Others rejoice in His divine humanity, others honor and praise Him because of His bitter passion and death, others implore Him for those who are near and dear to them, for their children, for a sick father or a mother, and others return to Him again like the Samaritan, and fall down in adoration before Him, to thank Him for favors received, for the hearing of their prayers or for the remission of their sins.

But for all, this visit to Jesus in the tabernacle is a power of divine grace and the source of many bene-

fits, a cause of joy and consolation. The tabernacle is the loadstone that draws Christian souls to it, and nothing can replace the heavenly charm, which rests upon the tabernacle and upon the soul which there in His Real Presence has entered into intimate intercourse with Him. No prayer at home, no solemn divine service, no public devotions can infuse into the soul that calm, that peace and that consolation, which it experiences when it kneels solitary and alone in devotion and faith before its Saviour. Oh, that the tabernacle might be for all of you a place with which you are perfectly familiar. How often do we not need comfort, courage and cheering-up amidst the many sufferings and anxieties of this life. But who can and will comfort and encourage us most and speak tender words to our soul? Who other than He, who in the goodness of His heart said: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matth. 11, 28.)

5. The fifth manifestation of Holy Eucharist, is the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Here we should look upon Jesus as the Jews in the desert looked upon the brazen serpent, as the three Wise Men and the shepherds upon the divine Child, as the lepers and the sick upon the Redeemer, as the Blessed Virgin, the disciples and the women at the foot of the cross, as the Apostles on Mt. Olivet looked upon Jesus before His ascension into heaven, or as the blessed and the angels in heaven look upon the glory of their eternal King. St. Paul tells us: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." This looking upward

is a rich vein of prayer, a powerful exercise of the faith and the best preparation for eternal happiness. In the exposition, it is true, we see Jesus only under the appearance of bread, but in heaven this prototype is accomplished in a real and wonderful manner, for there He rewards the look of faith that we have cast on the Blessed Sacrament with the everlasting and blissful vision of His visible majesty and glory.

6. Holy Viaticum is the sixth manifestation of Holy Eucharist. Just as by our first communion we entered into consanguinity with Jesus, so by our last communion, or holy viaticum, we are to enter into His divine glory. Therefore holy viaticum is administered to us when we are at the brink of the grave, at that decisive moment when we are to be born again for heaven. Holy viaticum, therefore, reaches beyond the grave and joins our temporal death with eternal life, mortal suffering with immortal joys. It is this that mitigates the terrors of death, because it inspires the soul with resignation and hope. It renders the particular judgment less inexorable and assuages and abbreviates the pains of purgatory. Waning life, the last struggle of the soul with the powers of hell, death itself and the journey into eternity — all these find their Christian consecration and consummation in holy viaticum. The dying Christian besides possessing in his soul his Saviour with all His graces, has also the best pledge of his eternal life, and with the divine germ, which the last communion bestows upon the body, is assured its resurrection, its glorification and its immortal beauty.

In such wise this manifestation of the Blessed Sacrament completes our faith and rewards us at the end of our life with those graces that will accompany us into a blessed eternity.

7. We still have the seventh and last manifestation of the Holy Eucharist to consider. It is the solemn procession, the climax of Catholic worship. The procession is the triumph, that we prepare for our divine Saviour on earth, a beautiful reflex of heaven, where Jesus is followed by the choirs of the angels and the multitude of the saints. In the procession Jesus passes along surrounded by His faithful, just as on Palm Sunday, surrounded by His Apostles and disciples, He solemnly entered into Jerusalem. It is an open profession of our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It is the most appropriate expression of our hope, that with His possession here on earth the pledge of heaven has also been placed in our hands. It is the most beautiful symbol of our love, since on this occasion we show Jesus to the world as our Lord and Saviour and publicly declare that we are His followers. The procession, however, is also the best representation of all life upon earth. The life of man is no true life, if it is not Christian, and if it have not Jesus as its origin and its end. The life of the family, of human society and of the state is not a fruitful, saving life, if it be not built on those foundations and commandments which the Saviour gave us. There is no impulse towards salvation and grace, no home-going to God and to heaven, but a ruinous rush to sin, to dissolu-

tion, to misery and destruction. There is no manifestation of real joy, no rejoicing, no love and no blessed hope, but there is hatred and envy and disorder, sin and unbelief and despair. But just as the procession returns to the church with the Blessed Sacrament, so does the Christian pilgrimage on earth return to God in heaven.

8. Would that these amiable manifestations of the Blessed Sacrament might awaken and increase in our hearts a great love and devotion for it and our divine Lord. Holy Mass should always be for us a splendid sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving and impetration, the constant memorial of the bloody sacrifice, which Jesus offered up for us on the cross. Holy communion should ever be for us the divine nourishment of our souls, by which we are fed for eternal life and enter into sublime kinship with our divine Saviour. We should pray to Him at benediction, so that He may extend His hands over us and bless us and those who are near and dear to us. We should often visit Jesus in the tabernacle, in order to show Him our gratitude and our love or also to find there consolation and aid in the hardships and trials of life. If the whole Christian world looks upon Jesus at the solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, we too should look up to Him, so that He may complete our faith and render us worthy of beholding Him forever in His glory.

There is, however, one special favor and grace, and that is the worthy reception of the holy viaticum in the hour of death. Everything depends on this su-

preme moment, immeasurable happiness, but also unspeakable suffering and despair. One prayer should, therefore, constantly animate us, namely the prayer for a happy death and for the last sweet visit of Jesus. Then let Him come to us in Holy Eucharist, since we can no longer come to Him in church. And thus our pilgrimage on earth will end happily, and our death will be a solemn procession into heaven, where the angels of God will accompany our souls, until they have arrived in the real home of their Father, -before the throne of God and in the circle of the blessed for all eternity. Amen.



## SERMON VIII

### BENEDICTION WITH THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

“And lifting up his hands, he blessed them.”—LUKE, 24, 50.

The holy Eucharist is an inexhaustible source of love. No words can ever adequately portray the depths of its loving mysteries. How beautiful is the silent, patient life of the Lord in the prison of the tabernacle. The divine Child lay quiet and patient in the manger, amiable and tender was His life in the holy house of Nazareth, mild and condescending was His intercourse with His Apostles. And thus as He ever showed Himself in His earthly life, so does He continue to live with us and in our midst in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. His calm, His patience and His silence are calculated to overcome our anxious excitement, our timidity and our doubting astonishment and to make us familiar with Him, the Saviour of our souls. The unction and power we experience in the devout visit of the Blessed Sacrament is beyond all description. For all those who visit the Blessed Sacrament, it becomes a rich fountain of many graces and of great consolation. They hear the voice of Jesus, if not with their bodily ears, at least in the intimacy of their souls. Everything there is hushed

and awe-inspiring. Calm and mysterious is the impulse of the soul towards the sacrament as the loadstone attracts the iron.

Hence, the Catholic Church, in her maternal anxiety for the salvation of her faithful, has constantly endeavored to draw us ever more closely to this holiest of sacraments. She does this especially by the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the frequent expositions of our eucharistic Lord. The benediction is to be our vesper sacrifice that we offer to God, and so forms the worthiest closing solemnity of the day.

And in truth, it would appear that Catholics could find no better way of applying to themselves these words of the Royal Prophet, "Thou shalt make the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to be joyful" (Ps. 64, 9), than by endeavoring to fill out their afternoons with the benediction as their vesper offering. Just as by holy Mass they offer God a morning sacrifice and thereby honor and praise Him and thank Him and beg Him for further favors, so likewise do they wish to remember Him once again and to implore His blessing by means of the benediction as their evening sacrifice. Catholic devotion and piety cannot wait too long for some manifestation of Jesus hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, and hence their perfectly natural desire to present themselves once again in the evening as His redeemed and His faithful. The Catholic Church has provided for this piety by instituting the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament as the closing solemnity of the day. Hence

I shall speak to you about this benediction and its graces.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. Holy Writ makes mention of three blessings, which, because of their significance, their extent and their duration, are of immeasurable grandeur and efficacy. They have in their train the preservation of creation, redemption and eternal happiness.

God, the Almighty Father, imparted the first divine blessing to visible creation, when with its numberless creatures it came forth out of nothing, and on the sixth day man was created to be the crown of the universe and the king of creatures. Therefore the Sacred Scriptures say: "And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth (Gen. 1, 28), and he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." (Gen. 2, 3.)

This blessing of God rests still on creation and on every single creature. It is the cause of propagation, of growth, of all life and fertility. In our day we still call truly and beautifully a fertile year, a year of many blessings. But if God should withdraw this divine blessing, which He bestowed upon the universe, every living creature would hasten to dissolution and death, just the same as man is dead and begins to rot as soon as the soul has left his body.

The Sacred Scriptures tell us of the second, more wonderful and more heavenly, blessing in these simple words: "And lifting up his hands, he blessed them." As creation continues to exist only by virtue

of the first divine blessing, so now does the same condition prevail for the kingdom of redemption and grace, the Catholic Church. Before His ascension into heaven our Divine Saviour raised His hands and blessed His work. This divine blessing still rests upon the Catholic Church and will remain with her until the end of all time. All the miracles of grace, all the works of Catholic faith, all the splendid souls, all the beneficent institutions of the Catholic Church, like hospitals, orphan asylums and the religious orders, the unity of the Catholic faith and the sacraments in spite of the heresies, the preservation of holy Church in spite of all persecutions, and everything that has ever been accomplished in and by the Church for the salvation of entire nations as well as for individual souls — all, all has been done by virtue of this divine blessing. God promised this sublime blessing to the Patriarch in these words: “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22, 18.) If it were possible for us to calculate the immense consequences of this blessing for time and eternity, then only could we comprehend the fullness of this divine blessing. Wherefore St. Paul exclaims: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ.” (Eph. 1, 3.)

Our Divine Saviour will impart the third divine blessing to His elect as judge on the last day and at the end of the last judgment. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matth. 25,

34.) This blessing, because of its eternity, is also infinite in its fullness. Only he who can grasp what it means to see God forever in His majesty, to be forever in heaven in the midst of the angels and the saints and to be forever happy himself — can grasp the infinite grandeur of this blessing. God alone can do this, and the saints in heaven.

2. The threefold blessing of God at the beginning of creation, at the beginning of redemption and at the beginning of resurrection and of everlasting life extends over the whole world, over the whole Church and over all the saints. But every single faithful is in need of a special blessing from his Saviour, so that he can really share in the fullness of that great threefold blessing, just the same as every single creature shares in the great blessing pronounced over creation, so that it can live, grow and develop, or as every individual Christian needs the sacraments for himself, so that the grace of redemption may also be transmitted to him.

In very truth, if the blessing of pious parents and of saintly priests is a great good and is, as it were, the pledge that God will also bless those whom pious parents or priests have blessed — how much greater must not the blessing of our Divine Saviour be? The Sacred Scriptures say truly (Eccl. 3, 11), and all the world confirms it that: “The father’s blessing endureth until the end and establisheth the houses of the children.” The sons of the old Patriarchs, as Abraham’s, Isaac’s and Jacob’s, relied upon the fatherly blessing and never failed to instil into their

children this pledge of future good fortune. Solemn was the moment when they, with their children approached their dying father in order to receive his last blessing. And even to-day Christian parents, when dying, bless their children, and well it is for the children if God ratifies this blessing.

Thus our Divine Saviour when on earth blessed His disciples, "In whom all peoples of the world should be blessed." And though He ascended into heaven, His blessing will remain until the end of days, for the blessing of Jesus lasts for all time. Behold, my friends, how our Divine Saviour abides with us always in the holy Sacrament of the altar, to console us and to bless us. Therefore is the following verse, sung at benediction, beautifully true; whom the species of bread covers, who art our Saviour, whom love here conceals, O Jesus give us Thy blessing.

St. Philip Neri often saw our Divine Saviour from the altar raise His hand to bless the kneeling faithful. He saw, however, also that not all participated in the blessing, but only those who were worthy of it, while the others returned home unblessed. We all need very much the divine blessing, but under what conditions can we obtain it? Where is the fortunate one, who can lay claim to the blessing of Jesus?

3. My friends, the holy gospel indicates to us three classes of men, whom our Divine Saviour blessed. Therefore, if we wish to participate in His blessing in the most holy Sacrament, we must belong to one of these three classes. The first class were the children, whom Jesus blessed. (Matth. 19.) This bless-

ing rests still to-day in a marvelous manner on Christian children and reveals itself in their innocence and grace, in their childlike faith and piety, which, as long as the children are uncorrupted, shines forth from their souls and their eyes, like dew-drops in the rays of the sun. Therefore, God prepared a praise for the mouth of innocent children, and bespoke His pleasure, the protection of the holy angels and the love of mankind for children. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," spake our Divine Saviour. Those who become as little children, will share in the bliss and blessing of the Saviour. "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. 18, 3.)

Therefore in grace, in innocence, in Christian obedience, without malice, without hatred and enmity, in faith and piety, as children of God, we must approach our Divine Saviour if we really wish to share in His heavenly blessing.

The second class of men whom Jesus blessed upon earth before He ascended into heaven were the Apostles, disciples and holy women. The disciples had the commission to go forth into the whole world, and in the name of Jesus to preach penance and forgiveness of sins, and to bear witness to the truth of His teaching. The holy women, however, energetically assisted them by their prayers and sublime example, which they gave to the Jews and the heathens, and thus contributed much to the honor of Jesus and the salvation of souls.

Zeal for the salvation of souls is, therefore, the second requisite in order to belong to the number of the blessed. Jesus blesses the faithful, who have zeal for His honor and for their own and their neighbor's salvation, just as He blessed His disciples and the holy women on Mt. Olivet. In the Sacrament of the Altar, He raises His hands and blesses Christian fathers and mothers, who seek the salvation of their children, who are as apostles of the Lord in their own families. He blesses the faithful in every state and calling, who by their good example gain others, warn and restrain the wavering from sin and admonish sinners to do penance. He blesses the faithful, who pray to God for the salvation of souls, for the conversion of infidels, for the peace of the Church, for the Holy Father, and who often pray for the poor souls. For these are also laborers and disciples in the vineyard of the Lord, and this is true even if they are bereft of the world's goods and unskilled in the world's knowledge, God will still sanctify their zeal and reward them a hundredfold.

The third class of men, whom our Divine Saviour often signally blesses, are the merciful; "Come, blessed of my Father and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world." (Matth. 25, 34.) Works of mercy, therefore, which we do to the poor for the sake of Jesus, the charity that we show towards our neighbors, the Christian patience, with which we bear insults and the mercy with which we gladly forgive, draw down



upon us the divine blessing in the Sacrament of the Altar.

4. These are, therefore, my friends, the three means which make us participants in the blessing of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. We must approach our Divine Saviour as children of God, in grace and purity of heart, as disciples of the Lord filled with zeal, and as Christians who practice mercy, if we wish Him to raise His hand over us and to bless us. And in truth, this blessing is a spring of many graces. These graces flow, not only, over our cares and trials, over our temptations and struggles, with which our life is so plentifully visited, but they comfort and strengthen us, they inspire us with courage and increase our faith, hope and charity; and our Divine Saviour blesses also our daily work, our tasks and our calling, our homes and our families in order that peace and harmony and Christian joy may reign in our midst. He blesses our temporal, but much more our Christian life.

There are many different ways to implore our Divine Saviour for His blessing. One way is to kneel down as if we belonged to the army of children whom Jesus blessed while on earth. Another way is to place one's self in spirit on Mt. Olivet among the Apostles, the disciples and the holy women, over whom He raised His hands. Another way is to place one's self among the army of those Christians who joyfully implore the grace of perseverance, hearing the words, "Come blessed of my Father." However, no mat-

ter what the devotion and prayer may be — in that solemn moment when the priest raises the monstrance to give the blessing, it is our Divine Saviour Himself who really blesses the faithful.

On the day of judgment the angel of the Lord invites with his trumpet all the world to witness how our Divine Saviour in all His majesty and glory solemnly blesses His elect for their fidelity. Thus the threefold ringing of the bell in the church invites us, not only to witness the blessing of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar, but also to receive it worthily and reverently.

Therefore, my dear friends, come often to holy benediction! Come as children of God, come as disciples of our Lord, and as merciful Christians, come to Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar! And as holy Mass is our most glorious morning offering so may holy benediction be our most beautiful evening offering to God, so that the words of Holy Scripture may be fulfilled in us: "Thou shalt make the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to be joyful." This joy will be changed into an eternal rejoicing and happiness on the day of judgment, when Jesus will impart His last blessing to all the faithful who have made themselves worthy of His blessing on earth with these words: "Come, blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen.

## SERMON IX

### JESUS ENTHRONED UPON OUR ALTARS. THE EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

“Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.”—HEBR. 12, 2.

In the Ancient Law the ark, in which were kept the manna, the tablets of the law of Moses and the rod of Aaron as a lasting memorial of the benefits that God had conferred upon the Jewish people, was held in the highest honor. It was solemnly carried around the walls of Jericho, and when the people found themselves in great straits it was carried around in procession amid great solemnity. When it was brought to Jerusalem, it was hailed by the rejoicing clamor of the people, the sound of trumpets, the singing of psalms, and King David himself preceded it with harp in hand. The tabernacle is the ark of the new testament, and the Blessed Sacrament is the heavenly manna that it contains. The solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is one of the principal means by which it reveals itself to us, one of the most precious fruits of the seed that Jesus Christ has planted in His holy Church. The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament makes of the Church the vestibule of heaven, where we can look upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. There we find the fulfillment of the words that Moses addressed to the Jews (Deut. 4, 7) :

“Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions.”

The most adorable mystery of the Blessed Sacrament is indeed the constant memorial of the divine miracles of Jesus: “Do this in commemoration of me;” it is the inexhaustible source of grace which all may approach. The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, however, places us in a new relationship with our Divine Saviour. In the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament our Divine Saviour no longer appears to us as He does in His prison of love, the tabernacle, our most intimate friend, to whom we can confide all our cares and worries, our sorrows and sufferings, our temptations and our sins, and where, kneeling alone before Him, we implore Him for His help and mercy — but here surrounded upon His throne with the brilliancy of the lighted candles, He grants a general audience and receives the homage and the adoration of His faithful.

Jesus enthroned upon our altars gives us a slight foretaste of His glory and majesty in heaven, where as the eternal king He receives the adoration of the choirs of the angels and the saints. I shall, therefore, speak to-day about the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, of its significance and its graces.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. When our Divine Saviour, in His interview with Nicodemus, insisted upon faith as the necessary condi-

tion of spiritual regeneration and of admission into heaven, He added these words (John 3, 14, 15): "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish; but may have life everlasting." Even though our Divine Saviour whilst uttering these words had in mind His elevation on the cross, we can still apply them to the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Divine Saviour was raised upon the cross for the redemption of the world, so that all who believe and hope in Him, might be cured of the poison of the hellish snake and of sin, and might obtain grace and pardon and everlasting life, just the same as the Israelites in the wilderness, when, because of their stubbornness they were afflicted with venomous snakes, had to raise an eye of hope on the brazen serpent if they wished to be healed. Ever and anon our Divine Saviour is exposed on our altars, so that the Christian world may look upon Him and find there protection against the poison of sin and preserve grace and the salvation of their souls.

And in very truth, my dear friends, just as the look which the penitent thief and the pagan centurion cast on the suffering Saviour on the cross became for them the cause of salvation, so now the look of faith which we direct to our Divine Saviour exposed in the Blessed Sacrament will and must become for us the source of all grace. Whosoever believes in Him and appears before Him imbued with a living faith, will possess everlasting life. In both cases it is the selfsame Jesus,

the one upon the cross and He who sits enthroned upon our altars.

Faith, therefore, is the first homage that we should offer our heavenly king in that solemn hour when, seated upon His throne, He grants audience to all His faithful. Hence the name, the mystery of faith, is beautifully and admirably appropriate for the Most Blessed Sacrament, and St. Paul tells us: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." The livelier our faith is, the deeper and greater our veneration will be for the Holy Eucharist, for it is here that in spirit we can behold Jesus on the throne of His mercy, just as in consequence of our faith we shall sometime behold Him on His throne of glory in heaven.

Faith is that divine power that raises us from the dust of earth unto heavenly things; it is that immense good, that precious pearl, by which we are enriched with every grace. Faith teaches us the sublime truths of salvation and reveals to us the blessed mysteries of God; it bestows upon the Christian that high nobility by which he receives God as his Father, Jesus Christ as his Redeemer, Mary and the Church as his Mother, and the angels as his companions. Without holy faith what are we but foundlings on earth, who know nothing about their origin, who have no claim to any inheritance, and who finally become a prey to every misery. Jesus is the author of all these grand gifts of grace; we should look up to Him, therefore, on the throne of our altars.

But in the Blessed Sacrament is also present the finisher of our holy faith. Jesus is the central point

of religion; all things move about Him as around a common center. All things have reference to Him, all find in him their completion; He is the finisher of all things. The promise of a redeemer which was first made to Adam, and then to Abraham and his descendants; the things the prophets foretold, the types of the Ancient Law, the hope of the Jewish people and the expectation of the other nations — all, all were accomplished in Jesus, He finished everything. Enthroned upon our altars in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, He solemnly exhibits Himself to the world as the author and the finisher of its faith. In company with the Patriarchs and the Prophets, the just of the Old Testament, with the Catholic Church and her faithful, yea, with the angels and the saints, who surround His throne in heaven and on earth upon our altars, we also should honor Him, praise Him, thank Him, and give Him the homage of our minds and our hearts. Oh, may we persevere in this glorious faith and implore the Divine Saviour, that the light of faith may not only enlighten our souls, but that it may spread over the whole world, so that all, without exception, may recognize Him in the Blessed Sacrament as the author and the finisher of their faith. And when life draws to its close, may His divine bounty grant that our own humble and believing looking up to Him may find its consummation in our unending vision of Him in His glory in heaven.

2. But, my dear friends, the exposition of Jesus on the throne of our altars has a second great significance. He is not only the author and finisher of our

faith, but according to the words of St. John He is also "the beginning of the creation of God" (Apoc. 3, 14), or as St. Paul says (Col. 1, 15), "the first-born of every creature," "the heir of all things" (Hebr. 1, 2), to whom all things are made subject and to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. (Matth. 28, 18.) Jesus Christ is the Lord and King of all creation.

Here upon the throne of our altars, in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, He appears as this king, in order to receive the homage of the entire creation. He is no king like the kings of this earth. He reigns not only over one country and that for a short period of time, but over the whole world, over every creature and forever. They were created for His sake, and for His sake, for His honor and praise, they continue to exist. To Him all nations, all mankind, all creatures render homage. The sunshine and the tempest, the mountains and the sea, give praise to Thee on high; and here on earth the crawling worm bids all mankind give honor to his Jesus.

Raise thine eye to heaven, O Christian, and there behold the glory of eternal bliss. There too the heavenly hosts and the choirs of the blessed, give homage to their King seated on the throne of His majesty. St. John tells us in the Apocalypse (4.) that the Ancients lay down their crowns upon the steps of His throne, the martyrs consecrate to Him the palms of victory, the virgins sing a new hymn, and all heaven is filled with the praise of the undying King.

Lower now your eye, O Christian, and look upon



the Catholic Church, that still combats under the standard of her glorious Chief and King. He is the author of all grace and mercy, of all life and blessing. He is the cause of every victory, of the happy termination of heroic struggles, the source of all merit and virtue. To Him are raised the eyes of all, who expect help and assistance, to Him flow all the tears and are directed all prayers, and in Him alone we can hope for peace and joy, salvation and happiness. In His hands rests the fate of the Church, the destiny of mankind, the recompense and the punishment of the nations. The Church serves Him, beginning with the least of her faithful up to the Pope himself, from the poorest of subjects up to the most powerful of Christian princes, and if the crowns of kings possess any prestige or authority, they hold it from Jesus, to whom all earthly powers are subject.

The glory of the heavenly King extends over all creatures. Heaven and earth, the sun and the moon, the ocean and the land, all pay homage to His might. The star announced His coming, the sun grew dark, the moon paled, the earth trembled and the rocks were rent asunder. The tempest and the sea obeyed His divine mandate: "Peace, be still." He wandered dryshod over the waters, His blessing multiplied the loaves, at His command water became wine, the dead arose at His bidding, and sickness vanished. Jesus is evermore the eternal King upon the throne of our altars. He rules and preserves the world, and everything pays homage to Him. Even though He be outwardly concealed by the appearance of bread, still

from this throne as from the throne of heaven there flows every grace and blessing over the whole world and over every creature.

Here, before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, we come as creatures to render homage to our heavenly King. My God, what are we, compared with the immensity of creation? with the universal human race, with the angels and the saints of heaven and especially with Jesus, the Author and King of all creation? We are not as much as is the leaf compared to the endless forest, a drop to the bottomless sea, a grain of sand in the gigantic ridges of rock. And yet we are allowed, nay obliged, to approach and look on Jesus seated on the throne of our altars and unite our homage with the homage of all creation. How unworthy soever we may be, however much we may have offended our heavenly King, He condescends most amiably to receive our adoration. From the throne of His grace He summons us to ask Him for grace, and He invites us to attend His solemn audience in company with all the faithful and there to proffer our requests with full confidence.

O Christian soul, remember all this and combine your lowly reverence with heart-felt love for Jesus on the throne of our altars and at the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Be sorry for ever having offended Him. Rejoice in this holy hour that thy eternal king is so amiable and love-inspiring, and look on Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of thy faith.

3. But, my dear friends, the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament reveals to us a third meaning that is

of the utmost seriousness and import. Jesus Christ is not alone our Saviour, our Lord and our King, there is a time coming when He will also be our Judge. The same, who sits enthroned upon our altars in the exposition, will return at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. Here upon our altars the appearance of bread conceals Him like a white cloud, but on the day of judgment He will appear visibly with great power and majesty. In the exposition on the altar Jesus rises far above everything, on the day of judgment He will sit enthroned upon the clouds of heaven. There the whole human race will look up to Him, but only the living, the elect will joyfully raise their heads, because everlasting happiness will be theirs. (Luke 21, 28.) With terror and trembling, with rage and despair the dead, the reprobates, will witness the triumph of the saints; they lower their eyes, for they cannot bear the sight of the majesty of the judge, and they wail that the hills and the mountains should fall over them and cover them up.

All of us without exception must appear before our judge on the day of the last judgment; we shall all visibly behold Him in all His dread majesty and glory. Every one will be forced to say with the patient Job (19, 25-27): "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." It will be well for us if, like Job, we can, filled with hope and joy, say these words with the living, the just Christians.

But woe, a thousand times woe to thee, O Christian soul, if in that most dreadful hour, thou shouldst appear before thy judge with a guilt-laden conscience, for on the last day His justice will know no bounds, just as during this earthly life His mercy was without end. And yet, my dear friends, even now during the solemn hour of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the presence of Jesus enthroned upon our altars, even now we can choose the place where we shall stand on the day of judgment, whether we shall stand to the right or to the left, whether we shall be numbered among the living or the dead, among the elect or the reprobates. It is the selfsame Jesus, who is present here as our Saviour, there as our judge. Bowed down before the throne of His grace in the Blessed Sacrament we should implore Him for His grace and treat with Him, even now, concerning our future sentence. Here and now we must look to Jesus if we would obtain mercy, we must have recourse to Him that He may grant us a happy death. And do you not believe that He, Who is here so wonderful in His humility and mercy for love of us, will, as Saviour, gladly listen to the prayers of His faithful, for whom He has shed His blood, so that as judge He will not be obliged to reject them forever, but rather render them everlastingly happy? Hence, with the Apostle, I cry out to you once again: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

4. Jesus on the throne of our altars and Jesus on the throne of His glory in heaven — this is the last and highest significance of the exposition of the

Blessed Sacrament. There in heaven Jesus, after His bloody death upon the cross and after His ascension into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of His Father on the throne of glory, and all the blessed spirits and the saints pay Him homage and fall down before Him and sing: (Apoc. 4, 11.) "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power." And the heavenly choir forever sings: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." (Apoc. 4, 8.)

Our Divine Saviour descends from this throne of glory to the thrones of our altars, as it were, to exchange the adoration and praise of the heavenly hosts for the adoration of the Catholic Church and praise of the faithful. The Catholic Church is now His heavenly residence and the Catholic Christians prostrate themselves before His throne and in deepest humility confess that Jesus is truly worthy to receive praise, honor and power and to lay at His feet the crown of their services, which alone they can acquire through Him. Thus at the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament heaven and earth, as it were, draw close to each other. The faithful are now united with the blessed in adoration of our Divine Saviour, and there is given to us all a foretaste of heaven and a picture of eternal bliss.

5. And now, my dear friends, since Jesus is so wonderful on the throne of our altars, it follows that the grace must be great and rich which the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament dispenses to all those present. In fact, no matter how great the throng of the bap-

tized are, there is not one to whom is not given sufficient grace to persevere unto the end.

There is no pagan, to whom grace would not have given sufficient assistance to have at least a yearning for salvation and to receive the baptism of desire. No child dies without baptism that the fault does not fall upon another, and no soul is lost that has not willfully withdrawn from grace. And just as all redemption proceeded from the cross, so all grace proceeds from the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus is elevated here so that His grace may flow out over all the faithful who are present and over the whole world. Just as we become aware of the splendor and the glory of the rising sun not only in the heavens, but also in every one of the countless dew-drops, in which the sun is reflected in many colors, so Christian souls are like dew-drops in which the glory of the grace of Jesus is reflected. The innocence of a child, the purity of a Christian maiden, the patience of those who are persecuted, the resignation of the sick, the zeal of the missionary, the courage of the Catholic amidst insults to his faith, the contrition of the sinner, the self-sacrifice of the Sister of Charity — what are they but various heavenly colors, which the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, reflects in Christian souls from the throne of His altars?

For this reason St. Paul again calls out to us: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith:" on Him as our Saviour, on Him as our heavenly King, on Him as our Judge, so that He may for-

ever be our Saviour and our King, but merciful as our Judge. And so at some future time we shall raise our heads and look forever on Him on the throne of His glory in heaven. Amen.

## SERMON X

### THE CUSTOM OF EXPOSING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT DURING THE TIME OF THE CARNIVAL

“If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”— 3 KINGS, 18, 21.

On a beautiful, bright summer day, the Grecian philosopher, Diogenes, was once walking through the crowded streets of Athens with a lighted lantern in his hand. Heedless either of praise or blame, he went about seeking eagerly as though he had lost something exceedingly precious. Young and old, great and small surrounded the philosopher and asked him with derisive shouts: “Diogenes, what dost thou seek? Diogenes, what hast thou lost? Speak, and we will help thee to find it.” For a long time he remained silent, and pursued his task. At last he stopped and called to those who surrounded him: “I seek a man.” The majority laughed at this, it is true, but nevertheless there was a great truth in what he said. In fact there are few men who regard their dignity and character and therefore are not carried away with the crowd, with the fads of the world, and who are not affected by the superficial principles of the world.

Now if Diogenes at his time and in a pagan town, could thus speak, how much more can we, at the present time and in a Christian town, regardless of praise



or blame, say: "We seek Christians, Christians, who in these days of alarming frivolity and of sin remain mindful of their dignity and character; Christians, who neither forget God nor the salvation of their souls. We seek Christians, who in this time so dangerous and critical, when everything is filled with anxiety for the future, seek to appease God, while the outrages increase and accelerate the threatening punishments for the continuous and increasing desecration of Sunday, for the immorality and contempt of the commandments of the Church by excessive frivolity, lascivious dances, and criminal forgetfulness of God. We seek Christians! but thanks and praise be to God, that even in this carnival time there are still many Christians. Just as at the time of the apostasy of the Jewish people from the true God, there were seven thousand who did not bend their knees before the god of Baal, so there are now many faithful who do not consider the carnival time as privileged days when one can give himself up to all kinds of immorality and go unpunished. Yes, as a reparation, as it were, for so many offenses against God, the faithful go with greater zeal to church and to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

For this reason, my friends, we will speak to-day about the origin and true meaning of the Carnival, and also about the cause of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, in other words, we wish to consider the contradiction of the carnival with the Blessed Sacrament.

On this account let no one think that we condemn here all and every pleasure, entertainment or amuse-

ment. No! The great Apostle St. Paul says to us: "Rejoice in the Lord, and your joy shall be known in the whole world." There is, therefore, that innocent joy, gladness and entertainment which rejoice the heart and soul, but is also pleasing to God, because it observes moderation, time and circumstances, commands and prohibitions, avoids sins, preserves grace and is filled with renewed thanks towards the giver of all good things. I will therefore speak about the Carnival and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. In the history of the conversion of the nations to Christianity there is a peculiar manifestation. Just as soon as a pagan country had accepted the Christian religion the first and most necessary care was to destroy all the temples of the gods. Why? In order that every thought of paganism and its vices should disappear. Every vice had its own god and every god its own temple and festival on which the vice, of which it was the patron, was practiced with unspeakable shamelessness, in order to glorify and imitate thereby the false god. Now, if these graven images and their temples could not harmonize with Christianity and were consequently destroyed, how can the pagan customs, the remnants of which are visible in the depraved pleasures, harmonize with the true Christian life? Every kind of such depravities St. Cyprian of the third century says that the Church condemns, and St. John Chrysostom, that great man of God whom zeal for the house of God consumed says in one of his sermons:

“If I knew that one of my hearers was on the street the past night and did any of those frivolous depravities, I would dismiss him from the Church.” How touching is what St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, in the year 380, with a sad heart said from the pulpit: “I have a grave complaint to make against many of you because you celebrate the festivals of pagans. Are we living temples of God? why then celebrate in this temple of God the festival of false gods? Christian souls, where is your faith and where is your love? If you believe that you are the temple of the Holy Ghost, which was poured out upon you, how can you dedicate your heart to the devil? And if you love God, who alone is worthy of our love, how can you love the joys, the false joys of this world? How can you believe that you have now a time to commit sin?”

And yet, at present it appears that the whole army of pagan gods assert their supremacy in the carnival days, and even though their statues have been destroyed, nevertheless their service is observed and the vices of which they are the patrons are openly and publicly practiced. How many altars are erected to Bacchus, the god of drunkenness? How many altars to Venus, the goddess of lust? How many altars are built to Juno, the goddess of pride and ambition? And who can count the souls who fall a sacrifice to them in these days? Immortal souls, for whom our Divine Saviour bled, whom the Holy Ghost sanctified, are now robbed of grace and innocence by immoral dances, conversations, and cunning devices. Who can count all those who plant the germ of later diseases

in these days? Who can count the tears that are shed in many families in these days? Who can tell of the miseries caused by the increase of want and poverty, discords and contentions? Who can number all the grievous sins that are committed during these days?

Surely there is no one who will believe that there is a privileged time to sin? Holy Scripture says: "A fool will laugh at sin, but among the just grace shall abide." (Prov. 14, 9.) Because the just know that God is to-day and to-morrow and forever the same, and He always hates and punishes sin. Everything has its time, silence and speech, work and rest, joy and sorrow, watching and sleep, eating and drinking, praying and fasting, living and dying, everything has its time, sin alone has no time, neither to-day nor to-morrow, neither in carnival time nor in Holy Week, neither on workdays nor on Sundays, neither in the present nor in the future.

Therefore, the words of the prophet Elias hold good here which he spoke to the Jewish people when they wavered between the service of the one true God and the pagan god Baal: "How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." (3 Kings, 18, 21.) Is the Lord, God, and is Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who suffered and bled for our sins upon the cross, then we must always and at all times follow Him, at all times observe His commandments, at all times remain away from forbidden and sinful amusements and especially in these days, when our Divine Saviour is more than ever outraged and offended. Yes, as good and grate-

ful Christians we must in this carnival season serve Him with greater zeal and publicly confess and glorify Him.

2. For this reason, my friends, the Catholic Church exposes on her altars the Blessed Sacrament for public adoration in opposition to the altars which are raised to glorify vice everywhere in these days. What else is this but satisfaction for the forgetfulness and sins of this season, for if our beloved Saviour is forgotten, insulted and outraged through the whole year by godless men, then at this season of the year He is more outraged than at any other time by the vices that are flaunted in the face of the world. What is therefore more fitting than that all Christians of a good and grateful heart should gather around the Blessed Sacrament exposed on our altars and console our Lord, as it were, in His loneliness and abandonment and to make satisfaction for the infidelity for all those who though they still call themselves Christians, remain in mind and demeanor far from Him.

As the great prophet Elias erected an altar to the true God, and sacrificed to Him a holocaust, so too the Catholic Church erects to our Divine Saviour in the carnival season a worthy throne and good Christians bring Him an agreeable sacrifice by their abstinence from all dangerous amusements and by their practice of the beautiful virtues of faith, hope and charity. And just as seven thousand gathered around the prophet Elias and would not bend their knees to the miserable god of Baal, so all good Christians in these days of betrayal form around our Divine

Saviour a chosen body and honor-guard which defends His honor and publicly offer Him their joyful homage. But since our Divine Saviour in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is not only our sacrifice and the food of our souls, but also our intercessor at the throne of His heavenly Father, He unites all praise, all prayers which are offered in these days throughout the whole Catholic world to God in His Sacred Heart before the Blessed Sacrament. He unites them with His praise of God to a marvelous sacrifice of praise which He, as our immaculate High-Priest, brings to the throne of God. Yes, He who is the King of heaven and earth, gathers also the praise which the heavens with the sun, the moon and the stars in flaming beams glorify the creator. "The heavens declare the praise of God and the firmament shows forth the works of His hands."

Furthermore, Jesus gathers the praise which the earth brings from the mouths of countless children, animate and inanimate creatures to the Creator. Creation tells indeed of the power and the goodness of God, but it is an unconscious witness. Its praise, therefore, resembles a vast organ which must first accompany the voice of the high-priest. This high-priest is Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, whence proceeds this wonderful hymn of praise and ascends to high heaven. But our Divine Saviour is more than the mere King of the visible heavens and the earth, He is also the chief of the heavenly hosts. As such He gathers their pæan of praise and unites it with the praise of the whole Catholic Church and of the universe, and

offers thus as the Mediator of all created beings and as the eternal High-Priest a wonderful sacrifice of praise before the throne of God's majesty. And we, prostrate before the Most Blessed Sacrament, continue this hymn of praise to God the Almighty and Everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Him the Angels and the Archangels praise His majesty, the Principalities adore Him, the Powers tremble, the heaven of heavens with its might, the Cherubim and Seraphim rejoice. Under the chieftainship of Jesus Christ we form with them but one choir that unceasingly sings the hymn of praise: "Holy, holy, holy, art Thou, O Lord."

Hence, though the world in its wretched disposition may celebrate its orgies around the altars of its idols, though it may sate itself with lascivious dances, with repulsive pleasures and debaucheries, we, on our part, wish to be mindful of our high and holy calling as Christians, as children of God, and as heirs of heaven. No self-respecting prince, count or baron will engage in the public streets in games and spectacles that will lower and disgrace the dignity of his station. Much less shall we, the children of God, the redeemed and sanctified of a still nobler station surrender ourselves to enjoyments that degrade and disgrace. We should be too proud for that: on the contrary, we will gather around our most amiable Lord and Saviour. Oh, may not a single one of us cause Him to exclaim with the dying Cæsar, who beheld his dearest friend and adopted child Brutus in the midst of his murderers: "And thou also, my son!" Oh, may our Divine

Saviour have no cause to exclaim and sigh over a single one of us: "And thou also, my son, my daughter." Thou art also to be found among those who have betrayed me to the wretched worship of Baal, bartered me for idle, base pleasure. May He rather extend over us from His throne on the altar His holy hands in blessing, as He extended them over the children whilst He was on earth, and as He did over the Apostles just before His ascension into heaven. May He also implore the favor of His heavenly Father for all of us who are gathered around Him, as He prayed at the Last Supper: "O Father! I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world. . . . I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me. . . . Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are." (John 19, 6, 9, 11.) Yea, may Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice, in the Blessed Sacrament, pour out over us His spirit, the beauty of His glorious soul, in order that we may escape the world with its unworthy lust, and acknowledge the beauty and the quiet, joyful happiness of a truly Christian life, and direct our hopes and longings above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, the Father. Let us preserve it by faith, hope and love, by gratitude and obedience to God and His holy Church.

