

## IV. Life of the Church

### A. The Mass and the Blessed Sacrament

107.

Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, April 4, 1866

Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral--Lent 1866, No. V.

#### **The Outward Worship of the Church.**

The fact of this being Holy Week, when the ceremonies of the Church are more than usually elaborate, attracting many to witness them, who do not understand them, has suggested the outward worship of the Church as the subject of this afternoon's instructions.

For one class of minds there is need of explaining why outward worship is used at all, and for another, what is the central feature of Catholic worship.

The first have to learn what religion is; the second want some general theory of the ceremonies explained to them.

To acknowledge God's supreme dominion or ownership over all things is to adore. To acknowledge that dominion over itself, the soul must annihilate itself, in its own estimation, submit will, intellect, affections, hopes, life, temporal and eternal, to the mastery of its Creator, and say "To the immortal and invisible ruler of ages, the only God--be glory and honor for ever and ever--to me and mine what He wills." Blind faith is the adoration of the intellect. Supreme love the adoration of the will. Both these acts make up the soul's acknowledgment that God is God.

Theologians distinguish four phases of the act of worship:

1. When the soul considers God in Himself, and bows to Him as the Supreme.
2. When the soul considers God as the giver of every good and perfect gift conferred upon it, the worship is thanksgiving.
3. When the soul looks upon God as the avenger or the pardoner of sin, the worship is expiation.
4. And when the soul considers God as the only source of its own salvation and the means for reaching salvation, the worship is impetration.

Now, no one who believes in God can deny the reasonableness of interior worship. For God is creator, supreme ruler, judge and disposer of all He has made; and interior worship is nothing more nor less than the willing recognition of this truth. The whole question then is about exterior worship, for there are many who not only deny its necessity, but are scandalized at its existence in the Catholic Church.

Ours is a strange age and country to object to worship because it is outward. For the past two hundred years and more, as a writer in a late English Review says, all our thoughts and all our literature have been directed to the outward and visible. We have been seeking comfort, health, commercial and national prosperity, as if we had no

thought or knowledge of anything invisible and spiritual. Yet the age finds fault with the Catholic Church for having a visible worship. Perhaps a keener search would disclose the fact that the visibility of Catholic worship is not the true objection, but rather a rooted prejudice which seeks to excuse itself even with frivolous and illogical censures. For how but illogical is it for persons to admit the propriety and duty of worshipping God interiorly, and then cavil at His exterior worship?

I am not called upon, in this question, to explain the wonderful union of soul and body that constitutes man--but only to call attention to the fact, as the logical reason for exterior worship of God.

"God is pure Spirit," said the Quakers, "and therefore He must receive only a spiritual worship," and so they keep their hats on in Church.

But the reasoning is grossly unsound. The manner of worship does not take its determination from the object of the worship but from the worshipper. Now, that God made man a living soul is acknowledging a reason why man should render Him spiritual worship. Therefore, that God made man a body is a reason why man should render Him bodily or exterior worship.

I do not understand how it is that spirit can be so closely blended with matter; but I do know the fact that the human soul and body are so joined together, that neither can act except upon or through the other.

An emotion of the soul unfelt in the body would be as monstrous as a cloud flitting through the sunlight and casting no shadow. Even little children can read--before they know letters--the grief, vexation, hope and satisfaction of those around them, in their countenance, and in their eyes. Any one standing at the door of a Church can tell who are Catholics and who are non-Catholics as the people come in, not because Catholics stop to compose their features, or non-Catholics are disposed to be disrespectful and uncourteous, but because the belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament is written on the countenance and manner of the one, and the unconsciousness of that Presence is plainly visible in the appearance of the other.

Every emotion of the soul has its corresponding emotion of the body. Polished people, it is true, practice the art of concealing their emotions, but they only succeed in so far as they merge all their emotions into egotism, or in so far as they are stimulated in their efforts at concealment by the thought of being watched. It is the irresistible fiat of nature. What the soul feels the body must express. Why, do not materialist philosophers say that the soul *is* the body, that matter and mind are undistinguishable? And though faith condemns their doctrine as heresy, and common sense derides it as a piece of learned idiocy, yet neither faith nor common sense denies the intimate physical union between the two substances whereby every change in the one quickly becomes a change in the other.

Therefore, if a man has any real religious emotion in his soul, he must feel it

more or less in his body. If his soul is reverent his body will be reverent; if his soul is filled with charity and hope, his eyes and tongue and the tone of his voice will express them, more or less. In other words, if his interior worship is sincere, he must have some external worship.

"So far, well" it will be said, "interior worship has a right to so much of outward expression. A man may cast down his eyes when he thinks of God, or clasp his hands, or bend his knees when he asks for pardon and blessing. But this spontaneous welling out through the bodily senses and powers of inward devotion is not what is meant by outward worship. Outward worship is worship on fixed days by established rites, through an appointed ministry, and set forms of praise and prayer, that can be undertaken and performed without a particle of inward spirit or sincerity."

Well, then, be it so understood. Not only inward worship is right and reasonable, but its outward expression is also right and reasonable--if the expression and the sentiment go together.

Now, feasts and rites and forms of worship do not pretend to be religion. They are the language of worship. If men use the language of sentiment they never felt, if the infidel talks the words of a believer, if the oppressor uses the phrases of charity, if the scoffer affects reverence and piety, the fault is not in the language, but in the men who use it for deceit.

Just so with exterior rites which are the language of worship. They express what the sentiments of the worshipper ought to be, and it is not their fault if he is insincere. They do not make him a hypocrite, but his own crooked will makes him one.

"I would not use set forms of prayer," say some of our sectarian friends, "It is enough if the heart prays." Yes, truly, there lies the point. If we can only get the heart to pray, it is, indeed, enough. But how often is the heart too uninstructed to pray, and how often is it tossed wildly about by the storms of ungovernable emotion, by fear, despondence, grief, and manifold other eager passions, until the light in it is almost darkness, and, vaguely wishing to pray, it knows not how to begin! Such a heart, at most, can say only, what the disciples said to Jesus, "Lord teach us to pray;" and the form of prayer, the solemn ceremony and sacred rite, unmeaning to gaping curiosity, are full of sweetness and blessing because they *help the heart to pray*.

Interior worship is therefore impossible, at least, prolonged and habitual, without exterior rites. The very ceremonies by which the Quakers eschew all ceremony make them the most formal and noticeable of sectarians.

Yet I am far from maintaining that all outward rites in use among men are necessary or commendable. From the nature of things, reason shows unerringly our obligation of paying some kind of outward worship, of offering together with our heart, with its designs and affection, our bodies, and the works of our hands. But by what external rite our bodies shall be offered, reason does not determine, just as it does not

determine the language of other emotions of the soul.

As a matter of fact, the human race, while using a countless variety of forms and rites, has agreed in holding the belief that sacrifice--the offering to God of some sensible object, bearing in it some mark of His supreme dominion, over life and death--expresses fitly adoration. But it does not appear that this agreement came so much from reason as from the command of God to Adam, and the tradition of it retained by his descendants, as they multiplied into tribes and were scattered through the earth.

Cain, the first born on earth, and Abel offered their sacrifices as a well understood duty which doubtless they had learned from Adam, their father. The patriarchs are spoken of as sacrificing of their flocks and herds; and the law of Moses established the matter and form and time of sacrifices, and the hereditary priesthood of the sons of Levi.

Sacrifice is, in itself, a strikingly expressive symbol. How can we better express our recognition of God's dominion over the earth than by immolating to Him the firstlings of the flocks and herds, and offering the first and choicest fruits of the fields and trees? Yet, unless we had it prescribed to us, we would never, probably, adopt it. For our adoration of God cannot be separated from the consciousness of guilt. Standing before the awful majesty of God, we do not feel as we would have felt had Adam never sinned, had we ourselves never stained our souls with prevarication. We cannot simply adore, saying, "Take me as I am, and make me what Thou wilt!" But we must say, "Spare me, O Creator, and change me from what I am into what Thou wouldst have me to be!" Nor would we dare even thus to pray to Him whose enmity we defied by sin, were it not for the idea of expiation suggested by Himself in Eden.

Sacrifice was undoubtedly commanded by God, to keep alive among men the idea of Him upon whom all our iniquity was to be placed, who was to be bruised for our prevarication, crushed for our crimes. The blood of lambs and goats and bullocks symbolized that Blood which, shed upon Calvary, washed away the sins of the world. The tribes that wandered away into the darkness of idolatry, though they lost the knowledge of God and His law, still remembered that some atonement was to be made in blood; and so, throughout the earth, from the temples of classic Greece to the Druid groves of Britain, blood--often human blood--stained the impious altars.