Just as we, my friends, perceive the glory and beauty of the rising spring-sun, not only in the heavens, but also in every one of the countless dew-drops which hang on the grass and the flowers and leaves, and from



which the sun plays and sparkles in all kinds of colors — so is also the glory and the sun of grace, Jesus Christ, not only visible in heaven, where He glorifies the saints, but also in every Christian soul on earth. They are like dew-drops from which and in which the spirit of Christ radiates His love and innocence, His patience and meekness. Thus may the sun of grace, Jesus Christ, pour forth His spirit on us in order that we act as true Christians during this carnival season, in love towards the Saviour, in contrition for our sins, in obedience towards the commandments of the Church, and in a worthy reception of the holy sacraments. And thus we will once be eternally enlightened and eternally glorified, and behold with the saints in heaven Jesus Christ, not any more under the species of the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar, but face to face. Amen.

## SERMON XI

### THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF THE CORPUS- CHRISTI PROCESSION

“And David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting, and with sound of trumpet.”—2 KINGS, 6, 15.

The holy king David and the immense multitude of people which accompanied him were never filled with greater joy, never gave evidence of greater zeal for the honor of God than when they brought to Jerusalem the covenant with the greatest pomp and public rejoicing. It was that ark of the covenant which destroyed the god Dagon in the temple of the Philistines, put the army to flight and brought the blessing of God down upon the house of Obedon. That return of the ark of the covenant was truly a day of triumph. All Israel was full of joy, the air reëchoed with joyful songs, and David himself spared nothing to glorify the festival. This picture presents a beautiful comparison with the Corpus-Christi procession. For what else is the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar but the ark of the covenant of the New Testament? The Corpus-Christi festival and the procession is dedicated to its glorification and its triumph.

This festival and this procession has been celebrated in the Catholic Church for the last six hundred years.

In the year 1246 it was celebrated for the first time at Luetlich in Belgium and introduced by Pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne in France for the whole Catholic Church. With this festival we enter at the same time into the faith of Catholic Christianity through all times and celebrate again the triumph of our Divine Saviour in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Thus the centuries passed by; nations with their princes were buried, but one thing alone remained always and unchangeable, the Catholic Church and the Blessed Sacrament. How gloriously are these words of our Divine Saviour fulfilled: "Behold I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world."

And in fact a marvelous life reigns in the Corpus-Christi season through the whole Church. There are so many Catholic cities and villages in the wide world, so many processions pass by singing and praying from the Holy Father with his faithful in Rome to the poorest priest surrounded by his newly converted Indians or Negroes in America or Africa. Worldly passions seem to be extinguished and faith and devotion are newly quickened. It is as if the nations or the peoples had prepared to celebrate a great peace, as if the world had become a great temple and the eternal festal day had arrived. Glorious and majestic is the mighty ocean, the work of the power of God, but more glorious and marvelous is the Catholic army of men in the wide world, which is moved and penetrated with faith in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and adoration and love for Jesus. I will speak therefore to-day

on the Corpus-Christi procession, of its meaning and its end.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. Our Divine Saviour celebrated a glorious triumph after His bitter passion and death. His appearance in limbo where He announced to the just ones of the old Law their eternal salvation was a true triumph over Satan and hell. His resurrection from the dead was His second glorious triumph over death, and His ascension into heaven was His third triumph when He, as man, surrounded by the heavenly host and the millions of souls freed from limbo took possession of His eternal glory. His last triumph will be more glorious and majestic when He will come on the last day as Judge from heaven to summon earth and hell before His judgment-seat.

The Catholic Church has even now prepared a yearly triumph for our Divine Saviour. Once a year at least there must be a special time when the Christian world can show to its Saviour a greater and a more public honor and homage. "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place: thou and the ark, which thou hast sanctified." (Ps. 131, 8.) Come forth from the prison of Thy love, from the tabernacle, and show Thyself publicly! Once thousands of men followed our Divine Saviour into the desert to hear His divine word, so to-day multitudes of faithful accompany Him in order to profess their faith.

The choirs of angels and saints in heaven sing:

“The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and benediction.” (Apoc. 5, 12.) But on earth it is the Catholic Church which, as the image of heaven instituted the Corpus-Christi procession. She orders all states and classes, from the children to the old, from the poorest to the richest, from the subjects to the princes to surround the Saviour. All are here in a wonderful equality of faith; of grace and salvation; the streets are decorated, the houses are ornamented, altars are erected, and whatever makes for the brilliancy of the procession in richness and glory of cities or the need of poor churches is done with zeal and joy.

My friends, the Blessed Sacrament is truly the center of our faith, of our hope and love, and the brilliancy of all our festivals. As light comes forth from the sun so does all grace and salvation come forth from the Blessed Sacrament. But on the feast of Corpus-Christi it is in a special manner the center of all festivity and the cause of all joy, of all songs, and of all public rejoicing. Then the churches cease, as it were, to be churches. Their doors are open, and the whole earth is dedicated as the house of God, when the Prince of Peace comes forth surrounded by the multitudes of His faithful followers. On Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem, humbly and meekly sitting on the foal of an ass, He was met by a multitude of people who led Him in procession, singing hymns, to the city. “Blessed is he that cometh in the

name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest." (Matth. 22, 8.) They strewed flowers and palm branches and clothes on the streets.

2. And now on this festival Jesus passes through the streets and lanes in humility and hidden in the Blessed Sacrament; the streets are decorated with flowers, branches and trees, the houses are ornamented with bunting, and song and music resound to His honor and praise. When Jesus lived visibly on earth He dispensed wherever He went good deeds and the fulness of his blessing. (Acts 10, 38.) And to-day He dispenses, wherever He is carried, the fulness of His blessing, of which the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the different altars reminds us. His people, His chosen Israel, accompanied Him and rejoiced in the preference which they enjoyed, through the grace of God, to possess Him in their midst. The cross precedes the people, that holy sign in which we all, in the words of St. Paul, should alone glory. The cross is surrounded by banners. They say to us: "Behold the cross has conquered; with it our Saviour has conquered death and hell. Fight also you, in order that you remain victors for the banners are the sign of victory. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith," says the Apostle St. John. (1 John 5, 4.) But above all it is our faith in Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar that overcomes the world and sin.

The burning candles indicate Christ, the true Light, Who enlighteneth all and Whom we possess here present; they indicate also the living faith and the burning

love which we should have in our hearts for this the holiest of all sacraments. Incense ascends to heaven as a symbol of our devotion. And the greater this devotion is, the more we feel how helpless we are to worthily praise Jesus. We look around, therefore, for help. Now we have the Church triumphant in heaven, where many of our brothers and sisters who formerly lived as we do, faithful servants of God on earth, now rest from their cares and trials in bliss and praise and adore Jesus with the angels and saints. All these, who are immeasurably more worthy than we are, we call from heaven to our midst in order that they in common with us may worthily praise the Son of God in the Blessed Sacrament, Whom all the world and all creatures never will be able to sufficiently praise and glorify.

In truth, how many spirits and angels of God may not in fact be invisibly near to the Blessed Sacrament, and pay to it the tribute of their adoration. Remember only this that each one of us, my friends, has his guardian angel. Should then these angels all remain still while we — their protégés — honor and praise their and our God? But the wish that not only the angels, but all the saints should be present as assistants, we express when we carry their pictures in our ranks. And thereby we declare at the same time that between the militant confessors of Jesus Christ on earth and the blessed in heaven subsists a continuous and intimate union.

Christ in heaven is surrounded by angels and saints, and some of these, as St. John in the Book of Revela-

tions says, are continually singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come;" and others sing, "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power: because thou hast created all things: and for thy will they were, and have been created;" and others sing, "The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." (Apoc. 4, 8, 11; 5, 12.) Thus also does Christ, the Lamb of God, desire to be surrounded by His faithful on earth. And these are they who praise and glorify Him with their songs and prayers, with all the devotion of their hearts. He does not reject the poorest church, the smallest hamlet, nor the neediest altar, for He wishes to seek all with His love, and make them love Him again and to dwell in their midst.

In order to complete this profession of faith, the four gospels are sung at the different altars. We give evidence thereby of our faith and of our love to the Word of God, and at the same time of our faith in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, which rests upon this Divine Word as upon a fourfold foundation. But the reading of the gospel is also the sentence of condemnation, which is here before the face of heaven and earth pronounced against the conquered of hell, and we express at the same time the wish that the word of salvation may become known to all the peoples of the earth.

3. Here we might have learned, my dear friends, the meaning of the Corpus-Christi procession. Still



we will not allow the end to go undiscussed. What may be then the first end? Undoubtedly the first object of the procession on Corpus-Christi is the public and solemn profession of our faith in the Blessed Sacrament, which we make in the face of all the world and of all public and hidden scoffers of religion. For, when large numbers assemble for a public profession of faith, it makes a more solemn and lasting impression. The early Christians also had processions to make public profession of their faith, but these processions were so earnest and difficult that they have been discontinued. These were the processions of the martyrs to the judgment seats of the pagans, from the courts to the prisons and from the prisons to the place of execution. There was then sufficient opportunity for the Christians to practice their faith before the gaping and the scoffing multitude. Now when this does not take place any more there is no more brilliant and solemn profession of faith before the enemies of the Catholic Church than the Corpus-Christi procession, when Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the center of our faith.

Could we at the same time in a better and more brilliant manner show our reverence and adoration for the Blessed Sacrament than by this solemn procession? Or could we give our Saviour a more public reparation for all the disgrace which He suffered for our sake in the presence of all the Jewish nation? He was seized by the soldiers on Mt. Olivet amidst great commotion and excitement, bound and led through the streets and public places of Jerusalem, from court to court, de-

spised and blasphemed by the crowd until at last He reached Mt. Calvary, where He completed His sacrifice on the cross as His sorrowful throne amidst two thieves. God the Father has now decreed that His only-begotten Son shall be glorified by the Corpus-Christi procession for all those outrages before the world. He is now also surrounded by lights and torches, accompanied by the faithful who are the soldiers of the militant Church. Instead of scorn, Church songs and music resound which vie with each other in His praise: instead of the contemptuous laughter, we hear the expressions of love and adoration. In the place of the self-stultified rabble there follow Him now emperors and kings, princes and governors, everything that is great, glorious and prominent in the world. All the armies of the faithful assemble to form a glorious escort for the triumph of the Saviour in the Most Holy Sacrament. His path is strewn with flowers, His throne is the ornamented and decorated altars and here the knees of all present bend before Him.

4. Could we, my friends, supply a better reparation to our Divine Saviour for the disgrace which He endured for our sakes on the streets of Jerusalem? With this reparation we unite at the same time satisfaction for all the irreverences and blasphemies which have been committed during the past year by infidels, yes, and even by Catholic Christians against the Most Holy Sacrament. Oh, how often is the conduct irreverent before it, or how often is not this holiest of all

sacraments used as a common curse-word, how often is it degraded by a sacrilegious communion! Oh, then the good Christians must come all the more together the oftener such things happen in order to make reparation to the Saviour and to beseech Him that He will not be mindful of these, but forgive as He did His enemies on the cross, and grant to them in His mildness and mercy the grace of conversion.

Moreover, the faithful must by this solemn procession return gratitude to the Saviour for His unspeakable love manifested to us in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. It is the public thanks for the gifts and graces which Jesus imparts to us in holy communion, and this public gratitude is the best encouragement to show ourselves worthy and frequent guests at the table of the Lord. Of course every ordinary Catholic returns thanks after holy communion for the graces received, and for the pledge of bliss and eternal resurrection. But this gratitude rises to God from the hearts and lips of individual Catholics unknown to the world and unheard by it. Now by the solemn procession the loud, solemn, public thanksgiving of Catholic Christianity is made known to the world. This gratitude, however, is also a glorious satisfaction, as it were, a public reparation for all unworthy communions and a public protest of the Catholic world against such crimes which, alas, some Catholics commit. The solemn procession becomes a true glorification of our Divine Saviour before the eyes of the world and gives to the faithful a foretaste of

heavenly bliss as we read in the Book of the Apocalypse: "They follow the lamb of God whithersoever he goeth." (Apoc. 14, 4.).

5. And if the unbelieving world cast reproach at this procession and call it a useless show, we, my friends, honor our Divine Saviour for all His love in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, for all the benefits which He has bestowed upon us, and for all the bitter sufferings which He underwent for our sakes. These marks of honor and reverence which we show Him every day and on all festivals of the Church we will once a year publicly manifest before all the world. Who can blame us for that? Those who spend the days and nights in carousals — they certainly have no reason to murmur against Catholics for celebrating their beautiful Church festivals and making public profession of their faith in holy and innocent joy, and of giving to the Saviour a public and glorious adoration in the Blessed Sacrament.

And even if in the solemn Corpus-Christi procession there is no particular devotion of the heart, no recollected prayer to be noticed — the Catholic expresses his devotion, his faith and his gratitude not only in words and prayers, but especially in works. The solemn procession is the most beautiful work of this devotion, the most powerful proof of this faith and this gratitude. Here words do not speak but works proclaim; here the solemn return to God is proclaimed. Here speaks the public profession of faith, the public homage and the public joy, and these truly announce before heaven and earth louder the honor of Jesus and

the love for Him than thousands of short prayers in the church or in the house could proclaim.

We may also, my friends, follow the triumphal march of our Divine Saviour on earth and as faithful Catholics show Him before all the world our homage, joy and adoration. "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God," exclaims the holy king David. (Ps. 83, 3.) Mary, the Blessed Virgin rejoiced also in God, her Saviour. And holy Church even though laden with sorrow and persecution for the sake of Jesus, rejoices, nevertheless, and especially on Corpus-Christi in the possession of her Divine Saviour. With her rejoice with a great joy millions of faithful, for the Saviour is in their midst. And should not we also participate in this joy, since Jesus is also our Saviour and pours over us from this sacrament of His love, His grace and His blessing?

But, my friends, we should not only prepare an external but an internal triumphant march for our Divine Saviour and that in our hearts by real love and true contrition and worthy communion, in order that He may one day prepare for us a triumphant entry into heaven, where we will see Him, not veiled under the species of bread, but face to face and praise and follow Him forever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON XII

### THE TREE OF LIFE IN PARADISE AND IN THE CHURCH

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die.”—JOHN, 6, 50.

If anything reveals the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church, it is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It is the triumph of the Church over the world, of the spirit over matter, of grace over nature, and of faith over the intellect. Yes, it is everything for us, and we ought to be everything for Jesus, and the Blessed Sacrament is the lovely way and means thereto. All the teachings of the Church, the Creation, the Incarnation, grace, faith, and the sacraments meet here together and find therein their most wonderful center. Whatever the ceremonies of the Church, what her worship and liturgy possess that is glorious and sublime, centers around the Sacrament of the Altar as around their germ. All devotions surround it as stars do the sun, or unite with it as their most beautiful crown. Whatever architecture, painting, sculpture, music and song has ever created as master-pieces, surround the Blessed Sacrament as a golden circle around a most precious pearl.

However, the sublime greatness of this Sacrament rises higher since in it is united the mystery of the

Incarnation and the life and works of Jesus on earth until His death on the cross and until they are reflected herein at His glorious grave. It is the most powerful means of Jesus for the continuation of His redemption, of His sacrifice on the cross, and of His mediatorship between God and man. It is the greatest work of God and the Sabbath's rest of the Saviour until the last day, when He in majesty and glory will show Himself visibly to the world as Judge and gather the fruits of redemption for eternity.

Finally, in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar are fulfilled all the types and figures of the Old Testament, such as the sacrifices, the manna, all the prophecies of the Prophets, and all the promises of God begun in Paradise. It is the crown of creation, of redemption and of the Old and the New Law; it is the heavenly rainbow which unites heaven with the earth. But it is especially the second tree of life, which God has planted in the paradise of His holy Church.

I will therefore speak to-day of the tree of life in Paradise and of the Blessed Sacrament as the tree of life in the Church of God.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. God planted in Paradise the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the fruit of which He forbade Adam and Eve to eat. The reason of this commandment was no other than to hold our first parents in obedience and in consequence in grace. They had to show themselves worthy of the wonderful grace of inno-

cence, which God had adorned them with, and worthy of Paradise. God gave them this commandment in reference to the coming Saviour, Who in the place of Adam was truly obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. But the easier this commandment was, the more grievous was the sin and the greater the disobedience with all its consequences. The tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because the eyes of our first parents after their fall were opened to the glorious gifts and graces which they had lost and to the immeasurable wickedness which they brought upon themselves and their posterity.

But besides this tree God planted another tree, "the tree of life in the midst of paradise." (Gen. 2, 9.) It had a higher end as its name indicates. If Adam had remained obedient the fruit of this tree was destined to keep our first parents in continual freshness, youth and beauty, to make their bodies incorruptible and immortal and thereby protect them from all sicknesses and from death. They would not indeed, have lived eternally on earth, but their passing with body and soul into the celestial paradise would have been no death, no dying, but a state of transfiguration and ecstasy. But with the sin of Adam paradise and the tree of life were lost, yet, on account of this tree of life, Adam was driven out of paradise. Holy Scripture confirms this: "Behold Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil; now, therefore, lest perhaps he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.



And the Lord God sent him out of the paradise of pleasure, to till the earth from which he was taken." (Gen. 3, 22, 23.)

And now, my dear friends, as our Divine Saviour set up again the tree of knowledge of good and evil in His cross on Calvary, at whose foot we learn the greatness of redemption and also the weight of our sins — so He has again planted a new tree of life in the new paradise in His Holy Church. This tree of life is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. He announced this in these words: "This is the bread which is come down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he will not die." As a heavenly gardener Jesus planted this tree of life at the Last Supper in His Church.

2. What then is the destiny of this new tree of life, and why was it planted? Its first destiny is no other than to make the body immortal. The soul is by its nature immortal, but not the body, which by its nature is mortal. The body, however, should participate in the immortality of the soul. For this reason our Divine Saviour has planted the tree of life in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Its fruit makes the life of the body immortal; it places a divine germ in the body, which becomes the spring of its life, and which can never be extinguished and nourishes it eternally. "Whosoever drinketh of this water . . . that I shall give him shall not thirst for ever," said our Divine Saviour, "but the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting." (John 4,

13.) This living water which Jesus gives us, is His Sacred Blood, and the bread is His Sacred Body: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him." (John 6, 57.) Jesus, the God-Man, in holy communion permeates as fruit of the new tree of life, our bodies in such a marvelous way, that they become like unto the soul which is by nature immortal. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die."

It is true, my friends, that our bodies must die, as our Saviour died on the cross, but the death of Christians who are in the state of grace is not any more the formal death as a punishment for sin, but a sleep, a rest in the grave until the resurrection. Then the divine germ shoots up in a wonderful manner and transforms itself into the eternal life of the body.

But whoever dies in the state of mortal sin and destroys by sin this divine germ which the fruit of the tree of life placed in the body, he dies in reality and annihilates the true immortality of the body. He will also rise again, but he will remain eternally mortal, and have eternally the need of food and drink, and eternal pains of hunger and suffer an eternal death. They die not because the fire of hell, which penetrates them like the salt the meat, tortures and yet does not destroy. Our Divine Saviour said of the damned: "They shall be salted with fire." It is such a terrible state or condition that it beggars all description and therefore is called eternal death and eternal dying.

Oh, my friends, just as marvelous as the Blessed Sacrament is in its graces, so terrible it is to sinners and lukewarm Christians in its consequences. For this reason how much and how zealously does not Holy Church admonish us to receive holy communion worthily especially at Easter time! And how earnestly she warns us against an unworthy communion! and in fact one cannot commit a greater irreverence than to make the greatest work of redemption a means of destroying in himself the divine germ of immortality. One cannot commit a greater folly than to bring upon himself eternal death rather than eternal life by eating unworthily of this tree of life. May God preserve us from such folly and such irreverence!

3. The second destiny of the tree of life shows itself still more glorious in the Church of God. God's joy, God's bliss should be our joy and our bliss. The soul created to the likeness of God will be made by grace worthy and capable of this bliss. But how can our body which is of the earth become worthy of God? "Flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 15, 2, 20.) Our material body with its countless miseries must evidently be changed in its entire being before it can enter into the eternal kingdom of God. It must be transfigured and spiritualized in order to be worthy of the company of the angels and consequently of the vision of God. This transformation of the body is the work of the new tree of life, of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

This takes place in a worthy reception of the fruit

of the tree of life, by holy communion, which permeates the body with the divinity of Jesus Christ and, as it were, deifies it: "Whoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him," (John 6, 57.) As the fire penetrates the rough black iron and makes it like to itself, thus the Sacrament of the Altar deifies and transfigures the body, because the divinity of Jesus enters our souls and effects the future transfiguration and spiritualization of the body.

If this change of the body does not take place in this life it transpires all the more gloriously on the day of resurrection. Nevertheless, the saints on earth have often been seen transfigured with a heavenly halo when they had received holy communion. How many holy confessors and virgins have remained after their death fresh and incorrupt, yet transfigured with a wonderful beauty. St. Catharine of Bologna may be seen to-day after three hundred years sitting as if alive on a throne in her cell. At the present time the tongue of St. John Nepomuc may be seen fresh and red, and countless saints have not been subjected to the corruption of the body. This is the power of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, which is the new tree of life and plants the divine germ in the body, that continues to sparkle with a heavenly fire until on the day of resurrection it will break forth into a wonderful transfiguration of the body.

4. Now comes the question, my friends, wherein consists the qualities of spiritualization which are communicated to the body by the fruit of the new tree of

life? The glorified and transfigured body of our Divine Saviour on Mount Tabor will serve us as an example, and likewise His glorious resurrection from the grave. His body took part in the transfiguration and bliss of His soul, for, although the holy soul of Jesus was always blessed and saw God on earth, nevertheless His body was excluded from it in order to appear in the form of a servant, so that He could suffer and die and redeem us. But this bloody passion and sacrifice on the cross would have been impossible, and consequently our salvation too, if the body of Jesus had been spiritualized and transfigured from the beginning by His soul and God-head. So is it also with ourselves. Although we receive in holy communion Jesus, as God and Man, and our souls are wonderfully enriched with grace, our bodies do not participate in this mortal life in the spiritualization of the soul, because while we are on earth we must suffer, struggle and war with evil and carry our cross. But with the resurrection from the dead the same will take place in regard to our bodies as took place at the resurrection of Jesus Christ with His holy body. St. Paul declares this glorious truth in these words: "Our Lord Jesus Christ will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory." (Phil. 3, 21.)

The Sacrament of the Altar as the tree of life penetrates the body with the divine germ and transforms it into a corresponding relation to the soul, and to the spirit, in order that both may again be united on the day of resurrection and made worthy of the vision

of God and the company of angels which are likewise pure spirits.

What are then the qualities of the glorified body? The first quality is subtility so that the glorified body can as little be seen with our corporal eyes as the soul. Therefore the eye will be spiritualized on the day of resurrection. For this reason we cannot see our Divine Saviour in the Sacrament of the Altar and if nevertheless so many of the saints have so often seen Him, this was a special grace in so far as their eyes were opened, that is spiritualized. The angels and saints of God, however, behold Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; they are here present, they adore Him as in heaven, and unite their adoration with that of the faithful to praise our Divine Saviour.

This subtility of the body is moreover, the cause why our Divine Saviour can be present in the Blessed Sacrament without destroying the species of bread; thus He appeared to His Apostles the doors being closed. Thus many saints in the state of ecstasy passed through closed doors with the same ease as the rays of the sun pass through a glass. The body therefore in its transfiguration can as little be handled and held fast as the soul.

The second quality of the glorified body in consequence of the divine fruit of the new tree of life is the marvelous agility and swiftness of movement so that the body needs feet as little as the angels of God or the blessed when they appear visibly on earth, just as our spirit can now in thought fly over the earth wherever it wills, so will it in reality once be with

the glorified body. It will fly whithersoever it wills. And this movement is wonderfully quick, swifter than the storm-wind or the rays of the sun, which in a few seconds pass through millions and millions of miles or as the lightning which cleaves the air. Thus our Divine Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints appear in an instant to pious souls on earth. Yes, we have examples enough of great saints on earth who were raised during their burning prayers and love of God from earth whereby their bodies lost their material weight, as it were, so that they were moved by the lightest breath as the light is by the wind. Such was the case with St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis de Paul, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Philip Neri and others.

The third glorious quality of the glorified body is that it is as transparent as the sun. It is a body of light of such a heavenly brilliancy that it surpasses all our representations. To behold this glory is the greatest joy: "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," says our Divine Saviour Himself (Matth. 13, 43). Just as the iron penetrated with fire sparkles and glows, so the glorified bodies shine with a heavenly splendor and become also in this way like unto the blessed spirits who are wonderful beings of light. This light is the reflection of the divine Majesty, a light, a million times different from every earthly light so that even the light of the sun fades away in presence of the brilliancy, beauty and loveliness of the glorified bodies: St. Paul says: "No eye has seen what God has pre-

pared for those who love him." And when St. Paul himself was wrapped in ecstasy and beheld the glory of heaven he found no words to express himself.

How often have not even in this earthly life great saints been transfigured for a moment when they spread about them such a heavenly halo that surpassed in beauty and splendor all created light. Yes, even pious Christians, if they often and worthily receive holy communion bear upon their countenances such a mild, peaceful expression that one can suppose that such will be the appearance of the blessed.

4. But now, my dear friends, let us ask the reason of these sublime qualities of the glorified body. And the answer is, they are the fruit of the tree of life which Jesus planted in His Church. It is the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar through which our body also is united with the God-head and receives from it that divine germ which comes to life, as it were, on the day of resurrection and glorifies the body, spiritualizes it and decks it with a heavenly beauty.

It remains forever beautifully true what the poor woman said when she saw the miracles of Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck." (Luke 11, 27.) Is Mary wonderfully blessed and taken up body and soul into heaven and crowned with eternal glory because she gave birth to Jesus, so is it just as true for every Christian to say: "Blessed is the body which worthily receives Jesus in communion." Yes, truly, holy communion enriches the soul with grace, controls the



passions, and increases faith and love, but also communicates the fruit of the tree of life to the body, namely, immortality, incorruptibility, transfiguration and spiritualization. It consecrates the body as the Temple of God and makes it like unto the body of our Divine Saviour in its glory and transfiguration.

Therefore, is the frivolity and carelessness of thousands of Christians so criminal. Like Adam they prefer to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, to plunge into sin and trample the commands of the Church under foot and allow the tree of life in the paradise of the Church to go unnoticed. Even at Easter time they despise it in spite of the command to eat of its fruit by a worthy communion in order to live, to live eternally and not to die, to die eternally. As little as they hunger after the fruit of the tree of life now, so terrible will be the pangs of hunger once as a just punishment in hell. Those, who contemptuously would not partake of this heavenly food will be, according to the words of Holy Scripture, thoroughly sated with eternal fire. They will die eternally because they despised to live eternally; they will eternally taste of the terrible agonies of eternal death because they threw away the eternal joys of everlasting life. Their bodies will also rise again for punishment, but just as the bodies of the just are transfigured and glorified, so terribly hateful, black and abominable, and covered with unspeakable filth will the bodies of the lost be.

But, my dear friends, our bodies will also be blessed if we often and worthily in faith, hope and love have

eaten of the fruit of this tree of life. And with our bodies as our souls, whatever privations, cares, sufferings, we must undergo in our Christian warfare, the blessed hour will come when we will rise from the dead and enter into the kingdom of our heavenly Father as transparent as the sun. That blessed hour shall come of which our Divine Saviour says: "Lift up your heads, and behold because your redemption is at hand." (Luke 21, 28.) Amen.

## SERMON XIII

### THE MYSTERIES OF THE SPECIES OF BREAD

“For let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man”—  
PHIL. 2, 5, 6, 7.

“Jesus Christ being in the form of God, emptied himself and took the form of a servant,” exclaimed St. Paul, full of adoration for the immeasurable greatness and majesty of Jesus Christ as Son of God, and full of admiration at His immeasurable humiliation by the Incarnation. In fact, Jesus Christ is the Son of God from eternity to eternity, equally almighty, all-knowing, and omnipresent with God the Father, whose being and immeasurable greatness even the highest angels are unable to grasp or fathom. Yes, even as the promised Saviour, He is the beginning of all things, on whose account all things were created and in whom all grace and mercy is found. He is the eternal High-Priest the King of heaven and earth, to Whom the angels and men and all creatures must pay homage. He is the Judge of this world, before Whom on the last day heaven and earth and hell must appear to hear His eternal judgment. He is the central point around which everything revolves, the times, the battles of the world, and the fortunes of

nations. Jesus Christ is so great and wonderful as the Saviour that the Prophet Habacuc joyfully exclaims: "But I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus." (Hab. 3, 18.)

And yet, my dear friends, how small, how immeasurably small did not Jesus make Himself in His human form! In the crib as a new-born babe He was small. There was nothing there to reveal His immeasurable greatness, His divine omnipotence or His sublime calling as the Saviour of the world. How small was He in the quiet peace of the cottage at Nazareth where He lived unknown and forgotten by the world until His thirtieth year, and was looked upon as only the carpenter's son! How immeasurably smaller was He in His bitter passion and death, so that the royal Prophet David placed these words in His mouth: "But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. 21, 7.)

And yet, even if Jesus Christ was so small exteriorly in His human form, what a world of redemption of grace and blessing and heavenly mysteries He administered as man. Thus it is also with the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, where Jesus is really and truly present under the species of bread. I will, therefore, speak to-day on the species of bread and their mysteries.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

I. The Old Testament was in its whole being, in its festivals, ceremonies, and sacrifices, only a figure,

a shadow of the New Law, therefore of the Catholic Church. Whatever it possessed of types, figures or promises, all that has been fulfilled in the Catholic Church. Thus the real presence of God in the temple of Jerusalem was also intimated, since in the Holy of Holies the tabernacle stood, over which once a year God appeared in the form of a cloud, and revealed Himself to the High-Priest. Thus God had already promised Moses in these words: "For I will appear in a cloud over the oracle." (Levit. 16, 2.)

This type has also been fulfilled in the New Law. God will no longer dwell amongst us in the form of the covenant or of a cloud, but really and truly, not once a year, but for ever.

It is true, my dear friends, that this figure was fulfilled when our Divine Saviour walked the earth in the form of man: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1, 14.) But our Divine Saviour only remains visibly on earth three and thirty years, until His ascension into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God, in His humanity as King, Saviour and Judge. The type or figure in the Holy of Holies of Jerusalem must therefore find its completion in another way, and this it has, in truth, found. This fulfillment is evident in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, where Jesus Christ as God and Man is truly and really present under the species of bread forever: "Behold I am with you all days even unto the end of the world." (Matth. 28, 20.)

2. Consequently what in His life on earth His humanity, the human form, was, in and through which Jesus Christ visibly moved among men, taught, performed miracles, and brought the bloody sacrifice of the cross — that is now the species of bread for the life and the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The species of bread are the color, the taste, the smell and the form or the external appearance of bread, which therefore appears to the senses. The bread itself, its substance, is changed into the body of Jesus just as He Himself in confirmation of this truth changed water into wine, or as in us bread and wine are changed into flesh and blood, even though slowly and in a different way. In His transfiguration in heaven, however, Jesus can no longer be separated and divided, therefore in the transubstantiation or consecration Jesus is present whole and entire as God and as Man under the species of bread. They are as it were, the white cloud in the temple of Jerusalem which veil before our eyes the Real Presence of our Divine Saviour, but not to our faith. Therefore, it is so simply and yet so beautifully sung at benediction: “Whom the species of bread veils, Thou who art our Saviour, whom love here conceals, give us, O Jesus, Thy blessing.”

Yes, my dear friends, in this mystery of the change of the bread into the body of Jesus Christ, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me.” (Luke 22, 19), in this mystery is shown the omnipotence of God in its sublimest greatness. It emulates the omnipotence which with one

word created heaven and earth out of nothing. It emulates the omnipotence which caused the Incarnation of the Son of God. And as the Incarnation in greatness and sublimity surpasses all the works of God, even creation, so does the change of bread into the body of Jesus surpass all other works of God in sublimity, in greatness, and in extent and meaning.

The world is the visible veil which conceals the omnipresence of God from our eyes. But under this veil He conceals His constant activity in the preservation and the regulation of the world, and the miracles and greatness of His omnipotence are unseen by the eyes of proud man. Even if they do ascribe it all—the beauty, the life, the growth, and the continuation of creation to the laws of nature—it is nevertheless the revelation of the omnipresence of God.

Thus in a higher sense was the human nature of the Son of God, as it were, a veil which concealed His divinity from the eyes of the Jews. But in His human form He completed the second and greater work of God, namely, the salvation of the world and the creation of the kingdom of grace and truth, His Holy Church. All the miracles which He performed on earth, the heavenly lessons which He taught, His transfiguration, His resurrection and ascension into heaven, were revelations of His invisible divinity.

So is it also with the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It is the third great work of the omnipotence and mercy of God. But the species of bread are the veil under which our Divine Saviour conceals His Real Presence from our eyes. He continues under

this veil His redemption on earth, and rules and preserves His Holy Church. All the miracles of grace, of faith and love, the holiness and virtues of millions of Christians, the armies of converted sinners and the hosannahs of redeemed souls — are all revelations of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

3. It is better for the unbelieving world that God conceals His omnipresence in creation. It was better for the obstinate Jews that our Divine Saviour concealed His divinity before their eyes and revealed it to them only in His miracles. And it is also better for godless men that our Divine Saviour veils His presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar under the species of bread. In fact, my dear friends, what is better for godless men who wish to be separated from God and the Saviour as if they were independent potentates, who do not want to acknowledge any higher Lord or divine judge over them — what is better for such men, the visible or the invisible presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? In every case His invisible presence is a thousand times better. If our Divine Saviour were to show Himself visibly countless numbers of men would never enter the church again from fear of the majesty of Christ and from terror of sudden punishment. Thus they would be much more apt to be destroyed in their sins because they could find no other place where they could ask and hope to obtain mercy. At least those who are satisfied with the title of being nominal Christians. At one time no one was allowed under pain



of death to appear before the king Assuerus unless he had been called, much less would godless or un-Christian men enter our churches to appear before the visible majesty of their Divine Saviour and Judge.

And if they were to come would their conduct be just as irreverent as at present? Yes, if our Lord would at once punish every criminal act, then they would perhaps be cautious. But where this does not take place, where the longanimity of God is present, they would become more lawless and more insulting. It is better for sinners and godless men that our Divine Saviour does not show Himself visibly lest they should become worse and draw upon themselves greater punishments. But now they are more easily converted, occasionally attend divine service and frequently the happy moment comes when their hearts are touched by grace or the admonition of the preacher and they find mercy, forgiveness and salvation for their souls. But, my friends, for the pious faithful too, it is a thousand times better that our Divine Saviour conceals His presence from our eyes under the species of bread. Yes, this is the happy privilege of faithful Christians that they can even in this life live in confident intercourse with God. As Abraham, Moses, David and other just ones of the Old Law spoke to God when He appeared to them under the form of an angel, so could the Apostles, the disciples and the holy women, the poor, the sick and the sinners with confidence approach the Son of God in the form of man on earth, converse with Him and beg mercy of Him. And thus we ourselves can at all

times approach our Divine Saviour under the species of bread, converse with Him, make our complaints to Him, tell Him all our trials and difficulties, beg His help and assistance, recommend to Him our souls, our families, our dead, or thank Him, praise and adore Him.

But if our Divine Saviour were to show Himself to us in His majesty, then there would be an end to our soul's converse with Him, an end to all our prayers and to all intimacy and joy. Even Mary, the Blessed Virgin, was terrified at the sight of the Archangel Gabriel. Tobias, Daniel and other prophets fell to the earth. The Apostles and the holy women lost possession of themselves when the angels appeared to them. Peter, James and John were struck dumb at the sight of the transfigured Saviour on Mount Tabor — what would then happen to us if we were permitted to behold our Divine Saviour visibly in the Blessed Sacrament? Terror, fear and anxiety would paralyze our tongues and make our hearts quake, yes, we would scarcely dare to visit this holy place again.

On the contrary how lovely, quiet and confidential is the intercourse with Jesus under the species of bread! There have been and are to-day thousands of Christians who feel themselves happy and blessed in the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle and can hardly separate themselves from it. From this holy place there flows a heavenly power, a sweet quiet, a happy peace into the souls of faithful Christians. They feel the truth of this saying: "What no eye hath seen

that God prepares for those who love Him." Oh, how true are the words of Jesus to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen thou believest. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe." By this faith we increase our merit, our virtue, our grace, but also our bliss. The eyes may deceive us and have already often deceived us, but faith can never deceive us. It is this faith that leads us to the bliss and vision of God in heaven. Therefore it is better for us that we do not behold Jesus visibly on earth but under the species of bread.

4. But what makes the life and the presence of Jesus under the species of bread still more wonderful is the remarkable similarity of it to the mystery of His life on earth in the human form. The first mystery was His gracious birth from the Blessed Virgin Mary; the adoration of the three holy kings followed it, whom the star led to the manger in Bethlehem, the presentation in the temple, the hidden life of Nazareth, the active life of our Saviour as He passed through the promised land healing the sick, converting sinners and feeding the people in the desert by the multiplication of the loaves. The mystery of His human life on earth was joined to His bitter passion, His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection and His triumph over His enemies.

All these mysteries are renewed constantly in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Here He is again born in a most wonderful manner and begins a new life, the sacramental life under the species of bread. And in truth, is the birth of Jesus of the Blessed

Virgin Mary a wonderful mystery, which enraptures heaven and earth and is filled with blessings, so is also this birth, which takes place at the change of bread into the body of Jesus, a mystery which enraptures heaven and fills earth with blessings. In this new sacramental life Jesus receives again the adoration of the Christian world, which faith leads to the new Bethlehem and to the new crib, namely, to the altar and the tabernacle, where Jesus under the species of bread shows Himself, where all knees bow in His name, and all tongues confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2, 10.)

As Mary offered the divine Child in the temple of Jerusalem to God for His honor and glory, thus the Catholic Church constantly offers Jesus under the species of bread to God to praise, to adore, to thank and propitiate Him. Touching was the charm of peace that surrounded Jesus in the solitude in His home at Nazareth. But more touching and more adorable is the solitude of the tabernacle, the peace and rest which reigns there, the humility and obedience of Jesus in this prison of His love. There is scarcely a mystery that makes such an impression on the Christian soul as the tabernacle with this hidden life of Jesus. As Mary Magdalen sat at the feet of Jesus and silently listened to Him, but had chosen the best part, so kneel millions of Christians always at the feet of Jesus in the tabernacle, listen to Him, and are blessed in the intercourse with Him.

Who can further delineate the marvelous active life of Jesus under the species of bread? He constantly

teaches His Church, and leads her into all truth; He calls thousands daily, converts countless sinners, heals the wounds of souls, feeds the faithful with the food of eternal life, blesses the children, consoles the dying Christians, gives courage to the disheartened, constancy to the suffering, and what the world beholds in miracles of grace and mercy, all this finds its only explanation in the marvelous active life of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

And yet, He is here also in His sacramental life despised, blasphemed and maltreated, as He was once by the Jews in His humanity. Yes, these insults are the more terrible, the longer they last, and the more they are committed by Christians: "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God," exclaims the Apostle Paul in anger. (Hebr. 6, 6.) This crucifixion is committed by unbecoming conduct in the church, by sins, and on this account many tread the blood of Jesus under foot, but especially by unworthy communions, when one creeps like Judas under the appearance of piety to Jesus. And yet, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter Jesus is silent and opens not His mouth!

Under the species of bread our Saviour celebrates also His triumph over His enemies who blaspheme Him, for the Catholic Church in her solemn processions offers Him a public satisfaction for all blasphemies, for all crimes and insults of a godless and a sinful world.

5. Oh, my dear friends, the same merciful Saviour who once walked the earth in His humanity, dwells also

amongst us under the species of bread. Yes, He is more humble, more loving, more merciful here, than He was then on earth. The Apostles and disciples did not see the Son of God Himself, but only His humanity clothed in needy garments. Nevertheless neither they nor the three holy kings nor the shepherds, nor any of those who believed in Him had the least doubt in His Divine mission. So we must not, and dare not have the least doubt in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, no matter how much He conceals Himself under the insignificant species of bread. Our Church is the new Bethlehem, our altar the manger, and here as there our Divine Saviour enters upon His earthly life. In silent Nazareth He remained hidden from the eyes of the world but not from the angels; in the tabernacle is His new Nazareth, where He dwells again forgotten by the world but not by His faithful. Here He calls to us all: "Come to me all and I will refresh you." Oh, may we often betake ourselves from the turmoil of the world, from business and cares, to find here rest and peace and grace, to open our hearts to Jesus, to reveal our faith and to renew our love. Blessed are we if we have believed Jesus in the species of bread, visited and adored Him. Then we will once behold Him as the most beautiful reward of faith in His God-head in heaven, and this vision is the highest bliss and benediction of souls through all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XIV

### THE GIFT OF GOD

If thou didst know the gift of God.”— JOHN, 4. 10.