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

This is the law established by the Almighty, when He decreed to allow men to be redeemed; and the dark sacrifices of the Gentiles were impious, not because they were sacrifices, but because they were made of things of which man has not even the secondary dominion, and because they were immolated to demons. There can be no religion, true or false, without a sacrifice. There may be infidelity, there may be philosophical sects, there may be systems of negation in which traditions of faith are retained because they are not inconvenient; but there cannot be religion.

So in the Catholic, as in all religions, sacrifice is the central feature of public worship. The old priesthood was only abolished to give place to the new, the sacrifices of the law only ceased when the true and living sacrifice was given to man. We have an altar of which those who serve the tabernacle may not eat. The blood of Christ was shed but once to atone for sin; but the sacrifice is made present to all nations from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Jesus Christ is at the altar, at once sacrificer and victim; and His death, represented in the separate consecrations of the host and chalice, is the mark in His divine person whereby we proclaim God to be the author of life and death.

The Holy Mass, therefore, is the central or generating principle of all public or exterior worship under the dispensation of Christ. It is the sole reason for all else that exists in the visible Church.

Bishops are consecrated rulers of the Church of God--chiefly to confer on those proved worthy the power of sacrificing. All the varied duties of the priest center in his duty of offering the Holy Mass. His instructions, his admonitions, his administrations of the other Sacraments are all to the end that his people, young and old, sick and well, may eat worthily of the altar. Deacons, subdeacons, and the four inferior grades are all called ministers; and their whole office is to serve the priest at the altar.

Have you ever stood within the great Cathedrals of the old world, awestruck with their vast proportions, gazing with admiration on their towering domes, their gigantic columns, and floors of polished marble? They were built to be, if possible, fit temples wherein might be offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Did you ever watch, spell-bound, the priest and his attendant ministers standing before the altar, glittering with hundreds of lights, and see jewels flashing through the smoke of incense in the chalice, in the veil of the tabernacle, in his vestments, with almost bewildering brightness? These, and the motions to and fro, the clouds of incense, the solemn and thrilling music, the kneeling and the rising, are all the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

All this and a thousand times more the Church would fain do, and still think it not enough, to treat as becomes it, the Unbloody Sacrifice. On the altar she would lay all the hearts of her children, and all their works. There she would bring all the beauties of nature and art, all the treasures of matter and mind. There she would have the poet, when he feels within him the fire that can kindle the hearts of other men and sway crowds, as the breeze sways the grain in the field white for the harvest, come and consecrate the bard spirit that thrills him to the honor of the Giver.

There she would have the musician as he grows wild with the melodies floating through his thoughts and thinks them of more than mortal sweetness, bring all the harmonies he can create. Let him reduce them to shape, and though they were a thousand times more entrancing they would yet be not sweet enough worthily to grace

the time when the Lamb, "slain from the foundation of the world," is offering Himself in the midst of adoring angels, to His eternal Father.

Oh! how sad was the day when false teachers arose among our fathers, and stole the body and blood of Christ away from so many churches in Christendom, and left so many people, who would have walked aright, had they been rightly guided, without priest, sacrifice or altar, yet still imagining themselves to be Christians! How sad it is now to look upon men who, considering themselves friends of Jesus Christ, yet stand here, in His house, as strangers, recognizing not one of the vestments or solemn rites that have been in daily use amongst Christians since the popes hid in the catacombs! and seeing no meaning whatever in the great central act of Christian Catholic worship, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass! nay, and publishing their ignorance by calling the ceremonies unmeaning! With no Real Presence, and no Sacrifice, ceremonies would be unmeaning. Long gowns and surplices are out of place in buildings where there is no altar; but only a dining-table, a platter of bread, and a mug of claret.

But, thank God, "we have an altar," and so, in every prayer, and bow, and kneeling by priest or minister, prescribed by the rubrics, there is a definite purpose and a precise meaning. The Life of the world gives life also to all the rites and ceremonies of His Church.

My Catholic brethren, while pleasing God that we have it in our knowledge and in our power worthily to worship Him, be on your guard against neglecting so great a privilege.

"If," says St. Thomas A' Kempis, "this most Holy Sacrament were to be celebrated in one place only, and consecrated by one only priest in the world, with how great desires dost thou think would men be affected to that place and toward such a priest of God, that they might be witnesses of the celebration of these Divine Mysteries?"

"But now, many are made priests and in many places Christ is offered that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, the more widely this sacred Communion is spread over the world."

And while the grace and love of God to man are appearing so much the greater, how cold we are growing! How seldom we hear Mass except on days of obligation! How few come to the church every morning in comparison with the number of these who go to places of amusement every night!

I cannot say with the prophet, "the ways of Zion mourn because there is none who cometh to the solemnity," for there are some who never fail unless in case of sickness to come for God's blessing and their share of the ineffable sacrifice every morning. But there are many who could come, and who only excuse themselves with pretexts they would be ashamed to have to stand in the way of a useless walk or an idle visit. My brethren, we have Masses every morning and leisure to assist at some one of them. Let us no longer be near so great a fire without being warmed; let us no longer

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neglect a treasure within our reach; but yield gladly to the sweet invitation that comes floating through the air to our ears every morning in the sound of the Angelus bell: "Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy burthened, and I will refresh you."

108.

Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, February 18, 1863

Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral, No. 5.

### **Sacrifice the Natural Language of Adoration.**

The human heart, in the depths where its life-current flows, is always alone with God. We talk and smile and weep together, and say we understand one another; but the understanding is only of things that lie upon the surface. Beyond what we say, there are thoughts unexpressed; under the smile there is often care; and beneath the weeping there is always hope. Far lower down than the whirl of thoughts, and desires suggested by the things we see and hear and taste, there is the feeling sometimes clear, but oftener ill-defined and vague, of the existence and presence of the majesty of God, and the irresistible impulse to adore.

To adore is a necessity of the created understanding. In perceiving itself to be created, in acknowledging that it has nothing it can rightly call its own, it perceives that there is One not created to whom all things belong, and before Him it annihilates itself in adoration. And the more it revolves its conception of an Uncreated Being, the more willing and the more thorough is its self-annihilation.

A Being uncreated, it says, must be self-existent, all-perfect, immutable, omnipotent, immense; and in meditating upon these attributes forgets its own existence in its vehement desire to praise.

All else besides this Being, had a beginning at His bidding. No matter how old the geologists make the earth, or through how many transformations the stars may have passed, there was a moment when God spoke and they were created--suns lit up the vast void, stars began their appointed revolutions, the seeds of generations sprang into being. But He had no beginning. He exists in force of His own nature, giving to all, receiving from none, with a majesty not increased by the creation of the universe or diminished by its annihilation, and by this is infinitely removed from the sublimity of His works. In the created world the mightiest depend upon the meanest by the law of order and dependence--the atom and the planet mutually act and are acted upon. But while God acts upon all and controls all, He is reacted upon by none. This is why the light in which He is throned is called inaccessible. This is what the Church speaks of when she says, "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee *for THY great Glory.*" Before this the awe-struck seraphim stand with veiled faces and cry eternally, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts"; the "four and twenty elders cast down their

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crowns," and prostrate their bodies; the angels fling up their clouds of incense; the multitude of the redeemed out of every nation and tribe fall down and say, "Blessing and honor and glory and empire to Him who is and was, and is to be forever and ever."

God is all perfect. Whatever of excellence there is in creatures in measure and with limit, is in Him without any measure or limit. He has beauty without defect of grossness, knowledge without end, holiness without stain, justice without anger, mercy without weakness, power without measure, all in force of His nature, because He cannot help but have them.

He is immense. He holds all space, that vast and, to us, mysterious realm, within whose bounds the suns spend their light, the planets revolve, the ages accumulate, life comes and goes, elements interchange their actions, spirits sin, merit, and are judged, as it were, in the hollow of His hand. Without division of His substance He is above, below, and through it all, yet infinitely removed from it. He is almighty, can do all things. We bow before the power of men, we tremble when the forces of nature show forth their might. When the hurricane sweeps down from the mountain upon forest and dwelling, when the vast ocean lifts its giant waves on high, when the resistless lightnings in fiery streams dart through the whirling clouds, when the earth reels under the might of its subterranean convulsions, when death lays his hand on those we love, we stand powerless and terror-stricken.

But God's power, without effort, measures the hurricane, curbs the ocean, guides the lightning, stills the earthquake, and makes a slave of death. God is unchangeable. He is outside and above all that knows vicissitude. Nothing can be added to His perfections, nothing taken away from them. Untold ages before the visible world, angels--bright, pure intelligences--began to measure time. Then material existences filled the vast void, and by their manifold development and vicissitude made up the ages, which are now growing old like a garment, and are destined one day to disappear from the ether. Yet God remains the same, and His years fail not. To Him the eternal years, for us gone by, are not yet past, and the eternity to come is not future. To Him the bright morning of creation is yet shining--the dark day of judgment is already lowering. Above the rolling of the stars, the beginning and life of spiritual existences, He is throned immutable.

In the face of this awful majesty of this Being of boundless perfection, what can the soul do but hush all thoughts of itself, of its desires, interests and being, and adore, acknowledge Him the source of being, His glory the rightful aim of all things, His will the law of every action and enjoyment? And this is adoration or supreme worship. But the soul is not unfettered spirit. It is linked to flesh, and while life lasts can suffer and enjoy, know and act, only through the body. If the spirit adores, the flesh must adore also. Man must worship with his body also. Man is irresistibly impelled to express all his thoughts and emotions by words and signs. No words can adequately express



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adoration. In the judgment of the human race the sign that expresses it is SACRIFICE. Sacrifice is an offering made to God in acknowledgment of His absolute ownership of all things. It is never made of the spontaneous gifts of nature, of wild animals, or fruits; but of the choicest of those things which man, by wit and industry, appropriates to his own uses. How else could man more aptly express God's ownership of all things? How else could he better declare that what he uses for himself, in the vast universe, he takes by permission of God? How else could he say that God is the author and owner of the grain, the fruits, the flocks and herds, than by offering the first and choicest to him? They could offer to Him only by destroying to themselves. Hence the offering was made by immolation or destruction by fire.

Sacrifice is not, as some have supposed, an outgrowth of human corruption, but the natural expression of worship, as old as the human race. The two eldest sons of Adam, taught by their father, who learned of God, offered sacrifice, one the fruits of the earth, the other the firstlings of his flock. The patriarchs sacrificed in the midst of their children and dependents. And in the course of time God Himself revealed to Moses the sacrifices that he would accept and made them a part of His written law. The heathen sacrifices were not abominable before God because they were sacrifices, but because they were offered of unlawful material, with impure rites, to false gods and idols.

All idolatrous nations had the custom of offering human sacrifices. They lost sight of the plain truth, that human life is consecrated to God by its sanctification, and not by its destruction. The Asiatic people are known to have poured human blood and burned human flesh on the altars of Baal Moloch. The polished Greeks, even in Athens, sacrificed men and women to Chronos and Apollo. The ancient Germans, Gauls, Britons, Northmen, had their human sacrifices; and on this continent the aboriginal Mexicans, the more advanced people of the western world, seem to have had the custom of offering hecatombs of men and women to their sanguinary deities.

Besides, their ordinary sacrifices were offered with rites that were impure and loathsome. Their feast days were days of riot, drunkenness and debauchery, in which all the laws of modesty and decency were systematically disregarded, and scenes enacted from which nature recoils in horror. And they were made expressly, not to the God of Heaven and earth, but to such spirits as could be invoked by rites so loathsome.

We are in the habit of speaking of heathen gods as if they were merely wood and stone, or the creations of poetic fancy. Yet the Bible declares that "they were all demons (Ps. 94 v. 5), and it accords more with common sense and the opinion of those who lived face to face with ancient idolatry, to believe that their places and objects of worship were very often inhabited by the fallen angels, the enemies of God, that Baal Moloch of the Orient, Chronos of the Grecian Isles, Woden of the Northmen, who lapped human blood in the trench around his sanguinary altars, was not a lifeless thing or a poetic myth, but a person full of wit, strength and malignity; that Apollo of the Delphic Oracle

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was not a blind fluid from a hot spring, but a lying and artful intelligence; in a word, that myths were not mere fancy, nor idol-worship the fruit of sentiment, but to some extent the creation of the fallen angels, playing at the same time on the weakness and pride of men.

The soul of man struggling in the darkness of ignorance, under the load [lead?] of false teaching, eager with untamed desire, would cry out, "Where is he who will guide me, aid me to reach what will make me happy." Then in the thick shade of some gloomy grove, at the mouth of some yawning cavern, in the weird mists of some boiling spring, under the cover of some graven image, or behind some unexpected and startling phenomenon of nature, a fallen spirit, filled with the mad ambition that of old caused him to be hurled like lightning headlong from heaven, would answer "I am he"; and man would forthwith build an altar, offer the victim, and say "help me to my desire."

Sacrifices to false gods and to the true God have always been offered for one or more of these four ends:

1. To acknowledge supreme dominion,
2. To return thanks for benefits received,
3. To obtain benefits desired,
4. To satisfy for sin.

The first three--worship, thanksgiving and petition, are, from what has been said, manifestly dictates of the law of nature. The last, it seems to me, must have had its origin in the tradition of the coming Redeemer who, by a voluntary oblation, was to make all things new. For in the law of nature I cannot see any remedy for sin. Reason says, "The soul that sinneth shall die"--the will that defies God shall feel His wrath.

If we consider sin a disorder, a violation of the moral harmony, it can be healed only by the infliction of punishment. If as an offence, the injured party must, in justice, have satisfaction. If as a debt to God's justice, what can pay it? Not repentance and reform, for they only provide against future sins--do not wash out past ones. Not holocausts, for they belong to God already. Over sin once committed, a horrible shadow settles which human reason cannot lift. It is true God is merciful; but He showed His mercy abundantly in creating us from nothing, and in leaving our happiness in our own choice. He is also just; and how else can His justice appear if He makes no distinction between those who do His will and those who defy Him? The soul that sins is dead. Who knows whether the spirit that giveth life will ever breathe upon it again? In justice, He is not bound to do it; in mercy, He may, but not without atonement.

Now God revealed to Adam and Eve, as with downcast eyes they were preparing to take leave of Eden, that the serpent who had beguiled them should be overthrown and crushed by one of their own offspring; and they bade farewell to it in the hope that one day their crime would be expiated in blood; and to symbolize this

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expiation bloody sacrifices were instituted. Among the people of God they retained to the last their symbolical character. But the Gentiles corrupted them by degrees, until at last they knew no longer any reason, beyond custom, for the offering. But, beyond doubt, St. Paul, in the epistle to the Hebrews, expressed the conviction of the human race when he said, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

The great blunder of all those who try to frame a sentimental religion is overlooking the fact that there is guilt to be washed away from the soul. Of what use to the soul are fine sentiments about the greatness of God, when that soul is at enmity with Him by unexpiated sin? What serves it to dilate on human greatness, freedom, progress, if the soul dare not encounter the judgment of God?

And the still greater blunder of the humanitarian school, which is tender towards crime, is in believing that God will not exact justice from those who trample on His law, if they do not. It is not civilization or true charity to expend sympathy on criminals, to ventilate their apartments, inspect their diet and consult their sensibilities. Be it that we have no right to take revenge; neither have we right to forgive, for the law is God's. Say that they are but little worse than ourselves, and if we were tempted as they were we might have sinned worse. That only proves that we as well as they are liable to commit sin and be condemned, not that they do not deserve punishment. Sin is not remitted because public opinion and law overlook it and let it pass. When human governments, which should be ministers of God, cease to punish crime, Providence itself takes the matter up. When the Romans of the empire grew too civilized to punish oppression of the poor, robbery, lust, murder, the men of the North came down and blood flowed for centuries in the streets of every city in the peninsula. Since the humanitarian doctrines of the past century were proclaimed in Europe, we have had almost an unceasing flow of blood--the great wars of the old Napoleon and the recent ones of his nephew.

In 1850 the French Assembly abolished the death penalty, and a few months later the streets of Paris ran blood, which ceased not to flow until the saintly ARCHBISHOP AFFRE of Paris laid down his life for his flock upon the barricades. At home here we have been in the habit of showing more sentimental sympathy with our criminals than with our poor. Practically we have abolished the death penalty by pardons and convictions in the second degree. And lo! one-third of the country is now belted round with blood; and we who have shrunk from taking the murderer's forfeited life, now see the lives of the innocent offered by thousands in the strife that began and will end, only God knows how. It seems a law of Providence, written in the history of our race, that where blood is not shed when justice demands it, it will flow from the veins of the unoffending.