The Gospel has preserved for us many expressions of mercy of our Saviour, and among them there is one that makes a special impression on those who are filled with love towards their Divine Saviour and gratitude for His benefits. It is His words addressed to the Samaritan woman: “If thou didst know the gift of God.”

When our Divine Saviour was returning from Judea to Galilee, having arrived at the city of Samaria, named Sichar, He sat down to rest at a well called Jacob’s well. The Samaritan woman came to get water. Jesus said to her: “Give me to drink.” But the Samaritan woman answered: “How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman? for the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans.” Jesus answered her: “If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that sayeth to thee, give me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (John 4, 7, 8, 9.)

Oh, what touching kindness, what zealous interest in this poor soul is contained in these words! What

choice grace and what wonderful strength in the divine art to convert souls! “If thou hadst known the gift of God!”—Jesus Christ does not as yet reveal Himself to the Samaritan woman; but He permits her to feel beforehand the whole joy of this revelation. He does not reproach her because she does not acknowledge it; but He makes her understand that if she knew the Saviour she would love Him and with her love and longing be saved. We will therefore speak to-day of this gift of God.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If we had been present at the conversation which Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, where He sat wearied in His search for us, wearied especially by our ingratitude and our sins, our hearts would have been moved and filled with love for Him. If we had seen our Lord in this holy hour when He saved a soul; beheld the heavenly fire that sparkled from His eyes, heard the resistless tone with which He spoke the words: “If thou hadst known the gift of God,” our souls would have been enraptured and our hearts filled with gratitude.

His look, His movement, His voice, everything in Him had certainly a divine expression as these words indicate: it is thy God that speaks with thee, delay not! It is now for thee the most favorable time, the hour of thy salvation! Learn to know the gift of God!—yes, we should not be surprised if our Saviour assumed the tone of the petitioner, who asks and fears to be refused: “If thou hadst known the gift of



God! If you knew that this is the gift of peace, of consolation in every suffering, assistance in weakness, the remedy against the passions, temptations and sins! If you knew that I am this gift, the joy of the angels and the salvation of men! But thou art not the only one who does not know this gift. I know that you are weak and subjected to your passions, and have little inclination towards the true good. Yes, how can I offer you the gift of God without your refusing it: how praise it without you refusing to hear; how recommend it to you without offense; if thou didst know the gift of God?

It seems as if all these feelings pressed the gentle, mild heart of Jesus. How willingly ought not we, my friends, meditate upon them until we have exhausted the whole matter, for we certainly have sufficient reason to address these words of our Saviour to all those who do not know the gift of God and do not want to hear of it.

Frivolity and distraction, want of faith and love, have closed the hearts of many Christians to every earnest thought. Their external and sensual life has robbed them of all taste for things divine, and yet their highest interests are at stake and their salvation in danger. The days pass by and death and the judgment finds them unprepared. What then should zeal do to win them? Their language is entirely different from ours; their thoughts are entirely different from our thoughts, their love is not our love. What method should one pursue? What should one do, or what should he say? And yet a favorable opportunity

often presents itself, or for the Christian a holy time, then there is no more touching expression to address to a Christian soul than the words which our Divine Saviour addressed to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God."

2. These words hold good especially when we speak of the Blessed Sacrament, of that gift of God, in a most particular sense. Here these words of Jesus apply: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given." (Matth. 19, 11.) Yes, here I speak a language which is not any more the language of the world; how could or how would the world hear and understand this? The world has not tasted how sweet the Lord is in the Blessed Sacrament, and knows nothing of His grace and of His joys. We know that if often and faithfully received it causes the scales to fall from our eyes and brings us into the closest proximity with the light of divine truth. We know, and if our heart is hard, that the Blessed Sacrament will gradually soften it; that it will extinguish the passions if they flame up. We know that a moment at the foot of the tabernacle is worth more than a thousand years in the oracles of sin (Ps. 83, 11), and that when the joys of the world are bitter and its distractions enervating the intercourse with the Blessed Sacrament has nothing bitter and its company nothing distasteful. We all know that the same Jesus for whom we prepare a lodging in the tabernacle will not refuse us a place of refuge in heaven. Yes, we know, and therefore we cannot ever speak enough of the glory of the Blessed Sacrament.

But what is the Blessed Sacrament for Christians in whom faith and love are extinguished, and who have lost all taste for the things of heaven? What is it along side of their way of thinking and acting, beside their distractions and pleasures? If one should try to convince them that the Blessed Sacrament is worth more than all the pleasures of the world, that it gives really salvation and peace to the soul, and is the pledge of bliss, he would lose courage, his speech would halt and he could only murmur, if thou didst know the gift of God.

When Jesus Christ spoke these words to the Samaritan woman He expressed an earnest wish for her, and true to this divine encouragement she was moved and learned in reality to know the gift of God. Our Divine Saviour exposed her former life so that she exclaimed: "Master, I see that thou art a prophet." She received His instruction with greater and greater attention until He gave her to know that He was the promised Saviour. Full of joy she hastened to the city, announced it everywhere and induced many to come out and see the Saviour. Happy and blessed soul! She knows now the gift of God, she possesses it, and it will not be taken from her, because she received the words of Christ with docility and humility, her spirit was enlightened as her heart was opened to sorrow. Just as soon as she recognized a prophet in Him who exposed her sins, she learned to find in Him to whom she subjected herself the Saviour of souls.

There were, therefore, two difficulties which re-

strained the Samaritan woman from the beginning from recognizing and accepting the gift of God. These difficulties keep many from the knowledge and the use of the Blessed Sacrament, namely the difficulty of the heart and the difficulty of the spirit.

3. The first difficulty comes from the heart which is never susceptible to the knowledge and grace of the Blessed Sacrament if it is not pure. A pure heart loves the Divine Saviour; a pure heart feels His presence in the Sacrament of the Altar and experiences its grace. But if one gives himself up to sensual pleasures or allows himself to be ruled by his selfishness and senses, how can he recognize the gift of God, or find in it joy and taste? To drink the chalice of Jesus Christ and the bowls of the world at the same time is evidently impossible.

The second difficulty is the difficulty of the spirit. The corruption of the world clouds the understanding, frivolity blinds it and darkens the heavenly good. For the truth is like God who can only be seen by a pure heart. Therefore the spirit of the world has nothing in common with the spirit of the gospel, and whoever is governed by the spirit of the world the Christian doctrine remains for him a sealed book, so that the understanding, because it is not the guide of his life, leads him from errors to doubt, and from doubt to indifferentism. He cannot recognize the gift of God. This twofold difficulty can only be set aside according to the example of the Samaritan woman by a docile reception of the reproach, and by an humble acknowledgment of guilt. But wherever the first is

rejected and the second despised a recognition of the marvelous gift of God is impossible.

Therefore, my dear friends, we find another saying of our Lord which is like to this first one, but instead of inspiring the soul with joy and hope it fills it with fear and sadness. And this is what our Divine Saviour in tears said of Jerusalem before His passion: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wing, and thou wouldst not." (Matth. 23, 37.) "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes." (Luke 19, 42.) Was this not as if He had said: "If thou hadst known the gift of God"?

But the conduct of Jerusalem was entirely different from the conduct of the Samaritan woman. When our Divine Saviour, tired from the labors of His life, weary from the pains of His passion, arrived at Golgotha and asked from the cross for a drink of water: "I thirst," then Jerusalem offered Him instead of a drink of fresh water only vinegar and gall. Instead of saying to Him with contrition and sorrow, "I see that thou art a prophet," it struck Him in the face with these contemptuous words: "If thou art the prophet, prophesy unto us who has struck thee." Instead of throwing itself at His feet and adoring Him: "I know that thou art Christ the Son of the living God," it nailed Him to the cross and shouted with contempt at Him: "If thou art the Christ, the Son of God,

come down from the cross and we will adore thee." Jesus Christ, it is true, cast a compassionate glance at Jerusalem, but at the same time a look of deep anger, which contained this sentence: "Now it is concealed from thy eyes."

4. Oh, how often did not Jesus Christ wish to gather those for whom He sacrificed Himself upon the cross under the wings of His divine Sacrament, and they would not! How often did He not want to bring peace and salvation to their souls, and they turned Him away! How often did He not wish to unite them to Himself in order that they might remain united with Him through time and eternity, but the separation is completed and the reckless conduct which despises faith in His presence, is their lot: "If thou hadst known the gift of God, but now it is hidden from thy eyes!"

Hidden! Is it to remain hidden from us, my friends? Oh, only not this! If you knew who He is that offers to us the bread of life, who gives Himself whole and entire to us as the food of our souls, you would exclaim with the Samaritan woman: "Lord, give us this bread!" You would remove every difficulty from the heart and the intellect, often come and often receive Him. You would then in truth possess the gift of God and experience a peace unknown to you, a peace that had fled and a joy in the Divine Saviour of our souls which is a foretaste of the heavenly joys. And not a little surprised thereby we would all exclaim: "Now I know the gift of God!" It is the bread of life, the salvation of the soul and the cause of our bliss. Amen.

## SERMON XV

### THE LOVE OF CHRIST

“I have loved you, sayeth the Lord: and you have said: wherein hast thou loved us?”—MALACH. I, 2.

Among all the words of God which Holy Scripture has preserved there is none more lovable than those which the Prophet Malachy places in the mouth of God when He addresses His people: “I love you.” But there is also no harder and more unjust question than that with which the people answer: “Wherein dost thou love us?” God, who freed Israel from the yoke of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea and the desert and made them a great and powerful people — God believed in consequence of an endless series of benefits given to His people to be able to call them to mind and to their senses: “I love you.” But these people contemptuously answered: “Wherein dost thou love us?”

Israel is not the only people whom God has loved so much and to whom He could rightly say: “I love you”; and Israel is not the only people that addressed the contemptuous answer to God: “Wherein dost thou love us?” We also, my Christian people, were typified by Israel; we, whom the Lord has nourished for the last eighteen hundred years in the bosom of His love and whom He wishes to gather under the wings

of His love as the hen gathers her young under her wings; we, whom He wishes to free from the things of earth, and teach us to fly to heaven as the eagle instructs its young, we are especially the ones whom our Lord had in mind when He said these words: "I love you." But, alas, we make answer to Him every day: "Wherein dost thou love us?" Yes, no more bitter answer can be given to God for none attacks Him more immediately in His most lovable quality, namely, in His goodness; nothing wounds Him more than to doubt His love, and nothing pains Him more than the misuse or the bad use of the gift of His love. As the last time we considered the gift of God, so today we will consider more closely the love of Christ in this gift, that is, in the Blessed Sacrament.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. "Wherein dost thou love me?" The poor man asks the Lord. My life is hard labor and the ways of this world have only thorns for me. The lands of the rich have no food to nourish me and his vineyard no wine to refresh me. Wealth, pleasure, joy, what makes the happiness of the rich, is denied to me: wherein dost thou love me?

I love thee, answers the Lord. For on thy account I was born poor, lived and died poor. I love thee, therefore I say: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, and when all abandon thee, I will not abandon thee. The lands of the rich have no food for thee, but the fields of Providence always permit thy daily bread to grow. Thou hast, it is true, neither wealth nor



joys which corrupt the heart and pass away with life, but for this very reason I said: Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Wherein dost thou love me?” speaks the saddened soul to the Lord. I am sunk in mourning. Thou hast taken from me the one who was dearer to me than life itself: parents, a husband, a wife, a brother, sister or child. O Lord, if thou hadst made such close, such tender bonds, why hast thou made them, or why hast thou broken them, and if thou break them, wherein dost thou love me?

I love thee — answers the Lord; for I had you in my mind when I said: “Blessed are the mourners for they shall be comforted.” In order to sanctify thy tears I wept myself over my dead friend Lazarus; in order to awaken thy hope I awakened him from death. Every soul will be overtaken with sadness, but I love thee and for this reason was my soul sad too, even unto death. Bitter sorrow bows thee down, but whoever thou art that walkest the way of sorrow, look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

But our Divine Saviour does not only address these words to the poor, to the suffering, or to the sorrowful. No one is excluded from His love. No one has the right to ask Him: “Wherein dost thou love me?” I love thee, He says to the rich man; for I have placed thee as the servant of my Providence and as a father to the poor. I love thee, He says to the powerful of this world, for I have confided to thee my sword for the punishment of the wicked and my highest power for the protection of the good. I love you, He says to

the children, for yours is the kingdom of heaven; I love you, He says to all, for I have stretched out my arms to you all from the cross.

But, my friends, where does our Lord address these words to us all more immediately and with greater emphasis if not in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? Oh, how much I love you, says the Saviour of our souls in the Blessed Sacrament, be it that He speaks more openly to us during solemn festivities of the Church when exposed on the altar, be it that He whispers to us from the darkness of His tabernacle, or even makes known to us this gracious mystery in the privacy of our own homes. Yes, if others doubt, if they have the presumption to ask about the measure of their love — we shall never doubt and never be influenced by the feeling of ingratitude and lack of confidence, and never ask wherein dost thou love us?

And yet, if the Saviour of our souls speaks to us in His adorable Sacrament and says: I love you, let us not refuse to examine with zealous longing how much love is hidden under the veil of this Sacrament. Let us not speak to the Lord in the spirit of distrust, but strive to make gratitude and love towards Him grow in us: wherein dost thou love us. Holy Scripture says: "Blessed are they that search his testimonies, that seek him with their whole heart." (Ps. 118, 2.)

2. St. John the beloved disciple of the Lord expressed the whole thought of his Divine Master at the institution of the Blessed Sacrament with these words: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end." (John 13, 1.) He wanted

to say, as it were, the whole life of Jesus was without doubt one of love; love at Bethlehem, love at Nazareth, love everywhere and always; but love especially, living, tender, affectionate love at the last supper when His passion was at hand. And in fact, here in the Blessed Sacrament is gathered all His love, which spread over His whole life in a marvelous and wonderful greatness. My friends, let us consider this divine Sacrament; we will find in it three precious treasures which exhibit His love. First His Sacred Heart which loved us so much, secondly His passion, that great means and glorious proof of His love, third His divine grace, the fruit of His love through the merits of His suffering.

First His Sacred Heart, for here it is present, here it lives, here it beats in love for us. Where can we better apply the words of Holy Scripture than here: "I sleep and my heart watcheth." (Cant. 5, 2.) Behold Him as a little child in the stable at Bethlehem reclining on the bosom of His mother. Scarcely a movement, scarcely a breath, scarcely a tear shows that He lives. How could He be the Saviour of the world? Fear not. "I sleep and my heart watcheth." His heart watches; it had already called to His crib the rich and the poor, the high and the low. The voice of the angel, it is His heart, that watches and speaks to the shepherds: "Peace to men on earth who are of good will." The star, which led the Magi, is His heart, that watches and leads. And now let us approach the tabernacle; what annihilation, what an unbroken silence, what a deep sleep! But be not de-

ceived — He speaks to us — the deeper the silence I observe the better I hear you praying to me: the more I conceal myself under the veil of the species of bread, the nearer I am to you; the more I appear to sleep, the more awake I am: “I sleep and my heart watcheth.” O Christians! however great your trials and sufferings, your infidelity and sinfulness may be, console yourselves at the altar with the Blessed Sacrament. Take courage. In the tabernacle Jesus Christ sleeps in order that this humble sleep may take away from us all fear; but His heart watches in order that His watchfulness may inspire us with confidence: “I sleep and my heart watcheth.”

Secondly, we find here, my friends, the passion of our Lord, of which the Blessed Sacrament is the living memorial. According to the decrees of divine Providence the world was to be redeemed not only by the life of the Saviour, by His teaching and miracles, but especially by His bitter passion and death. But like His passion and death so is also the unbroken continuation of the holy sacrifice of the Mass only one sacrifice on the cross. We cannot separate the one from the other, the passion from the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The love of Jesus Christ is here just as great as His love in His passion on the cross, and His passion and the Blessed Sacrament form one connected whole. First He instituted the Sacrament and afterwards offered His body on the cross, in order that He could always give it in the holy sacrifice and in the Blessed Sacrament. For this reason He says: “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay

down his life for his friends." (John 15, 13.) Yes, O Lord, it is true. First a bloody death on the cross, and afterwards to remain as a sacrifice of love for our salvation on our altars, that means to love as no other ever has loved.

Third and lastly we find here the grace which is the fruit of the passion of Christ, and which the Blessed Sacrament communicates as the sublimest of all the greater abundance so that we become here one with Jesus Christ, and not we any more, but Christ lives in us. For as He assumes in this Sacrament the species of bread for our sakes, so we gradually by the frequent and worthy reception of the species lay aside the old man born and lost in Adam and become new men like unto Christ and in consequence of which we will be raised from the dead to eternal life. Therefore our Divine Saviour says: "Who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him and I will raise him up on the last day and he shall live for ever."

3. We find therefore, my dear friends, in the Blessed Sacrament a threefold proof of our Saviour's love. His heart that loves us; His passion that redeems us; His grace that sanctifies us. If therefore our Saviour says: I love you, so think not that I will long ask: wherein dost thou love me? No, I will much more at once raise my eyes to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and in joy and gratitude say to Him: Yes, Lord! Thou lovest us, and I know how much Thou dost love us.

But could not our Saviour ask us: wherein do you

love me? Oh, let us not remain at the words of love! Let our love not be only on our lips, in order that we may not be like to the people of whom our Lord says: "This people honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." (Matth. 15, 8.) Our Lord asks us if we love Him by our works, by the conduct of our life and especially that we honor and make use of His gifts. The rule of life which He gives is fixed. "If anyone love me he will keep my word and my Father will love him . . . and I will love him and he will do the will of my Father who is in heaven, and the will of my Father is that you shall be holy." (John 14, 23. Thess. 2, 13.) Oh, how much love there is in chastity, humility and patience, and in the conscientious fulfillment of our Christian duties! The purity of the chaste has a voice like unto the voice of the angels, and is ceaselessly saying to God: I love thee. The hidden life of the humble, even its silence cries to God: I love thee. The patient suffering has a glorious tone which means: I love thee. What is the conscientious fulfillment of our Christian duties, the faithful diligence and devotion at divine service but a hymn of praise: I love thee? But it can become only true, or rather, it can hardly become true except by the frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament from which the words of our Lord to the soul come: I love thee. And as a truer and purer echo the soul of the worthy communicant answers: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Amen.

## SERMON XVI

### THE HIDDEN GOD

“Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour.”  
—ISAIAH, 45, 15.

Among the mysteries of Christianity there is one deeper and yet more lovely than all the rest. It might be called a deep night and yet it is the light that enlightens us. It might be called the most absolute silence, and yet it speaks the most eloquent language. It might be called inactivity and death, and it is such a divine life that He who accepts it exclaims: “I live no more, but Christ liveth in me.”

What then is this mystery? You have guessed it: it is the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The words of the prophet may be especially applied to this: “Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, our Saviour.” Yes, so it is! Jesus Christ conceals Himself in this divine Sacrament. Why, then, does Christ conceal Himself here? Every Christian soul can answer this, for everyone knows at the bottom of his heart that this is the heart’s most intimate and dearest mystery. We shall therefore consider it more closely, and with the assistance of the Holy Ghost strive to learn why Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is our hidden God.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If Jesus Christ conceals Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, He does this first, in order to unite Himself more intimately with us; secondly, in order to work more effectively in us, and thirdly, in order to reveal Himself more plainly in us.

He conceals Himself first in the Blessed Sacrament in order to unite Himself more intimately with us. The fact which gives to man his first true worth and his noble greatness, is communion with God. What is, my friends, what is the man separated from God by sin? His body is like the leaf on the tree, that is green in spring and withers in fall. The soul is like the earth without water, sterile and waste, and his life is a mist that passes away. But in his union with God, man rises great and noble. His soul is an image of God, his body, his organs and senses, the faithful and obedient servants of the soul, which assist it in retaining and developing its strength. There exists between God and man intimate mutual bonds. When he is born he comes forth from the hand of God, and when he dies he should return to the bosom of God. His life is passed within these bounds; it is the way that leads from God to God. But in order that man may go this way and remain united with God he has found means through His glorious love to draw these bonds closer and faster all the time. Religion is nothing else than the history of this divine invention.

From the beginning of the world the eternal Son of God entered into intercourse with man; He communicated to him his knowledge, he instructed him in



the truths which he had to believe and the virtues which he had to practice. He prepared for Himself a chosen people and manifested to them great things by His ambassadors and prophets. But as yet the Son of God had not appeared among men, He still dwelled above them in the high heavens. This first bond was not sufficient for His love. After He had dwelled for a long time above us, He willed to take up His abode with us: He became man. How much more intimate is this bond? The Son of God in the Incarnation does two things, which for us are equally necessary and sweet. He conceals Himself and yet draws near. If He were to approach us without concealing Himself our eyes would be blinded; if He would conceal Himself without approaching us we would know Him less and love Him less. But He conceals Himself and yet draws near to us. He conceals Himself, and I can the better rejoice in the shadow of His wings. He approaches and my soul cleaves closely to Him: "And I will rejoice under the covert of thy wings: my soul hath stuck close to thee: thy right hand hath received me." (Ps. 62, 9.)

Holy veil of the Incarnation! Adorable body of our Saviour! Divine hands which labored for us, divine feet which were tired seeking us! And Sacred Heart which loved us so much! In you the Son of God concealed Himself and through you He approached us. The Lord was great — says St. Bernard — and worthy of all our praise; when He became man He made Himself small but most worthy of our

love above all. "Great is the Lord and worthy of all praise, insignificant as man, is the Lord and worthy of all love."

If we consider Him as a babe in the manger at Bethlehem or sleeping in the arms of His mother, He appears to me much more insignificant than in His eternal birth from God the Father, and therefore I love Him. When He works with Joseph in the carpenter-shop at Nazareth He appears to me much smaller than when in His omnipotence He made the world, and therefore I love Him. When He is served by Martha in the house of Lazarus and adored by Mary, He appears much smaller than when He dwells in heaven where the angels serve Him and the celestial hosts adore Him, and therefore I love Him. When He is in His passion filled with sadness and pain, and dies in agony on the cross, He appears much smaller than when He lives and reigns with God the Father and the Holy Ghost from eternity, and therefore I love Him. "Small is the Lord and most worthy of love."

But if Jesus Christ conceals Himself so deeply in His Incarnation, can He conceal Himself still more? And if He approaches so close to us in His humanity, can He come still nearer to us? And yet this is what He does, and this is the greatest invention of His glorious love. He conceals Himself still deeper under the species of bread, but He approaches us so close that He becomes the food of our souls in holy communion. He makes Himself still smaller and therefore all the more worthy of our love. "Small is the

Lord and worthy of all love." He is smaller under the species of bread than in the form of man; smaller in the tabernacle than in the stable of Bethlehem; smaller on the altar than on the cross, and smaller still in our hearts after holy communion. Our heart is then the cradle where He lies; the carpenter-shop where He works; the place where He lives. It is Golgotha, where He sacrifices Himself, and the grave wherein He is laid. Nowhere has He made Himself so small, and therefore we can nowhere love Him more. "Small is the Lord and worthy of all love." The Blessed Sacrament is therefore the most intimate bond that can lead man back to God, and here the words of Holy Scripture have found their special meaning: "Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour."

2. Secondly, Jesus Christ conceals Himself in order to work more effectually in us. It pleased the goodness of our Divine Saviour to include in the sublime Sacrament of the Altar the richest treasure of His graces, and to make it the most powerful means of our salvation. Therefore holy communion was through all ages the living spring of holiness for all the faithful. It brought forth the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins, and all good Christians. Where holy communion flourishes, where souls long for it, as the earth longs for the fructifying rain, there waxes stronger living faith and joyful hope and warm Christian love, there, in one word, is Christianity. But where communion has come into disuse, where dust covers the table of the Lord, there all has perished and

an un-Christian and fruitless life reigns. Holy communion brings to us the treasures of God; it instructs and confirms us in the Christian virtues. Under the silence of the species of bread it possesses an inimitable eloquence, which human words cannot reach and which teaches divine mysteries.

Yes, my beloved friends, what did you know before you knew and tasted the Blessed Sacrament, or if you have not tasted it, and therefore do not understand it, what do you know? Do you understand the chastity of the body and soul, before you have received Him who alone can purify and sanctify body and soul? Do you understand humility, if you are not nourished by the mysterious bread wherein God humiliates Himself? Do you understand patience if you are not united with Him who offered Himself as a patient sacrifice, or do you understand love if you do not partake of the banquet of love? But if the Blessed Sacrament has become the chosen food of your soul, what do you not know of the divine doctrines and sublime ways which lead Christian souls from virtue to virtue? Yes, baptism has indeed made us Christians, but the Blessed Sacrament makes us perfect Christians. In truth, we are often tempted to believe that there are two kinds of Christianity. The first is that one where the commandments of God and of His holy Church are always heavy, the yoke of Christ and His burden oppressive. The other is that one where the commandments are easy, the yoke soft and the burden sweet. The first kind is the Christianity of those who taste not the Blessed Sacrament

and therefore do not rightly understand and the second kind is the Christianity of those who love the Blessed Sacrament from their hearts and in deed. This is the power of the Blessed Sacrament, a power for which we must thank Him who works in and through it on our souls. "Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour."

3. Thirdly, Jesus Christ conceals Himself in the Blessed Sacrament in order to reveal Himself more clearly to us. This Sacrament is certainly a deep mystery, but the living faith of the Christian penetrates this veil, finds the revelation of the same, namely, the Saviour of our souls. Jesus Christ appears only on this account to annihilate Himself, as it were, in the Blessed Sacrament in order to revive in each one who often receives Him worthily, and thus to continue the revelation of His work in the person of each Christian. He came down upon this earth in order to unite Himself to our nature, and to join the bonds with God more closely. But just as the old Adam is continued in us all by original sin and revealed by our fallen nature, so will Christ now as the new Adam continue the Christian generations in order that His nature, His life, and His virtues may be revealed in us. He does this through the Blessed Sacrament, through holy communion. As earthly bread is changed into our substance, so Jesus Christ changes our fallen nature and depraved souls by the frequent worthy reception of this Sacrament and gradually makes us participate in His nature. Therefore the Apostle says: "I live, nay not I, but Jesus liveth in

me." Christ Himself says: "Whoever eateth this bread abideth in me and I in him." And verily here is Christ who always showed Himself to the world humble, chaste, patient and meek. Now this divine life is buried in the mystery of the Sacrament, but this mystery only awaits unveiling. What is this unveiling or revelation? The life of everyone who frequently and worthily receives our Divine Saviour therefore the humble, chaste, patient, meek life. Yes, the Sacrament of the Altar is a mystery: the life and the virtues of a Christian are the unveiling or the explanation of this mystery: "Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour."

How can I better conclude, my dear Christians, than with the deeply felt wish: If thou hadst known the gift of God, certainly with joyful gratitude and thankful longing thou wouldst seize it with both hands. "Would that thou hadst known what was for thy peace, and would that thou knew Him that offers it to thee." You would not hesitate, and would set aside all human respect. You would love this hidden God, this mysterious nourishment, because it unites you intimately with Jesus Christ. You would taste it and often taste it, because it works so powerfully upon our souls. You would never forget that the more Christ conceals and annihilates Himself therein, the more He wills to live in us and to reveal Himself in our works. Thus we shall merit that our Divine Saviour shall reveal Himself eternally in us by the reward of His heavenly glory. Amen.

## SERMON XVII

### THE SWEETEST MEMORY AND THE BEST HOPE

“Thou shalt make the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to be joyful.”— Ps. 64, 9.

The traveler who ascends a high mountain often halts on his way and while he casts a look back over the way he has come, and forwards over the way he is yet to go, he gladly thinks of the impressions received and what still awaits him. Without doubt he is already tired, but how many agreeable memories has he not already gathered, and how many pleasant joys experienced! What pleased him most particularly, he remembers most gladly and thinks about it with the greatest satisfaction. Thus is it also with the way that still lies before him. Without doubt his fatigue increases, but there awaits him on the mountain a glorious view, or the rest which he longs for. He rejoices on this account and animated by the thought of the past and encouraged by the thought of the future he continues his journey. Thus it happens with us on our journey through life. If we cast a retrospective glance over our life we find sweet memories, if we look forward into the future it gladdens us with the best hope. I will therefore speak to-day of this sweetest memory and best hope.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If we cast a retrospective glance over our past life we find good and evil days. The evil days—who of us, my friends, has not experienced that as the birds were made to fly so man was made for labor and tribulations. (Job 5, 7.) Our life began in tears, and our childhood passed in sighs. Then came the hardships of our first youth, the faults of our growing self-love, and the sorrows of the soul, which could not of itself comprehend its misery and nothingness. Later on, laden with earnest business, disappointments, losses, and above all, severe injuries, which we were powerless to banish from our minds. How many smiled over our cradles, over whose graves we have wept! How many friends and companions of our youth have departed from us! How many came after us in this earthly life and have preceded us in death! A few years, a few days were sufficient to wound us deeply. But since we have the good fortune to be Christians, what are all these sufferings of our past life beside the sins which we have committed! As good Christians we must especially think of this with bitterness of heart. What have we not received from the blessed hand of God without having desecrated it by our sins? How many talents have we buried and what kind of fruit have we brought forth? How little use have we made of the sacraments, and how little have they served us in the salvation of our souls! Christ called us to His right side but we went to His left. Many days we would like to bury in impenetrable darkness because they only remind us of grievous sins.



But along side of these evil memories there are also memories which rejoice the soul and these are above all those happy moments which divine Providence grants to every man, so that there is not one who cannot say: "I have tasted a little honey before I died." (1 Kings 14, 23.) If childhood had its tears it also had its joys when the family circle was its horizon, and the child knew no other person than his father whom he honored and his mother whom he loved. If the age of youth has its tribulations it has also its joyful hours, and the heart expands with holy inspirations which promise true happiness.

But just as sins are the bitterest memories of the good Christian, so he thinks of nothing so joyfully as the graces which he has received from God. He remembers the baptismal grace and innocence which placed him among the children of God; he remembers his first prayer, his first alms, the day on which his Christian mother first took him to church, how many favors has he not received from heaven as he grew older and approached the age of maturity. How many holy lessons has he not heard, and if he remained true to them, how many good works would he not have accomplished, which are precious in the sight of God! But nothing inspires him with more gratitude, he esteems nothing higher than the communions he has received. These were the good odor of his life, and these he joyfully inhaled; they were the treasure of his days and these he counts with holy pride. He has not forgotten how every communion has protected him from a danger, adorned him with a new virtue,

or inspired him with a new love for it. Yes, he is mindful of those good days when he approached the altar of God with renewed, with holy innocence, to Him who rejoiced his youth. (Ps. 4, 4.)

But as one star surpasses another in brilliancy and clearness, so one communion surpasses another. There is one to which he gives the preference: one of which he always thinks and which has its sweetest memories: it is his first communion.

The first communion! how we prepared ourselves for it, be it by innocence of life, be it by the first contrition for our sins! At that time Jesus Christ entered into our souls for the first time; at that time the angels themselves envied us our happiness: on that day a Christian people surrounded us and repeated with the Israëlite woman: "Blessed is the bosom that bears Jesus." And if the people were silent the very stones of the church would cry out and praise God. Yes, on that day our childish prayers were heard, our faith was still living, our hope well-grounded, our love most intimate.

Before first communion everything passes into forgetfulness. It is surrounded with the rays of the holy innocence of a happy heart that goes to our Divine Saviour in longing and love for the preservation of the soul. It is the most precious pearl which remains of our past life; it is therefore in truth the sweetest memory for the Christian.

2. Now if we look towards the future we shall find suffering and joy, fear and hope, good and evil days. We will see how disease will destroy our bodies and

weaken our souls; we will see how our friendships shall be extinguished and the tenderest ties destroyed. Much misery, much unhappiness awaits us, with which God in His mercy will lead us to knowledge and separate us from the love of this world. But as our most oppressive suffering in the past was our sins, so in every case, as far as we can see into the future, we must fear our own unfaithfulness. If I, perhaps,—thus each one may say to himself to reckon up his fears and hopes,—shall I perhaps be so unfortunate as to commit grievous sins? Shall I begin or continue to live in indifference in regard to the salvation of my soul, to remain far away from my Divine Saviour, and what then will be my eternal lot? Behold this is what inspires me with most anxiety and terror! But what have I to hope for? On what good fortune can I still depend? I seek not for human happiness. The past has showed me sufficiently its emptiness. It behooves me much more to give to God all the days that still remain to me so that I can say: “The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.” (Ps. 22, 1.) I shall beg of Him every day my daily bread, and He, who forgets not the sparrow on the roof, will give it to me; He who clothes the lilies of the field, will also clothe me; He who has given a roof to the turtle dove will not deny one to me. This childlike confidence is sufficient to banish all anxiety from my future.

But wherein I still more hope is on the one hand in new graces from God and on the other a faithful coöperation with these graces. In the past I have

prayed, I shall still pray, and better. I have sought to do good, and shall still do it, and more; I have practiced the Christian virtues, I will practice them still more. I shall show greater zeal and devotion and reverence at divine service, and will joyfully observe the commandments of God and of His Holy Church. These are the pious hopes which fill my life now with peace and beauty.

But what is there in the life of the Christian that is good? what is truly beautiful, if it be not the wheat of the chosen, the bread of eternal life? Yes, my most confident hope rests in the communions which I shall make! I gave to one of my holy communions in the past the preference, and I called it my sweetest memory. Will it also be thus with my future ones? Ought I not to be able to call one my best hope? Yes, when I remember that my life must end and that this end is the transition into eternity and that our Lord will unite Himself to me for the last time in holy communion to banish all my anxieties and to show Himself to me as a reward for a true Christian life, then I say at once my last communion is my best hope.

The last communion! Yes, my dear friends, then we will not go to Jesus Christ in the church, but He will visit us on our sick-bed; how blessed will be His presence. In the first communion He gave us the kiss of peace, in the last He will give us the farewell kiss. But what makes our last communion especially precious, is the circumstance that the veil will soon fall. After a little while we shall see God; after a

little while and we shall find the Saviour of our souls! He stands behind the wall but He opens the window and looks through the shutters in order to see us more closely. (Cant. 2, 9.) His divine word trembles in our ears; it is already the weak echo of His voice which we shall hear in heaven. What should we then care for the evil and the good of this life? The evils of life we fear no more; the goods, we despise them on the death-bed. The last communion opens our eyes to the truth and banishes the terror of death, for love is stronger than death. It breathes into us the longing to be dissolved in order to live eternally with Christ.

3. Thus for the Christian, who understands and knows the gift of God, and what is to his peace, holy communion in the morning of his life is the sweetest memory, in the evening of his life, his best hope: "Thou shalt make the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to be joyful." May it be both for us. And yet, how is it otherwise possible if we only love holy communion and long to receive it? What one does not love, what he does not desire, lives only in a weak, joyless memory; what one does not love and what one does not desire can awake no hope. Or, how could we find joy in, and longing for Him, in whom during life and in health and full consciousness we had no joy and no love — how could we find joy in Him at the end of life, when filled with pain and anxiety half or entirely unconscious? How could we all at once possess that necessary contrition, faith, hope and love when we have not practiced these virtues

during life? Then, alas, the neglect of this food of the soul during life and the little desire for it in the moment of death avenges itself terribly on the dying. Both accompany the Christian as his faithful life-companions to his death-bed at his last communion. For what the youth does he will not depart from in old age, is a well-known adage. For this reason Christ said so touchingly: "If thou hadst known the gift of God!" "Oh, if thou hadst only known what was to thy peace!" If we only knew it, how happy we would then be! All our communions are like the first and the last, our sweetest memory and our best hope. Let us try to become more Christian, so that we may be found worthy to receive holy communion daily, or at least, every week. What a charm will then the rest of our days not possess for us! We can then say almost every day: Yesterday was a day of most joyous memory, for yesterday I had the privilege of receiving holy communion! And to-morrow is my best hope, for to-morrow I shall be so blessed as to receive holy communion. And at the end of my life, behold the last communion is absolutely my best hope to possess Jesus eternally and to enjoy the beatific vision in the company of the blessed. Amen.

## SERMON XVIII

### THE DIVINE BRIDEGROOM OF SOULS

“Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.”—  
MATTH. 25, 6.

Sacred day, day of heavenly mysteries, is the day of the Resurrection of our Lord, when the Church enraptured and with all her true children, true Christians in faith and love, intones the joyful alleluia, whose echo penetrates heaven, and the hosts of the glorified saints sing alleluia in union with the Church on earth. Yes, happy day, when humanity rises from sin to grace, and from death to life, and when even nature adorns itself anew for a worthy celebration. It shall now once more arise from its present state of stupefaction and return to its original state in paradise. But every individual Christian should arise from the fetters of sin, adorn his soul anew with innocence, and return to the bond which the Lord made with them and announced by His Prophet: “And I will espouse thee to me in faith: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.” (Osee 2, 20.) Yes, the Lord has again made a covenant on His side and He instituted the sign of this covenant on Maunday-Thursday. Therefore the words of the Apostle are addressed to each one of us: “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go forth to meet him.” Christ is therefore

the bridegroom of souls; in holy communion the marriage between Him and the soul of the worthy communicant is solemnized. This consideration, my friends, ought to make the words of our Divine Saviour sink deeper into our hearts: "If thou hadst known the gift of God." If we understood it, then we would truly prepare in joy for holy communion, for the arrival of our Lord, and adorn for Him our souls with renewed innocence, as a faithful bride joyfully adorns herself for the bridegroom. May the Holy Spirit graciously assist us, in order that reverence and love for this mysterious heavenly bread may increase in us, and the day of holy communion become truly a day of honor for us. Jesus, the bridegroom of our souls, shall form the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If we could perfectly see into the decrees of Divine Providence for the salvation of men, or if we could understand the wonderful combination of everything which God has done since the creation of man until the present time for his eternal welfare, we would, instead of being sunk in indifference to the mysteries of our holy faith, be more and more enlightened and be filled with reverence and joy. Even the little that we know, and the little that we have discussed in reference to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, allows us to imagine how much more there is still to say. There is much and sublime thought contained in the teachings of our holy Catholic faith, of which



neither the contemners in their boundless pride, nor the ignorant in their conscious ignorance have the slightest knowledge. We have before our eyes the sublimest mysteries, be it in the person of our Saviour, the Mediator between God and man, be it in the sacrifice that He instituted, in order that man might in harmony with the sacrifice of praise of heaven, possess also the sacrifice of praise of the world, for the holiest sacrifice in honor of the Triune God. The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and the Resurrection of our Lord reveals to us that we too will once arise with our body and soul and with us all nature to that glorious state in which the hand of God placed us, but from which we fell through sin. The tree of life, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, which the Lord planted for men in His new paradise, in His Holy Church, preserves by its fruit the soul from sin and from eternal death, and makes the body in consequence worthy to enjoy the resurrection. Thus the fruit of the tree of life in paradise was to have preserved the first man from sickness and death of the body. What then did it mean that the corpse of our Lord on the cross shed blood and water when His side was opened with a lance by the soldier?

This is such a simple matter that many discover no mystery in it. And yet, my friends, St. Paul and with him the holy Doctors of the Church discovered a fullness of mysteries in it, so that it is again revealed how marvelously divine wisdom glimmers through apparent unimportant things, and fulfills the eternal decrees of Providence. Water and blood flowed from

the side of our Lord. The water makes the earthly man a heavenly one; the water makes of the children of wrath, children of grace; children of darkness, children of light; and heirs of hell, heirs of heaven and temples of the Holy Ghost. This takes place by the water of holy baptism. But if man loses this grace by new sins and falls back into his old state, then the water of the tears of penance cleanses him again.

The blood from the wound of the side of our Lord is the price of our redemption. By this blood man enters into the completest union with Christ so that the old man lives no more — but the new, and he becomes, as it were, one body and one spirit with Christ and this takes place in holy communion. Men become Christians by the water of baptism and by the blood of holy communion, and the Church consists of Christians. The Church, therefore, came forth from the wound of the side of our Lord. This is precisely the teaching of St. Paul and of the holy fathers. But behold here a new aspect of Divine Providence reveals itself, so that we exclaim with amazement: “This is the hand of God.”