Cain, who would not shed blood in sacrifice to God, but offered the fruits of the earth, did not hesitate to shed blood in murder. Humanitarians call this a harsh law--the law of expiation by blood. So it would be if sin were no great evil; so it would be if

man were merely a noble animal, whose last end is to enrich with the fatness of his body the soil from which he gathered sustenance in life; if crime were an inevitable disorder like the head-ache or rheumatism.

But crime is not merely an inconvenience to man; it is an outrage offered to God, entailing consequences that stretch on through eternity.

If we are shocked at expiatory sacrifices we should be the more appalled at sin. All the blood that ever flowed through human veins is not enough to atone for a single sin against the majesty of God. Only the sacrifice of the cross could take away the sins of the world. Jesus Christ is the only liberator.

I have been thus minute in showing from reason and the practice of the human race that sacrifice is the natural language of adoration, because we live in times when the idea of God and of worship seems nearly dying out of the minds and practice of those who yet lay claim to the truth. Protestants have no sacrifice professedly, and their public worship is but a social meeting, in which nothing is offered to God. Many Catholics have unconsciously fallen into their way of thinking, and are almost careless of what is done upon the altar, though attentive enough to the choir and pulpit.

The central act of all worship, the reason for a priesthood, temples, altars, lights, vestments, ceremonies, is sacrifice, without which adoration has no expression.

109.

Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, February 25, 1863

Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral, No. 6.

### **The Sacrifice of the Mass.**

For those not instructed in Catholic doctrines, it may be well to promise an explanation of what they have many times witnessed in the morning religious exercises in our churches.

The music of the choir is no essential part of the service, and is always omitted on working days, and on festivals at every Mass but one. The words sung by the choir are always taken from what is said at the altar, and are intended, by ancient custom, to assist the devotion of the people. The act of worship is all done by the priest at the altar, and is the same, whether with or without, music, with a large and devout congregation, or with two or three, or even none at all, attending. The more people attend, the more will be benefitted, and the more devout they are, the better for them; but the honor done to God is all the same.

In like manner, of those you see engaged in the ceremonies in the sanctuary, all can be dispensed with but the priest--and leave the sacrifice intact. They are there to add to the comeliness of divine worship by serving him, reaching wine and water to him, turning the leaves of the book for him, singing the Epistle and Gospel for him,

warning the people by ringing the bell of the different parts of the service he has reached; but he alone offers the sacrifice.

So, also, in the things done by the celebrant himself, there are some that do not belong strictly to the essence of the sacrifice, but are preparation before or thanksgiving after; it but the essential act of sacrifice consists in making present on the altar the sacrifice of the cross, in representing on the real person of Christ present on the altar by separate consecration of the bread into His Body, and of the wine into His Blood, the death actually wrought in Him on the cross. It is the means by which the sacrifice of the cross is brought home to every locality and every generation. I would not call it the renewal of the sacrifice of the cross, but the application of it to some spot and people. The sunbeam when it reaches the remotest star, though newly seen there, is not renewed. So the sacrifice of the cross, transmitted from Calvary to far off lands and distant generations by means of the sacrifice of the Mass, though new to each clime and people it reaches, is not a new or another, but the one oblation that "perfected forever the sanctified" in sight of Jerusalem.

As to the ceremonies that go before, and follow after the sacrificial act, the vestments to be used by the priest and his assistants, the Church is free to prescribe them at her pleasure. Many of the particular usages in vogue had their origin so far back, that it is lost in the night of time; and we can only explain why this or that particular vestment, this or that special ceremony is used, by saying there must be *some* vestments and *some* ceremonies, and these that come to us from our fathers are as good as any others.

In general, we know that the ceremonies of Mass are intended to be a dramatic representation of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, in its relation to the spiritual condition of men before and after Him.

The lights upon the altar signify that His death brought spiritual light to every man coming into this world.

The ceremonies have the same relation to His death.

When the priest stands at the foot of the altar, the confession he makes and the absolution he gives are purely personal, in which he begs of God for himself and the people the proper sentiments for so tremendous an act as the Holy Sacrifice.

What he says up to the chanting of the Gospel has reference to the state of men before the coming of Christ. Prayers are recited, some portion of the Bible not taken from the Gospels is read, and then the book is removed from the left to the right hand of the altar to signify the transition from the old to the new law, accomplished by the death of Christ.

What follows represents the circumstances of the crucifixion, and the sentiments with which it should inspire us.

The offering which the priest makes of the bread and wine and the people of

their gifts, is the act by which they seek to unite themselves to the Redeemer in the spirit of sacrifice.

At the chanting of the preface we recall to mind the majesty of God, and return thanks for the mercy that vouchsafes to make us partakers of such sublime mysteries.

Then the voice of the priest is lowered, and he commemorates the living and the dead who share in the mysteries, and utters the words of consecration over the sacred elements, and raises aloft the chalice and the species of Bread for the adoration of the people, just as Christ was lifted up from the earth to draw all things unto Him.

After that follows the communion and thanksgiving, and the dismissal of the people to their homes.

These are all the outward rites of what Catholics call the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

As I have already said, these rites bring home to us, upon our own altars, to answer our own wants, the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is no mere dramatic representation, such as might be made in a theatre by a person not a priest. The real body and blood of Christ are upon the altar by the words of consecration; the real sacrifice is offered. The only thing merely represented is the death of the Redeemer, who "being risen from the dead dieth now no more." His death--the separation of the blood or highest form of animal life--from the body is represented by the separate consecration of the bread and wine. This is His own device. For when He had blessed the bread and the cup and given them to his disciples, He added the command, "This do in commemoration of Me."

This the Apostles understood, and no sooner was He ascended into heaven than they had an altar at which, according to the acts of the Apostles, while fasting, they "ministered," or "*sacrificed*"--as the Greek text has it--"unto the Lord."

To this St. Paul alludes (Heb. xi.) when he says, "We have an altar of which it is not lawful for those to eat who serve the tabernacle." What one of all sects, whose meeting-houses disfigure our cities and villages, is there whose members could say with St. Paul, "we have an altar?" Where is the altar in their places of worship?

In reference to this was the controversy of which the same St. Paul speaks repeatedly about the lawfulness of eating meat offered to idols. Of the victim offered on the Gentile altars a part was burned, a part went to the priest, and a part to the offered. This meat was exposed in market for sale; and while pagans bought it the more eagerly because it had been offered to some false god, Christians were forbidden its use on the principle, that "they who eat of the altar become partakers of the worship of the altar."

"Ye cannot," St. Paul tells them, (I. Cor. x.) "drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils."

St. Andrew the Apostle, as is related in the acts of his martyrdom, written by the

priests of Achaia, when he was told by the judge to save his life by sacrificing, gave this answer, "I offer daily to the almighty God, who is one and true, not the flesh of bullock or the blood of goats, but the spotless Lamb, upon the altar; and after all the believing people have eaten of His flesh, the Lamb, who is sacrificed, remains whole and living."

It was from this sacrifice that the unbaptized and penitents were anciently excluded. After the sermon, it was the custom in the ancient church for the deacon to warn the catechumens and penitents to leave the church, as the sacrifice was beginning. Those who were allowed to remain were called the initiated. This distinction between the initiated and the uninitiated was kept up until the fifth century. St. Augustine speaks of it directly in his catechetical instructions, given after the year 400.

Hence, arose in the second century the popular calumny that the Christians were wont to sacrifice and eat an infant child in their mysteries; which St. Justin refuted by describing minutely the ceremonies observed in Christian assemblies in his "Apology to Mark Aurelius and Lucius Commodus."

It was for this sacrifice that there were altars and a priesthood in the ancient Church; it was for this that rituals were established by Church authority, and exist now in the Latin, Greek, Coptic, Arabic, Syriac, Armenian languages six times as old as Protestantism.

Where there is no sacrifice there is no altar and no priesthood. And what other sacrifice did the Christian Church ever know but the sacrifice of the Mass. This sacrifice of the cross has all the excellence of the sublime offering. But the sacrifice of the cross, according to Christianity, is the great central act of God in the creation and government of the universe. He made all things for His own sake--for His own glory, and this glory is rendered to Him, pre-eminently, in the Sacrifice of the Cross. You know the outward rites, with which that sacrifice was offered. You know that the altar was a wooden cross on which was laid the innocent body of Christ, who, when it was raised up, and set in the ground, hung there fastened by nails through His hands and feet, until all was consummated, being offered because He willed it.

And that oblation was the only worship ever offered to God worthy of Him. The oblation of the created universe would not be worthy of Him, because it is created and finite, whereas He is infinite.