In paradise Adam is the first progenitor of man, and on the cross Jesus Christ is the second Adam and the second Father of man. Adam slept in paradise and from his side God created Eve, and Christ fell asleep on the cross and from the wound of His side God created the holy Church. Eve was the bride of the first Adam, and holy Church is, according to St. Paul, the bride of the second Adam, the bride of

Christ. Eve was the first mother of men, and the Church is the second. Eve caused the death of her children by the fruit of the tree, and the Church gives life to her children by the fruit of the tree of the cross. By the inspiration of God, Adam said: "Thou wast taken from man wherefore a man shall leave all and cleave to his wife." Thus, in truth, Jesus Christ left His heavenly glory in order to unite Himself with His Church on earth and to be with her until the end of the world. "Behold I am with you until the end of the world." Christ is therefore the Divine Bridegroom of the Church. The children of this heavenly marriage are the Christians, good or bad children, as they are good or bad Christians, obey or disobey their mother, the holy Church. Therefore the great and holy Bishop and Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine says: "Who has not the Church for his mother cannot have God for his Father." But Jesus Christ is also the Bridegroom of souls: "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him."

2. As the bridal couple are adorned on the marriage-day and betake themselves to the altar, and relations and friends for the greater solemnity of the festival accompany them and assist as witnesses, thus appears the Christian soul clad in the bridal robe of renewed innocence in the church in order to solemnize its bridal-day with the Divine Bridegroom in holy communion. For its sake He leaves heaven and appears in the church surrounded by His heavenly court, the ministering angels. He gives to the soul as a sign of their union the marriage ring, sanctifying grace; He speaks

the words: "I will make a covenant with thee . . . and I will espouse thee to me for ever: and I will espouse thee to me in justice, and judgment, and in mercy, and in commiserations, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." (Osee, 2, 18, 19, 20.) The witnesses of this union on the part of the Lord are the angels who accompany Him, and the witnesses of the bride are her guardian angel and the Christian people who are present. Now she lives not any more in herself, but Christ lives in her; she becomes one person with Him: "Who eateth of this bread, abideth in me and I in him." She enters into a communion with Him in His goods; His graces and His merits go over to her on earth and in heaven she participates in His eternal glory. But from these celestial espousals come forth, if it is solemnized on the part of the soul in sanctity, children of benediction, who administer to their mother eternal life. These children are good works begotten in love. They were born by the union of the Divine Bridegroom with the soul: "Whoever remains in me brings forth much fruit;" they were begotten in the soul itself from which they beheld the light of the world and as true children accompany the Christian soul in all its ways. But it has ever at its side in the countless dangers of this mortal life Jesus Christ, its Divine Bridegroom as its faithful protector. "I will espouse thee to me in faith, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

If the soul is stormed by the waves of powerful temptations and takes its refuge in Him, He says to it: "Why art thou fearful, thou of little faith?"

And at His command rest and peace return. If it is bowed down by the tribulations of this life, oppressed by misery and suffering, visited with want and care, He points to His own example and says: for thy sake I was poor and miserable, filled with anxiety and sadness, oppressed with pains and sufferings, therefore follow me and wherever I am, there you must also be! But for thy sake I have given command to my angels that they accompany thee in all thy ways, and my grace and protection will never be wanting to thee. What consolation does not the Christian soul find on his death-bed when he remembers the fidelity of the heavenly Bridegroom, when he does not separate himself from Him, commits no adultery with sin, and begets no children of wrath and damnation, that is, no sins! Soon the time will approach when the Bridegroom will appear to lead the soul into the heavenly bridal chamber, into His eternal bliss, where separation is impossible. The soul hears the call: "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go forth to meet him." Come, chosen bride of Christ, possess the crown which the Lord has promised those who love Him.

And although his body may be bent, his appearance wretched, his dress needy, his face covered with dust and sweat, and despised by all — however abased he is, the soul is the bride of a great King; it can joyfully say even here below with the Blessed Virgin Mary, the purest Bride of the Holy Ghost: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth

all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is his name." (Luke 1, 46, 49.) How will the soul rejoice when it has once put off the earthly veil of the body, and surrounded with beauty and loveliness, it enters the celestial bridal chamber, and full of admiration will ask with the angels: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. 6, 9.) This marriage which is entered into on earth by holy communion and preserved in fidelity by a Christian life will be consummated in heaven in the most wonderful manner in presence of the glorified saints, so that St. Paul declares that its joy and bliss, its brilliancy and glory cannot be described: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him." It is a participation in the glory of Christ Himself: "Whoever eateth of this bread abideth in me and I in him." "I espouse thee in faith and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

3. But, my dear friends, the call is also addressed to us: "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go forth to meet him!" Oh, may we not hear this call in vain, in order that we may not be excluded like the five foolish virgins from His grace on earth and His bliss in heaven! Should we not frequently desire the happiness to receive our Saviour in faith and love in holy communion, in order that our soul may become the happy bride of His love, happy by a numerous offspring, by Christian virtues and works of the love of

God and of the neighbor, and happy by a confident hope in His special protection and in the participation in His heavenly bliss? O my Jesus, how far must it have already gone with us if even Thy most pressing invitation to share in thy bridal banquet would not be capable of exciting in us the desire to appear at Thy table! But no: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after thee, O God; my soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. 41, 2, 3.)

There in the tabernacle we find our Divine Saviour, and the more longing and love we have for Him, the more we shall be filled with His grace. It is the beginning of the espousals with Christ, it shall be eternal in heaven and prepare an eternity of bliss. Jesus is wonderful in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, wonderful in heaven, and just as the Christian is happy by every worthy communion he will become immeasurably more happy by it as the eternal pledge of bliss. This happiness I wish you all. Amen.

## SERMON XIX

### THE LOVE OF JESUS IN HOLY COMMUNION AND THE EFFECTS IT PRODUCES IN THE SOUL

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven.”—  
JOHN, 6, 51.

Great and glorious are the graces which Jesus dispenses to us in the sacraments. But what should we say of the source of this immeasurable love, which centers in the Blessed Sacrament? Neither the tongue of man nor the language of angels could adequately express its sublime dignity. He is the Lord of majesty whose throne is heaven, whose foot-stool is the earth, whose messengers are the angels and all creatures obey His commands. It is our Divine Saviour Himself, who lives among us in the Blessed Sacrament. The Son of God came down from heaven in order to become man and redeem all on the cross, and He constantly comes from heaven now, in order to unite Himself in the Blessed Sacrament to each individual Christian for time and eternity and to make each one share in the redemption: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this Bread shall live forever.”

All the mysteries of God are great and wonderful, but for our Christian life and for the attainment of heavenly bliss there is none more important and more



consoling than the holy sacraments. In them, my friends, we learn to appreciate the power and work of our Divine Saviour and especially His promise: "Behold I am with you all days even unto the end of the world." (Matth. 28, 20.) In the holy sacraments He continues the redemption for each individual, which He accomplished for all on the cross. Among them the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is, as it were, the sun. All the sacraments have for their purpose our union with Christ, but in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, or in holy communion, this divine union is consummated. For this union with Christ in holy communion baptism first makes us competent; confirmation preserves it and makes it more worthy. Penance wipes out the sins which destroy it and places us in a position to reënter this union with Christ. Extreme Unction removes all obstacles at the end of life or confirms the union with Christ in the moment of death forever. The sacraments of holy orders and matrimony preserve the Church, the priest by administering the sacraments and marriage by begetting children in the faith.

But holy communion is especially for all those who receive it frequently and worthily what the tree of life in paradise was for Adam, whose fruit would have preserved his life immortal if he had not eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree. For this reason holy communion is called the bread of eternal life (John 6, 35). It is the heavenly manna whose prototype was the manna, which God caused to rain down from heaven for the preservation of the life of the Israel-

ites in the desert, and which contained within itself the taste of all kinds of food. King Solomon in the Book of Wisdom speaks of it with astonishment: "Instead of which things thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven prepared without labor; having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste." (Wisdom 16, 20.) But the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar which contains the sweetness of every taste, which satisfies the longing of every one, is immeasurably greater, sweeter, diviner than the manna. The Israelites asked in the desert when they were hungry: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. 77, 19.) Thus we can also ask: "Can God give us bread and furnish His people a table?" Jesus Himself gives the answer: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eateth of this bread will live forever."

This is, therefore, that wonderful table which God prepares for us, and the bread of life, which He places before us. What then is more natural than to speak of the love of the Saviour which He shows to us in holy communion and of the blessed effects of communion in the soul of the recipient? The love of Jesus in holy communion and the effects it produces in the soul. This will be the subject of our consideration to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. When we consider with attention what God has done for us and what means He uses in order to unite

us with Him and sanctify us, but if at the same time we reflect that man is as nothing to God and even less than nothing by sin, then there open up before our eyes two unfathomable abysses. The first abyss is God's love towards man, the second is the nothingness of man in reference to God, but precisely on account of this second abyss is the first still more unfathomable. Now the love of God shows itself in the dignity of the giver, in the worth of the gift, in the qualities of the recipient and in the effects of the gift. Ask Holy Scripture, ask your faith, who is the giver and the gift at the same time in holy communion? They will answer you: it is Jesus Christ as God and as Man. Here in this sacrament is the only-begotten Son of God, who, according to the words of St. Paul —“ who being the brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance ”— (Hebr. 1, 3) — just as immeasurable and omnipotent as His heavenly Father. Here is the ruler of the world, the Sanctifier and Saviour of souls; here is the last end of all created beings. And yet, while Jesus fills heaven and earth with His glory and power and everything announces His greatness to creatures, He wants to remain in the Blessed Sacrament, as it were, reduced almost to nothing, in order that we may have on earth a visible throne of His grace and approach it with confidence in order to pray for mercy and to find grace.

Wonderful mystery! The only-begotten Son of God leaves, so to say, the throne of His eternal majesty in order to place His seat in the small species of bread and wine. What may be the reason of this?

His love, the unfathomable abyss of His love! O my friends, ask your faith! and it will unveil new mysteries. It says to you: it was not enough for the Son of God to leave, as it werè, His seat of glory, no, as man Jesus cannot decide to leave entirely the place of His Passion, to leave earth. Here in this most holy Sacrament is the same Jesus who sanctified John the Baptist in the house of Zachary, filled the mother and child with the Holy Spirit and wishes to effect the same graces in our souls in holy communion. Here is Jesus who for three years taught and preached and worked miracles, and in this Sacrament He still teaches souls and reveals the miracles of His grace. It is the same Jesus, who for our salvation was scourged, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross, Who arose glorious from the dead and ascended into heaven, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. He is always present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Like Mary Magdalen weeping over her sins at the feet of the visible Saviour, like Zacchæus, who entertained Him in his house, and like Thomas falling in adoration before Him, so can we in the same manner bewail our sins before the Saviour, receive Him into our souls and kneel before Him in adoration. And what is the reason of this? The abyss of His love. Was it not, my friends, at least sufficient to institute this Holy Sacrament in order that we, like the Israelites in the desert, bitten by the serpents, directed their gaze to the brazen serpent hanging on the cross and were healed thereby, would it not have been sufficient

to look upon the species of bread and wine, wherein is concealed the Saviour, in order to be healed of our maladies? But no, this would not have satisfied the love of the Saviour. He wanted to give Himself as the food of our souls, and to take up His dwelling within them as long as the species of bread last. Unfathomable abyss of love! Holy David exclaims in amazement at the gifts of God to men: "What is man that thou shouldst regard him, or why dost thou incline thy heart to him?" Thus we may also say to the Saviour: what is man that thou shouldst visit him with such a new and unheard-of invention of love? Is He then so great and of such holy importance? O Saviour, consider well into whose dwelling Thou enterest! We are a vessel full of malice, born in sin, from youth inclined to sin, and Thou wishest to come into us, eternal Holy God! Our tongue is, according to the words of Thy Apostle James (3, 6) a world full of injustice and it should touch Thy Most Holy Body! Our breast is the seat of all kinds of evil desires and malicious wishes and Thou wilt here take up Thy abode! What is man in comparison with Thy omnipotence, glory and sanctity? Nothing, dust and ashes, and over all this a sinner! If we could entirely comprehend our own misery it would be sufficient to make us exclaim with amazement at the wonderful greatness of the love of Jesus in this Most Holy Sacrament: "What is man that thou shouldst regard him or incline thy heart to him?"

2. What then, my friends, is the intention of our Divine Saviour towards us in this Most Holy Sacra-

ment? Here we come upon a new and inexhaustible source of the love of our Saviour for us. His words: "Behold I am with you all days even unto the end of the world" tell us everything. The Blessed Sacrament is a memorial of all the works which Jesus practiced when still visible on earth for the welfare of men. But it is not only a memorial of this, but a continual renewal of them for the welfare of each one of us. When our Divine Saviour dwelled visibly on earth, He was the physician of men; He gave sight to the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead, salvation to souls and a power went out from Him which healed all. He is also here in the Blessed Sacrament still the physician and the medicine of souls. He heals the blindness of the intellect and the diseases of the soul, breathes new life and strength into it, cures the wounds of sin, controls the passions and even furthers the welfare of the body.

When our Divine Saviour dwelled upon earth He was the teacher of men, He is now our teacher also, He enlightens your understanding, writes His law in your heart and fills you with the true wisdom of life. Then He was the Saviour of men; He freed them from the dominion of the devil, snatched them from destruction and broke the chains of sin. And here too in the Blessed Sacrament He is your Saviour, for behold, He has redeemed you with His flesh and blood, and in virtue of which you have courage to withstand the attacks of Satan, to escape destruction and to overcome the onslaughts of sin. "I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for my sheep," thus the world

hears Him speak ; but even now He is your good shepherd, calls you, carries you back, allows you to sit at His table, and gives Himself for you. He is here still always the best friend of your soul, who invites you to His marriage feast. If thou art in trouble and anxiety, in need or in doubt, here is thy consoler, helper and counselor. Then He was inflamed with a longing for the salvation of men, with the unfortunate, He wept tears of sympathy, and with the fortunate He rejoiced. He is still now inflamed with the desire for thy salvation ; He is worried over thy misfortune and rejoices over thy good fortune. Whoever asked Him, when on earth, in vain for help, in vain took refuge to Him, who returned from Him with empty hands ? And behold He still lives in the Blessed Sacrament, for He still refreshes all who come to Him, still works miracles of grace, forms souls in angelic purity, and sanctifies the brides of His love : “ And my delight is to be with the children of men.” (Prov. 8, 31.) O wonderful love of our Blessed Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament ! I can now cry out in joy with Job : “ I know that my saviour liveth.” (Job 19, 25.) I know it from His words, I know it from His intention, I know it from His love. Most Holy Sacrament, abyss of love, would that men might know thee ! Truly, no more holy and intimate wish would ever possess them than to often and worthily receive thee, not one would go to ruin if this would take place.

3. My friends, do you not now believe where such great love of Christ is evident that there must be also a corresponding effect of this holy sacrament in the

soul of the communicant? I speak, of course, only of those who approach the table of the Lord worthily. The effects of holy communion are two: one in regard to the body, the other in regard to the soul. By holy baptism our body is made the dwelling place of grace, a temple of the Holy Ghost, as Holy Scripture calls it. In holy communion His flesh is transformed, as it were, into ours, His blood into our blood. The consequence is that our body is sanctified, the passions weakened, the evil inclinations restrained, and is presented to God as a holy, living, pleasing sacrifice. (Rom. 12, 1.) The Christian who frequently receives holy communion worthily, feels, that also his body experiences the presence of his Saviour, as St. John the Baptist did at the visitation of Mary. It is as if a new, pure and holy life flowed through his members. Therefore holy communion is called the bread of angels, not because the angels receive it, but because it makes the Christians like angels. The angels have no bodies, and those who receive holy communion often worthily seem to have no bodies any more, for they are raised above the desires of the body and reach an immaculate chastity and purity by the repeated enjoyment of this holy food. Moderation and diligence are its accompaniments, rest and constancy its conduct, and morality is evident in the eyes, mouth and ears of the recipient. As good food with its nutrition preserves the whole body, so does this heavenly food also preserve the whole body. What other effect can it have than to sanctify the body?



This corporal union which we enter into with the Saviour is so intimate that St. Cyril likens it to two pieces of wax which have flowed together. St. Chrysostom in the fourth century said: "O man! consider the honor which you share in, when you approach the holy table. Here we receive Him whom the angels behold with trembling, we unite ourselves with Him, we become one flesh and one body with Him." My friends, we can say with St. Paul: "I live, nay not I, but Christ liveth in me." Holy communion is the source of all purity and chastity of the body, and we have a well-grounded hope of the resurrection of the body to eternal glory, because our Divine Saviour has sanctified it by His flesh and blood. If the Christians only knew how to esteem this glorious food better, we would be obliged to hold their zeal in check instead of bewailing their indifference with sorrow. Instead of a licentious life, angelic purity would reign, and instead of drawing water from the cess-pool of the passions, they would long for the well-spring of living water. Christ is the life of the body.

4. The effects of holy communion in the soul are still more glorious. Jesus Himself says: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." (John 6, 58.) As Jesus as the only-begotten Son of God has His life and being and all perfections from the Father, lives in Him and through Him, so has everyone who receives the holy body of the Lord worthily, his being and life, all virtues and graces from

Him. He can rightly say: "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2, 20.) Or as Christ confirms with other words: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." (John 6, 57.) Think of the happiness which the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and the Apostles had, when they could be with our Divine Saviour; we almost feel like envying them. But no! this happiness is also given to us, to be in the company of the Saviour who is the joy and the happiness of the angels and the saints in heaven. Oh, the love, oh, the goodness of the Saviour! How true are the words of Holy Scripture: "Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath God so nigh to them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. 4, 7.)

But our Divine Saviour is not satisfied to only live within our soul; He wishes to unite Himself so intimately with us, that we are one with Him and in a certain sense share in His divine nature. A spiritual change is effected in the soul by holy communion, but Jesus does not change Himself into us, but we poor mortals are transformed into Jesus, so true is this, that our body becomes His body, our blood His blood, our soul His soul, and our life His life. We live by Him just as our bodies live by the soul: "Whoever eateth me will live through me." Christ the life of the soul! Now, my friends, we can explain why the Council of Trent said of holy communion: "It is an antidote which frees us from daily sin and preserves us from mortal sin." (Sec. X, Cap. II.) Holy communion cleanses us from small sins or faults, since it

moves us to true contrition and love, and preserves us from grievous sins. It increases in us especially sanctifying grace. The more sanctifying grace is increased in us by worthy communion, the holier and more heavenly becomes the life of the soul, the more it becomes like unto Jesus, the greater its merits, the more beautiful its virtues, as is evidenced by the lives of the saints.

Holy communion increases in a special manner as the sacrament of love, divine love in the soul. Our Saviour Himself says: "I am come to cast fire on earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke 12, 49.) He it is who in holy communion fills the soul more and more with love of God; He enriches it with a higher enlightenment by means of which it has a better insight into what is good and bad, what can please or displease God. Therefore, a simple farmer, one of the faithful from the common people, who possesses no learning but receives holy communion with love and devotion, is more enlightened in the ways of God, more experienced in the knowledge of holy things than the greatest secular scholars whom the world praises, because love enlightens him, and He who communicates it to him is the light of the world and the spring of love.

Who could completely control the onslaughts of those evil inclinations which remain in us even after baptism without holy communion? Therefore holy communion is that mysterious bread described in the Scriptures (Ps. 103) which strengthens the heart of man. It is the bread of the strong. We can rightly

say with the royal Prophet: "Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me." (Ps. 22, 5.) Who else are these persecutors if not the evil spirit, the enticements of the world and our own passions? In order to protect us against them God prepared this divine food. Here anger is softened by a frequent reception of holy communion; here revenge and enmity is subdued; here the attacks against the virtue of chastity disappear or are lessened, and here impatience is overcome. Here is the same Jesus who once stilled the storms and the waves of the sea, and still quiets the storms of the human heart or weakens them, and here He gives the strength to resist every temptation. St. John Chrysostom says of the first Christians: "They went forth from this holy table with the courage of the lion, and terrified the powers of hell." The greatest proof are the words of our Saviour: "Whoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him." Even the greatest saints had to overcome grievous temptations; yes, the greater, the holier they were. "Whoever wishes to serve God — says Holy Scripture — let him be prepared for temptations." But the saints resisted and conquered temptation, because they often received holy communion. But if so many Christians are overcome by the least temptation, it is because they deprive themselves for months and years of this greatest means against temptations.

5. My friends, where such effects are united in the Blessed Sacrament it necessarily follows that the soul must also be prepared for eternal life. But that is

the eternal and blessed life which we will possess with God in heaven forever, see Him face to face and enjoy Him without end. In confirmation of this promise Jesus communicates Himself to us in holy communion, where we see Him with the eyes of faith, and enjoy Him under the veil of bread. Therefore He says: "Whoever eateth my flesh will live forever." It is therefore the pledge of eternal life which God Himself has given us. Our heavenly Father could give no more precious pledge of His promises than His only-begotten Son, and as St. Paul says: "He hath with him, given us all things." (Rom. 8, 32.) The Son of God, our Saviour, could therefore give us no greater pledge than Himself, and with Himself all the rights and claims which we have to heaven through His precious blood. The Holy Ghost endows us and gives us into our hearts His grace as the pledge of our inheritance.

But holy communion is more than a pledge, it is an effective means to really gain eternal life, since it preserves us from sin, increases grace, weakens or destroys our evil inclinations, and gives us the constancy of always pleasing God by a frequent reception of communion. Yes, holy communion is, as it were, a beginning of future bliss, by union with Jesus through the love it inspires and the peace and joy that it causes in the heart. We can therefore rightly exclaim: O abyss of love that here reveals itself! O gracious intention which our Divine Saviour exhibits in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament! How wonderful are the effects and how precious the blessings which

it pours out upon the worthy communicant. God gives Himself to us as the bread of life; it sanctifies the body and unites the soul with Jesus, and creates it again, as it were, in it. It preserves and increases grace and is a pledge of eternal life. Could God do more than He has done? Could He show His love in a greater measure, strengthen us better for the battles of life and protect us more securely on the way to eternal bliss. I say in the words of Moses: "Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath God so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. 4, 7.)

My friends, with what better words could I conclude than with the words of the hymn of benediction: which concisely and beautifully confirm everything? "Come and praise without end the Most Blessed Sacrament. Yes, come and praise it by true devotion and longing to worthily receive it! Jesus has indeed instituted it as the power of His love and as the source of His graces and merits. Here is Jesus' flesh and blood, here the greatest good, no soul is lost under its protection." How could it be possible since Jesus communicates His Passion and His blood and Himself to the soul, in order to preserve it for Himself and for heaven? Come therefore to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, your Saviour! He is powerful enough to help you, rich enough in mercy to pardon you and no soul is lost under His protection. "Be Thou praised, blessed, thou consolation in adversity." He is still the good shepherd who gently calls: "Come to me all ye who are burdened and heavy laden and I will refresh

you." If grievous temptations assail you, if heartless men persecute you, if you are oppressed by the cares and sorrows of the world, or if conscience or anything else destroys your peace of mind, if you are in despair on account of your sins, in anxiety before death, in fear of the judgment, here is Jesus, here is consolation in all adversities, and all who sincerely confide in Him, true security and for all who worthily receive Him, the pledge of eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON XX

### THE GRACIOUS ENTRY OF JESUS INTO THE SOUL

“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—**MATTH.**  
21, 9.

When our Divine Saviour visibly entered the world by His wonderful Incarnation the angels made the dawn glorious with their song and announced His entrance into the world: “Glory to God in the highest and peace to men on earth who are of good will.” (Luke 2, 14.) And the Jewish people glorified the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem when they went forth to meet Him with palm branches and filled the air with their songs of joy: “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: hosanna in the highest.” On the same day the Jews led the paschal lambs beautifully ornamented through the streets, one of which was to be offered in the temple and the others to be eaten in their houses as the paschal meal. Our Divine Saviour was the true paschal lamb, as St. John exclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” Therefore He wanted to be solemnly received by the Jewish people at His entrance into Jerusalem before the sacrifice of His death on the cross.

Our Divine Saviour celebrated another and glorious entrance and that was His entrance into heaven



forty days after His resurrection. On this occasion the souls of the just liberated from limbo and the choirs of angels, glorified His triumphal entry and filled the heavens with their words of joy and benediction: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the king of glory shall enter in." (Ps. 23, 9.)

But Jesus still celebrates to the present hour a twofold entrance on earth. Marvelous is the first, gracious the second. The first is His entrance into the species of bread. As Jesus quietly and mysteriously entered the world in His humanity, so now He enters still more quietly and mysteriously into the species of bread, in order to perpetuate and complete here His salvation in each individual soul. And just as quiet and marvelous as the entrance of Jesus into the species of bread is, so gracious is His entrance into the Christian soul. On the cross He bought the soul with His blood, He takes personal possession of the soul with His entrance in holy communion. Gracious is this entrance and therefore every Christian soul can joyfully say to Him as the Israelites did at the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, or as the angels did at His ascension into heaven: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." I will therefore speak to-day of the gracious entry of Jesus into the soul by holy communion.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. God can unite Himself with us in a fivefold manner. He unites Himself first according to His divine

nature by His omnipresence with all men: "For in him we live, and move, and are." (Acts 17, 28.) Marvelous and sublime is the second union of God with the just by sanctifying grace. Still higher and more unspeakable is His union with the blessed in heaven by glory. The Son of God, however, has united Himself in another manner and personally with man, and that by becoming man, and as the Apostle St. John adds: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelled amongst us, and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." (John 1, 14.) And therefore the Apostle St. Paul says: "Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." (Phil. 2, 6, 7.) The fifth and most gracious union is the sacramental one with His faithful by holy communion. It is, or contains within itself all the graces of redemption, for it is the preservation of sanctifying grace, the perpetuation of the personal union of Jesus with man and the pledge of the glorious union in heaven. The sacramental union of the soul with Jesus takes place at His gracious entrance into it by holy communion. This entrance is that glorious grace by which Jesus blesses not only the whole world, but each individual Christian and gives Himself personally to each one as the author of all grace, and communicates to each one according to the measure of his faith, His hope and love, the treasure of His heavenly merits. As King He visits us as His subjects: "Rejoice greatly,

for behold thy king will come to thee, the just and saviour." (Zach. 9, 9.) As Redeemer He visits us as His redeemed: "Behold I will be with you all days even unto the end of the world." As Bridegroom He espouses Himself to our souls as with His bride: "And I will espouse thee to me for ever in faith and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." (Osee 2, 20.) As Physician He visits us as His patients: "Come to me all ye who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Consequently He wishes to satisfy the hunger and longing of the soul for God with Himself as celestial food: "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall not hunger." (John 6, 35.)

This divine love of Jesus towards us, and this unspeakable longing for the salvation of our souls explains why He chose the humble species of bread in order to unite Himself sacramentally with us. These species of bread banish from us all fear and terror of appearing before Jesus; they inspire us with confidence and child-like simplicity; they correspond to the poor and the rich, to the child and the old man, to the sick and the healthy; they are everywhere in the world at hand and cost no labor, no great journey, no insuperable sacrifice. They unite all men in the completest union with Jesus as daily bread unites itself to the body.

2. Oh, how gracious is the entry of Jesus into every Christian soul, be he prominent or insignificant, esteemed or forgotten, and unknown by the world! If we approach Him in faith, hope and love, and if we

are adorned with the bridal robe of the soul, with sanctifying grace, He makes Himself known to us in holy communion. We feel His presence by His inspiration. He invites us with Thomas to kiss His wounds; He receives most kindly our petitions and says to us: "Be comforted, thy faith hath helped thee." He consoles us like Mary Magdalen, He praises us like Zacchæus and raises us up as He did Peter. Here is where He continues His works of mercy which He performed on earth. He feeds us, if we hunger and thirst after justice; He clothes us with His grace, He redeems us from the bonds of passions and temptation, teaches us in our ignorance, consoles us in our anxieties, strengthens us in our weaknesses, heals the blindness of our spirit and blesses us, as He blessed the children and His disciples. And truly He who grants us so much grace in the other holy sacraments by the ministry of the priests — in baptism, extreme unction and penance — will, in holy communion, where He gives Himself to us, communicate still much greater graces.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit doth rejoice in God, my Saviour," exclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary, filled with joy. But she immediately added the reason for her joy: "Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is His name." (Luke I, 49.) Thus also every Christian soul can rejoice in God his Saviour, if His entrance into him has been gracious, for He has done also to him great things, and he should praise His holy name. And this entrance of our Divine Saviour into the soul

is always gracious as often as we approach Him worthily in purity and in faith and love.

My friends, wherein consists then the graces which Jesus especially communicates to the soul at His entry into it? Our Divine Saviour Himself denotes them in these words: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same shall also live by me." (John 6, 58.) We live not only the life of grace because holy communion is a sacrament of the living and therefore grace is understood, but we live a higher, holier and more perfect life, which even baptism does not impart in this degree. "I am come in order that you may have life more abundantly." This higher, more abundant life is the fruit or the effects of holy communion.

It is principally the spiritual strengthening of the soul, as food causes the strengthening of the body and its life. The soul is strengthened first by an antidote, by which the root of sin is destroyed, and secondly by a nourishing food by which its enervated strength is restored again. Holy communion gives to the soul that which the tree of life in paradise gave to our first parents. Its fruit removed every injurious thing from the body or destroyed it and constantly gave it new strength to successfully resist the attacks on its health.

It is the same with the fruits of holy communion. They cleanse the soul from venial sin, which are the cause of our spiritual weakness. But they suppress also the temptations of the flesh, of the world and of the devil, which debilitate the strength of the spirit.

Venial sins weaken the spiritual life, and place the soul in the danger of falling into mortal sin. Therefore if holy communion preserves the soul from death it destroys also that which leads to spiritual death, namely, venial sin, in so much as it urges the soul to contrition, to betterment and to a greater perfection. Nevertheless this glorious effect only takes place when we are worthily prepared and avoid every inclination to sin.

May we then, my dear friends, always spurn the inclination in us to sin, and even if after the most worthy communion we have to fight with temptations, the bread of angels will strengthen us again, keep external temptations farther away and make us able to more easily overcome internal ones. Yes, I say still more, even if the faithful and good Christian who despises sin and does not want to lose his Saviour and grace, should nevertheless be momentarily overcome by temptation and fall into sin — his faith, his hope, his love, which become by frequent and worthy communion more and more active, the thought of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the thought of the next communion, would not suffer this sin to remain on his soul. They can no more agree with sin than bad food can agree with the stomach. These thoughts banish sins by an humble confession, and the good Christian hastens with new, almost with greater joy to holy communion. This is the glorious and wonderful effect of Jesus in holy communion and the fruit of His grace. He awakes the soul from spiritual death as He waked the young man at Naim, or

the daughter of Jairus from bodily death; He says to it: "Be comforted, thy faith hath helped thee."

3. The gracious entry of Jesus into the soul by a worthy communion prepares it also for the joys of the spirit. The visitation of the Christian soul by the personal presence of its Divine Saviour fills it with sweet joy, with a similar ecstasy which filled the Blessed Virgin at the thought of the great deeds of God or like to the joy which Elizabeth felt when Mary visited her. Zacchæus was also filled with joy when our Divine Saviour invited Himself to be his guest. The five thousand who were miraculously fed in the desert rejoiced, yes even Jesus thanked His heavenly Father when after His forty days' fast the angels ministered to Him.

Thus also Jesus communicates to the soul great joy by His gracious entry in holy communion, a pure, holy joy, which He often communicates even to the body and makes Himself felt by that agreeable experience which is the effect of grace and innocence. By holy communion we gain the possession of the highest good of the soul. Therefore, with reason may the soul rejoice and become absorbed in the meditation of this good and immerse itself in gratitude and petition and adoration to its Saviour. And if, alas, many do not find this true spiritual joy in holy communion, it is due solely and alone to the fact that they do not esteem this gift of God or are unworthy to enjoy it.

This esteem is contained in the simple, touching words which the Church addresses to us: "O Lord,

I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul shall be healed." These words teach us to esteem the gracious entry of Jesus into the soul and adore His love, which is not satisfied to only speak a word, but comes Himself to visit us. Yes, it is Jesus, who came down from heaven to earth and to the crib and ascended the cross in order to redeem us. And now He comes from heaven into the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and makes Himself immeasurably smaller, but also much more lovable than in the manger and on the cross, in order to communicate to each individual soul personally His grace, His love, His redemption and to fill it with His presence. This presence inspires the soul with a spiritual joy, which reveals itself in sweet restfulness, in child-like confidence and in happy satisfaction, in spite of external sufferings and struggles, and is a foretaste of eternal joy and of eternal peace.

Nevertheless, my dear friends, we must also communicate ourselves to our Divine Saviour as far as it is possible, according to our faith, our devotion and our strength. This communication takes place by a worthy preparation, by longing after the gracious entry of Jesus into the soul and by a sincere and humble contrition for our ingratitude and sins. Where the memory is full of the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; where the spirit busies itself with the heavenly ecstasy of this sacrament, and the phantasy keeps Jesus before the eyes under the lovely prototype as the Divine Child, as the Good Shepherd, and the Divine Physician and Saviour — behold then grows our long-



ing, our zeal, our love and joy. We approach Him like the sheep its good shepherd, like the sick man his physician, like Mary and Joseph and the shepherds the Divine Child, like the lost son his good father, the pilgrim the place of pilgrimage, Mary Magdalen her Saviour, like the angels and saints approach their king, their God. And this child-like, confident, contrite and humble approach to Jesus is the cause of blissful joy: "Come to me all ye who are burdened and heavy laden and I will refresh you."

4. And the body, too, often feels the gracious entry of Jesus by a sweet quickening, which cleanses and purifies it, and raises it above its usual miseries and prepares it for its eternal glorification. How often have not holy Christians been inundated with a wonderful quickening; how many have not lived almost entirely from holy communion, or were surrounded by a heavenly halo of grace and innocence, yes, at times by a supernatural brilliancy! And if this purest joy of the body is experienced less often, nevertheless, every Christian feels after a worthy communion a great restfulness and peace and freedom from the ordinary passions and desires. This heavenly joy of the body will be perfect on the last day, because glorified and spiritualized, immortal and indestructible, it will behold God face to face: "Whoever eateth of this bread, shall live for ever."

Thus, my dear friends, we too should often approach this Blessed Sacrament, in order that our Divine Saviour might keep His gracious entry into our soul and communicate to us heavenly joys. Yes, this joy

sweetens the adversities of this life; it strengthens, it consoles, and gives peace and rest. And finally at the end of our life holy communion prepares us for the gracious entry into heaven, to Jesus, to eternal joy and to eternal bliss. Amen.

## SERMON XXI

### PREPARATION FOR AND THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

“But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice.”—2 COR. II, 28.

Our Divine Saviour has given us, as a condition of eternal life and our resurrection from the dead, the commandment to frequently receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar: “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.” (John 6, 55.) St. Paul places beside this commandment a second and self-evident one, namely, the commandment of a worthy preparation for holy communion: “But let a man prove himself: and let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice.” In fact, the more earnest and decisive an act is for one’s whole life, the more careful must be the preparation and self-examination. The pupil or student must prepare himself for the examinations upon the result of which his life’s calling depends; the teacher must prepare himself for his instruction, the priest for his sermon, the lawyer or physician for his degree. Every one must prepare himself for his calling or vocation, in order to be competent to accept a position, calling, or undertake

a business. Upon this preparation usually depends the successful issue, and with it, life's success.

If this is an accepted maxim in daily life, it is much more so in our Christian vocation and in the affairs of our soul's salvation. The holier the calling is, the more earnest and lasting must be the examination and the preparation. The youth, who has chosen the priestly state, will be tried for four or more years, and must prepare himself just as long for ordination. The maiden, who takes the veil and espouses herself to God, must make a novitiate of two or three years; she will be seriously tried and must prepare herself well.

It is just the same with the faithful. The holier the sacraments are, the more the faithful must be tried and the more worthily they must prepare themselves for them. The Most glorious and Blessed Sacrament is the Sacrament of the Altar. It is the most precious gift of God, which cannot be placed in an unclean vessel; it is Jesus Christ Himself, for whom we must prepare a pure dwelling, a pure heart. But the preparation alone is not sufficient. The more glorious the gift, the holier the sacrament, and the greater the grace is, the greater, the more child-like and the more joyful must be the thanksgiving for it. Therefore I will speak to-day on the preparation for holy communion and on thanksgiving after communion. The subject is extraordinarily necessary, for the greater the preparation for holy communion and the better the thanksgiving after communion, the greater the graces bestowed upon the recipient.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. "But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice,"—with these words the Apostle St. Paul in the name of the Lord addresses us all, priests and faithful, insisting that the preparation by which we place ourselves in the state of grace, in order not to approach the table of the Lord unworthily and eat unto ourselves death and judgment is indispensable. This examination is no other than a worthy and contrite confession as the Holy Church has declared in the Council of Trent. (Sess. 13; Can. 11.) We must approach Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with a pure heart, unstained by sin. For this reason in ancient times the deacon called to the faithful: "The holy for the holy!" They must be holy, in the state of sanctifying grace, in order to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily.

The first and most necessary preparation, therefore, regards the soul. It consists in the purification of the conscience and in the devotion of the heart. But the conscience is only then pure when it is not conscious of grievous sin, and consequently possesses sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is the heavenly bridal robe of the soul, with which the Holy Ghost has clothed it. With this bridal robe the faithful must approach the nuptial feast, which Jesus prepares for us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, in order that it may not happen to him, as it did to the one at the nuptial feast of the king's son, who was cast out into exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, because he did not have on the bridal robe. (Matth. 22, 13.)

But the purity of conscience and sanctifying grace is only a part of the worthy preparation; it must also be accompanied by the devotion of the heart. This evidently consists foremost in the practice of faith. Oh, there is something great and sublime about faith, when our Divine Saviour addresses to us these consoling words: "Blessed are they who see not and yet believe." The shepherds and the Magi, the sick and the sinners, the disciples and Apostles did not see the God-head of Jesus, but they believed and were filled with holy joy. We, too, do not see our Divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament, but in a worthy communion we very often feel the sweetness of His presence and the power of His grace. Therefore we should awaken a living faith in His holy presence. Not only His holy Church, the Apostles, the tabernacle and altars and all centuries announce and teach the Blessed Sacrament, our Divine Saviour Himself has revealed it, and instituted it. And even if the whole world did not bear witness to the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament — His love would be sufficient to make us believe in it. For as His love caused Him to become man for us and to suffer and die upon the cross, so His love urges Him continually to be here our Saviour, our Physician, our life and our all. Therefore, my friends, when you go to holy communion say with the fullness of your heart: "O Jesus, I believe that thou art really present here: I believe not only because thou hast revealed it, and the Church teaches me to believe it, but I believe it much more from Thy love."

3 However, to faith must be joined its sister, namely the practice of hope. If our Divine Saviour during His earthly life performed so many miracles of His mercy, healed so many sick, forgave so many sinners, consoled so many souls and suffered so many nameless pains for the salvation of our souls — will He be here in the Blessed Sacrament less merciful to him who receives communion worthily, and not communicate His grace to him or not hear his prayers? Only he can assert this who does not know that Jesus is forever our Saviour and Redeemer, full of mercy, full of longing for the salvation of our souls, full of the desire to assist us and to be gracious to us. Therefore say from the fullness of your heart: O my Jesus! I hope from Thy goodness and mercy the answer to my prayer, the graces of this sacrament and the promise of everlasting life.

4 But to faith and hope there must be especially joined love, the love for Jesus, which is the happiest and most glorious virtue of every true Christian. And in fact, what does our Divine Saviour as a child in the manger say to us? "I love thee." What does His hidden life at Nazareth say, what especially His bitter Passion and death on the cross? "I love thee." But particularly touchingly and truly He addresses these words to us from the quiet, humble prison of His love: "I love thee." What else can we do, my friends, when we go to holy communion but answer with love in turn? Oh, how much love there is in obedience to Holy Church, in battling against sin, in the forgiveness of all injuries, in innocence or in purity of heart!

They have but one voice that says: O my Jesus, I love Thee!

2. If therefore, my friends, we have prepared ourselves in such wise and according to the measure of our strength and good will for holy communion and approach the table of the Lord — behold the mass-server begins again in the name of the communicant the Confiteor, the general confession. We can never sufficiently bewail our sins, and nothing moves our Divine Saviour so much to mercy and grace as an humble and lacerated heart, which is conscious of its guilt and therefore the more confidently implores God for mercy. For this reason the priest says to the communicant in the moment when he shows him the holy host the consoling words: “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” The same Jesus, who bled on the cross for our salvation and took away our sins, wipes out here the last remnants of our sins, if we have contritely confessed them and in this solemn moment bewail them again from love for Him. How beautifully therefore sound the words: “O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word, and my soul will be healed, purified, sanctified and worthy to receive holy communion and all its graces.” Oh, these words are a call to all the Christian world which rises to heaven! They are the call of every individual Christian in which the consciousness of guilt, the voice of humility, the accusation of sorrow, the confidence in Jesus, the hope in His mercy, the longing after His grace and redemption and the desire of the soul for this heavenly



food loudly and in faith declares itself. And in truth, when the pagan centurion of Capharnaum spoke these glorious words for the first time and aroused the admiration of Jesus and His mercy for the sick servant — should not these same words again touch His divine Heart and direct His mercy and grace to us? Yes, in these words lie the greatness and the merits of a good preparation for holy communion, above all in faith, in hope and love must the humble consciousness sound: O Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul will be healed.

3. But, my friends, how does it happen that by far not all the faithful who go to communion very often, receive little or no benefits, little or no graces from it? The first reason is because they do not worthily prepare themselves for it, yes, even approach holy communion without any preparation. And even if they have worthily confessed, all further preparation is omitted. From confession they hasten to communion without having performed their penance, without having again renewed their good resolutions, and without having awakened the devotion of the heart. And there are many even after they have made a good preparation for holy communion leave the church immediately without any thanksgiving after communion. And yet thanksgiving is absolutely necessary for a worthy communion rich in graces. It is a solemn duty to be grateful for gifts received, be they dispensed by man or by God. It is therefore evidently just as much a holy duty to sincerely thank our Di-

vine Saviour after communion. Nothing causes so much pain to parents, to friends or benefactors, as the ingratitude of children, of friends, of the recipient of gifts, so there is nothing that pains our Divine Saviour so much as the ingratitude of those Christians who do not think it worth their while after communion to thank Him from their hearts for this great grace. When our Divine Saviour had healed the ten lepers, only one, a Samaritan, returned to throw himself at His feet and thank Him, He said moved with sorrow: "There is none found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger." (Luke 17, 18.)

St. Theresa indicates the reason why not many Christians receive hardly any benefits from holy communion. They miss the precious opportunity when Jesus dwells in their hearts to enrich themselves with His graces. Yes, it is one of the most dangerous and blame-worthy misuses to busy oneself after holy communion either with other things or to hasten from the church home or to business. Therefore, the Blessed P. Avila, once caused two servers with burning candles to accompany a Christian who was accustomed to hasten away without thanksgiving, in order to honor the Blessed Sacrament which this Christian carried in his breast. In fact, what would we say of a man who, when his king visited him, left him standing alone, or busied himself with strange things without paying attention to the king? But Jesus is more than all the kings of the world. After holy communion, we have the happiness to possess Him. He has visited us, He has enthroned Himself in our hearts, He wishes here

to be adored, praised and blessed. And He will enrich us with His love and His grace, and listen to our difficulties and prayers as soon as we pray to Him and thank Him.

Therefore, my friends, after communion we should kneel down, close our eyes and represent to ourselves in the most lively manner that we are kneeling before Jesus. We should say with St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God: or: how comes it that my Saviour has come to me? My Jesus and my all! Lord, I believe; Lord, I hope; Lord, I love Thee from my heart!" What will be most pressed from our hearts in these blessed moments if not gratitude for the great graces? But if it is impossible for us to be grateful in a becoming manner — then let us offer Him the gratitude of all good Christians after communion, the gratitude of the saints, the gratitude of the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God. Their thanks are our thanks! Yes, a truly glorious thanksgiving which moves the Sacred Heart of Jesus to mercy towards us. The beautiful words of the 102 Psalm should move our hearts and lips: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that he hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion . . . bless the Lord, O my soul."

But with our praise and thanks we should unite our offering. Our Divine Saviour says to us and in us: "My son, give me thy heart; and let thy eyes keep

my ways." (Prov. 23, 26.) As He once offered Himself for us and still continues to offer Himself, so should we, too, offer Him our thoughts, words and works, our sufferings and trials, our soul and our body, in order that He might sanctify all and consecrate us with His grace. Then He will sanctify our thoughts, enlighten our words, bless our works, console us in our sufferings, strengthen us in our struggles, enrich our souls with grace, purify our body from its inordinate desires and return to us our heart chaste and pure.

4. For this reason we should unite our offerings with our prayers. For there is no more happy moment than the one after holy communion, and our prayers will hardly ever be more zealous and devout, especially if accompanied by love and confidence, and our Divine Saviour also is more inclined then to give ear to our prayers and is ready to fulfill His promises of hearing us. Therefore we should beseech Him with the disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent." (Luke 24, 29.) Evening in the many temptations, dangers and sufferings. We should also say: "I will not let thee go until thou bless me." (Gen. 33, 26.) We must do meek violence to our Divine Saviour with our prayers, for such prayers move His Sacred Heart. We can then recommend to Him our needs and sufferings, our misery and sinfulness, and also, our work and duties, our state and calling, our parents, children and dead. Of one thing we are always certain, that we shall be consoled by such thanksgiving and prayers.

But if we have nothing more to thank and to pray for, then we can take our prayer-book and say with devotion those prayers, which are there designated to be said after holy communion.

5. Therefore may the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar be also for us the bread of eternal life, the fruit of the second paradise. This it will become by our preparation, by our thanksgiving, by our faith and love. It is for us an examination, and this examination will be happily passed by a worthy communion. Yes, even this church built by the hands of men ought to remind us of this.

Just as God conversed with our first parents in paradise, so does He here converse with those, who approach Him with a faithful heart. Jesus is enthroned upon our altars so that you can speak to Him face to face as often as you will, reveal to Him your tribulations, your needs, and unburden your heart to Him. He has planted in the tabernacle the tree of life, in order that His holy people may surround it and often enjoy its fruit for the increase of grace and for the eternal life of the soul and of the body. Only a shadow of this benefit in ancient times was given to the Jews by the ark of the covenant and yet the wise king Solomon was so much astonished that he cried out in great joy: "Is it then to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth? for if heaven, and the heavens of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built." (3 Kings, 8, 27.) Could God indeed give to His Church a higher meaning and dignity by this Blessed Sacrament than to raise

it to be the second paradise, from which all who have withstood the trial should pass into the celestial paradise? The dignity of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is no less than that of heaven, for there as here it is the same Jesus, and there as here He is surrounded by the hosts of His angels, who behold Him without cessation, adore and praise Him. What is the purpose of His being here? In the first paradise according to the expression of Holy Scripture flowed milk and honey, in order to denote its fruitfulness and loveliness. And, O Christian soul, consider in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar these heavenly bees: behold how they come laden with honey to rejoice the holy Church by wonderful amiability and to nourish the life of the soul with a bread that unites in itself all the sweetness of heaven. He comes with the fullness of all graces and virtues and, accompanied by the merits of His Passion in order to communicate Himself to all who approach Him with a pure heart and bear within themselves a longing after His gifts. He comes, he comes with such great fullness of graces and generosity that no one is so poor and needy, no one so miserable and abandoned, to whom He is not prepared not only to give His graces but to give Himself. Therefore prove yourselves and approach the holy table worthily in order that your preparation may be a preparation for eternal life and your thanksgiving may be once happily continued in heavenly bliss. Amen.

## SERMON XXII

### THE SIN OF INFREQUENT COMMUNION AND THE PUNISHMENTS THAT ATTEND IT

“Tell them that were invited, behold I have prepared my dinner: come ye to the marriage.”—MATH. 22, 4.

The adorable love of Jesus shows itself not only in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, but more especially in this, that at all times and in all places it can be adored, solemnized and received. It shares this high privilege with the daily bread. On account of its necessity it may be found all over the whole earth and is therefore the greatest corporal benefit, and for this reason we always pray: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Thus also the living bread which came down from heaven is to be found everywhere, because it is just as necessary food for the soul as daily bread is for the constant nourishment of the body. As little as other foods can supply the want of bread, just as little can other prayers and devotions outweigh the want of communion. “If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world. Except you eat of this you shall not have life in you.” (John 6, 52, 54.)

No Catholic can excuse himself that the enjoyment of this heavenly bread is bound up with too great difficulties and cost; it is at his command at all times and

without cost. The ancient Christians joyfully obeyed the will and longing of our Divine Saviour and daily received holy communion, in order to make known actively their communion among each other and their union with Jesus. (Acts 2, 46; I Cor. 11.)

Holy communion is the glorious nuptial feast which our Divine Saviour prepares for His faithful and for which He sends out His priests, to invite all as His guests. Therefore, in the ancient Church very little was thought of those who answered the invitation: "I pray thee hold me excused; my business, my work does not permit it."

For this reason the Catholic Church has made the commandment which obliges under mortal sin all to receive holy communion during Easter time in honor of the institution of the sacrament and of the bitter Passion and death of Jesus Christ. And yet precisely this commandment offers to many the pretext to answer the invitation of the Saviour: "My dinner is prepared, come ye to the marriage," only at Easter but to excuse themselves on other great and high festivals of the year. The commandment of the Church is not the cause of this infrequent communion, but laziness and ingratitude towards Jesus. And this call from heaven is addressed to us also: "Come, my meal is prepared." And may our answer be at least no excuse, but a joyful acceptance: yes, Lord I will come, I will often come! To confirm this happy and saving resolution I shall therefore speak to-day on the sin and punishment of infrequent communion.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.



1. There are two classes of Christians who very seldom receive communion. To the first class belong those who claim that from humility they remain away because they feel unworthy, and therefore pay homage to sloth. To the second class belong all those who are not in the state of grace and live in mortal sin. They do not wish to receive unworthily, but they will not be converted either. Consequently they avoid the medicine and love, the sickness of the soul, habitual sin remains, or take no pains to overcome it and return to the state of grace, in order by frequent communion to remain safe from new relapses. The call of our Lord is addressed to both classes of these Christians: "My dinner is prepared, come ye to the marriage."

This staying away from holy communion is a real insult to our Divine Saviour, and His sacrificing love in the adorable Sacrament, and consequently a sin. In fact, my friends, in this Sacrament we should not only renew the memory of the bitter Passion of our Divine Saviour: "Do this in commemoration of me," but also to constantly share in the fruits of the same. He only demands one thing, that we come clothed with the bridal robe, in the state of grace. He does not call exclusively saints; this invitation is extended to all without exception, to the perfect and the imperfect, to such who fight and struggle with their faults and passions, to Christians without regard to their state or calling, in order that they may by the frequent reception of this heavenly food become like unto the angels.

Sloth, or the continual refusal to follow the divine invitation is therefore a real offense to our Divine Sav-

our, which strikes Him the more painfully the more wonderful His love in this Sacrament, the greater His longing for the salvation of our souls, and the more unspeakable is the necessity of this heavenly food for our bliss. We all understand this truth, namely that without conversion eternal bliss is hopeless. When then should this conversion take place, at Easter or on the death-bed? But St. Ambrose said already in the third century: "Whoever wishes to communicate worthily on his death-bed communicates worthily once a year; and whoever wishes to communicate worthily once a year must so live that he is worthy to communicate every day, or as often as our Lord by internal or external invitation invites us."

In fact, my dear friends, the less seldom a Catholic Christian goes to holy communion as a rule the less worthy he is. He goes because he must, but not because he wills, and therefore not from faith or love and longing for the grace of Jesus and seldom really worthily prepared. And such a communion belongs at least to the doubtful where there is a question whether it imparts grace or malediction. In any case the care disappears entirely in the dignity and good preparation which every faithful Catholic earnestly undertakes. If Zacchæus at the word of our Lord: "For this day I must abide in thy house," had excused himself with all manner of excuses, this great grace would have passed by his house and salvation too, and our Divine Saviour would not have come a second time. (Luke 19, 9.) Oh, how much depends upon our giving a willing and frequent hearing to His gracious invitation,

and at least, on festivals approach the table of the Lord and partake of His heavenly nuptial meal! Then we will have no reason to fear that these earnest words pertain to us: "But I say unto you that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper." (Luke 14, 24.) For sloth is also a sin which has evil consequences for the salvation of the soul, but the greatest and most irremediable is that which seldom and scarcely at Easter time receives communion.

2. My friends, if infrequent communion is a sin of ingratitude towards our Divine Saviour, and a sin of sloth in the affair of the salvation of the soul and the necessary graces, it must and will be punished accordingly. The real sins God visits by real punishments, but sloth by withdrawing His inspiration and graces. The gospel says: "Go out into the highways and the hedges and invite all whom you meet, but none of those that were invited shall taste my supper." The invited guests are we Catholic Christians, who are threatened in these words with three punishments, if we do not follow the invitation or very seldom follow it. First we will have no taste for holy communion, secondly we will receive from it no grace and no blessing, third in many, alas, in only too many cases we will be deprived of the final grace in the hour of death.

But he who frequently goes to communion worthily prepared always feels greater and purer joy and longing, which at times if not at every time fills him with sweet peace. But whoever goes to communion without worthy preparation, whoever runs from the con-

fessional to the communion rail, will scarcely feel a taste for, much less experience true joy and longing for this heavenly food, even if he carries with him the most beautiful prayer-book. Where there is no longing, where there is no joy, where there is no hunger of the soul, devotion is impossible. The heart is barren and dry and finds no words of living faith, of love or prayer. It is the same as with a ruined stomach which has no taste for the most delicate food. If the soul is sunk in the things of the earth and sensuality, if it is cold and dry in the affairs of faith and salvation — how could it then experience a taste for or consequently a joy in and longing for holy communion?

This is the punishment of infrequent communion. Our Divine Saviour, Who is the bliss of the blessed in heaven and the joy of good Christians on earth, comes to us in holy communion precisely as we come to Him. If we come at last after many excuses and pretexts, by force and almost against our will to holy communion, who can then hope for a friendly reception, or how can his heart then be filled with joy? No, my friends, in consequence of a seldom and almost compulsory communion there is seldom evident a joy, a longing, a hunger for this food of the soul. Therefore it will seem strange to nobody if the soul departs just as cold and empty as it approached, and then also if the communion has not been openly unworthy.

Would that this were all! But the punishment of infrequent communion is as a rule, much more palpable. It consists in the withdrawal of the fruits which this tree of life bears and richly communicates

to pure souls who often and worthily partake of them. They strengthen and console the soul; they increase sanctifying grace, they enlighten the faith, they enliven the hope and inflame the love. They weaken the inclination to sin, lessen the passions, and cool the desires. They sanctify the body and fill the soul with longing for God and for its eternal salvation.

In fact, wherever Jesus entered He left miracles of His grace, but where He frequently entered, as by Martha and Magdalen, He gave to those who received Him an abundance of greater graces and gave to them greater proofs of His love. Now he who receives holy communion scarcely once a year deprives himself of all these rich blessings and effects of grace. Worthy communion ought to be learned, practiced and often received or repeated just as every virtue, yes, every art, every service and every task must be practiced. Practice makes the master, and the most glorious and happiest practice for time and eternity is holy communion. Therefore, we see, alas, and especially at Easter time many of the faithful approach holy communion without any preparation, without any longing and joy, and consequently depart from the communion railing cold and dry, almost without faith and grace. It is the consequence and punishment of infrequent communion.

3. But, my friends, what should fill us most with fear is the sad knowledge that so many Catholics die without the holy Viaticum and go unprepared before the judgment-seat of God. This is the most terrible punishment for the low esteem of holy communion.

It is, as it were, an indication for the living how infrequent communion displeases our Divine Saviour, so much so that he who has been guilty of it is not even worthy on his death-bed to hope to enjoy the holy grace of the holy Viaticum. It is true at times even pious, yes, holy Christians die suddenly but they supply the Viaticum either by an extraordinary desire, or they were so well prepared that this preparation will be for them a greater merit.

But whoever has during his life not esteemed holy communion will not especially esteem it on his death-bed nor have a great longing for it, and if he receives the holy Viaticum, he does so as a rule as he did in life, without contrition, without devotion, without feeling, and consequently without fruit. But very frequently the lukewarm Christian dies without the Viaticum. My God, that is a hard thing and a harder punishment! For the last communion is the last and highest fortune. It is the pledge of a merciful judgment; it consoles the dying and fills his soul with hope; it softens and lessens the agony of death, it accompanies the soul into eternity and prays for mercy for it; it moves the divine Judge, lessens the punishment, shortens purgatory and increases the degree of bliss.

But if the Christian by his guilt, be it as a punishment for infrequent communion in life, be it from negligence, dies without the holy Viaticum—how grievous is the agony of death and how great are the last terrors! How inconsolable stands the soul if all alone, entirely alone, absolutely alone without Jesus, it must go into eternity and before the judgment of God!

Who will now be his intercessor, what will soften the judge, what will lessen the judgment and extenuate the punishment? My God, let us not take upon our poor souls such a misfortune and unhappiness!

We learn from this a great truth, namely, that we must always approach the table of the Lord worthily prepared, and secondly that we must not be His too infrequent guests. Those who frequently go to communion and yet never become better, and do not overcome their faults and evil habits, give the Christian congregation just as much scandal as those who seldom go. Both are punishable. The former should receive holy communion more zealously and worthily, the latter more frequently. The invitation of our Lord is extended to all; we feel it, as soon as there is infused in us a longing, a holy desire for communion. The great festivals of the Church are the days on which we are more particularly invited to the nuptial feast.

Our first parents were commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree lest they should die, but we are commanded by our Lord: "Take and eat. Whoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever." And yet many transpose it as Adam and Eve: they do not eat of this bread which came down from heaven and consequently die. But my dear friends, we want to live and live eternally and have been invited to the heavenly marriage feast of our Lord. Therefore go often as the best preparation for holy communion, in order that our Divine Saviour may rejoice to number us among His guests and be honored by our worthy preparation. Then we shall truly rejoice in the hour of our death

when our Divine Saviour comes to us for the last time and now, as it were, accepts our invitation. Yes, with Jesus in the heart we will die more easily; with Jesus the soul goes consoled into eternity; with Jesus it hopes for a merciful justice, and with Jesus it enters as the reward for its worthy communions the heavenly nuptial feast and beholds now His divine word marvelously fulfilled in Himself: "Whoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever." Amen.



## SERMON XXIII

### UNWORTHY COMMUNION

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.”  
— I COR. II, 29.

The Apostle St. Paul, the great teacher of the nations announces to the faithful of Corinth sublime things regarding the grace of God and holy communion. But he says also to them: “Let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord,” namely from ordinary food. He probably had the living picture of the unhappy Judas before him, who was the first to make an unworthy communion. Full of mercy our Divine Saviour warned him and as the warning bore no fruit he threatened him with the terrible punishment of God: “Woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed: it were better for him, if that man had not been born.” (Matth. 26, 24.)

Judas allowed himself neither to be warned nor to be intimidated. With a bold countenance he entered and received from the hand of our Divine Saviour Himself communion. Here he first betrayed Jesus, and what he did later, when he delivered Him over to the

Jews, was only the continuation of this first betrayal. You all know his unhappy end. Whipped and scourged by his conscience, he stormed about in despair, until he ended his life with a rope.

How many times we stand at the death-bed of one in despair. All admonitions and persuasions are in vain. Unworthy communions with their terrible load of sin rest upon his soul: he has betrayed the Lord! How often do we not hear of an unfortunate suicide. Not seldom unworthy communions have at last driven him to this cursed crime! How often do we not hear of great criminals; the beginning of their career of crime was an unworthy communion! How many men sink from vice to vice, from godlessness to godlessness so that they are already on earth devils in human form, before whom we are terrified — unworthy communions have driven them so far and so low!

Therefore St. Paul, enraged, cries out again: "They crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and made Him a mockery." (Hebr. 6, 6.) They do not, indeed, crucify Him again on the lifeless cross, but in themselves, in their own hearts, if they go to communion with a guilty conscience and make themselves, according to the words of the same Apostle, "Guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." (1 Cor. 11, 27.)

As painful as the death on the cross of Jesus was, so much was it sweetened for Him by the thought of the will of His heavenly Father and the salvation of millions of souls. But what makes His second cruci-

fixion by an unworthy communion so terribly painful is the loss of the souls that make themselves guilty of it.

Therefore I will speak to-day for our instruction, warning or improvement, of unworthy communion, its sin and its punishment.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. There are many offenses against God which the Christian can commit and, alas, does commit, but the most grievous insult to God is unworthy communion. All other sins are trespasses against the commandments of God or of His Church, but unworthy communion is a personal offense against our Divine Saviour. The Jews made themselves guilty of grievous sin when they loaded our Divine Saviour with shame and nailed Him as a criminal to the cross. But He wished to suffer for the honor of His heavenly Father and for the salvation of our souls. Therefore He did not try to escape these sufferings but submitted willingly to them, and even longed with a great desire for His bloody death on the cross.

But, my dear friends, it is altogether different with unworthy communion, for here Christians, according to the expression of the Apostle St. Paul, crucify the Son of God anew. Here they shamefully maltreat Him; here they make themselves guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. Whoever communicates unworthily, is himself the cross, and that, too, the most cruel for our Divine Saviour. This cross recognizes no honor of God, no salvation of the world, no

redemption of souls, but knows only and alone crimes and destruction.

2. In fact, every unworthy communion is the abuse of what is holiest; the greatest insolence and faithlessness and the most hateful hypocrisy. It is the abuse of the most sacred thing. God has inculcated nothing so much as the reverence due to holy things. For this reason in the Old Law the Holy of Holies in the temple remained always closed to the gaze of the people, the high-priest alone was allowed to enter. Oza died the very moment, when he touched with irreverent hand the ark of the covenant. Nobody was allowed to eat of the loaves of proposition, which lay upon a table before the altar before he had purified himself by ablutions. And yet what was the most holy in the temple of Solomon? What was the ark of the covenant? What were the loaves of proposition in comparison with the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar? Scarcely a shadow! How grievous, therefore, is the abuse of it by an unworthy communion, when in one and the same heart sin and the holiest are united. It would be terrible for a living man to be cast amongst a heap of corrupting corpses, but it is a thousand times more terrible when the living bread, which came down from heaven, when the Lord of life, when Jesus Christ is compelled by an unworthy communion to enter a soul filled with corruption and sin. He takes, indeed, upon Himself this hard cross for the sake of the existence of this Sacrament and for the sake of the faithful, but woe to the man, who makes

himself guilty of the unholy abuse of the Blessed Sacrament.

3. There is joined with this abuse an awful insolence. In fact, St. Paul says to us as he did to the faithful of Corinth before every communion, "Let a man prove himself and so let him eat of this bread"; "you cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils: you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the tables of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Cor. 10, 21, 22.) But no warning, no reproach of conscience detains him, who, with brazen impudence approaches holy communion in the state of grievous sin. He breaks through all guards that should inspire him with respect for our Divine Saviour; he receives from the hand of the priest not communion, no, he steals the divine food, which was instituted only for pure souls in the state of grace. If our Divine Saviour is silent and suffers this insolence He permits it for the sake of the true faithful. No, criminals should at least not have so much power as to be able to rob the faithful of the food of their souls and of the consolation of their hearts! Therefore the Saviour of souls suffers this measureless disgrace and shows Himself here greater in His adorable love for us, than even in His bitter Passion and death on the cross.

4. This impertinence, or insolence, is accompanied by faithlessness. Thus it was in the case of Judas. He betrayed our Divine Saviour with a kiss. Al-

though Jesus offered to him His merciful love, although He addressed him with the compassionate words: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?"—all was in vain and lost on this hard-hearted villain. And yet, my friends, is the kiss which Judas gave to the Saviour, a greater faithlessness than an unworthy communion? Here the sinner externally appears as if he went to communion like a Christian, like one of the faithful, like a friend in order to confess his faith and love to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to enter into the most intimate union with Him, the union of communion, but at the bottom of his heart he is just as awful a traitor as Judas was. He sells his Saviour, to be sure not for thirty pieces of silver, but what is still more contemptible, he sells and betrays Him for the price of an awful sin, for the price of his passions, for the price of proximate occasions of sin which he will not avoid, bad habits which he will not overcome, vices which he will not bewail, unjustly gotten goods that he will not return, or enmities which he will not give up. Here, then, the sorrowful words of Jesus apply to the soul of the unworthy communicant: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray thy Saviour with a kiss?" Judge for yourselves, my friends, if that is not a deplorable unfaithfulness.

5. This abuse of the Blessed Sacrament, this insolence and unfaithfulness can and naturally dare not be openly made known before the faithful and before the Christian congregation. What takes place, there-

fore, in order to conceal it? The mantle of hypocrisy covers it. That is a new step on the road to ruin to which unworthy communion drives the unhappy one, a new and awful sin which cries to God and man. O my Christians! how often does not such hypocritical conduct exteriorly simulate the most pious Christians, wherever by frequent communion a veil is cast over a sinful life, or wherever they go only from compulsion! Their whole care consists in not worthily preparing themselves but to represent themselves and to appear different from what they are. When our Divine Saviour said at the Last Supper, sadly: "One of you will betray me," Judas was one of the first to say with simulated amazement: "Am I the one, Master?" He even hastened to give witness of his devotion and his zeal, in order not to betray himself. Would to God that this shameless hypocrisy of Judas might never be imitated among Christians. Yes, that they might never become guilty of the unhappiness of Judas! But, alas, this hypocrisy is only too often imitated in order to veil the disgraceful secrets of the soul under the mantle of piety and zeal. But the avenger of His desecrated Sacrament will expose them on the day of judgment; woe then to the hypocrite, when he stands exposed before all the world!

Touching are the simple words of the Gospel which says that Jesus was troubled in spirit on account of the crime of Judas. (John 13, 21.) Thus our Divine Saviour at the present day permits only with a kind of compulsion and force the crime, which Christians commit against Him by unworthy communion.

Who can tell what transpires in the spirit of Jesus when a Christian abuses the adorable Sacrament, and causes all the intentions of Jesus in the institution make for his destruction instead of his salvation? But it is and remains true that Jesus suffered His bitter Passion and death willingly, yes, that His crucifixion was less painful to Him, than one unworthy communion, which desecrates His body and His blood. On Mt. Calvary Jesus was crucified only once, but in our churches often: "They crucified the Son of God, each one for himself."

6. What, then, my friends, is the punishment of unworthy communion? Evidently they correspond to the grievousness of this robbery of God. St. Paul the Apostle expresses himself clearly enough: "Who eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." Whoever, therefore, communicates sacrilegiously makes himself primarily guilty of the body and blood of Christ. Yes, if the desecration of one's own body by disgraceful vices, which is the temple of God, is such a great sin and causes such a great temporal and eternal punishment—how much more the desecration of the body of Christ in which the fullness of the God-head personally dwells? But the body of Christ is desecrated by an unworthy communion. As the blood of the innocent Abel cried to God for vengeance against his murderer Cain, and the blood of Jesus came over the Jews, so the desecrated blood of Jesus cries out for vengeance against the sacrilegious one and it overtakes him. My God, what a terrible change! the blood, shed for the



salvation of the world, for the redemption of souls, the hope of Christians, the absolution from sin, is changed now for the greater destruction of the soul. The cause of this is unworthy communion.

It is secondly the judgment of the soul: "Whoever eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself." Jesus Himself, the Divine Judge, is the witness and accuser of the unworthy communion. And He has already spoken His judgment on a like occasion over Judas and his followers: "Woe to that man!" The holier the sacrament, the more wonderful its grace, the greater the love of Jesus, and the sublimer His divine person is, the greater is the sin and the heavier is the judgment for time and for eternity.

The consequences of sacrilegious communions on earth are, as a rule, the greatest abandonment of God. To resist the grace of God or to make it fruitless is already a dangerous sin, because it places an obstacle in the way of the intention of God for our salvation. Without grace man can merit nothing for eternal life, or be sufficiently sorry for his sins. What will happen then if he receives Jesus Christ, the cause and source of all redemption and all graces, not only uselessly, but unworthily and sacrilegiously? But what makes this sin especially grievous, is the sad circumstance, that unworthy communion is almost always made with consciousness, with intention and against the voice of conscience, against the reproaches of the soul. Therefore, my dear friends, it must not at all seem strange to us, if God withdraws Himself from

such unhappy Christians, and withholds His graces or gives them to others, who make themselves worthy of them. And here, too, the Saviour says as to Judas: "What thou doest, do quickly." It is as if Jesus was again troubled in spirit on account of such traitorous Christians and wanted to say to him: "Unhappy one, I have warned thee in vain and spoken to thy soul, go and do now as thou wilt, for 'who eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh unto himself the judgment.'"

7. The sad consequence of abandonment of God is a death-bringing indifference in the affairs of faith, of prayer, of the service of God and of eternal salvation. Such a man finds no more any joy, any consolation, any peace or interest; everything leaves the soul horribly cold and bare. Once the thought of a high festival, of former Christian customs, of a time of indulgence, or of Easter communion was the cause of making such a man enter into himself, prepare himself and make the good resolution to make use of the holy time in a Christian manner; it was a bridle on the inclination to sin and an opportunity to appease himself again with God. All that is now usually passed; it makes no impression any more and causes no particular unrest. This experience is especially confirmed when a second or a third unworthy communion follows the first. Then Satan has entered into him. Such a Christian casts all further respect to the winds; He continues either to make use of unworthy communions in order to conceal his sins, or

he casts everything away and lives carelessly and untrammelled as if there could be neither a God, nor a heaven, nor a judgment and a hell. There is an abyss of impenitence formed, which announces itself publicly in this mortal life and after death continues as a fearful punishment. And if, alas, we see so many die without the sacraments or end without penance, they have brought upon themselves this terrible death by unworthy communions.

My friends, unworthy communion is that nameless deed of violence which the sacrilegious Christian commits against his Divine Saviour. It is the second and spiritual cross, on which Jesus is raised. And yet Jesus shrinks more from this cross than He did from the cross on Mt. Calvary; He is more troubled in spirit, because from this cross goes forth no redemption, no grace, no salvation of souls, but only sin, destruction and curses. Here the divine life is truly annihilated, here the Son of God is truly shamelessly maltreated, and His Precious Blood, the ransom of the world, trampled under foot.

8. We all have to fear the judgment of God, but especially those, who are guilty of sacrilegious communions. The Apostles, frightened by the sight of the Divine Saviour when He was troubled in spirit and at His words: "One of you will betray me," cried out: "Am I the one?" They trembled at the thought of being a traitor and guilty of sacrilege. And so should we prove ourselves and wash our souls clean of every sin by sincere contrition, before we eat

of this heavenly bread in order that we may share richly in its blessings and graces for time and eternity, and not in the terrible judgment.

But whoever is conscious of having made an unworthy communion, be it that he went to communion in the state of mortal sin, or be it, that he intentionally concealed grievous sins in the confessional — let him not despair. True contrition and a true return to Jesus has never wanted the mercy of God. Even Judas, if he, like Peter, had fallen at the feet of his Lord and Master, would have obtained forgiveness. No, let it be far from us all that our Divine Saviour should be troubled on account of a single one amongst us! As often as we go to holy communion, let us go worthily prepared, with a pure heart and in faith, in order that we may experience salvation and blessing, peace and grace in this life, sweet hope in death, and after death find a merciful judgment and the blessed society with Jesus and His faithful and holy Christians in eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XXIV

### I. ADDRESS TO FIRST-COMMUNICANTS

To-day, dear children, the hour has come when your longing for the union with our Divine Saviour shall be satisfied and you will receive your first holy communion. But I have still a request to make of you. The promises and the profession of faith which your sponsors made for you at baptism in your name to Almighty God, you will now please make yourselves solemnly and publicly before God, before your guardian angels, before me, the representative of God, and before those here present. To-day you should publicly show that you are joyfully, with whole heart and from your whole soul, children of God and Catholic Christians, that you will always observe the commandments of God and of His holy Church, and steadfastly profess your holy faith. Therefore, I ask you again, as you were asked at holy baptism, and I ask you in the name of God: Do you renounce the devil? and all his pomps? and all his works?

Yes, I do renounce them.

Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered for us? Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of

saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?

Yes, we believe!

And do you believe what God has revealed, and what the holy Catholic Church teaches us to believe, not only to steadfastly believe, but also to live according to this faith, as it becomes children of God and Catholic Christians?

Yes, we do promise!

So then come to the altar and take the burning candle; and let it be a sign, that you will walk without fear before God and will live with Him in eternity.

#### BEFORE COMMUNION.

Dear children, at last your wish is realized to be able to receive holy communion for the first time, to take our Divine Saviour into your souls for the first time. A few years ago Jesus, the Good Shepherd, called you to the number of His children by holy baptism. At that time your sponsors made for you the baptismal vows, to-day you have done it yourselves and have promised to follow our Divine Saviour in faith, hope and love. Jesus Christ has accepted your vows; He is pleased with them, and as you have promised to be entirely His, so He will give Himself to you entirely in holy communion. He, who created you, He, who redeemed you, and consecrated you in baptism and adopted you as His children, He will to-day come down from heaven and take solemn possession of your body and soul. Oh, thrice happy day, when you share in this greatest joy of the Christian,

when in reality is fulfilled what our Divine Saviour said full of tender love: "Let the children come to me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" Happy day, when you can reply to Him with longing and love: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest!" Thrice blessed day, when our Divine Saviour gave His body on the cross for you, shed His blood for you, for the remission of your sins, and stretched out His arms to you, now again gives His most sacred body and blood for you in order to nourish you with this heavenly food for eternal life! To-day He spreads His hands in blessing over you and raises His mild eyes to heaven: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, that they may see my glory." (John 17, 11-24.)

But you also, my dear children, should offer yourselves entirely to our Divine Saviour, as He offered Himself on the cross for you, and again to-day gives Himself in holy communion. Oh, promise Him with grateful hearts, that you want to be pious and innocent children, who are pleasing to God and man. You should never, nevermore forget your vows and the union which you made to-day with our Divine Saviour in holy communion. As He was born for your sakes, so should you also be obedient to God, to the Church, and your parents, believe with your whole hearts, hope sincerely in Him, and love Him above all, in order that this your first communion may prepare

for you salvation and blessing, strengthen you in innocence and grace of God and become the pledge of your future bliss. But Thou, O sweetest Saviour, O divine Friend of children, look down upon these children with a friendly and compassionate countenance, come into their hearts and preserve them in Thy Faith, in Thy hope and love! And thou, O Blessed Virgin and Mother of God, be and remain a good mother to these children, and pray for them that they, full of the grace of God and childish innocence, may worthily receive into their souls the body of thy Divine Son! And you, holy Guardian Angels of these children, and you choirs of blessed spirits, who hover around His altar, accompany these children and assist them, in order that this their first communion may become to them the means of the salvation of their souls and once the reception into heaven! And all you present here, fathers and mothers, relatives and Christians, you, too, accompany these children with your prayers to their first union with their Divine Saviour.

And now Christian children, approach the altar!

#### AFTER COMMUNION.

So now, Christian children, you have made your first holy communion and by it concluded a holy bond with your gracious Saviour. What He is, and what He has, His body and His soul, His humanity and His divinity, His graces and merits, everything, He has now imparted to you. He demands from you that you will be now His with body and soul; that you will be a source of joy to Him by your gratitude and



love, by your innocence and obedience, that you may once possess Him for eternity and be eternally His. Yes, to-day Jesus Christ entered your soul for the first time. To-day even the angels envy you your happiness, to-day you are surrounded by a Christian people, that repeats with the Israelite woman: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee!" But to-day your childish prayers are heard; your heavenly Father accepts them with pleasure. Oh, pray for the grace and constancy for your future life, in order that you may persevere in innocence and morality, in faith, in hope and love. Remember your parents, who raised you until this day of honor with so much care and trouble and have instructed and prepared you for it. Nevermore let the memory of this day depart from your hearts. It should always be to you the holiest and sweetest memory! Yes, before first communion everything else is thrown in the shade. It is surrounded with the radiance of the blessed innocence of a happy heart, that gives to our Divine Saviour entrance to the soul in love and longing. It is the most precious pearl of the youthful years; it is the highest happiness of the Christian. Oh, may this happiness also in later years frequently draw you to the altar of God, who to-day rejoices your youth by holy communion.

But you, fathers and mothers, who have accompanied your children here on this day of their honor, promise God, that you will carefully preserve your children from all evil and bring them up to all good by word and example, in order that they may not again lose their Divine Saviour and the grace and pleasure of

God which they have found to-day, and never again be obliged to repent of frivolous transgressions of the commandments of God and of His Church. God has placed you, parents, as visible guardian angels over these children, in order that you may preserve for them the paradise of innocent children's souls from the poisonous breath of sin and infidelity, and take care of these lilies in the garden of God. To-day God gives you these children back holy, and He will demand them from your hands again holy. And your souls must stand for the souls of your children. Therefore unite yourselves with your children in praise and thanksgiving to God, in order that He on this holy day may bless you and your children, dispense grace and mercy, salvation and blessing to you. May these firm resolutions of the parents be blessed and may God bless, my children, your vows. And may God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in His mercy and goodness bless your first communion. Amen.

## SERMON XXV

### II. ADDRESS TO FIRST-COMMUNICANTS

With the words of the Apostle St. Paul I address you, my dear children, who have the happiness and joy to receive holy communion for the first time today: "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus, that in all things you are made rich in him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace. . . . God is faithful: by whom you are called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1, 3-9.) Yes, truly, God was faithful, when in love and mercy He selected you for His children in holy baptism, adorned your souls with the robe of baptismal innocence and grace, and infused into them the three divine virtues, faith, hope and charity. At that time, on that happy day, your sponsors made a bond in your name with God, and promised to renounce Satan and all his pomps and all his works forever, to believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to hope in Him and to love Him. But now, since you are grown up in grace, instructed and, by the mercy of Jesus Christ, rich in all utterance and knowledge, now

you should repeat and confirm your baptismal vows with one accord, full of gratitude and love toward God, in the joy of your heart, and with the steadfast resolution to always observe them. And now you repeat them before God, before your guardian angels, before this congregation and before me as God's representative. Therefore I ask you again, before you celebrate your day of honor with Jesus Christ by your first holy communion, and in order that it may be the more joyful and the more solemn.

Do you renounce the devil? and all his pomps? and all his works? Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered for us? Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and everlasting life? Do you promise also to believe what God has revealed and what the holy Catholic Church proposes to our belief, and not only steadfastly to believe but also to live according to this faith as it becomes children of God and Catholic Christians?

We do renounce. We do believe. We do promise!

Come, then, to the altar and take the burning candle; let it be for you a sign that you will walk undefiled before God, and live with Him in eternity. Yes, let it be the nuptial torch for this present feast, the feast of the espousals of your souls with Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom; it should go with you surrounded by the choirs of holy children and Christians

to meet Him, when He comes to take possession of your souls by holy communion. Its light indicates your living faith, its flame streaming upwards denotes your joyful hope, and its warmth your child-like love. Lord, I believe; Lord, I hope; Lord, I love Thee with my whole heart!

BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION.

My dear children, I address you again with the words of St. Paul the Apostle: "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus. For God is faithful, by whom you are called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." (1 Cor. 1, 3-9.) Yes, when you were baptized it was God your heavenly Father who received you into the fellowship of Jesus Christ and His holy Church. The name of a saint was given to you at that time in order that he might be your ideal and intercessor. You were breathed upon as Adam received in paradise the breath of God, in order that a new spirit, the spirit of God might be communicated to your souls. You received blessed salt to taste, for the bad conversations and the examples of the world should be no more your joy and taste, but much more Jesus Christ, obedience and love to Him; they should permeate your thoughts, words and deeds, and preserve you from the foulness of sin. And as our Divine Saviour touched the eyes of the blind man with dust and spittle, in order that he might obtain sight, so were your eyes

and ears touched with spittle, in order that from now on they should be opened to the teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ, to His praise and for prayer. And after you had renounced Satan and sin and promised to believe, to believe with all your heart, you were baptized and born again by the water and the Holy Ghost. You were anointed with the chrism of salvation as the living temple of God, in order that the Holy Ghost and His graces might dwell in you. With Jesus you should reign over sin and all passions, and with Him offer up a holy and immaculate sacrifice to God the heavenly Father with soul and body. Your faith leads you to the truth of the Christian doctrine and to the possession of heavenly bliss. At your baptism heaven was opened for you, the Holy Ghost came down upon you, and the voice of God went forth over you: "These are now my much beloved children!" Christian children! God is faithful, He is amiable and merciful, for he has called you to such abundantly great graces. You can never sufficiently thank and praise Him for them, never rejoice Him sufficiently by your innocence, obedience and love. But behold I announce another great joy to you. The heavens are again opened and our Divine Saviour Himself comes down and wants to enter your souls, which He purchased and redeemed with His precious blood on the cross. O thrice happy day, when you will share in this the greatest happiness of the Christian! when in truth is fulfilled what our Divine Saviour said full of tender love: "Let the children come to me," when you yourselves with joy and longing cry

out to Him: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Yes, truly blessed is our Divine Saviour Who, as He suffered for us all on the cross in wondrous love and longing for the salvation of our souls, He longs just as much here in the Blessed Sacrament for the salvation of our souls as He did on the cross. With longing He wishes to enter into your souls. Let this love and longing of Jesus rejoice your souls, and approach with devotion to receive your first holy communion, in order that Jesus may bless you and say of you: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me," keep them for me in this life, keep them for me in the bliss of eternity.