But the victim on the cross is worthy of Him. For by the hypostatic union, whereby the humanity without a human personality subsists, has actual existence in the divine Person, that victim is God the Son. The flesh torn with scourges, thorns and nails, the blood crimsoning the white skin, and clotting on the wood were not the flesh and blood of any man, but of God. They were not divinity--for the divinity cannot suffer--yet they were God. The hand you grasp in friendship is not the soul you love, yet you touch your friend; the body you strike in anger is not the mind of the enemy you hate, yet you strike your enemy.

So the body of Christ was not His divinity--yet they who struck it struck God, they who bruised it bruised God, they who crucified it killed God.

Mary did not give birth to the divinity which is without beginning, yet she gave birth to God. For the "Word became Flesh." He did not dwell in a man as in a tabernacle, He did not come to make a moral union with some man already formed, but He became man--as truly man from the moment of the incarnation as He had been eternal true God.

If you ask me what was offered to the Eternal Father on the Cross, I answer human flesh and blood, a human life.

If you ask me who was offered, I answer God the Son.

In this appears the wonderful wisdom of the Incarnation. If the WORD had not become flesh He could offer no sacrifice, since the divinity cannot suffer; if He were mere man His suffering would be nothing worth. In His humanity, He could be buffeted and crucified; and His divine nature rendered those sufferings, even the smallest of them, infinitely valuable.

God cared nothing for the sacrifices of the old law, except as they showed forth and influenced the piety of His people. He was not moved by that piety itself, except in so far as it delights His mercy to see His creatures on the road to their own happiness. He counted the adoration of the angels not so much honoring Him as them. For His own sake He wills not sacrifice and oblation. But when His coeternal Son took flesh in the womb of Mary, and said, "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God," He was well pleased. Thus, and thus only, could there be an oblation in every respect clean--clean from every stain of sin, from every reproach of imperfection, from every taint of inadequacy or unworthiness.

Thus only could the true worshipers of the Father adore Him, not in words and wishes merely, not in weak and beggarly symbols, but with an offering essentially worthy of Him, "in spirit and in truth." St. John v.

Blessed wisdom of God, that in saving men could invent a sacrifice worthy of His infinite excellence! Blessed fault of Adam which obtained such and so great a Redeemer!

If Adam had never fallen, and every child of his race had been saved, if all the angels were yet before the throne of God in unbroken array, and if their almost countless numbers were multiplied by unnumbered millions, the adoration of all, the sacrifice of all, would be nothing worth in the eyes of God in comparison with infinite honor He receives from the cross. No wonder that St. Paul, whose dearest wish was to see God honored, gloried in nothing but in the cross of Christ! No wonder that the divine Spirit Who began to breathe upon the earth to renew it, on the day of Pentecost, took away the infamy of the wood in the estimation of men, and made that a symbol of honor in the rites of temples, in the standards of nations, in the diadems of kings, which



had received sanctity from the touch of limbs so sacred.

I know the cold hard spirit of incredulity asks sneeringly why God should choose out of all the natures He has formed, the nature of man in which to effect this sacrifice; and out of all the worlds He has made the little planet earth for theatre of so sublime an event? But incredulity is blind not to see that the marvel is not in the nature and scene chosen, but in choosing any; that God is so great that if He stoops to any of His creatures it matters but little to which of them He condescends. For the sacrifice He proposed the Son of God needed a created nature; that He chose ours rather than any other adds nothing to the mystery.

In virtue of its infinite value the sacrifice of the cross fulfilled all the ends of all sacrifices. It was at one and the same time the acknowledgement of His supreme majesty, thanksgiving for His benefits, petition for new bounties, and atonement for sin. It paid the price of the redemption, sanctification, and eternal happiness of the whole human race.

The prophet calls it a stream of pure water gushing up in the midst of the desert. (The different generations of men are so barren.)

Since the primal curse fell upon the world the generations have been ever treading the same round of sensual excitements, none doing good, not one. All their works, however great, were without true aim, were without true life. So the cross, the source of salvation and of all the works that tend to salvation, is a life-giving fountain in the desert of ages. But how are the men of different generations to approach it? By what channels are the waters of that exhaustless fountain to flow from Calvary through all the countries of the earth, and down to all the generations? By what means is that sacrifice to become yours and mine, to become the expression of our worship, our thanks-offering for obtaining what we need, the propitiation for our sins?

The sacrifice of the Mass is the means of application. In it the sacrifice of the cross is brought home and made present to far off climes and distant generations.

Thus is fulfilled the prophesy of Malachy, "In every place incense shall be offered unto My Name and a clean oblation."

It is wonderful that John Calvin could not see in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews a confirmation of the Catholic doctrine of sacrifice and priesthood, instead of trying to distort it into objections. In that sublime Epistle, the Apostle first establishes the divine and human nature in Christ; next he shows the excellence of His priestly character and sacrifice, by contrasting them with the priesthood and sacrifice of the old law.

His first point of contrast is this. The Levitical priesthood got all its dignity from the blood of Abraham; but Abraham acknowledged his inferiority to Melchisedec by paying him tithes, receiving his blessing, and partaking of his sacrifice in bread and wine, according to the account given. Gen. xiv.

But Christ is a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec. Therefore,

His priesthood is better than Aaron's.

Again: there were many priests of the old law, who followed the lot of mortals by death and succession.

Christ is the one only priest of His order without beginning of life or end of days, with none before Him and none after Him.

The priests of the old law were not only mortal but sinful--must first offer for themselves, and then for the people. But Christ is a high priest, holy, unpolluted, separated from sinners, made higher than the Hebrews.

Again, the sacrifices of the old law were many and had to be offered again and again.

But that of Christ once offered perfected forever those who are sanctified.

The sacrifices of the old law could only remove certain external legal defilements. That of Christ cleanses the soul from sin. Those could only signify grace; this was grace.

According to Catholic teaching, Christ is a high priest according to the order of Melchisedec, because His offering in the Mass is in bread and wine.

He is the only priest of His order. For those who consecrate the bread and wine into His body and blood, do so by assuming His personality, and saying over the elements, "this is MY Body," "this is MY Blood." They are not His successors or factors of ambassadors in that act--but they are HIMSELF. Whatever be the name, or disposition, or conduct of the clergyman, it is JESUS CHRIST who sacrifices--as it is He who baptizes, who absolves, who confirms, who gives every grace to man.

So also, as I have already explained, although the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered in many places, there is but one offering of Christ made present to us in the sacred mysteries every time they are celebrated, and imparting to us according to our disposition all the merits of the Redeemer.

Beloved Catholic friends, you know all this without any explanation. You know that the fountain of spiritual light, strength, joy, hope, is brought home to you on the altar every morning. You know that day by day, before the tide of busy thoughtless life has begun to ebb and flow through the streets of the city, the scene of Calvary is brought here entire--except the mangling of the Body, the weeping women, and the deicial mob--all--the priceless victim, the august sacrifice, the fountain of mercy, the ground of hope, the source of enlightenment, the medium of pardon, the well-spring of grace.

It is no stretch of fancy to suppose that the angels are here; for we know that the angels have command to adore Him even in His humanity; and the same who sang, "Glory to God in the Highest" in the starlight of Judea, over His Birth in the stable, yet attend Him in wonder and adoration. And as His sacred Blood streams mystically upon the altar, for the good of those who participate, they stand rank upon rank in mid-

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air about the tabernacle, veiling their faces in a mute wonder that never grows old.

You know this. Then why are the angels so often left to worship alone? Why is it that the church is almost solitary at all the masses except those of obligation? That all the pews do but gather dust during the week, except a few filled by those who learned to love their Redeemer in other lands, and with whom simple and loving faith seems to be passing away from earth? It is not too much to go without natural rest for special enjoyment, to encounter rough weather in the prosecution of business. Is it too much then to give three quarters of an hour of every day to welcome Jesus Christ when He descends from heaven to apply the merits of His passion to us? Have we not spiritual wants of our own to be supplied? Do we not desire benefits for those we love, every day? If we look forward to living forever with Jesus Christ and His angels, we had better improve our acquaintance with them as much as we can.

110.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, October 3, 1857

### **Protestant Dislike of Catholic Ceremonies.**

Dislike of sham in other people is, we believe, innate in human nature. There is in it an assumption of intellectual superiority, which irritates our natural pride, and we are moved with strong disgust when an idle form is attempted to be palmed upon us for a solemn reality. Hence not Americans only, but all people, dislike unmeaning ceremonies.