#### AFTER COMMUNION.

Happy children! Rejoice now, and with you our Divine Saviour rejoices, your holy guardian angels and all here present. Oh, how wonderfully small and amiable is Jesus Christ as the divine child in His crib at Bethlehem! And yet much smaller and therefore much more amiable He is in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Your soul is now a second Bethlehem, where he lives and abides; it is His second Nazareth, where He labors and dispenses His graces. Yes, just as the sun sparkles in thousands of dew-drops in lovely colors, so will now our Divine Saviour shine forth in your souls. Innocence and grace, child-like piety and faith should adorn your souls and make you pleasing to God and man.

This first communion, my dear children, should always be for you the happiest memory. And if obedi-

ence is often hard for you, think of your first communion, and for its honor and in gratitude for it obey Jesus in love. If temptations assail you by the conversation or the example of bad children, think of your first communion and in honor of it avoid the bad example. If study and obedience is often difficult, think of your first holy communion, and in honor of it be diligent and good. Oh, how often even in later days is the first holy communion the sweetest memory, and if it was made truly in faith and grace, it is truly the cause of the blessing of God and the well-being of maturer years.

Therefore, thank our Divine Saviour for this most beautiful happiness of good Christians, for if gratitude is pleasing to Him, it is certainly the gratitude of childish hearts. If God looked down with pleasure upon the sacrifice of the innocent Abel, and with displeasure upon the sacrifice of Cain, the reason was because Abel was grateful, and Cain was ungrateful and bad. God looks down upon you also with pleasure if you are grateful for your first holy communion. But your best gratitude is piety, obedience and innocence.

May the happiness and blessing, my dear children, of this first holy communion accompany you all days through your whole life; may it assist you in all dangers, preserve you in the love and grace of Jesus and finally lead you into the heavenly bliss, where all good Christians and all pious children will eternally rejoice and with grateful hearts eternally thank God. Amen.



## SERMON XXVI

### III. ADDRESS TO FIRST-COMMUNICANTS

My dear children, to-day is for you truly a festival of joy and a day of honor, for you are allowed for the first time to come to the altar of God, who rejoices your youth. You are to receive that heavenly food of the soul, which Jesus Christ instituted in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Yes, Jesus, our Divine Redeemer and Saviour, will to-day take possession of your souls, for which He suffered on the cross, and purchased with His precious blood. It is true, God, our heavenly Father, adopted you as His children already in baptism for the sake of Jesus Christ, gave you His grace, sent you the Holy Ghost, opened for you heaven, but our Dear Lord Himself had not as yet taken possession of your souls. To-day He will do it, if you promise Him to be wholly His, to believe His teaching, to observe His commandments, to love Him with your hearts and be grateful to Him. And why should you not, my dear children, promise joyfully this, since you have learned to know Jesus Christ? You know how Jesus Christ has loved you and still loves you, how He became man for you, suffered and bled and stretched out His arms for you on the cross. You know His doctrines, His miracles, His commandments and the holy sacraments; you have even experi-

enced yourselves His mercy, yes, your joy and your heart says, that you love Jesus. And will you not say to Him that you love Him, and delight Him and that you will know nothing of sin and ingratitude to God? Once your sponsors promised this for you, to-day you will promise it again yourselves, willingly and joyfully. For this reason I ask you in the name and in the place of Jesus Christ:

Do you renounce Satan? and all his pomps? and all his works? Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered for us? Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting? Do you promise to believe what God has revealed and what the holy Catholic Church proposes to our belief, and not only to steadfastly believe, but also as it becomes the children of God and Catholic Christians to live according to this faith?

Yes, we promise.

So then come to the altar. Take the burning candle; let it be for you a sign, that you will walk guiltless before God and live with Him in eternity.

#### BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION.

My dear brethren: The happiest, holiest and most soulful days of our lives are those which our Divine Saviour prepares for us. Our Divine Saviour sends to each one of His faithful who is of good will such

heavenly days with a blessing hand. They are the friendly rays of the sun, which break through the clouds of our daily life; they fill the soul with pure, unalloyed joy; they are a reflection of eternal life and a foretaste of that heavenly bliss which God prepares for those who love Him from their hearts. Such a day is the day of first communion, the day on which the soul borne on the wings of love hastens to its Divine Bridegroom and celebrates its mysterious espousals with Him. In holy communion Jesus Christ, the life and light of the world, enters our souls and living in us leads us to eternal life, here below by faith, hope and love, but in the life to come these are changed into the vision, the bliss and eternal love.

Behold these children, whose hearts are moved by holy impatience and joy, how they longingly approach the altar. Hear the gentle voice of our Divine Saviour: "Let the children come to me and forbid them not, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Obedient to this voice, we lead them to-day after careful preparation and instruction to our Divine Saviour.

Yes, my dear children, to-day you will become sharers in the kingdom of heaven; to-day is the day which the Lord has made, the most beautiful of your life. Rejoice and be glad, for behold, I announce to you a great joy; to-day our Divine Saviour enters into your hearts. You can cry out with the Blessed Virgin Mary: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." As she was declared blessed, so will you also be declared blessed by your guardian angels and by the present faithful

and children. Yes, just as Mary full of joy showed to the shepherds and the Magi the Divine Child Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem, so you also joyfully show the present faithful your faith and your knowledge of our Divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

What then is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? The Sacrament of the Altar is the most holy sacrament; it is the true body and the true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

In fact, holy and very holy is the sacrament of baptism; confirmation is holy, the sacrament of penance and extreme unction are holy and rich in blessings; the sacrament of Holy Orders is holy and sublime, and the sacrament of Matrimony is holy; but insuperably above all these is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, for here Jesus Christ Himself, our most amiable Saviour and Redeemer, lives and dwells full of love and goodness, full of meekness and mercy. And in order that we can approach Him more confidently, more childishly and freely, visit and pray to Him, He conceals Himself under the species of bread, which envelops Him like a white wonderful veil. Therefore, it is so beautifully sung in the hymn at benediction: Whom the species of bread conceals, Thou art our Saviour, whom love here veils, give us Thy blessing, O Jesus!

What follows from this, my dear children? It follows that Jesus Christ is to be adored in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Yes, that is true. How

happy were the Apostles who had Jesus Christ in their midst on earth! How much more happy are they now with all the saints in heaven, where they can praise and adore Jesus Christ forever, as their Lord and Master, as their life and Redeemer and their all? Behold, we also share with them and the angels and the saints their happiness; we, too, have Jesus in our midst, we, too, can praise, bless and adore Jesus. With the Apostle Thomas we should kneel down and cry out: "My Lord and my God!" My life, my hope and my all!

When and why did Jesus institute the Sacrament of the Altar? Jesus Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar when He ate with His Apostles the paschal lamb. This paschal lamb was for the Jews, since their liberation from Egypt a type or figure of the promised Saviour, Who, as the true Lamb of God, would take away the sins of the world. Jesus Christ offered Himself on the cross as the Lamb of God for us, He suffered for us with nameless love, He bled for us and dying redeemed us. Oh, how much are we indebted to Him and must show our love and gratitude to Him. Behold, then, in order to give us a perpetual remembrance of His bitter Passion and Death, He instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

But our Divine Saviour instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar not only as a memorial of His Passion and Death, but in order to nourish our souls for eternal life. Just as the body needs food and drink, in order to retain health and strength, so do

our souls also need nourishment, in order to persevere in the grace of God. O wonderful love of our Divine Saviour, Who comes into the soul, in order to nourish it and to impart to it His graces. As the pelican tears open its breast in order to feed with its heart's blood its famished young, so did Jesus Christ allow His side to be opened, in order to feed our souls with His flesh and blood for eternal life. Yes, truly, here is Jesus' flesh and blood, here is the highest good. No soul is lost under His protection.

So then, happy children, come to the altar in order that our Divine Saviour may enter into your souls and nourish you for eternal life. May this your first holy communion be accompanied by the blessing of God, sanctify your whole life and become the pledge of your future resurrection! Amen.

## SERMON XXVII

### IV. ADDRESS TO FIRST-COMMUNICANTS

There are two precious days in our Christian life, which are the beginning of that glorious chain on which are linked the goodness and mercy of God, the grace of God and salvation. And these two days are the days of baptism and first communion. Just as the heavens were opened and the voice of God the Father was heard when our Divine Saviour was baptized in the River Jordan, so, too, the heavens were opened when you were baptized and the voice of your Father came over you: "This is my well-beloved child in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost sanctified your soul also, gave it the robe of innocence and grace and infused into it the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity, and a guardian angel was given to you for your earthly life. Yes, on the day of your baptism, the holy Triune God celebrated a festival in heaven, and the angels, the Catholic Church and your parents rejoiced over your happiness. But for this reason your sponsors promised in your place to believe in God, to hope in and love Him, and to avoid sin. Now that you are grown up and instructed, now that you know the love of God, of Jesus Christ, that you know His teaching and His commandments, His Passion and Death and rejoice over God and our

Divine Saviour, now promise for yourselves to renounce sin and to willingly believe from your hearts, to hope and to love. Therefore I ask you again: Do you renounce Satan? etc. Do you believe in God the Father? etc. So receive the burning candle, etc.

Yes, the robe of innocence which was given to you in holy baptism will become to-day by your first holy communion still more pure and decorated with new graces like unto the richest diamonds; it will be preserved pure by you in order that you may appear on the day of judgment before our Divine Saviour in this nuptial robe of innocence and grace. This candle, which burned for the first time at your baptism as a type or a figure of faith and grace, blazes to-day as the nuptial torch at your espousals with Jesus Christ through the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; may it enlighten you through your whole life, in order that you may reach by grace and faith the heavenly life, which is Jesus Christ Himself.

#### BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION.

Beloved Christians! When our Divine Saviour dwelled upon earth in all His trials and persecutions He was consoled by children. Their presence gladdened Him, and they in turn sang to Him: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest!" Therefore He said with a gentle voice: "Let the children come to me for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Whoever receives a child in my name, receives me. There rested even upon the childhood of



Jesus a marvelous charm, a heavenly blessing for Christian childhood and youth. The Holy Ghost rests upon the years of childhood and imparts to them the charm of innocence, of joy and radiance, and breathes into their souls the blessing of grace and peace. But the festivals of children are also the festivals of God the Father, Who chose them in holy baptism to be His children, festivals of the Son, Who redeemed them and of the Holy Ghost, Who sanctified them. The feasts of children are the feasts of angels who rejoice with them, feasts of men, who at the sight of innocent children's joys are reminded of their own childish happiness. Yes, we are wont gladly to look back to the days of our youth, to those days of joy, of grace and happy carelessness, to those days which often were the only happy days of our life and which reëcho in our souls as a soft, sweet music. And in maturer years they console and refresh us, and remind us of the days to come of heavenly bliss. To-day we celebrate again such a children's festival, which only God and the Church are able to give.

O my children! with the words of St. Augustine addressed to the newly-baptized on Low-Sunday I address you: "New buds of sanctity, born of water and the Holy Ghost, holy seed, new army, flowers of our honor and fruit of our labors, my joy and my crown" (Serm. 1, in Pasc.), my consolation in the present and my hope in the future rejoice and be glad, for I announce to you a great joy; our Divine Saviour stands at the door of your childish hearts and knocks. What else does He desire, but that you open it unto Him

by faith, hope and love, while you say: "O Jesus, good Jesus, come into my heart, and into my soul."

But in order that our Divine Saviour may come into your soul by holy communion, you must be well and rightly prepared for it. I ask therefore: how manifold is the preparation, which is necessary for the worthy reception of this Sacrament? Wherein consists this preparation, in regard to the soul? What does it mean to have a pure conscience?

Yes, as clear, pure water, or a pure looking-glass reflects the picture of the one who looks into it, so should the soul be clear and clean, purified of all sin. The image of God and the grace of God should be reflected and shine forth from it, and Jesus would joyfully enter into it and take possession of it. Oh, happy is he, who is free from guilt and fault, and preserves the child-like purity of soul! but woe, if our Divine Saviour must raise the sorrowful cry: "Judas, dost thou betray me with a kiss?"

But wherein consists the devotion of the heart? Yes, in the practice of faith. O Jesus, I believe from Thy love, that Thou art here present. O Jesus, I hope from Thy mercy all graces, which Thou here impartest to Thy faithful. O Jesus, I love Thee with my whole heart, and I wish to love Thee as all the saints once loved Thee. Your obedience, O children, has a beautiful voice which says: O Jesus, I love Thee! Your piety, your diligence has a beautiful voice which says: O Jesus, I love Thee! Your innocence, your morality has a lovely voice which gloriously says: O Jesus, I love Thee!

But the devotion of the heart consists also in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and in the grateful remembrance of the death of Jesus, for the remembrance of which this sacrament was instituted and the commandment given to receive it. What else was the appearance of Jesus in the form of a child, but a preparation for this sacrament? What else was His hidden life in Nazareth but the preparation for His hidden life in this holy Sacrament? The giving of His body and blood on the cross, what else was it but a preparation for the constant sacrifice of His body and blood in this Sacrament? In a heavenly manner He escaped, as it were, from heaven and the adoration of the angels, in order to live amongst us, and to be adored by us with the shepherds, the Magi and the angels. Yes, here is the school, where we should practice ourselves in this adoration, in order to be able once to eternally adore and praise Him with the angels and saints.

And now, my dear children, since you are well prepared and in the state of grace, so come to the altar, to Jesus, who rejoices your youth. Approach full of faith, hope and charity and say: O Lord, I am not worthy, that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and my soul shall be healed.

AFTER HOLY COMMUNION.

Rejoice now, my children! rejoice, for our Divine Saviour rests in your souls. With you, all here present rejoice; your parents and relatives rejoice with you; with you and over you rejoices your guardian

angel, the Blessed Virgin Mary, yes, Jesus Himself. Oh, show Him your joy by childish gratitude; yes, thank Jesus from your hearts for His goodness and love. But your best thanks are if you rejoice Him with obedience, with piety and innocence.

O God, to whom the gratitude of the simple and innocent is always pleasing, look down with a benign and appeased countenance upon the grateful hearts of these children and accept their childish gratitude with pleasure! O God, whom the tongues of these children cannot sufficiently thank, accept in mercy my priestly gratitude, which I offer Thee in the name of these children for all the goodness, love and grace, which Thou hast to-day and through their whole youthful life granted to them. Accept the thanks of all the faithful here present which they offer Thee to-day for these children. Above all, accept the thanks of true Christian parents, who have sacrificed themselves in the care and bringing up of their children, who were entrusted to them as the highest good and have preserved these sanctified children's souls in honor.

O God, although unworthy, I beseech Thee nevertheless, to hear my prayer: keep these children in Thy grace and love, bless their pious resolutions, bless their first holy communion, in order that it may be to them the pledge of their welfare on earth and of their eternal salvation. And Thou, O Blessed Virgin Mary, be to these children a true Mother, as Thou wast to the Divine Child. Pray for them, in order that they become like unto the Divine Child in

obedience, in grace and innocence. St. Joseph, protector of the faithful, show thyself as a good foster-father of these children, and grant to them that love and fatherly care, which thou didst once give to the Divine Child on earth. O my children, may the Father, Son and Holy Ghost bless you and your first holy communion. Amen.

## SERMON XXVIII

### HOLY MASS, THE UNBLOODY SACRIFICE OF THE NEW LAW

From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."—  
MALACH. I, II.

If we wish to know what a sacrifice is or what it means to sacrifice, we need only to penetrate into the depths of human life, and read its history; yes, ask the human heart, how love, friendship or gratitude reveals itself. Is it not in the manifold giving away of one to another, the offering of help, of possessions, of time and even life? Good parents are ready to offer for the welfare of their children time, comfort, health and means: they bring for their children great and heavy sacrifices. The friend sacrifices everything in order to save the friend: he hesitates at no sacrifice. Others are induced by Christian charity to forego the privileges of birth, of honor, of fortune, and of the joys of the world, in order to consecrate themselves to the education of children, the salvation of souls, or the care of the sick: they sacrifice everything from a spirit of Christian charity. A sacrifice is therefore a free offering of time, of comforts, of means, of health, yes, even of one's life, in order to

testify by such offerings his love and gratitude to one's neighbor.

What takes place among men should it not also be in vogue in the most intimate relations of man to God? Everything is from God, in God and through God. His omnipotence created everything, His wisdom and providence preserve and rule everything, and heaven and earth and every created thing bears most eloquent witness of His goodness. This was so deeply written in the heart of man at all times and in all places, that he gave to Him a part of everything of value, and annihilated it by fire or pouring out, in order to show to God due reverence, gratitude and love. He offered to God sacrifices. Thus Cain and Abel offered sacrifice, thus Noah after the deluge, and later Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the covenant which God made with the Jewish people on Mt. Sinai, He Himself determined through Moses the different kinds of sacrifices. But all these sacrifices were only figures of that great sacrifice, which the promised Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, would offer by the complete giving of Himself for the salvation of the world. And these sacrifices of animals were pleasing to God only in so far as they pointed to the future great and immaculate sacrifice and were accompanied by the internal sacrifice of obedience, of contrition for sin and of love of God. But as this necessary love of the Jewish people disappeared and they were satisfied with the empty ceremonies, God rejected their sacrifices and announced that sublime prophecy of Malachias: "I have no pleasure in you and I will

not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, sayeth the Lord of hosts."

This promise of God, my beloved, has been absolutely fulfilled. The holy Mass is the pure sacrifice which is offered in all places and through which the name of the Lord becomes great among the nations. It is the unbloody sacrifice of the New Testament, the continual remembrance of the bloody sacrifice, which Jesus Christ offered on the cross. And this will form the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If a sacrifice is a free gift, which man offers to God either for himself or for others, what gift then did Jesus Christ offer to God for us as a sacrifice? He offered His own body and blood for us on the cross as the gift; He Himself was the sacrifice or the victim. For this reason St. Paul writes: "Christ hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God." (Eph. 5, 2.) But Christ was not only the oblation but at the same time the priest, who offered this sacrifice in His body and blood: "He delivered Himself." For this reason, too, He is called Christ, that is the Anointed of the Lord, as the eternal High-Priest according to the order of Melchisedech foretold by Holy Scripture. (Ps. 109, 5.) The royal Prophet David in the prophetic spirit placed the words



in His mouth, and these words St. Paul also quotes when he speaks of Christ in his letter to the Hebrews, being at the same time the victim and priest: "Sacrifice and oblation (bulls and goats) thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me . . . then said I, behold I come that I should do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10, 5, 7.) The cross was the altar on which Christ accomplished the will of God, and the victim was His own body fitted for Him by God; that was the bloody sacrifice of the New Law. But Christ sheds His blood no more, suffers and dies no more, and as the Lamb of God sacrificed on the cross, He has taken away forever the sins of the world. This sacrifice on the cross He offers no more; only once was it necessary.

Is then, my friends, the New Covenant of God with man, is the holy Church of Christ left without a sacrifice? Here a new insight into the truly wonderful providence of God opens up to us, with which He wisely orders and directs all things so that we understand from the present, thousands of years long passed, and from these understand the present, and from both we are able to look forward to the future times with some certainty. We recognize everywhere in apparently most unimportant things the love of God for the salvation of man, in order that our faith may be strengthened, our hope increased and our love inflamed. How everything takes its place from Paradise on in a remarkable way! The promise of a Redeemer which God made to our first parents in Paradise after the fall had not departed from the memory

of man when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice to Him his own son on the mountain. Abraham was on the point of executing the will of God when the angel of God cried out to him: "By my ownself I have sworn, sayeth the Lord: because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake: I will bless thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22, 16-18.) Abraham and Isaac were the types that God the Father one day would not spare His own Son, but would sacrifice Him on Mt. Calvary for the salvation of the world. But how will He sacrifice Him? When the posterity of Abraham found themselves in Egypt God commanded them through Moses, to sprinkle the door-posts with the blood of a lamb before their departure into the promised land, in order that the angel might preserve their first-born from the threatened death on that night. This was the other type or figure, that Christ was to be the Lamb of God, with whose blood mankind was to be sprinkled and redeemed from eternal death and enter the promised land of the heavenly kingdom. But where will this Lamb of God shed his blood? When the Jews were in the desert and God in punishment for their disobedience allowed poisonous serpents to attack them, Moses erected by the command of God a cross with a brazen serpent. Whoever looked upon it, would become well again; and from the cross Christ dispensed to man salvation of souls. Whoever places his hope in it, is preserved from eternal death. The prophets, hundreds of years before, announced all His

sufferings. But when the Jewish people came to Mount Sinai in the desert, fifty days after their departure from Egypt, there was a mighty wind, the mountain seemed to be enveloped in flames and the glory of God appeared, the people received the ten commandments of God, and the Old Covenant was made. And fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ there was a mighty wind, when the Apostles and disciples of the Lord were gathered together in Jerusalem, and the Holy Ghost came down in fiery tongues, the New Covenant of God with mankind and the New Law was announced. And wonderful! Soon after the bloody sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and after the establishment of the New Covenant Jerusalem was destroyed, the majestic temple of the Jews, where alone they were allowed to offer their sacrifices, fell in ruins; their high-priests from the family of Aaron have died out, and the priests from the tribe of Benjamin, the ark of the covenant with the manna, the vessels, the sacerdotal vestments, the altars, everything, as prescribed according to the ordinance of God, as described in Exodus, has disappeared, and there remains only the vain longing for the promised Messiah. But now the Christian Church has taken the place of the old Synagogue, in the new house of God the tabernacle, the new ark of the covenant and the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the new manna, which came down from heaven. Now there are the new festivals from Easter and Pentecost, new holy vessels, sacerdotal vestments with their great meaning, consecrations and altars — where remains now the sacrifice?

That sacrifice namely which should take the place of the Jewish sacrifice and foretold by God? And again, my friends, we must go back four thousand years in order to recognize herein the decrees of God.

And truly, when Abraham after his victory over the four allied kings, and Lot's liberation from imprisonment returned home, he was met by Melchisedech, King of Salem and at the same time priest of the Most High, who offered wine and bread, blessed Abraham and said: "Blessed be Abraham by the most high God, who created heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, by whose protection the enemies are in thy hand." (Gen. 14, 19, 20.) This is all that the Holy Scriptures narrate about this mysterious appearance and about Melchisedech. But the holy King David says of the future Saviour: "Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech." (Ps. 109, 4.) And St. Paul calls Him a priest according to the order of Melchisedech and not according to the order of Aaron. (Heb. 7, 11.)

2. In fact, at the Last Supper Jesus Christ took bread and wine, He blessed the bread saying: "This is my body," and He blessed the chalice saying: "This is my blood; do this in commemoration of me." The holy Mass is therefore the sacrifice of the New Law. But is it the same sacrifice? Holy Church says in her explanation of the holy Mass that it is the same sacrifice, as that which Christ offered on the cross, for it is the same gift—His body and His blood, and the same High-Priest, who offered it on the cross

and still offers it by the hands of the priest in holy Mass. Only the manner of offering is different. His sacrifice on the cross was a bloody one, and here it is an unbloody one, for then Christ shed His blood, suffered and died. But now He does not shed His blood any more, suffers and dies no more. But the Council of Trent further says: "Christ who offered Himself on the cross as an oblation did not wish that His sacrifice should have an end herewith, but because He is the priest in eternity so He wished that His sacrifice be continued in the Church until the end of the world. And because He is a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, who alone offered to the true God bread and wine, so He wishes to offer His sacrifice under the appearances of bread and wine. And as the sacrifice on the cross was completed when the Saviour gave up His spirit, so it is now completed on the altar with the consecration." (Sess. 22, C. 2.)

My dear friends, we see here the love of the Saviour. He wanted to leave us a perpetual memorial by which we should be constantly reminded of His bloody sacrifice on the cross and of all the love with which He offered it for us: "Do this in commemoration of me." But He was not satisfied with this. He wanted also to leave here on earth a gift which we could continually offer to God, and this gift is His body and His blood, which we offer to the heavenly Father in holy Mass; therefore the holy Mass is a sacrifice. The priest visibly performs the ceremony of Mass, and Jesus Christ Himself invisibly. For this reason this holy sacrifice can suffer no harm, no diminution of its

worth by the most unworthy priest, for it is not the priest who is sacrificed or who really sacrifices, but Christ Himself. St. Paul beautifully says: "For it was fitting that we should have such a High-Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's." (Heb. 7, 26, 27.)

But if God had pleasure in the types and figures of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, if He had pleasure in the sacrifice of the innocent Abel, who offered Him the firstlings of his lambs, or in the sacrifice of Noah after the deluge, in the sacrifices of Abraham and especially in the sacrifices of the holy king and high-priest Melchisedech, what pleasure then, my friends, must not God have in the holy sacrifice of the Mass? For this reason the priest soon after the consecration prays: "Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ, Thy Son our Lord, His resurrection from hell and glorious ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy most excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and grants, a pure host, a holy host, an immaculate host, the holy bread of eternal life, and the chalice of everlasting salvation. Upon which vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance, and to accept them, as Thou wast graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our Patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy

high-priest Melchisedech offered to Thee, a holy sacrifice, an immaculate host.”

Oh, yes, God will look down with a serene and propitious countenance for the gift which we offer Him,— is it not the most blessed Humanity of Christ? And with His humanity His divinity is united, because He is God and man at the same time. With His humanity Christ offers everything that He did for the honor of the Blessed Trinity and that He did and suffered on earth for the welfare of man. But he does not offer Himself here as the Christ is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God in glory and majesty, but humble and small, imprisoned, and, as it were, fettered by the species of bread and wine, offering Himself entirely, and, as it were, annihilating Himself, truly sacrificing Himself, He places Himself before the Holy Trinity in the most touching manner. What honor for God, what virtue and excellence of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, but what salvation and blessing for those who assist at it with devotion! May you also, my friends, assist at this holy sacrifice with devotion, with exterior and interior reverence, in order that God may look down upon you also with a serene and propitious countenance and accept this sacrifice from your hands for the salvation of you and yours. Amen.

## SERMON XXIX

### THE HOLY MASS AS A SACRIFICE OF ADORATION, PRAISE AND GRATITUDE

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness.”—EPH. 5, 2.

We saw last Sunday that a sacrifice is a free gift, which man offers to God. These sacrifices consisted in animals and in the fruits of the field. They were each according to the intention, in which it was offered, a sacrifice of adoration for the acknowledgment of the highest majesty and government of God; a sacrifice of praise, for the praise and glorification of God; a sacrifice of gratitude, for benefits received from God; a sacrifice of petition, for obtaining the help of God. It was deeply impressed upon man from the fall of Adam on that God was the highest Lord of heaven and earth, from whom everything has life and being; that He preserves and governs everything, and can also demand it back as His property. For this reason men offered the life of animals in their place, whose blood they shed and which were destroyed by fire as a sacrifice. They offered a sacrifice of adoration in acknowledgment of the highest dominion of God. It was deeply impressed upon men that they were created in order to praise God, the highest Lord and the most amiable Good, whose glory



and goodness fill earth and heaven and to thank Him for His countless benefits, with which He not only remembers men but also all creatures. For this reason they offered Him a sacrifice of praise and gratitude. Thus Abel offered sacrifice, Noah after the deluge, Abraham and the rest of the ancients, and even men who were strangers to the true God. The sacrifices were at all times the principal part of divine service. On Mt. Sinai, where God made the Old Covenant with the Jewish people, He Himself determined through Moses the sacrifices, their numbers, their ceremonies, the vessels, the robes and the rank and the order of service of the priests, in order that everything might be a great, even in the smallest minutiae, fixed type of that one only sacrifice which was to take the place of all other sacrifices and be truly the highest sacrifice of adoration, of the most perfect praise, and of the most worthy gratitude. Here again we hear the words of God in the mouth of His prophet: "I have no pleasure in you, and I will not receive a gift of your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation." (Malach. I, IO, II.)

This sacrifice so pleasing to God is holy Mass. It is the highest sacrifice of adoration, the most perfect sacrifice of praise, and the most worthy sacrifice of gratitude. And this will form the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. Holy Mass is the highest sacrifice of adoration. In the Jewish sacrifice of adoration the whole sacrificial animal, whose blood had been shed before was burned on special altars, while at the sacrifice of praise and gratitude only a piece was burned, the rest being eaten in common by the sacrificing ones and by the priests. This was their sacrificial meal, while now our sacrificial meal is holy communion, by which we participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. For this reason in the sacrifice of adoration everything was burned in order to show that life and existence, all that we have and that we are, belong to God, and should be sacrificed to His service and to His honor. Thus God as the highest Lord could demand in still more strict justice, that each one offer to Him his life, as He commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, but was satisfied with his obedience. Thus God demanded also in the Old Law that the first-born children should be offered to Him, when He said: "These are mine;" and on this account mothers were obliged to bring their first-born children to the temple in Jerusalem and to redeem them by another small offering. The Blessed Virgin Mary redeemed the Child Jesus, but God was not satisfied with it in the case of His own Son, and later the Saviour offered His life on the cross, in order to free all men from the duty of redeeming themselves or offering their lives as a sacrifice of adoration. For this reason St. Paul says: "For the charity of Christ presseth us, judging this that if one died for all, then all were dead, for Christ died for all:" (2 Cor. 5, 14, 15), that is, in the life which

Christ sacrificed on the cross were included, as it were, the lives of all men, and since Christ as the head of the race sacrificed His life, He sacrificed it at the same time in the place of all and for all. But since Christ on the cross destroyed His body by suffering and pains, and the burning agony of His wounds, as if by a fire, and shed at the same time His own blood, He offered to God the highest sacrifice of adoration in acknowledgment of His immeasurable majesty and dominion over all created things.

But now, my beloved, are we freed from the first and greatest duty of man, to honor and adore God as the highest Lord of heaven and earth? Or what shall be our Christian sacrifice of adoration? Our sacrifice of adoration is the holy Mass. It is the sacrifice by which we testify that God is the cause of all creation, the last purpose of all bliss and the highest Lord of all things, to whom we offer a visible sacrifice for a witness of our dutiful subordination and adoration and which is in accordance with His divine majesty. Now no more numberless sacrificial animals are offered, but Christ Himself we daily offer. "This is my body, and this is my blood: do this in commemoration of me." Thus He gave Himself into our power in order that we might offer Him as a true sacrifice of adoration to the Blessed Trinity. Just as Jesus Christ offered His life on the cross by the separation of the soul from the body, and by the shedding of His blood, so now is renewed in holy Mass at the consecration in a spiritual manner His death by the separation of His body from His blood,

and consequently His life is offered as a sacrifice of adoration. And just as once took place in the consecration of Solomon's Temple in the Old Law when fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice of adoration (which was a type of the New Covenant of God with men), so now the fire of the Holy Ghost comes down from heaven and destroys the bread and wine and only leaves the appearances which conceal the body and blood of Christ. For this reason the holy Bishop and Father of the Church, St. Ambrose, of the fourth century, wrote: "Permit, O Lord, the invisible majesty of Thy Holy Spirit to come down, just as He did in ancient times upon the bloody sacrifices of the fathers."

Therefore, my dearly beloved, what else is the holy Mass but a daily ambassadorship to the Blessed Trinity with the most priceless presents, which we offer to God as an acknowledgment of His highest dominion over all creatures and in testimony of our subordination and obedience. To him, the Lord of life and death, is offered the life and death of Christ as a daily tribute for all by the militant Church on earth with the coöperation of the triumphant Church in heaven, in order that there may be shown to Him, the Triune God, the highest honor and adoration by His creatures. Yes, heaven and earth here conspire together for the honor of God, for the priest prays: "We most humbly beseech Thee, almighty God, command these things to be carried by the hand of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy divine Majesty." But his greatest honor, which the

Holy Trinity receives through this gracious sacrifice of adoration, is given to God not by angels and men but by Christ Himself, who has become so lowly here under the appearances of bread and wine and, as it were, annihilates Himself and presents Himself in the extreme of humility and reverence. My dearly beloved, the Jews had precious sacrifices of adoration and yet gave themselves great pains to show God befitting honor and adoration; but we have an incomparably nobler sacrifice of adoration, which costs us nothing, but is given by Christ, in order that we may offer to the Blessed Trinity and show to It fitting and due honor and adoration. We are not freed from the duty to honor God as our highest Lord. Yes, we are more obligated to this duty now than before the coming of Christ. Here at holy Mass we have the best opportunity. Therefore, whoever stays away from Mass and strives consequently to forego the fulfilling of this first and most important duty on earth, places himself beneath the Jews and pagans. Thus becomes to us and for so many Catholic Christians it will become on the day of their judgment clear and easily intelligible the terrible expression of our Divine Saviour which even now is contained in these words: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to Thee as the heathen and the publican," for the Church commands us to hear holy Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation with becoming reverence and devotion, in order to fulfill our duty towards God.

2. But holy Mass is not only a holocaust or sacrifice of adoration; it is also a sacrifice of praise. What

God is, neither angels nor men can say. Unfathomable is His substance, immeasurable His holiness and inexhaustible His riches. He is the strictest justice, the mildest mercy, the loveliest friendship, and the most attractive beauty. Heaven and earth give the most eloquent testimony of His power and wisdom, of His generosity and goodness. But God created everything in order that He might be blessed and praised by His creatures. This the angels did since their creation, this they are still doing now and will continue to do for eternity. This the sun, the moon, and the stars did, and are still doing. Thus God Himself asks Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? When the morning stars praise me together and all the sons of God—the angels—made a joyful melody?" (Job 38, 4, 7.) All creatures—each in its own way—praise God their creator. What the tongues of fire in the starry army of heaven recount, what the sea and the mountains and the abysses of earth announce, what the friendly sunshine and the noises of the storm, what the beauty of the blossoms of spring and what the hail which destroys them, and the cold blast of winter which annihilates them; what the lilies of the field, the sparrow on the roof, and the worm in the earth, yes, the beams of the sun announce—what else do they speak of, if they are rightly read and understood if not of the praise of God?

Therefore should not we men much more praise and bless God, since for this purpose precisely we have been created in order to know God, to praise and to

bless Him? This the holy king David understood best, for from a desire to praise God as much as possible he composed the spirited Psalms in which he calls upon his people, yes and the whole of nature to praise God with him. Are not we Christians much more obliged to do the same, since we have been adopted as children of God for this purpose? Therefore, St. Paul writes: "Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ unto himself; unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved son, that we may be unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1, 5, 6, 12.) This is therefore our great obligation; the Prophet Sirach urges us on with more emphatic words: "Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can, for he will yet far exceed, and his magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can: for he is above all praise." (Eccus, 43 32, 33.) And yet, my friends, how can we fulfill this our obligation in the most becoming manner?

For this, too, Christ our Lord has provided. He instituted the holy Mass at the Last Supper, which is offered to God as a sacrifice of praise from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof, in the Catholic Church, in all places and among all peoples. Thus prays the priest at the altar: "We offer Thee a sacrifice of praise." In the Gloria he says with a loud voice: "We praise Thee. We bless Thee. We adore Thee. We glorify Thee." In the Preface he says: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. The

heavens and the earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." God cannot be better and more worthily praised than by the immaculate sacrifice of the Altar. Here we offer to the holy Trinity the praise which Christ on earth gave to God, yes, Christ Himself here brings the highest praise on the altar, and offers it in the name of those who assist at Mass with becoming devotion, and increases it in such a manner as these never could of their own selves. Therefore, whoever offers up the holy Mass in this intention to God, offers Him a greater praise than all the angels and saints in Heaven and all the men on earth are able to give to God, for He offers to Him a divine praise, the praise of the Son of God. For this reason the priest in the Preface raises his voice and after he has exhorted us to raise our hearts to the praise of God, he continues the praise song to God the Almighty and Eternal, through Jesus Christ, through whom the Angels and the Archangels praise His majesty, the Dominations adore Him, the Powers tremble, the heaven of heavens, the Cherubim and Seraphim skip for very joy, and we, who with them under the same head, Jesus Christ, form only one choir of praise, cry out to God with one voice: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of His glory."

Thus, my dear friends, we can explain that God has fulfilled the words long since spoken by the Prophet Isaias: "And now what have I here, for my name is



continually blasphemed all the day long?" (Isa. 52.) That is, why should I allow the world to prosper any more by my fatherly providence, since in the world I am continually blasphemed and insulted? I will leave it to its own devices, will visit it with plagues and punishments and wipe out the blasphemies and sins. But what keeps the just God from doing this, what alone prevents Him? It is the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; it counterbalances all the blasphemies and malice, for it offers to Him daily throughout the whole world the highest praise, and this praise is a rich satisfaction for the insults inflicted on God. Holy Mass is therefore a sacrifice of praise; it is also a sacrifice of gratitude.

3. Gratitude is one of the principal virtues, gratitude is one of the greatest duties of man toward God. Out of gratitude Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, Cain the first-fruits of the earth, and Noah offered sacrifice after the deluge for his safety. Thus also the Jewish people offered sacrifice at different times for the prevention of diseases, for the liberation from the hands of the enemies, for the yearly harvest they were accustomed to offer sacrifice in thanksgiving. Has the duty of gratitude toward God ceased for us, or have His benefits towards us in comparison to the men before Christ decreased, instead of increased? God never tires of showing us His goodness, goodness in our creation, redemption and sanctification; goodness in the forgiveness of our sins, goodness in the hearing of our prayers, in the institution of the holy sacraments, help in temptations, consolations in

difficulties, goodness for our temporal and goodness for our eternal weal. As the sun lights the day, so the goodness of God shines through our whole life, and we have not merited this goodness nor could we merit it. We must ask ourselves with the holy king: "What shall I render to the Lord for all that he has given to me?" (Ps. 150.) or with Tobias: "We are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things?" (Tob. 12, 3.)

But, yes, my dear friends, our Divine Saviour knew that we poor mortals would never be in a position to render to God the great obligatory gratitude. Therefore, the priest at the altar prays thus: "The day before He suffered He took bread into His holy and venerable hands and with His eyes lifted up towards heaven, to God, His Almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee." Oh, certainly, the best and most vivid thanksgiving which our Divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, in our place offered to God, our heavenly Father, for all unmerited benefits granted to us! What Christ did, however, on the evening before His Passion that He does now daily in holy Mass, where He raises His mild eyes to God the Father in thanksgiving for us. Therefore, as often as we assist at holy Mass with the right intention, so often should we offer to God our fitting thanksgiving united to the gratitude of Christ. Christ gives to us His thanksgiving as our own, and consequently our gratitude is not human, insufficient and miserable any more, but correspondingly divine and perfect. For this reason our Saviour says:

“Do this in commemoration of me.” And he instituted the holy Mass also as a sacrifice of gratitude. On this account the priest prays in the Gloria: “We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, the heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.” And the priest in the Preface calls to those present: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” And the answer is: “It is meet and just. It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should always, and in all places, give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, through Christ our Lord.”

4. We have, therefore, in holy Mass the most glorious sacrifice of adoration, by which we show God the highest adoration and honor, and testify that He is the last object of all bliss, and the Lord over life and death, to whom we offer this holy sacrifice in testimony of our due subordination, a sacrifice which is suited to His divine Majesty, for we offer Him the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We have in the holy Mass the most perfect sacrifice of praise in which we can praise and bless God better than heaven and earth, than the angels and saints and all creatures are able to praise God, for we offer to Him the Divine Praise of Christ. We have, finally, in the holy Mass the most worthy and most suitable sacrifice of gratitude for all the mercies and goodness of God, because here we offer the gratitude of Jesus Christ. Great God! would that most men knew what an inexhaustible spring the holy Mass is through which the Christian enters into the most intimate bond with God,

the redeemed with the Redeemer, the sanctified with the Holy Ghost—a bond in which salvation and blessing, the pleasure and grace of God rests upon him here below and from him arises to heaven, praise and glory of God, blessing and gratitude, faith, hope and love. If this were known by all, or if all in union with Christ, or in the intention as the holy Church offers this sacrifice to God, if they would only offer it to God! The consequence would be exterior and interior reverence, and the Church would be truly a house of God, where Christians would flock around Christ as the angels and the glorified blessed in heaven surround the Lamb of God.

Therefore, my beloved, be mindful of the great love of the Redeemer, which He has given as a means into our hands to worthily adore God, to praise and thank Him. He gave Himself to us in order that we may offer Him again in holy Mass to God the Almighty Father, and with us and for us Christ offers His adoration, His praise and His gratitude. Use it well, for if we must render an account of the least word, how much more must we render an account of the holy Sacrifice? But to the good God be thanks, heartfelt thanks given, that He has made it possible for us on earth to serve Him in the most worthy, in the most pleasing manner, and afterwards to behold Him in heaven among His angels and saints. With what better words, therefore, can I conclude than with the words of the Apostle St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: “Grace unto you and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I give

thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus, that in all things you are made rich in him, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will confirm you unto the end without crime, in the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8.) Amen.

## SERMON XXX

### THE HOLY MASS AS A SACRIFICE OF IMPETRATION, SATISFACTION AND ATONEMENT

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”—I ST. JOHN, 2, 1, 2.

We saw last Sunday that holy Mass is the highest sacrifice of adoration for the adoration of God, the most perfect sacrifice of praise for the glorification of God, and the most worthy sacrifice of gratitude. In this threefold meaning the former sacrifices were types of the unbloody sacrifice of the New Law; the sacrifice of the innocent Abel down to the sacrifices of the time of Christ foreshadowed the unbloody sacrifice of the New Law.—But it was written deeply on the heart of man that besides the obligatory duty to adore God, to praise and thank Him, there could be obtained nowhere else a more powerful and better help in times of danger or in need than from God, whose goodness they had already experienced in His benefits. Therefore, they besought God for His help, and in order to make their petitions stronger and more pleasing they offered sacrifice of impetration. How often did they not fall deeper into sin so that their petitions remained ineffectual, because God was not

propitiated? This gave them to understand that God, the just Judge, who punished all evil must be propitiated. Therefore, in order to obtain forgiveness for their sins they offered sacrifices of propitiation. We read of the pious Job, that every eight days he called his children to him and offered a sacrifice of propitiation for them saying: "My sons, lest you have perhaps sinned in your daily works and blasphemed God in your hearts." Would that Christian parents would follow this example and at least on Sundays assist at holy Mass with their children and offer it to God for the sins of their children! In the law of Moses God Himself instituted a sacrifice of propitiation: "If any man sin he shall offer a ewe-lamb and the priest shall pray for him and for his sin, but if he be not able to offer a beast, let him offer two turtles, or two young pigeons to the Lord, one for sin, and the other for a holocaust." (Lev. 5.) But from the times of our first parents until Christ men have known that sin called forth two evils: the guilt and the temporal and eternal punishment. The guilt with the eternal punishment is wiped out by true contrition, and for this reason they offered sacrifices of propitiation as a sign of their contrition. The temporal punishment is taken away by the satisfaction which is offered to God as a compensation as the ordained penance. But because this penance was usually not sufficient for complete satisfaction they united with it a sacrifice — the sacrifice of satisfaction.

All these three kinds of sacrifices were only weak types of that great and holy sacrifice which God was

to institute in His Church. "I have no pleasure in you and I will not receive a gift of your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, sayeth the Lord of hosts."

This sacrifice is holy Mass; it is our great sacrifice of impetration, propitiation and satisfaction. This will form the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. Faith teaches us, and experience confirms it, that the grace of God is necessary for eternal happiness, and that man can merit nothing for eternal life without grace. And truly, where could the Christian receive the strength to constantly and effectually resist internal and external temptations to sin? Heaven is a reward, heaven suffers violence, and not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of God, and this will is expressed in His commandments. But on the contrary how enticing are the examples and conversations of men, their own depraved nature and tempting occasions? Everything seems to have conspired together for the destruction of the poor soul. St. Paul himself sighs: "I, unhappy man, who will deliver me from the fetters of this body?" but he adds at once: "The grace of God." Want, distress, half despair oppress some, others are extremely unfortunate in their marriage, others again by their own chil-



dren; sicknesses, pains, unlooked for misfortunes, envy, scorn and abuse follow others. Oh, then there is needed everywhere the strength, the patience, the constancy and resignation in order to weave from the sufferings of this life a crown for heaven! Whence will assistance come, in order to make it possible for man to do what of himself he is unable to bear and to accomplish? Christian parents should take nothing so much to heart as the temporal and eternal happiness of their children, and the successful education of them, and nothing should be so dear to the children as the welfare of the parents. To whom above all should they recommend them? To whom should they recommend their relations, friends, benefactors, or the souls of their departed? Everybody trembles and is in danger of the misfortunes of sickness, sorrow and death; who alone can protect them from these evils and offer a remedy for just punishments?

Almighty God alone can do this, and He does it only if we ask Him for it. But what are our miserable petitions able to effect with God? Our Divine Saviour Himself in His goodness has provided that they may accomplish everything. He gave into our hands a gift with which we should appear before the throne of God in all our necessities. This gift is His body and His blood, which we offer to God the Almighty Father in holy Mass: "Do this in commemoration of me." Here is where the words of Christ are fulfilled: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you." But if God Himself avers that if a drink

of fresh water is given to our neighbor from mercy it will not go unrewarded, will He permit him to go unrewarded, unheard, who offers in devotion, in confidence and with a contrite heart for sins committed, that heavenly gift of God in holy Mass, and with it the sufferings and wounds of our Saviour? Here is where we pray in the name of Christ, yes, hold Christ, as it were, and will not let Him go until our prayers are heard.

And what more, my beloved, should we ask for, Christ Himself prays for us, this is the faith of the Church. Just as often as the holy Mass is offered up, so often Christ prays for him who offers the sacrifice of the Mass, and for those for whom it is offered, and therefore for all who are present and assist at Mass in a manner pleasing to God. When our Divine Saviour was on earth, He spent whole nights in prayer; prostrate upon the earth on Mount Olivet He prayed to God His heavenly Father. For whom? for Himself? This was not necessary; but for us, for all men, whose welfare He foresaw, or whose woe pressed the tears from His eyes, the sighs from His heart, and the bloody sweat from His brow. There is, moreover, no doubt that Christ on the cross prayed not only for the forgiveness of His enemies, but also for the faithful standing under the cross, and that He especially recommended to His Father that the fruits of His suffering might be applied to them. And there is still less doubt that Jesus Christ does the same in holy Mass for those who are present with devotion. He prays for them as St. Paul and St. John warn us:

“We have an intercessor with the Father, Christ the just one.” “For let us approach with confidence the throne of grace, in order that we may obtain mercy and find help in opportune time.”

But, my beloved, where is this throne of grace to which St. Paul invites us? It is not in heaven, for we cannot ascend there; it is therefore on earth: in the Church, on the altar, in holy Mass. Here is Jesus Christ, here He prays for us and we with Him. Here is where He unites not only our petitions but also the petitions of all the faithful, the sighs of all the troubled, the impetrations of all contrite Christians, the prayers of the whole Church from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same — He unites all these with His divine intercession and as the head of the true Church makes them known to His heavenly Father. Thus we offer Him in holy Mass to God the Almighty Father, in order to find help. Therefore, holy Mass is the most powerful sacrifice of impetration. And for this reason St. Paul wrote: “I desire therefore, first of all, that supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in high stations: that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2, 1-4.) Does not this take place in the holy Mass, through all times, in all places, and among all peoples, for the Pope, the Bishop, the rulers, for all professors of the true and Apostolic faith, for the living and for

the dead, for the conversion of sinners and of heretics, for the deliverance of temporal punishments, of hunger, of sickness, of war or pestilence? And in truth, if holy Mass were not such a powerful sacrifice of impetration, the increasing godlessness and desecration of Sunday would have long since brought the just judgments of God upon men and destroyed them partially from the face of the earth. That this has not as yet taken place, we have to thank it to the holy Mass.

Yes, my beloved, the most powerful sacrifice of supplication or impetration is the holy Mass. Here we supplicate with Jesus, and He with us, and with Him supplicate His wounds, His Passion and His love. Such supplications penetrate heaven and reach God. Here is the place, where parents should recommend to God their children, and children their parents; here is the place where married people, friends and relatives should pray for one another and remember their departed. Jesus Christ says: "Come to me all, come to me all." We are accustomed to make our complaints to people, why not to the Saviour? Our greatest need is the danger of sin, and future destruction, of which even the disciples spoke to Christ: "Lord, who can be saved?" but He answered: "With men it is impossible, but not with God." But if we know this from the mouth of Christ, why do you not take refuge more frequently to Jesus in the holy Mass, in order that He may pray with you and for you, for your salvation?

2. But holy Mass is not only the best sacrifice of

impetration, it is also the greatest sacrifice of propitiation. Since the fall men have felt by the guilty conscience driven to offer to God sacrifices of propitiation. God Himself commanded the Israelites to offer, besides the daily, simple, and the yearly great sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people, other sacrifices. Thus He commanded: "If anyone sin let him offer of the flocks a ewe-lamb, and if he is unable to offer a beast let him offer two young pigeons and the priest shall pray for him and for his sin." But these sacrifices were only the type of the great sacrifice of atonement of Christ. For this reason the Apostle St. Paul says: "For it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he sayeth: sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me: holocaust for sin did not please thee. Then said I: behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do thy will, O God." (Hebr. 10, 4-7.) And Christ came into the world and offered the great sacrifice of atonement on the cross in a bloody manner, and offers it still in holy Mass in an unbloody manner. Hence He said to His Apostles: "And taking bread, he gave thanks, and brake; and gave to them, saying: this is my body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. In like manner the chalice also, after he had supped, saying: this is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you." (Matth. 26, 26; Mark 14, 22; Luke 22, 19; I Cor. 11, 23.) Therefore just as Christ offered

Himself for the sins of the world on the cross, so now He offers Himself for the same purpose in holy Mass. "Do this in commemoration of me." The holy Mass is, therefore, a sacrifice of atonement. And for this reason holy Church says in the explanation of those words: "Christ wished to leave His beloved Bride, the Church, a visible sacrifice, in which the bloody sacrifice on the cross would be represented, and would show His saving strength in the forgiveness of our sins committed daily." (Trent Sess. 22, Con. 1.) "But if anyone would say that the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not a sacrifice of atonement let him be anathema," that is excommunicated from the Church. (Sess. 22, C. 3.) It is, therefore, an article of faith, which no one, who wishes to be a Christian and have a part in Christ, can or may deny. It is true, Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world, but in order that the fruits of that bloody sacrifice of atonement may be applied to us, He instituted the holy Mass: "Do this for a commemoration of me."—For this reason the priest prays at the beginning of Mass the Confiteor, and says over those present: "May Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting." He prays nine times: "Kyrie eleison, Lord, have mercy on us!" And three times he repeats the words: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!" At the offertory of the host he prays: "Accept, O holy Father, Almighty, Eternal God, this immaculate host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for

my innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences, and for all here present, as also for all faithful Christians, both living and dead, that it may be profitable for my own and for their salvation unto life eternal." Hence the Apostle St. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, after the Ascension of our Lord, says, in the mass-prayers which we have received from him: "We offer Thee, O Lord, the unbloody sacrifice for our sins and for the ignorance of the people." Namely we commit many sins, which we do not know, and because we do not know them, do not confess them. Nevertheless they are sins, for which we must render an account after death. The holy king David prayed: "Remember not the sins of my youth and of my ignorance." And the great Apostle St. Paul cries out: "For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I am not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord." (1 Cor. 4, 4.) For these unknown sins the holy Mass is a sacrifice of atonement; it is true, it does not obliterate them but procures for us contrition for them. For this reason there is another prayer at Mass which says: "We offer unto Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation beseeching Thy clemency, that in the sight of Thy divine majesty, it may ascend with the odor of sweetness, for our salvation, and for that of the whole world." Contrition is a great grace of God, and nothing moves God more, to grant this grace, than the sacrifice of holy Mass. When the Patriarch Jacob feared that Esau might revenge himself on him on account of the rights of the first-born which he had taken away from him, he said to himself: "I will

appease him with gifts and perchance he will be kind to me again." Thus we propitiate our heavenly Father with the body and blood of the Saviour, in order that He may become kind and merciful to us again. In this sense holy Mass has the virtue to appease God with the contrite sinner.

My beloved, what benefit did not our Saviour show to us when He instituted the holy Mass as a sacrifice of atonement, especially for venial sins? If we did not have this divine sacrifice, or constantly make use of it for the atonement of venial sins, with what a burden of venial sins we would appear before the judgment seat of God? Many we do not know, many we do not confess, many we do not amend. But if during holy Mass we awake true contrition for them, they melt away before this sacrifice of atonement as wax before the fire; they are destroyed by the fire of divine love, that burns upon the altar, and their punishment wiped out. The holy Mass is, therefore, the greatest sacrifice of atonement of Christianity.

Verily, we see here again the extraordinary love of our Divine Saviour. What would we be without this sacrifice of atonement, and who could withstand the just scourging of the anger of God on account of so many unheard of crimes which cover the earth? If you had been present at the cross of the Redeemer, and if only one drop of blood from His wounds had fallen upon you, you certainly would have felt yourselves fortunate, and what hope of your future salvation would have sprung up in your hearts! One unfortunate man, whose life was one series of crimes,



took such confidence at the sight of the Saviour sacrificing Himself and was filled with such contrition, that from being a robber he became a saint, and from the cross on which he was raised on account of murder, raised himself on the same day to paradise. The same Son of God, who offered Himself on the cross for the atonement of sin, offers Himself still in the holy Mass. Why, therefore, do so many Christians not make a better use of so easy and untrammelled an opportunity? Have we not all need of the grace of contrition, the atonement for greater and for daily smaller sins? The best means for this is the holy Mass, and where faith, where hope, where love is, there the Christian knows Jesus, too, his Saviour is to be found.

3. But if the holy Mass is the sacrifice of atonement, it must be also at the same time a sacrifice of satisfaction for sin. True, the guilt of sin with eternal punishment is forgiven by contrition and penance. The forgiveness of temporal punishments on earth or in purgatory is strictly in accordance with the greatness of contrition, the fervor of the penance and the sincere accepted satisfaction. The best satisfaction is incontrovertibly the holy Mass heard with true devotion. It is ours, and for this reason the priest says: "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty." We should offer the body, the blood, the sufferings and merits of the Saviour to God for satisfaction: "O Lord, I acknowledge my guilt, and am prepared to make satisfaction; from my merits I cannot, but I unite all my works of penance, prayers, suffering and

labors, with this holy mass and offer them to Thee for satisfaction." Oh, believe that the holy Mass heard with devotion and in this intention has uncommon power, to gradually take away all temporal punishment of sin. This is precisely the teaching of the Church.

The holy Mass is, therefore, a sacrifice of impetration, a sacrifice of atonement and a sacrifice of satisfaction, but only he obtains these consoling fruits, who assists at Mass with devotion, unites his intention with the intention of holy Church, or, offers himself and expressly the holy Mass to God, in order that he himself and his may share in its graces, and appease God and obtain true contrition for, and knowledge of his sins, and to make satisfaction for sins committed. Whoever has faith and love would have considered himself fortunate if he had been present at the cross of the Saviour. He can be present at holy Mass. It is the spring foretold by the Prophet Zacharias: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David for the washing of the sinner" (Zach. 13), or as the Prophet Isaias says: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Isaias 12.) This fountain is a spring of health, where the soul is bathed, purified and sanctified, and finds consolation and constancy in suffering. This fountain is a spring of salvation from which parents may unceasingly draw for their children, children for their parents, brethren for their brethren, relatives for their relatives, for the living and the dead. Would that you, my beloved, knew this gift of God! You

would approach to this throne of grace with devotion, with confidence, with zeal, in order to find mercy and help at opportune times and to obtain from God a pure conscience and the salvation of your souls. Therefore I conclude with the words of St. John in the Apocalypse: "Come; and he that heareth, let him say: come! and he that thirsteth, let him come: and he that will, let him take the water of life, freely." (Apoc. 22, 17.) Amen.

## SERMON XXXI

### HOLY MASS IS THE GREATEST BENEFIT TO THE FAITHFUL

“I give thanks to my God always for you, . . . that in all things you are made rich in him.”— I COR. I, 4, 5.

St. Paul, the great Apostle and Doctor of the Gentiles, filled with joy on account of the mercy and goodness of God to all the faithful, begins his first letter to the Corinthians with these words: “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given to you in Christ Jesus, that in all things you are made rich in him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who also will confirm you unto the end without crime, in the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. I, 3–8.) Now, where or through what have we become rich in all things, in grace, in all knowledge, in peace with God, so that nothing is wanting to us, in order that we can await the coming of the Judge without sin at the end of our life? We have become rich in all things in and by the Mass. It is the talent, the confided gift, of which Christ speaks in the Gospel with which we should lay up interest for the salvation

of our souls, in order that we may not be found as lazy, faithless servants at His coming in the day of judgment. Yes, the sacred body and blood of Jesus Christ should be for us the key with which we unlock heaven's treasures, the grace of God and His help at opportune times, assistance in grievous temptation, propitiation and satisfaction for sins committed, yes, and even open the portals of heaven for us. Therefore St. Paul says: "You have become rich in all things, so that no grace is wanting to you." Holy Mass is, therefore, the highest benefit for the faithful. This is the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. In her explanation of the holy Mass the holy Church says: "We must necessarily confess that no other work so holy and divine can be performed by the faithful as precisely the reverential sacrifice this mystery demands, wherein the vivifying sacrifice the priest daily offers upon the altar and through which we are reconciled to God." (Sess. 22, in Decr.) Here we can give to God the greatest adoration, here we praise and glorify Him worthily, thank Him for all His benefits, beseech Him in the most powerful manner to be reconciled with us, and can make satisfaction to Him for our sins. Here is the place, where the one who assists at holy Mass with devotion and free from mortal sin, increases grace, grows in virtue, controls his passions, and weakens his temptations. Just as in cities and marts yearly markets are held and all kinds of wares are offered for sale at low

prices, so the Church also, yes, even heaven itself, holds, as it were, a market and offers the most precious treasures for little. My beloved, be not troubled about money; they cost nothing. The Prophet Isaias addresses us with the words: "All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money make haste, buy, and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price." (Isaias 55, 1.) And the Prophet David tells us what the Lord will give us: "Grace and glory the Lord will give:"

Yes, indeed, grace, sanctifying grace, what a great gift is this for man! It makes him a friend of God, and if he dies in the state of grace, he has God for his reward. "I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great." (Gen. 21.) But whoever has God for reward has everything and more than heaven and earth can offer him. Sanctifying grace is the highest good man can possess on earth. It gives to the soul a beauty that makes it most pleasing to God and a joy to Him. It draws the friendship of God to the soul and if it does not incline the soul especially to God, He does not depart from it until He is driven by force from it by mortal sin. And then God departs from it only with great reluctance and feels this infidelity more than we can comprehend. And He is prepared to enter it again if contrition follows: "Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock." "If any man shall hear my voice and open the door to me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." (Apoc. 3, 20.) This grace God freely gives to the soul; He gives to it virtues, devotion, consola-

tions, interior joy, good desires, constancy, peace and strength against temptations. He protects it, leads and unites it to Himself. Therefore the Apostle St. Peter says: "He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1, 4.) By this grace the soul is so ennobled that it obtains the dignity of a child of God. The Apostle St. John surprised at this dignity exclaims: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 John 3, 1) and thereby also heirs to God. (Rom. 8, 17.) Who then, my dearly beloved, should not treasure with all diligence this divine grace, or, if he has lost it by grievous sin, seek to regain it again by penance and to constantly increase it? But this grace is increased by good works, alms, prayers and works of charity. Therefore the more excellent the work is, the greater the increase of divine grace. One of the most excellent works is the frequent and devout attendance at holy Mass, not only on account of the holy Mass itself, but also on account of the virtues that are practiced thereby. Here we awake contrition and sorrow and confess in humility our sinfulness; here we practice faith, in as much as we firmly believe that Jesus is truly present under the species of bread and wine as God and man; here we practice hope since we supplicate; here we practice love since we await it. Our reverence, our adoration and gratitude are not less pleasing to God than the remembrance of the Passion and Death of Jesus; the intercession for friends

and enemies, for living and dead, is pleasing to God also.

Oh, indeed, at holy Mass all virtues unite themselves into a radiant crown and thus the hearing of Mass is the best and most excellent work and highest benefit for the faithful. "We must necessarily confess — says holy Church — that the faithful can perform no work so holy and divine as to read or hear Mass." Just on this account the Mass imparts to us a rich increase of sanctifying grace, and with it an increase of the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity. With it peace, and joy and justice in the Holy Ghost; with it constancy, patience in suffering, strength in temptation, weakening of the passions; everything good is imparted to us with sanctifying grace. This is what the Apostle says: "You have become rich in all things through him . . . so that no grace is wanting to you."

2. But more than this. What else does the increase of sanctifying grace mean, my beloved, but an increase in heavenly bliss? Heavenly bliss, incomprehensible gift of God! The slightest increase of which surpasses everything that man has ever seen or heard on earth: "What no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, and hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, that God hath prepared for those who love Him." This heavenly bliss is increased by meritorious works; but one of the best works is to hear holy Mass with devotion. Therefore as often as a Christian assists at holy Mass with reverence and devotion, he increases the grade of his future bliss. The more



devotion, the more devoutly Mass is heard, the higher the Christian elevates himself, the nearer he approaches to God, the clearer he understands Him, the more heartily he loves Him, and consequently the more glorious and blessed he will be in heaven. Surely, if the smallest drink of cold water given to our neighbor for the love of God, will not lose its future reward, how much less a devout holy Mass? The Apostle St. Paul says: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4, 17.) Who can indeed believe that a momentary tribulation borne with resignation to God can work a bliss in heaven without measure? And yet the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, teaches this doctrine. What will then not the holy Mass effect, accompanied by the little self denial, the bad roads to church, the heat in summer, and the cold in winter; what will this not effect, if done with constancy and patience and love and devotion?

O my beloved, who faithfully and reverently visit our Lord in the church, at holy Mass, as often as you can, rejoice for Christ our Lord says: "Rejoice and be glad, for your names are written in heaven and your reward will be exceeding great."

How bitter death is, he only knows who has to suffer it; but the bitterness of death all can imagine and see who are present at death if they observe the wringing of hands and sighs and contortions, the cold sweat and resistance of the dying with which the soul is obliged to go forth from this world to the other, from this

life to the judgment-seat of God in order to give an account of its stewardship for eternity. With what should the dying console himself or on what can he rely to prevent him from despair? With an un-Christian, misspent life? with annihilation! He should cleave to the mercy of God. But here the holy Pope Gregory the Great speaks for each one earnest and heartfelt words: "Whoever has done what was in his power can confidently trust in the mercy of God, for God will not abandon him; but whoever has not done what was in his power to do, let him not confide in the mercy of God, for he will deceive himself." But where is the man, my beloved, who always does what is in his power? Therefore, on what can the dying rely with certainty that he has done in his life? On the holy Mass; if he during his life has sincerely loved the Mass, devoutly heard it, and offered it up and never missed it even on work-days. Holy Scripture says: "Bring the sacrifice of justice and hope in the Lord." This sacrifice of justice is the holy Mass; it propitiates the justice of God, it obliterates sin and its temporal punishment, it obtains the grace of contrition and makes satisfaction. In the Mass we fulfill the purpose of our life on earth, to honor God, to love and serve Him, and afterwards to be happy with Him. For this reason we read further in Holy Scripture: "In peace will I sleep and take my rest, for thou, O Lord and God, hast singularly settled me in hope." The Church applies these words to the dead: "Lord, let them rest in peace." Thus the dying can console himself and he will experience that

he built well and confided well. In peace will I depart, and I will go before the judgment of the Lord without anxiety, for Thou, O God, hast singularly settled me in hope. I can think no more that I should be lost, since I have so faithfully offered to Thee, my God, the most agreeable sacrifice of justice, constantly showed my adoration, praise and gratitude, and offered Thee propitiation and satisfaction. I will, therefore, fall asleep in the Lord! Of course the dying must confide in the Passion and Death of Christ, but this Passion and Death of Christ is no use to us if its fruits are not applied to us. On this account many will be cast away forever, because the merits of Christ were not applied to them. Why were they not applied to them? Because they did not make themselves worthy of them. And by what means do we make ourselves worthy of the merits of Christ? By true contrition, by the reception of the holy sacraments, by works, and above all, by the holy sacrifice of the Mass. For this reason we sing in the hymn of benediction: "Here is the flesh and blood of Jesus, here the highest good: no soul is lost under His protection."

But someone might reply: the merits of Jesus Christ are indeed applied to the dying by the sacraments for the dying and consequently he will be freed by them from eternal punishment. This is true, provided he receives them with true contrition and devotion. But this grace is applied again by the holy Sacrifice, for if the dying has diligently offered up the holy sacrifice of the Mass to God, he can precisely on account of this have the greatest hope that God

will not withhold from him His mercy, and He will not deny this precious gift to him. Whoever thus confides has not built on sand. Therefore everyone should frequently offer up the holy Mass to God, especially with the good intention of a happy death, for it is the greatest consolation of the dying and consequently the highest benefit for the faithful.

3. What, therefore, my beloved, can we do that is truly filled with blessing better than to hear holy Mass and also during the week? No hour of the day is more rich in blessings than just that one in which you heard holy Mass and offered it to the Blessed Trinity. It is truly a golden hour, in contrast with which the others are common metal. Begin with God, cease with God, that is the most beautiful rule of life. For this reason God created us, that we might serve and honor Him, but we can do this in no better way than by the holy Mass; this is the highest service of God. Remember that we are obliged to give thanks to God for so many benefits: the holy Mass is the most precious sacrifice of gratitude. Remember that we are here on earth in order to praise God: the holy Mass is the most worthy sacrifice of praise. Remember what Christ said: "Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." We can bring forth no better fruit than by devoutly hearing holy Mass; there are no better means to bring us out of the state of mortal sin than the holy Mass; there are no better means to take away the debt to God than precisely by the holy Mass. We are daily in danger of falling into sin and unhappiness: holy

Mass turns these dangers away, for it is the most powerful sacrifice of impetration. Death and the enemy of our souls dog all our steps: the holy Mass is the best protection against them; it should also be our consolation in death. Here is the increase of grace, here the future bliss, here peace and justice, and propitiation and pardon of many temporal punishments.

Oh, do not say: I grant the glorious benefits of the holy Mass, but my work, my business do not permit me to hear Mass frequently. This can be sometimes and even often the case, but not with everybody and not always. In fact, we cannot improve our work in a better manner or do it, as it is required better, or perform our household duties better, than if we begin our work by hearing holy Mass. Begin with God, cease with God, this is the most beautiful rule of life for everything depends on the blessing of God. We have the confirmation of this from the mouth of the Son of God Himself: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matth. 6, 33.) If one performs an agreeable service for a prominent lord, do you think that this service will go unrewarded, or even bring him injury? And if we daily or frequently offer holy Mass to God we show Him the greatest service and the highest pleasure. Do you, indeed, imagine that this service will remain unrewarded or that from it you will reap injury to your daily work or suffer in your business? Yes, this is a true proverb: Everything depends on the blessing of God. The world has always experienced this truth,

as long as the church was the way to labor, as long as Christ in the holy Mass raised His hands and blessed those present and their work.

But if to-day there is little more blessing in labor, in matrimony and in the family, in parishes and in the State, little faith, little peace, salvation and happiness, it comes from the fact that few begin their work with God, or ask the blessing of Christ in the church, much more they declare the service of God and the hearing of Mass time lost, and a useless display of silly devotion.

If you knew, my beloved, the gift of God, you would make use of it for your highest benefit in life and your greatest consolation in death. O God, give Thou for the sake of this holy Sacrifice, for the honor of Thy here abandoned Son, to all, the necessary knowledge, in order that Thy only-begotten Son in whom Thou wast well pleased, may not uselessly raise His hand in blessing and find no one whom He may bless. Truly, Jesus our dearest Saviour has well earned our gratitude and love! Jesus, through whom you have become rich in all things so that no grace is wanting to you. Make use of it as faithful and diligent servants in order that you may be found without sin on the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## SERMON XXXII

### THE MANNER OF OFFERING UP HOLY MASS

“I will sacrifice to thee the sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.”—Ps. 115, 17.

It is not sufficient for us to know the mechanical make of the lock of a door, we must also have a proper key to it in order to open it and to enter. The holy Mass is such a lock for the door of heaven. It is, therefore, not sufficient that we know what the Mass really is; we must know also how to make use of it, how to assist at it, in order to share in its graces and blessings for body and soul, for time and eternity. This knowledge is the key to this lock of heaven, which opens for us the entrance to eternal bliss. It is a great and destructive error to believe that only the priest offers this sacrifice to God. The most prominent priest is Jesus Christ Himself, who performs this sacrifice and offers it to God His heavenly Father. After Christ and in a certain manner His instrument, His hand and His tongue is the priest, who visibly performs this sacrifice and offers it to God. After the priest come the faithful, who are present at holy Mass. And they have not only the power but even the duty to offer the holy Mass to God, and indeed so much so that many of those present offer up the

divine sacrifice with more devotion and purity of soul than the priest Himself. But also those, who, by pressing business are legitimately prevented from being personally present at holy Mass, yet unite themselves in spirit with those in the church, and at the stroke of the bell think of the consecration, belong also to those who offer the holy sacrifice to God. To these are to be added those who read the holy Mass, or bring the necessary objects for the sacrifice and for the ornament of the altar, such as the chalice, mass-wine, altar cloths — all those who give such presents to the church are included in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. All these share in the fruits of the holy Mass because in a certain sense they offer it, and they can apply these fruits also to others. For this reason St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, speaks of the high dignity which our Divine Saviour gave to Christians by the holy sacrifice of the Mass: “But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2, 5, 9.)

What else does the holy Apostle wish to say here but that all the faithful are in a spiritual manner priests, who offer to God by the hands of the priests as their ambassadors to God, the body and blood of Jesus Christ? Oh, indeed a high dignity, a great grace, which places the Christian not much below, yes in a certain relation above the angels! The offering is, therefore, the most excellent work in the holy Mass without which the Mass could neither be heard in the right way nor bring any special fruit. I will, there-



fore, to-day speak of the manner of offering up Holy Mass.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. The hearing of holy Mass does not alone consist in being present, but in offering up at the same time with the priest the holy Mass to God. We learned already in our catechism: it is not sufficient to be present when Mass is read, one must hear it with reverence, attention and devotion, and unite his intention with the intention of the priest and offer it to God. And truly, if the holy Mass is a sacrifice, it belongs to its very essence that it be offered also to God. But since it is not only the sacrifice of the priest, but also of those present, it therefore belongs to its essence that it is also offered to God by those present. On this account those have no share in the sacrifice who neither offer it to God in words or in thought, nor with the intention of the Church, nor have they any part in it when they devoutly say other prayers which contain no offering; they only have that benefit which accrues to them by any other meritorious work. And naturally so, for those who offer up the holy Mass with the priest or with the Church or with express words, offer to God the greatest and most precious gift, the body and blood of Christ, His suffering and His merits, which Christ acquired and gave to us as His own, under the condition, however, that we would offer them again to His heavenly Father. "Do this for a commemoration of me."

For this reason the priest prays: "Be mindful, O

Lord, of Thy servants, men and women, and all here present, whose faith and devotion are known unto Thee: for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves, their families and friends, for the redemption of their soul, for the hope of their safety and salvation, and who pay their vows to Thee, the eternal, living and true God." And after the washing of the hands he says: "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." After the consecration of the chalice he prays: "Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ Thy Son, our Lord, His resurrection from hell and His glorious ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy most Excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and grants, a pure host, a holy host, an immaculate host, the holy bread of eternal life, the chalice of everlasting salvation." Therefore, my beloved, what else is this but the solemn assurance before God and man, that not the priest alone offers this host but also those present and that his sacrifice is your sacrifice? Just on this account he calls those present before God and the angels a holy people, who have the right intention and are in the state of grace, because holy Mass sanctifies them and gives to them a supernatural consecration. The Apostle St. Peter says the same: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Whoever, therefore, does not offer this sacrifice himself to God, nor unite his intention with that of the priest,

nor offer it as the holy Church offers it to God, robs himself of a great good. He assists at the oblation, it is true, but he does not offer it himself, consequently the sacrifice is less for him than it is for others. For only in so far will we share in the merits of Christ as we make them our own, just as the medicine does not help the sick if they only place it before themselves but do not apply it or make use of it.

And truly, we know that all nations, but especially the Jews by the ordinance of God had various sacrifices, for the various intentions for which they were offered, and all these sacrifices form the most excellent and the most important part of their divine service. The holy sacrifice of the Mass takes their place; it is the center, it is the most excellent part of our divine service.

We are all created in order to know God, to honor, love and serve Him, in order afterwards to be happy with Him. Whoever, therefore, does not offer to God the holy Mass neither in thoughts or expressed words, nor in the intention of the priest or of the Church, does not offer to God the highest adoration and the greatest sign of his subordination; for him the holy Mass is no sacrifice of propitiation. He does not offer to God the highest praise, the praise of the Son of God; for him the holy Mass is no sacrifice of praise. He does not offer to God the most worthy thanks, for all the goodness and mercy received, the thanks of Jesus Christ; for him the holy Mass is no sacrifice of gratitude. Without the grace of God it is impossible for man to obtain salvation; without it, no meritori-

ous work for eternal life is possible; without it, it is impossible to resist temptations. We can do nothing without God, but in the holy Mass Christ prays with and for us; whoever, therefore, does not offer it up to God, for him it is no sacrifice of impetration, neither for himself nor for his. And the sinner! how can he propitiate God for his sins, how can he obtain the grace of contrition, how obtain mercy? Whoever, therefore, does not offer the holy Mass to God, for him it is no sacrifice of propitiation. We must make satisfaction, obliterate the temporal punishment of sin and remove the mass of venial sin; to do this the oblation of the holy Mass is needed in order that it may be a sacrifice of satisfaction. How important, therefore, is the offering of holy Mass, for it becomes only now a sacrifice for the Catholic who assists at it! We can conclude from this what consequences follow the thoughtless standing in the rear of the church and irreverent conduct during Mass.

But now, my beloved, it is not exactly necessary that we offer the holy Mass in expressed words, especially for adoration, for praise, for gratitude, but these words will suffice: My God I offer to Thee the holy Mass with the intention with which the holy Church offers it. And even this manner obtains if forgotten, for it still is included in the devout attention or in the sense with which one goes to Church, namely, to fulfill the will of God and to serve Him according to His pleasure, therefore to hear holy Mass with reverence. But when we need the grace or the help of God, when we want to propitiate Him in the best way possible

for our sins, or to obtain the grace of contrition and to make satisfaction for our sins, then we must offer the holy Mass to God especially in this intention. Then certainly no one will remain unheard sooner or later neither for himself nor for his. This much about the manner of offering up the holy Mass, the importance of which we have seen.

2. But the offering up of the holy Mass has also a high value. There is no part of the holy Mass and in no prayers during Mass a greater consolation and higher spiritual joy pronounced than in the words which the priest has to pray after the elevation of the chalice while he offers to the heavenly Father the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; he says: "Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ Thy Son our Lord, His resurrection from hell, and glorious ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy most Excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and grants, a pure host, a holy host, an immaculate host, the holy bread of eternal life, and the chalice of everlasting salvation." The priest, therefore, calls the people holy, because they are sanctified by the offering up of holy Mass as Christ says: "And for them do I sanctify myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth." (John 17, 19.) Therefore, by the gift which the present faithful offer they are sanctified. It shares in a measure its own holiness and high dignity with them and pours out upon them a supernatural consecration.

What then do the faithful offer to God? Oh, it is

the holy soul of Jesus, His body and His blood, and with Him everything that Christ did upon earth for the honor of God and for the salvation of man. St. Paul says: "In Christ dwells the whole fullness of the God-head in a corporal manner," for Jesus Christ is God and man at the same time. Since, therefore, my beloved, we offer His sacred humanity as a gift, we offer at the same time His divinity. His humanity is, as it were, a precious chalice and His divinity the priceless diamond within it and we raise both to God. Now it is just as if the heavens were opened anew and the voice of God was heard saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then the Holy Ghost also comes down as a divine fire; then the choirs of the blessed spirits hover around the altar. Therefore the priest prays: "Upon which vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance, and to accept them, as Thou wast graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our Patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy high priest Melchisedech offered to Thee, a holy sacrifice, an immaculate host."

For this reason those assisting at Mass should always be careful to offer to God the sacred host and chalice by the hands of the priest: "O Lord, Almighty Father, eternal God! I offer to Thee by the hands of the priest Thy only-begotten Son in whom Thou wast well pleased!" We read that Henry I, king of England, heard three masses daily and knelt on the top step of the altar. And when the priest at the Offertory elevated the host and the chalice, he

placed his hands under the arms of the priest and offered at the same time with him these gifts. This takes place still at solemn high-Mass, when the deacon as the representative and in the name of the faithful who are present touches with the fingers of his right hand the chalice at the Offertory, when he reaches the host to the priest and says with the priest the Offertory prayer. The faithful should especially offer then the holy blood with the Passion of Christ, for by it God is propitiated, the sins are atoned for, the sinner is converted, the dead redeemed and the living strengthened.

3. What else, my beloved, is this offertory but the means to attach us more closely to Christ and to unite us with Him? The more closely and firmly the instrument is held in the hand of him who uses it, the greater is the effect of his work. The same holds true at the Offertory of the holy Mass. The more frequently, the more zealously we use it, the greater is its effect. Through it alone we share in the promises of Christ; through it are fulfilled the words of St. Peter the Apostle: "Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honorable by God: be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2, 4, 5). We become now, therefore, clothed, so to speak, with this holy sacrifice, united as members with the head, and through the head with God the Father. By this offering it becomes our sacrifice and in it all are found, who call

themselves after Christ, Christians and by their lives are Christians, a divine family. A spiritual house. A kingdom of God, a type of heaven, where the blessed are not less united around the Lamb of God and among themselves are bound together by the most intimate union. And as once the faithful disciples of the dying Saviour gathered around the cross, so here we renew by the offering the constant remembrance of His Passion and Death. In this renewal we renew also the type or the figure of the true disciples, who unite themselves around His unbloody sacrifice and persevere: "Do this for a commemoration of me." Thus Christ is in the midst of His own, and He will certainly say here as He did at the Last Supper: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; that they may see my glory which Thou hast given me, because Thou hast loved me before the creation of the world." (John 17, 11, 24.)

Be therefore, mindful, my dearly beloved, that this holy sacrifice must also be your sacrifice, but it only becomes your sacrifice when you offer it at the same time with the priest. Who can describe the blessing of this sacrifice for time and for eternity? All share in this blessing for time and eternity who apply it to themselves by the offertory. The holy sacrifice is the lock on the door of heaven, which opens for you if you use the key to it, and this key is the offering up of holy Mass. With it offer up all your thoughts,



words and deeds, all your labors and troubles. Thus they will gain great value and will become meritorious works for eternity, which will obliterate not only mortal sin but every state of disgrace. Oh, then if we have sinned and lost everything which Christ did for us, whither should we flee? Where should we go when we are burdened, tormented by passions, plagued by temptations to sin, whither should we flee? Where else but to the arms of divine mercy, to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and gives the grace of contrition and true conversion; to Jesus the Saviour, at once the priest and victim of holy Mass; to Him, whom the species of bread veils, whom here love conceals, and who is here our Saviour! We offer Him to God, for atonement, for satisfaction, for impetration, in order to obtain the grace of mercy, and He will take away our sins. Thus we will become His, full of hope in life, full of consolation in death, and be once placed among His glorified saints in the heavenly Jerusalem for all eternity, in the Vision of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIII

### DEVOTION AT HOLY MASS

“How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven.”—GEN. 28, 17.