From the fact, however, that a spectator does not understand the meaning of a ceremony, it does not follow that the ceremony is unmeaning. A countryman may not understand the ceremony of presenting a scroll duly signed, practiced between creditors and debtors, but it does not thence follow that the ceremony is idle and the scroll unmeaning. Protestants who assist at Mass may not know why the priest goes first to this side, then to that side, of the altar, why he turns sometimes his face, sometimes his back, to the people, why he kisses the altar, makes the Sign of the Cross, now bows, now stands erect, now opens, now joins his hands together; but the natural inference from this is, not that these ceremonies are idle, but that Protestants are ignorant. The fact is, there are no unmeaning ceremonies in the Catholic Church. Though divine in her origin and in her authority, she has a human element, she must act upon *men*, and therefore must use the means that are capable of reaching men. These means are the Sacrifice and the Sacraments of the Church.

Christ has left us a Sacrifice. We must offer it by an external, sensible action. There must be *some* ceremonies. Are not those prescribed by the ritual as good as any that can be devised? He has left us the Sacraments. Are not the forms used in their administration as becoming as any that Protestants could suggest, and as simple as

Christ commanded? We are bound to some outward expression of our dependence on God. Can we use any better than words, bows, genuflexions, and prostrations?

There can be no public worship without ceremonies. Even those who reject them are constrained by the nature of things to use ceremony in their rejection. The ceremony of a church full of Quakers sitting with their hats on until the Spirit moves some one to speak or pray, is a palpable demonstration of the truth of this. Protestants therefore must seek some other ground for their dislike of Catholic ceremonies than the mere fact that they are ceremonies. They must show us a better way of celebrating Mass, of administering the Sacraments, of demonstrating our faith and adoration of Jesus on the altar, before they find fault with the way which generations of pious men have followed. Let them get their brokers, filibusters, fanatics, inventors, to draw up a new ritual directing the manner of sacrificing, conferring Sacraments, and worshipping, and propose it to us for adoption, and then they will have a right to oppose the forms, which two hundred millions of Catholics, at present, find full of meaning and reality.

111.

Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, February 11, 1863

Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral, No. 4.

**Reason and the Real Presence.**

The Doctrine of the Real Presence, or transubstantiation, is a great stumbling-block to those outside the Church. Luther, as you know, never denied it. But Zwinglius, Calvin, and the countless sects into which their followers were subdivided, denied it most vehemently on pretended scripture grounds. The English Church, in its Articles and Catechism, takes both sides, to the great comfort of the High Church party, which believes the Real Presence, and of the Low Church party, which denies it. In this country no sect but the German Lutheran holds to it in our day.

It is not the purpose of the present instruction to prove transubstantiation from scripture or the writings of the ancient fathers. There are many controversial works--as, for example, the lectures on the Real Presence by Cardinal Wiseman\*--in which the subject is thoroughly treated from that point of view. The object proposed now is to take up the question--is the doctrine of the Real Presence, or of transubstantiation, contrary to reason? The reasoning will be close and require attention. It always takes more thought to answer an objection than to make it.

The order to be followed is plain: we must first state what is the doctrine of transubstantiation; next, what is meant by contrary to reason; and then compare the two definitions together to see whether the one agrees with the other.

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\* *The Real Presence...in eight lectures* (New York: 1836)

Transubstantiation is a Latin word, meaning the change of one substance into another. It was adopted into theological language after the condemnation of Berengarius in the 11th century, to express the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

At His last supper, you remember, "Jesus took bread and blessed it and gave it to His disciples, saying, take and eat, this is my body; and, in like manner, the chalice, saying, this is my blood." Now, the Catholic Church believes that when he said "This is my body," "This is my blood," He was in earnest and spoke the truth. But of course what He held in His hand and gave to His disciples could not be His body and His blood, unless it had ceased to be bread and wine. Therefore, when He gave it, it had ceased to be bread and wine and had become His Body and Blood. So in the Mass, what is on the altar is bread and wine until after the priest pronounces over it--at the second ringing of the sanctuary bell--the words of Christ, "This is my body. This is my blood," when it becomes, by the power of God, the flesh and blood of the Redeemer.

Such is the doctrine of transubstantiation. The substance of bread disappears, leaving the outward appearances, and the substance of the body of Christ takes its place. Under either species, of course, Christ, whole and entire, is present--as His blood, body, soul and divinity are inseparable since His resurrection. But the separate consecration is made to effect the sacrifice of the Mass, of which we may speak on another occasion.

Before going any farther now, let us settle definitely what is meant by "contrary to reason." The phrase is very often abused, never oftener than by those whose share of reason is not large. One must not mistake his prejudices--his notions of what ought to be--for his reason, as is too often done. Bayle, who put his talents to rack in seeking ways to dishonor the God that gave them to him, tried to maintain by sophisms that all is contrary to reason, which reason cannot comprehend. In other words, that whenever you cannot comprehend *how* a thing is done, you may conclude it is not done at all. But common sense cries out against this theory, according to which nine-tenths of the events in nature would be contrary to reason. For how do the stars move so regularly, the seasons come and go so unalterably, the generations of men and beasts succeed each other so unfaillingly, the swarming vegetable kingdom go on in its alternations of life and death? If you say science explains, I answer science does not explain but only carries the mystery a little farther from vulgar comprehension, leaving it still a mystery. There are more facts in our own being, in what we see daily, never thinking, in each little blade of grass we tread on, or each snow-flake we shake from our garments, than we can comprehend; and, therefore, we must not dream of calling a thing contrary to reason because we cannot see *the how* of it. Reason sees that God is omnipotent and, therefore, that He can do all things, not in their own nature impossible, *i.e.*, all things

conceivable whose properties do not contradict and exclude each other. God cannot make a square triangle, or an angular circle, or two mountains without a valley between, because these are contradictions or nullities, and impossible. But whatever does not involve contradictions is possible. Now the question becomes, does the doctrine of transubstantiation, as already explained, involve contradiction. No one will pretend that transubstantiation in general is impossible. The varieties and phases of organic and vegetable life, birth, growth, death, the succession of generations are but so many changes of substance into other substance. The objector must, therefore, take the ground, that only the Eucharistic transubstantiation is impossible. This differs from others in two essential particulars.

1. The substance [is] changed, the appearances are not changed.

2. Many portions of the substance changed become one and the same human body, which cannot be unless that one body can be present in many different places at one and the same time.

We will consider first the question, is there any contradiction in supposing a substance to be gone when its appearances remain? The objection to Catholic doctrine has its full force in the following form.

After the consecration, the bread and wine have the color, taste, odor of bread and wine. But we can judge of most substances only by the senses. But the testimony of the senses is evidence. Therefore they are bread and wine.

I grant, of course, that the appearances of bread and wine remain after the consecration; also, I grant that the testimony of the senses is evidence. But we must see carefully what it is that the senses bear witness to.

The eye, you will concede, bears witness only to the shape, size, and color of an object; the sense of smell to its odor; of taste to its flavor. They convey to the brain and soul certain nerves produced by outward objects. In the case under discussion they convey to the brain the sensations ordinarily produced by bread and wine on the optic nerve, the nerves of the palate and nostril. If God, in His almighty power, had but one way of producing these sensations, then the conclusion--therefore they *are* bread and wine-- would be inescapable. But God, who made the way of producing them ordinarily by means of bread and wine, can also make a way of producing them without bread and wine. He teaches us by His own mouth that He has made another way of producing them--in the most Holy Eucharist; and we simply believe him.

Hence, there is no contradiction between faith and reason. Reason teaches that unless God has intervened by a miracle, these elements must be bread and wine. But faith teaches that God *has* intervened by a miracle in the words of consecration and that they are not bread and wine. Neither is there any contradiction between faith and the senses. The senses declare that in the Eucharist are the figure, color, odor, taste of bread and wine, and faith teaches the same. It is the province of the judgment, not of the

senses, to declare what is under those appearances--and the judgment, enlightened by the words of Christ, pronounces it the body and blood of the Redeemer.

Some one has objected that chemical analysis of the consecrated elements discloses only bread and wine. But when it is remembered that chemical analysis dissolves the appearances, and therefore ends the Real Presence before it reaches any result, the objection will appear manifestly futile and absurd.

Others have thought to infer from the fact that poison in the chalice will destroy life, that the blood of Christ could not be there. But if they remember that the priest has power to change only wine--not water or milk or beer or poison--into the blood of Christ, they will not urge the objection. There is no contradiction, therefore, to transubstantiation, so far as the substance changed is concerned.