We have thus far seen that the holy Mass is the unbloody sacrifice of the New Law, a perpetual remembrance of that bloody sacrifice, which Jesus Christ offered on the cross. The promise of God is fulfilled in this unbloody sacrifice, in the Holy Mass; it is the pure, holy, immaculate sacrifice, which is offered in all places and among all nations and takes the place of all former sacrifices. But if the holy Mass is the memorial of that bloody sacrifice on the cross then also the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostle St. John, and other faithful disciples and women who were present at the death of our Lord must be an example for us how we should assist at holy Mass. They were entirely seized and possessed with the thought of the bloody sacrifice of the Saviour, kept silence and were full of expectation and reverence. Thus, we should also be present at the unbloody sacrifice, at holy Mass. Reverence and devotion are necessary; for then only will it be filled with blessings for us, as the sacrifice of the cross was for the disciples. Therefore the holy Church says: “Since we must publicly confess that no other work

can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine than precisely this mystery which causes pious emotions in which the priest daily offers the life-giving sacrifice by which we are reconciled with God the Father; thus appears sufficiently clear that one must take all pains and diligence how he may perform or assist at this sacrifice with the greatest possible purity of heart and exterior devotion and edification." Therefore, when we go to holy Mass we must be mindful where we are going and what we properly should do at holy Mass. If you consider this holy Sacrifice only a little, you will readily perceive that we must appear at it with all external manifestation of good conduct and show a dignity and reverence and a zeal that makes it clear to all present that we are penetrated with the thought: "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." The picture of Jesus praying in the garden of Olives must be vividly before our mind's eye; He prostrated Himself upon the earth, now raises His hands and looked to God, now lowers them again, while He utters the fervent feelings which move His heart. Accordingly exterior reverence is not sufficient for us; it must be actuated by interior devotion, by interior feelings. But I propose to speak to-day of wherein consists this devotion, what we should do before the consecration, at the consecration and at the communion of the priest, and to explain how the mind and heart should be engaged and what prayers should be said. I will speak of devotion at holy Mass.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If we are, my beloved, truly penetrated with the faith and the presence of Christ, if we vividly remember what we have heard about this divine sacrifice, then we will all see with the fullest conviction that hearing Mass is not merely standing or sitting or resting in the church and that devotion is not merely a repetition of certain prayers, but the adoration and offering and union with the priest in offering up this sacrifice. For this reason we must make at the beginning of holy Mass a sincere intention to offer the holy Mass to God and to hear it with profit. But the first way to hear Mass well is to say the Mass-prayers and to constantly follow the course of the holy Mass. These prayers, however, must be performed with attention, for prayer is the elevation of the mind or the soul to God. Lip-prayer is an abomination before God, and therefore He bitterly reproached the Jews: "This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." If the heart feels itself in the presence of God, then the lips are only the instrument which gives expression to the feelings of the heart. But this interior language, this interior feeling is the feeling of humility, contrition for sin, of love, of longing for God, of gratitude for benefits received, and submission to His most holy will. These feelings are expressed in the different Mass-prayers, and now they become also the feelings of the one who prays in the language of his heart. And in this consists the true devotion at holy Mass.

But what is to be done if one cannot read? Is devotion impossible for him? By no means! There is

a second and more perfect way of being present at holy Mass, and this consists in the remembrance of the Passion of Christ and the cause of it. By this the most devout feelings of love, of contrition and hope in the mercy of God, are aroused together with confidence and resignation to His holy will. And holy Mass gives the points of these considerations and consequently, this manner of assisting at holy Mass awakens true devotion of the heart. And even if at times distracting thoughts, yes, unwilling temptations to sin come to the mind, no one should be disturbed about it. Devotion does not consist in long prayers, performed without distraction, but in the awakening of faith, hope and charity, or of contrition, of gratitude, or of the good intention, or of the exterior reverence. This is devotion at Mass; it unites us with Christ, and makes us share in the fruits of holy Mass.

2. But, my beloved, holy Mass itself is well calculated to awaken in us this devotion if we only follow it with attention. Above all let us begin by awakening contrition with the Confiteor, for Christ prostrated Himself on Mount Olivet before He offered up His bloody sacrifice on the cross. His soul was filled with sadness on account of our sins, and He did penance for them by His sweating blood. After awakening contrition we should follow the Mass-prayers or further meditate on the Passion of Christ until the offering of bread and wine, when we may call to mind again how our Divine Saviour, laying Himself upon the cross, renewed His intention to sacrifice Himself to God for the salvation of our souls

and for the satisfaction for our sins before He began His bloody sacrifice in reality: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me: holocaust for sin did not please thee. Then said I: behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will, O God." (Hebr. 10, 4-7.) Thus we, too, should make our offering at the Offertory in order that this sacrifice may also become our sacrifice. Soon we will be warned again by the threefold ringing of the bell at the Sanctus to bow down and adore the Holy Trinity, and to repeat that Holy, holy, holy, as the angels do in heaven.

Now the Canon of the Mass begins, which is read in silence in order that the deep mysteries which it contains remain in reverence and that everyone may give himself undisturbed to his devotion. The Apostle St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, teaches us what we should now do. In his still preserved Mass-prayers we read: "Everyone here should be silent, tremble with fear and think of nothing earthly, because the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords approaches, to be sacrificed and to be given to the faithful as food. The choirs of angels go before Him with all power and majesty; they veil their faces and sing hymns of praise with great joy." And verily, the kings of this earth are surrounded by their court on solemn occasions or on great festivals, but Jesus Christ, the King of kings, renews in the holy Mass the greatest and sublimest function; should not also He be surrounded by His heavenly court? The holy angels carry our prayers, our devotion to God, and

unite our adoration with theirs before the common Lord and King, Jesus Christ. The holy King David already exclaimed: "I will sing praise to Thee in the sight of the angels: I will worship towards Thy holy temple and I will give glory to Thy name." (Ps. 137, 1, 2.) The position of the adoring angels on the high-altar give a touching testimony of this truth. Therefore, not only Christians are here present but also their guardian angels who accompany them everywhere and consequently to church: "For he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. 90, 11; Matth. 4, 6.) Before and after the consecration the sublimest moment has come, when not only true Christians double their devotion but also with them and for them the blessed spirit, far better, far more devoutly and honorably for God than we poor mortals are able to.

Now we have, my beloved, a suitable time to unite ourselves with them; now the holy Sacrifice stays at our behest, now the angels pray and, as it were, say: we supplicate Thee, O Lord, for those whom Thy Son loved so much that He suffered death for them; we supplicate Thee for those for whom Thy Son shed his blood; we seek grace for those for whom Thy Son sacrificed Himself; have mercy on those poor souls who are present in the state of mortal sin, in order that they may be finally converted to Thee, O merciful God! St. Paul says to us: "But you are come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, . . . and to Jesus the Mediator of the

New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel." (Hebr. 12, 22, 24.) Where then is this multitude of angels to which you have approached? There, where Christ the Mediator of the New Testament is, and therefore in the holy Mass when He comes at the consecration.

He comes with great longing to hear all, to receive all who approach Him, to propitiate all sinners, to strengthen the tempted and to give more grace to those who love Him. Here are His words fulfilled: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save what was lost." Therefore we should awaken a living faith in His coming, contrition for our sins and hope in His goodness to be heard and received by Him. Thus we open unto Him the entrance to our souls: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: whoever opens the door for me by him I will enter." Would we like to see what takes place at the consecration! But blessed are those who see not, and yet believe. "Peace be to you, fear not, it is I," thus He speaks also here as He once spoke to His Apostles after the resurrection. We should then at the first sign of the bell recollect ourselves, stop the usual prayers and direct our eyes to the altar full of faith. Yes, if we do not greet our Divine Saviour, do not adore Him, nor show Him any honor, we give evidence that the holy Mass does not concern us at all. If one were visited by a prominent person and instead of entertaining him went about his usual business we would say that man was very rude and ill-bred; such conduct at Mass is much more reprehensible and has entirely other consequences.



3. What then, my beloved, should we do? We should do the same as the priest does, in order to be united with him, to offer with him, and that his sacrifice may become our sacrifice. Just as soon as the priest has spoken the words of consecration he kneels and adores the Saviour; he bows his head low and calls to mind that the Saviour is here present. You should do the same, for it instills faith as your reason tells you and the bell gives the sign. The three Magi from the East went to Bethlehem, found the Child and its Mother in the stable, fell on their knees and adored the Child. When the man born blind heard from the mouth of Christ that He was the Son of God, he fell at His feet and adored Him. And the Apostle St. Paul writes emphatically: "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

The consecration is the center and the sublimest part of the holy Mass, and therefore, our exterior and interior devotion and reverence must reach the highest possible point then, and the Holy Ghost gives His grace to those of good will to do so. But in order that all may take most intimate part at the consecration the holy Host and the Chalice are elevated by the priest, because Christ was also raised on the cross. Whose figure does the priest present before the eyes of God the Father? It is His Son, in whom He was well pleased; it is the truest reflection of the Most Holy Trinity, the highest innocence, the deepest humility, the intensest love and the most perfect obedience. Whose figure does the priest hold before your eyes? It is the Saviour, the Mediator between God and

us, who spreads out His hands in blessing and says: "Holy Father, keep them in my name whom Thou hast given me; that they may be one as we also are." (John 17, 11.) And what does the priest say, what do the people say, if they are both animated with faith, with reverence and devotion? "Behold, O Eternal Father, this Thy only-begotten Son in whom Thou wert well pleased, is now our prisoner. We will not let Him go free until we have received through Him what we have incessantly besought from Thee: forgiveness of our sins, the grace of true conversion, true knowledge, help and assistance, salvation and blessing, now and for eternity."

Truly, my beloved, whose likeness is it? It is the likeness of our Saviour and Redeemer. Behold Him only with true faith and pour out your hearts to Him, for blessed are the eyes that have seen what you see. We can say with the Patriarch Jacob: "I have seen God face to face, and my soul has been saved." (Gen. 32, 30.) This devout vision of the Saviour under the species of bread increases our merits and multiplies the joys of that vision in heaven which is prepared for all those who love the Saviour. The practice of faith which is necessary to it, is a great merit, because we believe what we neither see nor understand and what is even apparently contrary to reason. But what we merit by the practice of this faith Christ announced: "Blessed are they who see not and yet believe." The elevation of the chalice has also a special meaning and virtue. Here the blood of Christ is shed again in a spiritual manner and sprinkled over all who have made

this sacrifice their own by their devotion and offering. "This is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins. Do this in commemoration of Me." Whoever is here present therefore in the proper manner experiences the grace as if he were standing beneath the cross, for it is the same blood, the same sacrifice, the same Christ.

But what should the sick do who are unable to be present in the Church, or those who are prevented on workdays from hearing holy Mass? Will they not share in the fruits of the Mass? Precisely also here we see the coördination of the teaching and the wise ordinances of the Catholic Church. In order that the fruits of the holy Mass may not be lost on those who cannot go to church, the Church prescribes that the bell in the belfry should be rung at the elevation of the Host and of the Chalice, in order that all who hear it may recollect themselves, turn to the church, think of the Saviour and offer Him to God for themselves and their families. Most people, however, deprive themselves of this advantage, partly from human respect and partly from indifference to what is taking place in the church.

What are we to do, my beloved, after the consecration? Here there is no better advice to be given than frequently to offer this victim to God with the priest, for whoever wishes to obtain graces, helps, knowledge, contrition, virtues, temporal and eternal weal, whoever wants to pray, to thank and to make atonement for his past sins and to remember his neighbors

should always offer again the gifts and presents which Christ left for this purpose, he should offer these to God as a ransom, or in payment, and beseech Jesus Christ to offer them to the Almighty Father in his place.

4. We come now to holy communion. If we are without grievous sin we should make a spiritual communion, if we cannot receive the Blessed Sacrament itself. Spiritual communion is nothing more than a zealous desire to receive Christ and to be united with Him. This reception may be had outside of holy communion without its real reception and will bring many graces. Spiritual communion may be made anywhere, in the church and in the home, by day and by night, just because it is an earnest desire to receive Christ and this desire can be awakened everywhere. The greater the desire is, the greater is also the grace which is received from spiritual communion. All those who assist at holy Mass and worthily prepare themselves are spiritually fed with the body of Christ through the mouth of the priest, for the virtue of the Mass is so great that all who unite their intention with that of the priest and long to communicate with him receive at once with the priest the fruits of this spiritual food. For it is meet that all who unite themselves with the priest in the sacrifice should also unite themselves with him in communion and make it their own. Therefore the bell gives the sign for this.

This would be the devotion at holy Mass; it consists therefore not in long prayers, but in the practice

of faith, hope and charity, in the offering, in the desire to receive Christ and in the interior and exterior reverence. Truly a sufficient reason to be in such an attitude in the church, "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Here we are in the presence of God and of the Saviour, here in presence of the angels; here we lay the foundation for our transfer into heaven. How terrible is this place; the gate of heaven! It opens or closes according to the manner we are present in the church. If we have shown ourselves here worthy of the presence of God and of His angels, we will be declared worthy of the Vision of God and of the reception among His saints. But terrible is the thought, that precisely this house of God, in consequence of the sublime sacrifice should become the gates of hell on account of irreverence in the church.

Remember, my dearly beloved, that few shared in the fruits of the sacrifice on the cross of the Lamb of God, because only a few were penetrated interiorly and exteriorly with reverence and faith and love by the presence of the Saviour dying on the cross. Do not permit yourselves to be kept back by human respect from showing your Saviour due reverence and devotion and from visiting Him here often, for whoever is ashamed of the Saviour before men and fears to confess Him, the Saviour will also be ashamed of him before His Father and will refuse to acknowledge him as His follower. May God preserve us from this! Christ was not ashamed to hang on the cross in misery and contempt for us and we will not be ashamed to

give Him in church proper reverence, and devotion and adoration. This leads us to Christ, to participation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass; the church will become for us the gate of heaven, faith will attain unto the Vision of God, hope to the possession of bliss and to the union of Christ and His saints, and love will continue forever. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIV

### DEVOTION AT HOLY MASS

“For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, sayeth the Lord of hosts.”  
— MAL. I, II.

This is the glorious promise which God made to the Jewish people by the Prophet Malachy, that the coming Saviour would institute in the place of the sacrifice of animals a holy and immaculate sacrifice. This sacrifice should unite the nations in the adoration and glorification of God and pour out upon them salvation and blessing. This pure sacrifice is the holy Mass. Just as the sun in heaven transfigures everything and rejoices everything with its blessing; just as its rays are poured forth on the whole of creation and gives to it its true beauty and charm, so that without it everything is cold, desert and sad — so is in truth the holy Mass in the one true Catholic Church, the spiritual sun which gives to everything consecration and grace. The holy sacraments surround the Mass like stars, which prepare the soul for the worthy celebration of holy Mass and the worthy reception of holy communion. Moreover, around the holy Mass as the center of grace all the other divine services and ceremonies group themselves. Everything is sanctified and gains

dignity by the Mass. The grand churches, these masterpieces of architecture, with their towers and steeples, which seem to rise longingly toward heaven; all the statues, the stained-glass windows, the beautifully ornamented altars, the richly decorated tabernacle, the altar-pictures full of truth and beauty, the rich carpet, the holy vessels of gold and silver, the priestly vestments made of choicest material, the church-music and songs, in a word, everything that the piety, art and talents of Christians at all times and in all places — what else is it but the glorification of holy Mass? This breathes upon all again a supernatural and reverential consecration. But take away this holy sacrifice, take away the faith that Christ, the God-man is here truly present, that He Himself is the high-priest according to the order of Melchisedech and by the hand of the priest offers Himself to His heavenly Father — take this faith away, and everything is dead and without meaning and leaves the soul cold and barren. But the holy Mass is also the great pulse of life which unites the head with the body, Jesus Christ with the Church, and causes the blood of life to circulate through all its parts, rushing in the fullness of all graces, flowing from the head and returning upwards again in gratitude, praise and glorification of God. Although the priest alone officiates at holy Mass, nevertheless, everyone present, — in so far as he is animated with the right devotion, takes the fullest part in everything; he speaks with, acts with, believes with, receives with the priest and makes his own all the graces which have their source



in holy Mass. Here is a living, true community of the faithful, around Him who can enter by closed doors, and therefore by everyone by whom He will. He does not only permit Himself to be announced, He comes Himself, He is present to all, is received by all in faith and gives Himself to each one to be his very own. The holy Mass is part and parcel of the whole order of salvation. It comprises within itself all divine promises and conditions, and is an expression for all states of life. Despondency and courage, fear and hope, trouble and consolation, sighs and joys, unite themselves in it and to it; the whole diapason which rings through the true faith of rightly disposed souls, and touches the related chords, which unite themselves in a pure accord around Him who is at once the priest and victim. In the consciousness of its guilt the soul descends into the depth of darkness, which has overtaken it by sin, and it lifts itself in joy over its redemption to the throne of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and unites itself before Him to the numberless armies of blessed spirits from all nations and tongues to sing for all eternity with them the praises of God. Strengthened the soul returns to the battle of life, and peace, weariness and zest, anxiety and consolation, examination and preservation in all states which permeate the earthly life as a preparation for eternal life. Thus the holy Mass is for each individual Christian the center which gives to his whole life, a higher, a supernatural consecration. There is peace of God, there is the submerging in Christ. There is the appropriation not only

of redemption but also of the Saviour Himself, and there rushes a powerful, an irresistible cry, from the beginning to the end and carrying with it everything: "Raise your hearts!"

May the grace of God, my beloved, also enlighten you, in order that you may assist at holy Mass with reverence and devotion for the welfare of your souls and learn to know what a wonderful source of salvation and blessing it is. May the Holy Ghost assist me in order that I may speak of this holy sacrifice in a most worthy manner. In the consciousness of my own weakness and unworthiness I implore Him with the greater confidence from whom all true knowledge and true worth comes to send to me His Holy Spirit. The subject of to-day's meditation will be the devotion with which we should assist at holy Mass.

O Jesus assist us with Thy grace.

1. Whoever assists at holy Mass with devotion is spiritually united with the priest, so that all his words and acts become his own words and acts. He goes to the altar of the Lord with the priest, the Lord is his strength, his light in His guidance and His truth directs him to hope in all things and to banish all sorrows. Everything prepares the Christian to raise his heart in gratitude to Him who was and is and will be for all eternity. This is the devotion and that holy rest in which the longing of the faithful soul after the portals of the Lord, after his altars are satiated, and the joy in the living God is awakened. But by this mild devotion and consecrated disposition there

suddenly breaks forth from all earthly dissonance of the guilty separation of the soul from God by sin. We approach indeed the altar of the Lord, may He indeed elevate our minds to Him, may the soul indeed cradle itself in blessed zest in His vision, in His glorification. But it is wanting in dignity, and guilt has lamed its movements, it feels itself banished in the land which is not its own. Then the soul engages itself in the prayers at the foot of the altar and with the priest confesses its guilt; it calls upon the saints of heaven, it calls upon all its brethren present to unite themselves with it to implore mercy of God. Thus the soul is brought to the consciousness of its guilt, which even in the purest disposition must govern us because this alone makes us capable of divine grace. This feeling of guilt is too powerfully written upon our hearts to make us feel satisfied with the simple confession of guilt. We must implore and with that sacrifice approach the altar with an anxious mind and contrite heart, in order finally to thank the Blessed Trinity for the mercy which it shows to us. Therefore the consciousness of guilt overcomes us again; it makes itself felt by the repeated supplication: "Lord, have mercy on us, Christ, have mercy on us."

Bowed down before the face of the Lord penetrated so by hesitation whether he can again raise his eyes and heart to Him, knowing, as it were, nothing else but his guilt, the Almighty hand which alone can help him is reached to him from on high. Moved by the breath of grace not only has every care disappeared, not only has internal peace returned, but anxiety has

been turned into joy. Assured of mercy the soul pours forth in a song of praise with the heavenly host: "Glory to God on high, and peace to men on earth who are of good will." It intones the song of praise to the Almighty Father and to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and joins in the glorification of the Holy Ghost.

2. Now the faithful Christian hopes with childlike confidence to be heard by God, and unites therefore upon the admonition of the priest: "Let us pray," his prayers with the prayers of the Church. He hears the words of the Epistle in which the Apostles of the Lord admonish the faithful to love, to humility, to harmony and to a life pleasing to God, which He has also promised anew to God to follow in his own life. Prepared by this for the Gospel he prays with the priest at the middle of the altar that God may purify his lips in order that he may hear worthily the teachings of the Son of God, steadfastly preserve them and live according to them. Led by the Gospel into the decrees of God, enlightened by the word of life of the Saviour and penetrated by the certainty that in Him alone is to be found salvation and bliss the Catholic Christian feels himself powerfully urged to give testimony of his innermost faith. He does this in the public profession of faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; he confesses that he stands in the blessed community with the whole Church, which the Lord has purchased for Himself through all times, among all peoples and races by His precious

blood, and gives testimony of his hope for the present and the future time.

In this true and, since the times of the Apostles, constantly announced faith, the Catholic Christian unites himself with the priest, and through him and with him, everyone who assists at holy Mass with the true disposition and devotion, offers to the holy Triune God, who has been merciful to him and to all, the sacrifice of the immaculate host and the chalice of everlasting salvation for each one and especially for his own sins, transgressions and omissions. But in order that the notion might remain far from each one that God was only his God, and that what he petitioned for or hoped for should be confined to his own person; in order that it may remain deeply impressed upon him that he stands in inseparable communion with the whole Church, with the visible as well as with the invisible members of it, he offers the sacrifice for all the faithful, for the living and the dead that it may avail them all for salvation and eternal life.

Now, my beloved, the mysterious sacrifice itself soon begins in reality, and, therefore, we are filled again by the thought of this holy and immaculate sacrifice with anxiety, on account of our sins and unworthiness. Who should not, therefore, address to God again the humble supplication: "Cleanse me from my injustice and purify me from my sins!" All should, therefore, in communion with the priest wash their hands, devoutly raised in prayer, that is, all should unite in the prayer with the priest that God

might wash their souls from sin that He will not destroy them with the godless, that He would accept the sacrifice with pleasure from theirs and the priest's hands for the praise and the glorification of His name, for their salvation and for the welfare of the whole Church.

3. Prepared by the joy in the living God, by the humble confession of guilt, by the announcement of the Gospel, by the profession of the Apostolic faith, and by the offering of the host and the chalice, in order to submerge us in the deepest mystery of the unbloody sacrifice, in the memory of the death on the cross, and the propitiating offering of the Lord, we are now admonished more than ever: "To raise our hearts!" and the answer is: "We have them lifted up unto the Lord," to Him who is given to us by God for our wisdom and justice, sanctification and redemption, in order to worthily receive Him among us and to give thanks to the holy Triune God, and to unite us with the angels and the archangels, to the thrice holy and hosannah in the highest and with them to join our voices with the song of the cherubim and seraphim.

Now comes deep silence. All external manifestations of faith or of praise of God cease, and the soul retires entirely within itself, and awaiting the arrival of the approaching Saviour doubles its supplications, now not any more for itself, since for itself it is at rest, but for the whole Church, that the Almighty may ever preserve it in peace. For whatever blessings He pours out upon it, we and all the faithful will also

share in them in so far as we do not render ourselves unworthy of them. Then we remember the whole Church with its visible head, the Holy Father, our Bishop and all professors of the true faith who not for themselves alone, but also for their followers offer the sacrifice and vows for the salvation of all souls, especially for relatives and friends. Not alone and separated do we stand, but in the living communion with all, also with those who have already fought the good fight, and have been crowned with the crown of justice. Peace in the present, reception into the ranks of the glorified saints, these are the highest goods for which we pray and confidently hope for in Jesus Christ, Who is on the point of coming from heaven into our midst.

The soul awaits the words of consecration in reverence and faith; at the consecration the divine fire of the Holy Ghost comes down and the bread and wine is destroyed, as once at the prayer of King Solomon fire came down from heaven and destroyed his sacrifice. With the descending divine fire the Christian soul sees with the eyes of faith the Lamb of God coming down in all His loveliness and amiability surrounded by the host of angels, and it places itself in their midst and with them praises and adores the Saviour with reverence and love. Therefore, let it again unite itself with the priest in its supplication: "We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, command these things to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty, that as many of us as by par-

icipation of this altar, shall receive the most sacred body and blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace.”

Now we remember, my beloved, also the departed who sleep in the Lord, in order that they may also share in the benediction and grace of this living sacrifice and by it attain unto eternal rest. With the words: “Also us sinners,” we pray for ourselves that we may once be worthy to share in the company of the Apostles and martyrs and all the saints in heaven, without before being obliged like gold to be tried in the fire and thus purified by suffering in purgatory from the stains of sin not yet atoned for. For this reason we unite ourselves with the Saviour in the prayer which He taught us, in the Our Father, in which we pray for the salvation from all evil and the deliverance from every sin. And our hope in the merits of Jesus Christ is so confident that thinking of the reason of His sacrificial death we say to Him three times: “Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.” Therefore we promise Him before holy communion to give ourselves undivided and entirely to Christ, and to observe faithfully His commandments and hope that the reception of His most holy body and blood will not tend to our judgment and damnation, but to the salvation of our body and soul.

4. After such preparation the heavenly bread should finally be received, but in the midst of the joyful disposition which the soul feels in the presence of its Saviour, arises again the unpreventable feeling of our



unworthiness. This feeling must not remain silently hidden in the closed heart, for it is not a singular but a general one of every Christian who works out his salvation in fear and trembling. Therefore, it must be announced in the threefold confession: "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and my soul shall be healed." But whoever does not actually receive the body of our Lord, let him awaken at least, provided he is not conscious of mortal sin, a great longing to unite himself with his Saviour by holy communion.

This then is the devotion and disposition with which every faithful Christian assists at holy Mass. Thus he becomes capable of praising God and in the sight of all men of thanking Him for His mercies and imploring Him that everything may tend to the salvation of his body and soul. Renewed and consoled he returns home or to his family with the blessing of the Most Holy Trinity.

Who can imagine, my beloved, a celebration that so powerfully moves our souls, now to the humble confession of our sinfulness, now to the purest and the most joyful glorification of the Holy Triune God, now to the childlike confidence in the goodness of God, now to the tenderest love of our Saviour, and to the closest bonds in the living communion with the blessed in heaven, with the faithful on earth and the departed in purgatory? Where could a celebration be arranged which unites the sublimest words of Holy Scripture, the deepest mysteries of our faith and the holiest feelings of the soul as the holy Mass? May the grace

and the light of the Holy Ghost be with you, my beloved, in order that you may always assist at holy Mass for the honor of God and for the welfare and salvation of your souls, so that you may return to your homes with minds elevated to God, renewed and strengthened by the blessing of the Most Holy Triune God. Amen.

## SERMON XXXV

### THE DESECRATION OF HOLY MASS

“How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven.”—GEN. 28, 17.

As the sacrifices of the Old Law were only types of the holy Mass, so the Mass is again a type of what the bliss of heaven shall be. But it gives also the clearest understanding of what awaits those who desecrate this most holy sacrifice by their unworthy presence or by their sinful absence on Sundays. And the holy Mass reveals still other sad mysteries. It is the truest reflection of the life and suffering of Jesus Christ on earth in which is represented to us briefly what Christ did in the three and thirty years of His earthly life. Here he experiences from many always the same treatment which He suffered on earth from the Jews. The holy Mass is therefore not only a resumé of the whole order of salvation of God for the welfare of man, not only a brief epitome of the life and suffering of Jesus Christ, but is also by the manner, which many conduct themselves in the presence of this unbloody sacrifice, a living representation of how His enemies conducted themselves at the bloody sacrifice of the cross. His enemies are again a true and terrible type of the conduct of those who unworthily attend Mass, or who do not find it

worth their while to attend Mass even on Sundays. At the cross the separation of the good from the bad took place, and the very same separation occurs at holy Mass. At the cross some were more inflamed with love for God, and with gratitude towards Him, and others were more hardened towards our Divine Saviour.

The same thing takes place at holy Mass. On the cross the blood of Christ flowed for some and flowed against others, and here at the holy Mass the blood of Christ flows for some and against others. Some found salvation there, others damnation; and here likewise in holy Mass some find their salvation and others their damnation. What is therefore the reason of such different results when Christ offered Himself and still offers Himself? The reverence and devotion of some and the irreverent conduct of others is the cause. I will therefore speak to-day, in conclusion, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost on the desecration of holy Mass and its temporal and eternal consequences. May this meditation serve to spur us on to so conduct ourselves at this most holy Sacrifice as the example of the Blessed Virgin, of St. John the Apostle, and the other disciples and holy women at the cross teaches us in order that the blood of Christ may also flow for us and our salvation and the church become for us the gate of heaven. And if at times reverence is wanting to us may the earnestness of this subject urge us to humbly ask pardon of our Saviour in order that He may not instead of raising His hands

to bless us, as His faithful, turn His face from us as from His enemies.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. My beloved, the celebration of every holy Mass reminds us of two things, namely, first, the whole life of Christ which He spent in this world was only one solemn high-Mass in which He was at once Himself the priest and the victim; secondly, that the holy Mass is a brief epitome of the whole life of Christ and especially of His Passion. The life of Jesus Christ was only one solemn celebration of holy Mass. He clothed Himself with the priestly vestments for His solemn sacrifice in the most holy bosom of the Blessed Virgin Mary, when He assumed our flesh and put on the garment of our mortality. From this sacristy, so to say, He came forth on Christmas night and began the entrance or introit of the Mass when He entered the world. He sang the Kyrie eleison when lying in the crib, He extended His hands to God, and shed His first tears on account of our sins. The angels sang the Gloria in excelsis to the organ's tone of the night breezes in the choir of the clouds of heaven. The Oremus or the prayers Christ prayed when He spent whole nights in prayer and called the divine mercy down upon us. He read the Epistle when He explained Moses and the Prophets, and pointed to their announcements. "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things that were concerning him."

(Luke 24, 27.) He chanted the Gospel when He passed through the Jewish country and preached His holy doctrine. He daily offered Himself to God His heavenly Father for the salvation of mankind and offered to suffer everything: it was the Offertory or the Offering. "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hast fitted to me: holocaust for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God." (Hebr. 10, 4-7.) He unceasingly prayed God and thanked Him for the benefits granted to us: this was the Preface. The Jewish people intoned the Sanctus, on Palm-Sunday when they sang: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest!"

Jesus Christ performed the consecration of the bread and the wine into His body and blood at the Last Supper. The Elevation took place when He was raised on the cross and made a spectacle to all the world. He prayed the Our Father when He spoke the seven words on the cross. The breaking of the host took place when His holy soul separated itself from His body, a part of the host He dropped into the chalice when His soul descended into limbo. The Agnus Dei the Centurion sang with his cohort when they struck their breasts saying: "Verily this is the Son of God!" Holy communion took place when His holy Body was placed in the new tomb, and Jesus Christ gave the blessing at the end of this His holy Mass when with raised hands He blessed His disciples at His ascension into heaven.

2. Thus, therefore, my beloved, the whole life of Jesus Christ was nothing but a great holy Mass, and secondly the holy Mass is a brief epitome of the whole life of Christ: "Do this for a commemoration of me." Who then assisted at this long high-Mass and at the bloody sacrifice of the cross and how did they conduct themselves at it? Oh, we see very few there who follow the Saviour in faith, hope and love, and listen to Him with devotion and reverence. There were only a few who were submerged at the cross in the suffering Redeemer, and entirely sunk in His bloody sacrifice, suffered with Him, persevered at the foot of the cross with Him in spite of scorn and contempt, and showed Him the last service of love in placing His most sacred body in a new tomb. But many, only too many, heard His teaching and saw His works only to blaspheme and persecute Him. On the cross where He suffered for them, prayed for them, some turned their backs to Him, others transacted business among themselves, others blasphemed Him, others divided among themselves His garments and cast lots for His seamless robe; others laughed and joked, and did not concern themselves at all about what transpired on the cross, and others again ran to and fro. They saw nothing else on the cross but a common man, even though the sun was darkened and the rocks split asunder. Thus it was precisely the cross where Jesus offered Himself for the salvation and sanctification of mankind, the place where these hardened their hearts still more; it was the place where the blood flowed not for their salvation but for their

destruction; it was the place where Jerusalem brought upon itself misery and suffering, of such a nature that no city and no land had ever experienced. Christ Himself announced to His Apostles: "When you shall see the desolation and abomination, standing where it ought not: he that readeth let him understand: then let them that are in Judea, flee unto the mountains . . . for in those days shall be such tribulations, as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, neither shall be." (Mark 13, 14, 19.) But why? In order that everybody may know that the bloody sacrifice on the cross is the reason why mankind can attain unto eternal bliss, the greatness of which far surpasses everything that the world can offer, so this sacrifice is the cause why men draw upon themselves an eternal punishment whose greatness surpasses everything in misery that the world has ever seen of misery. Jerusalem is a type, a warning and an example.

3. Now, my beloved, what else is the holy Mass but the continuation of that sacrifice which Christ consummated on the cross? It is the same gift, His body and His blood; the same high-priest then and now, Jesus Christ Himself. Only the manner of offering it is different. On the cross it was a bloody sacrifice, here on the altar it is an unbloody one, for on the cross Christ shed His blood, suffered and died, though now He does not shed His blood any more, suffers and dies no more. On the cross He concealed His divinity under the form of His humanity, and on the altar in holy Mass, He conceals His divinity and hu-



manity under the species of bread and wine. But truly, what thoughts arise! Behold the spectacle on the cross! Behold the disgraceful conduct towards the Saviour sacrificing Himself! Behold the disgraceful irreverence renewed in the church, before the altar, before the divine Sacrifice and before Jesus Christ, and renewed, too, by Christians!

The same consequences, the same future and the same results take place here on the altar in our churches as on the cross. Here is Christ; there are some faithful sunk in devotion and reverence, in faith, hope and love, like the disciples and holy women at the foot of the cross; and there are others present with the same behavior, the same disposition as the Jews were at the Crucifixion. The holy Mass is the highest sacrifice of atonement, of praise and gratitude, to worthily adore God, to praise Him and to thank Him for everything by the offering up of holy Mass. It is the greatest sacrifice of impetration, propitiation and satisfaction, in order to supplicate God for one's self and his friends, for the welfare of his body and especially of his soul, to obtain the grace of contrition, to make satisfaction for sins committed and to offer sorrow and penance and good works with the holy Mass to God our heavenly Father. And yet so many are present animated by no good intention to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass to God, or to unite themselves with the intention of the Church! No prayer is on their lips, no contrition in their hearts, no faith and no love. The mouth is dumb, immovable the otherwise restless tongue, no prayer-book in the hand

and no attention to the course of the holy Mass, and even at the consecration there is no sign given of any particular reverence and faith. Here some gossip, there some transact business; others go to church to show their new clothes, enter and leave the church noisily, looking around and disturbing those who are hearing Mass with devotion.

Here is Jesus Christ, yet they place themselves before Him without any external sign of reverence; here is the Lamb of God that offered Himself for us, yet in mortal sin they come without any contrition, with hatred towards their neighbor, with anger and enmity, with their hearts full of lustful passions; here is the divine sacrifice that will also become our sacrifice and for which they should prepare themselves by recollection of mind, yet this preparation and recollection of spirit takes place even during divine service on the street or in the dram-shop, whence they then come smelling from liquor and place themselves before their Saviour. Truly, if any one would so conduct himself in our presence, we would turn from him in scorn, and the Saviour should be satisfied with such conduct! He should not be worthy to be treated with the reverence that we treat the most insignificant person! Whence comes this irreverent conduct? The Jews saw in Jesus only a common man, and here many see only some bread and wine and a trivial and wearisome ceremony. Thus the sad spectacle of the cross is constantly repeated; thus the Saviour must permit Himself to be constantly treated by such who call themselves Christians after Christ, and allow Himself to

be again and again wounded and crucified, as the Apostle St. Paul in indignation exclaims: "They crucify the Saviour again and treat Him contemptuously." The church, which is the house of God and should be a type of heaven, is made the spectacle place of a second Mount Calvary. In the presence of the angels, who surround their heavenly King and bow in reverence before Him, the Saviour is dishonored and shamefully treated.

4. What is the consequence of such conduct in the church at holy Mass? Just the same as at the Crucifixion! The greater part of the Jews returned from the cross more hardened and more unredeemable. And verily, my beloved, if the sight of the dying Son of God, if His prayer: "Father, forgive them," if the sun and moon in their darkness and the quaking rocks, if the example of the good thief, or the pain of the disciples at the cross, if all this could make no impression on the Jews, what could touch their hearts? And here in the church before the unbloody sacrifice, before Jesus Christ, if one conducts himself without feeling, without reverence, what can make an impression upon him? Here is again the place where many harden their hearts and so harden them that they can never extricate themselves from this state. O my God! what grace should still come to men, if here in the presence of Christ, neither the place nor the celebration of the unbloody sacrifice, nothing can make an impression upon them? And yet the greatest graces are offered by God! But without grace there is no salvation, no meritorious works, no contrition and

without contrition no forgiveness. God often calls men to better their lives, the Holy Ghost speaks in the soul and whispers to it good resolutions, and the guardian angel warns the conscience, but the man who shows himself without feeling towards the divine sacrifice, will show himself with still less feeling towards the call of God, towards the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and the warnings of conscience; they pass by him unnoticed and conscience is stifled or deadened.

In fact, where the Most Holy, where the most incomprehensible work of the goodness of God and the joy of Christians is considered only worthy of being dishonored, nothing more can be expected. At the cross we see only one robber and a few pagan soldiers with their centurion converted, but of the Jews who unworthily treated our Saviour we see not one. And here at the unbloody sacrifice where Christ still continues to offer Himself His words emphatically hold true: "If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day the things that are to thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes." (Luke 19, 42.)

It is truly a terrible thought that just as the cross, so also the holy Mass must be the place, where some return with the blessing of God, others slink away laden with His curse: that the church should be the place where some lay the foundation for their Christian life, others for their un-Christian life, where some lay the foundation of their salvation, others for their destruction! "Oh, how terrible is this place! it is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven." Therefore, no place of pleasure, no recreation hall or

dram-shop, no promenade and no street but the house of God and the gate of heaven.

5. May this church, my beloved, be for us all the gate of heaven. As we were here received by baptism into the kingdom of Christ on earth, into His holy Church; as we here received in this church the holy sacraments and at the end of our lives our corpse will be brought here to receive once more the blessing of the Church — so should this house of God built by the hands of men become the entrance to the heavenly house of God. From the present invisible presence of Christ and the holy angels we should pass over to the visible presence of Jesus Christ, the blessed spirits and all glorified Christians. My God! is it then so difficult to be here with reverence, with a worthy disposition at the right time, to show devotion and faith and this, too, externally? Is it then so hard to take a prayer-book in your hand and to remain recollected? Or is it so hard to kneel at the consecration, when all knees, in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bow before the Divine Saviour? No false shame should prevent us from doing so, no human respect intimidate us and prevent us from giving testimony of our devotion and faith. In the house of God we are Christians, children and heirs of heaven, and as such we should make the holy and immaculate sacrifice by our devotion, reverence and offering also our sacrifice. Thus the priest at the altar can with joyful confidence, without being obliged to fear the contrary, pray: “Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Pas-

sion of the same Christ Thy Son our Lord, His resurrection from hell, and glorious ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy Most Excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and grants, a pure host, a holy host, an immaculate host, the holy bread of eternal life and the chalice of everlasting salvation. Upon which vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance, and to accept them as Thou wast graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our Patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy high-priest Melchisedech offered to Thee, a holy sacrifice, an immaculate host.”

“We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, command these things to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty, that as many of us as, by participation at this altar, shall receive the Most Sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace.”

My beloved, if we should have also failed formerly and frequently in reverence in the church at the holy Sacrifice, then remember that true contrition and an earnest resolution to amend your lives wipe out every fault and every sin. Behold, here is the same Saviour who calls: “Father, forgive them!” Behold here the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world! Behold here that God whose mercy never tires to forgive the truly contrite and to rejoice him with His blessing! Yes, it is true, O Jesus, Divine Saviour, whom the species of bread conceals, Thou art our Saviour, whom love here hides from us! We

have not seldom made this church a new place of Thy Crucifixion, and at holy Mass have imitated the unworthy conduct of Thy enemies at the bloody sacrifice of the cross, but cannot contrition move Thee, to raise Thy hands in blessing and forgiveness over us? Yes, thus we hope, thus we believe and thus we will make ourselves worthy of Thee. Oh, may this disposition animate us all! May these meditations on the holy Mass which I herewith close become for all salvation, and all who call upon the name of Jesus with a pure heart and childlike faith and assist at the holy sacrifice, may it bring them graces, pardon for all punishments, peace and joy of heart and constancy in all good things! Therefore I close with the words of the hymn of benediction: "Come, praise without end the Blessed Sacrament, which Jesus instituted for a testament for us. Here is Jesus' flesh and blood, here the highest good; no soul is lost under His protection!" Amen.

THE END









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