Beyond a doubt, the doctrine of the Real Presence asserts the presence of the same undivided and unmultiplied living body of Christ in many places at one and the same time. He is in heaven throned above the armies of saints, and the shining choirs of angels, at the right hand of God the Father. He is in the tabernacle of St. Peter's, in the pyxes of the wandering missionary in China, on that altar, in every tabernacle in every parish church, convent and college-chapel of the Catholic world, in the same indivisible, impassible, glorious body.

But, says the objector, this is impossible. If the body is here, it cannot be there. If it is in west longitude, it cannot be in east longitude. If it is north, it cannot be south of the equator.

Luther thought this difficulty was so formidable that to escape it he must maintain the body of Christ to be like His divinity, omnipresent, a theory at once absurd and impious.

But reason need not be alarmed for faith until a contradiction appears in the assertion that the same body may be in two places at the same time. Take the determinate proposition, the body of Christ is in yonder tabernacle, and see whether it is contradicted by the proposition the body of Christ is in Rome. The two propositions are both affirmative and, therefore, cannot be contradictories. The contradictory of the first proposition is this: "the Body of Christ is *not* in yonder tabernacle." "Here" is contradicted by "not here." If you say that "there" is equivalent to "not here" you beg the question, taking for granted what you were to prove, that a body cannot, even by a miracle, be present to two places at the same time. Therefore, there is no contradiction in the doctrine that a body may be in many places at the same time. If no contradiction, then no impossibility. Reason must admit that it may be, and God says it is; and the believer in God is justified before the tribunal of reason.

But let us sift our own ideas a little farther and find the true meaning of being present in a place.

We commonly conceive space to be the limits within which the sun, moon,

planets and stars move, and place to be some portion of that space filled by a body. The place of a body is its relation to other bodies about. The bodies it touches it is said to be present to, and those it does not touch it is absent from. Now, to touch is to act upon, not through any intervening medium, but directly and immediately. The body of Christ, therefore, is present to as many places as He can make it act upon directly and immediately. But He, being omnipotent, can act directly and immediately wheresoever in the universe he pleases--and it thus appears from the analysis of our own ideas of presence that multilocation is possible.

Take, for illustration, the Holy Communion received at the same Mass by many persons.

A consecrated particle is laid upon the tongue of each, and the glorified, living body of Christ is in them all--one receives as much as a thousand, and a thousand no more than one.

The single, undivided, living body of the Redeemer acts not through an intervening medium or by indirect agencies, but directly and of itself upon them all. Is there any contradiction here?

I grant that this does not accord with our usual conception of bodies; but our usual conceptions are founded on what ordinarily happens with gross earthly bodies, whereas the Eucharist is a miracle done on the body of Christ. We usually conceive the human body as gross, lumpish, inert, bulky. But Christ's human body is without weight, spiritual, agile, shining, impassible, unobstructed by matter, for He entered the room while the doors were closed--not chained down by grossness, for in the sight of five hundred disciples He went aloft through the air lighter than gossamer from Mount Olivet, above the clouds into heaven. Our usual conceptions cannot be the measure of God's power; and therefore the doctrine of the Real Presence does not contradict reason.

St. Catherine of Sienna says, "I could never doubt the power of God to change bread and wine into His body and blood, but if the spirit of unbelief could move me at all, I should be tempted to doubt His love." There is something in this eagerness of Jesus Christ to seek us out and dwell with us that seems to border on delirium. When we consider Him in His godhead, dwelling in inaccessible light, above the limits of all that comes and goes and changes, to Whom there is no past or future but only an eternal present, under whose unchanging eye the ages come and go, the stars run their solemn rounds, the generations of living things chase each other across the stage of existence, we can but cast ourselves upon the ground and forget the littleness of our own existence in the greatness of His.

When we remember the countless throng that stand before His throne--the shining ranks of the nine orders of angels, and of glorified saints, that rest not day or night, saying, with a voice as of many waters, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts"--we say, What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou



should'st visit him?"

Yet from the height of His eternity, from the peace of his unalterable self-repose, from the midst of heaven's ineffable harmony He stoops to seek us, and to prove by hiding His majesty under appearances that will excite no terror, how love makes it His delight to be with the children of men. He follows them along pathways slimy with the pollution of sin, where He sees His own laws trampled upon, His name blasphemed, His word discredited, His kindness slighted; nay, His own body insulted in the mystery of His love--satisfied only when He has gained them and made them partakers of His own divine nature.

In the rites of paganism the sacrifices were feasts, wherein the gods and the sacrificers ate at the same table, fire being considered the mouth of the god that swallowed up his share of the feast, and the eating of theirs by the sacrificers, making them table companions of the deity.

But in the Christian sacrifice the companionship is closer, for it makes God and man of one nature. Just as the food we take becomes a part of our flesh and blood, so the divine Redeemer becomes one with us in the Eucharist and transforms our nature into His. This is, indeed, incomprehensible love. What are we with our brutal passions, our lumpish bodies, our stupid ignorance and insolent pride, that He should seek to make us one with Himself? Yet He does. A long time ago He gave Himself all for us on the cross--His name to be blackened, His dignity to be trampled on, His back to the scourging, His head to the thorns, His hands and feet to be torn with nails, His side to the lance, His blood to be shed, His soul to strong agony, His Body to death. After this can any excess of love be incredible? But if the love of Christ in the Eucharist cannot stagger our faith it ought to arouse our devotion. We ought not to be so near so great a fire without getting warmer. If He thinks so much of us we ought to think something of Him. O, it is a sad thing to see the souls that Jesus Christ is seeking by such thorny paths, entangled in a web they have woven themselves of plans, schemes, thoughts, affections, in which He has no share or part; to see them chasing their own caprices, or tossed by their wild fancies, while He is waiting patiently for them in the tabernacle, or offering Himself in sacrifice, in the almost deserted Church, for them; to see a soul that might banquet with God trying to gorge itself in the shambles of corruption.

Children of men, why do you love vanity and seek a lie? You want peace, security, riches, honor, dignity. You will never find them to satisfy you in the things that men pursue. Earthy goods are lying because not enduring--You can find them at the altar. There gush up the living waters, there is opened the vision of beauty, there is the fount of truth, there the riches of which death cannot rob us, there the honor that slander cannot blacken, there the peace the world cannot give. Let us say then with holy David, "This is my rest for ever and ever. Here will I dwell for I have chosen it."

112.

Sermon, Book 1, No. 16

### **A Worthy Communion Our Greatest Happiness**

Our Redeemer had compassion on the multitude and fed them with miraculous food. So has He still compassion on the multitude of His faithful, in the desert of this life, and feeds them with Bread more wonderfully miraculous. It is His delight to be with the children of men; and so He remains in the tabernacle of every church throughout the world, waiting to [be] visited and received.

He hath loved His own unto the end, to the last limit not only of time but of His omnipotent power of loving, exhausting the treasures of His bounty by giving us Himself.

All that He has done for us He has done through Love--in order to secure our happiness. And hence, in this highest effort of His love, He has secured, as the little catechism express it, the greatest happiness in this world. We cannot be supremely happy in this changeful world; but the happiness of which our nature and state are capable here on earth is to be found in a worthy Communion. This assertion is of the highest importance. For if it be true, those who are yet without the Church but waste their energies in vain in search of true felicity; and those who are children of the faith may cease running to and fro, with anxious bustle, after what they can get each day without effort. If rich they need not glory in their riches, for happiness is not in them. If poor, they need not repine, since the Church is open to all.

But the assertion is true. A worthy Communion is the greatest happiness in this world. Proceeding [overwritten--maybe Descending?] from the eternal life, of which it is a pledge, and from the glorious resurrection, of which it is the seed, and viewed only as a happiness of the moment during which Jesus Christ rests in the bosom of the communicant, the Holy Communion transcends all the pleasures that this life affords.

Happiness is the state of mind in which all the powers of the soul repose in the possession of what they crave, in which there is neither craving for what it has not, nor fear of losing what it has in the soul. This happiness the soul can not find in itself. Whatever the ancient heathen philosophers or the modern heathen sentimentalists may say about man's being sufficient for himself, the common opinion of mankind and the testimony of every experience is that the well spring of joy is not in the soul, but only the thirst, that as we depend on one without us for our being so we depend on one without us for our happiness. The multitude show this opinion in the activity and bustle, the anxiety, hope, fear, anger, disappointment of their lives. It is because they are seeking something to make them happy that they struggle, toil, hope, fear, scheme, and plot.

The soul has wants, deep, unutterable, intense, sleepless, but not wherever

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withal to satisfy those wants. Now it is not to be denied that there are certain objects in this world whose possession gives a kind of happiness to the soul, that, in this vale of tears, sunshine peeps here and there through the blank clouds that overhang every one's path. Sunshine lights the misty dreams of childhood and sometimes gives momentary brightness to the dissolute track of ambition, avarice and voluptuous life.

The untried have a kind of happiness in the loves and hopes which the young heart cherishes. The ambitions have a kind of happiness when they triumph over adversaries, avenge insults, and wield power. The avaricious have a kind of pleasure when they number their possessions, and swell with complacency at the contemplation of success that seems to defy fortune. The voluptuous have a kind of happiness when they are filled with feasting, merry with wine, and rioting in wantonness; but none have a happiness which can at all compare in value or intensity with that of the humblest who receives devoutly the Holy Communion.

No joy of earth reaches the heart's craving. The best and purest, those to which the unsullied heart clings in childhood, the affections of home, the dreams of the future, the first converse of the soul with material nature, with sound of harmony and forms of beauty, have no penetrating power to reach the inner man, and no substance to satisfy its yearnings. Even in the gust of confidence to those it loves, the child has thoughts unspoken and wishes unwhispered because its hopes and loves are deeper than its power of utterance. With all its flow of bounding spirits it is not happy, but only hopeful; and with the young hope is confidence, and confidence content to wait.

Of the delights the world affords, gratified ambition, which is but power over the bodies of men and exacts the outward forms of respect from those who do homage lest they receive injury, is a pleasure that never reaches the soul. It is related of the elder Napoleon that once when present, in state, as Emperor of France, at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, he saw at the solemn moment when amid the blaze of torches the peal of bells and clouds of incense the adorable Host was raised over the heads of a mighty multitude low bent in reverence, and hushed in adoration, and exclaimed, "This is the homage I desire and to enjoy this for one moment I would give my empire." No man can dwell in the midst of pomp and ceremony of power without being reminded a thousand times a day, that none about him respect him for himself but only for his power. All the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them which Satan promised to our Savior, on the high mountain, can but adorn the body with pomp and splendor; they cannot mingle with the inner life and slake the unquenchable thirst of the soul. There needs no handwriting on the wall to make the heart heavy within the bosom of the mightiest Balthasar. Amid all the flutter of gorgeous ceremonies, his heart is desolate, untouched by joyous emotion, because not reached by goods so coveted when not possessed, so despised when once grasped.

The next and grosser earthly good which men covet, namely riches, is yet more

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unsatisfying than rank and power. Let all one's plans for accumulating succeed, let wealth multiply around him, let field be added to field, house to house, gold to gold, what is there in all these to satisfy the heart? They are but acres of clay and gravel, piles of brick and mortar, sacks of lumpish ore, and the soul is not athirst for these. It is true, indeed, that these sacks of lumpish ore, these houses and fields, are very serviceable in procuring friends, in commanding respect and comfort in life. But of what use is life itself to him who has no aim beyond its narrow confines? The riches the soul pants after must have intrinsic, enduring worth. Gold, houses, lands take their value from the estimate of men, infatuated with an unnatural state of the markets, and after the fast-coming day of judgment, when things will resume their right condition, like notes of a broken bank, will entirely disappear from circulation. Conscious of this, no soul submits to the drudgery of money getting without resistance and remorse; and surrounded by his unlimited wealth, the man who has given his heart to it, finds no enjoyment save in the excitement of getting more.

The third and still more animal enjoyment of worldly men is found in the gratifications of sense and these not only do not satisfy but disquiet and disgust the heart. Take the poets from Anacreon to Moore who have labored to disguise, under the veil of sentiment and poesy, the passions of lust and gluttony; and in the lightest of their lays you will discover an undercurrent of stern contempt for themselves and life a gloomy grasping after the wine cup and the leman as the least of the evils of an unprofitable existence, and impatient desire to bury in oblivion the yearnings of nature and to forget the pangs of unavoidable sorrow in madness. The soul is infinitely nobler than the body and can never find its end in ministering to the body's passions. Even in the frenzy of its keenest sensual enjoyments, the thrill of pleasure but glances along the surface of its being, never reaches its core, and, condemned to a life of sensuality, it pines and withers away under a consciousness of degradation and of coming ruin.

Both reason and experience demonstrate beyond question that earthly happiness can[not] reach and satisfy the soul.

Now, that there is a happiness in the worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist no one will deny. Those who have been to Communion can prove it to themselves from their own experience. Those who have not, can be convinced of it by reflecting on the trouble that two hundred millions of Catholics who with instinct of nature seek happiness, take at least one a year to prepare for it. And this happiness is not that unsatisfying nature, which I have shown to belong to that which springs from other sources. For in it this good attained is directly applied to the wants of the heart, and satisfies them all.

Of course I take for granted in this discussion the Real Presence of our Lord's body and blood in the Holy Eucharist. There is no reason why we should always be compelled to recite you over and over again the proofs that our Lord meant what he

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said, what the Apostles understood him to say, what the Church, the living witness of His doctrines, the pillar and ground of the truth, has always understood Him to have said, when at the last supper He said, "This is my Body," "This is my Blood," and "Do this in commemoration of me." Whoever received the Holy Communion is in possession of the living flesh, and therefore the blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God and redeemer of the world.

The delight of Communion is therefore no dreamy joy such as holds childhood in suspense by uncertain hopes. There is nothing vague, uncertain, [or] undefined in it. We know whom we trust, and we know that we possess Him with all His treasures of graces and power during the moments of Communion.

Nor is He a good afar off from the thirst of the soul, like power and riches. He who made the heart can reach its inmost core and satisfy all its cravings. The intellect craves truth. He as the author of being is the fount of truth, the true light that enlightens every man coming into this world.

The will desires good. He is goodness without limit or imperfection.

The natural heart desires one to love, who has no faults, one to trust who will not betray, one who is strong and wise to lean upon, one who is mild and loving to confide in. Jesus Christ is all these. We can love Him for the infinite loveliness of His divinity, for the untold gifts of His mercy, for the cross and passion He endured for our sakes.

We can trust because He is incapable of deserting us, because He has shown a love stronger than death towards us.

We can lean upon Him because he has conquered death and Hell, has led captivity captive, has a name above all names and a power which none can resist.

We can confide in His gentleness so often proven in our regard in times past. How lovingly He has sought us through weary ways, how unrepvingly He has received us into favor when we have wantonly outraged him?

When we have Him we want nothing.

The happiness of heaven consists in the soul's seeing God, in being united to Him in some way that transcends human conception, but the happiness [is] in the union. In the closeness [and] the certainly of this union lies the unspeakable joy that enraptures the elect for all eternity. The Holy Communion is therefore a foretaste as well as a pledge of the joys of heaven.

For the time that the sacramental species endure it is in substance heaven for it is union with God, not seen indeed face to face, but still a real substantial union. The understanding is united to Him by faith, the will is united to Him by adoration and love, and even this gross body is permitted to come in contact with His life-giving flesh. When we have Him what more can the heart yearn, what has it to seek, or hope or fear? The man must be greedy indeed when the possession of God does not satisfy. He owns all things, disposes all wants, and at the moment of Communion He is ours. Hence at

that moment the universe is ours. The stars move solemnly along their appointed tracks, the seasons keep their course, the elemental powers of nature exert their energies, the innumerable hosts of angelic creatures exercise their powers for the time being, all for our interest and all according to His will. No wonder that St. John Chrysostom had a vision of hosts of angels adoring around one communicant. No wonder that the saints of God have been ravished into ecstasies by Communion and after being lost to their senses for hours, and recovering their senses, have looked fondly on the tabernacle to say with St. Peter, "Lord it is good to be here;" or with the Psalmist, "How lovely are Thy dwellings O Lord of Hosts!"

Beloved friends, I fear we do not treat the Holy Communion as the happiest moment of life. It is such only when it is worthy. It is not such, when it is made with hasty preparation, with thoughts wandering upon earthly things, with affections clinging to unworthy objects, with cares and solitudes about unnecessary things, with a will unresigned to the loving providence of God. It is not such, when it is approached for form's sake, at stated periods, without serious self-examination and true penance and earnest desire to live for God alone. But when it is worthy, made in faith, love, sincere humility, then it is the greatest happiness of life.

As such esteem, as such look back fondly on your past Communion and forward eagerly to your future. If there is any affection in your soul that keeps you from so esteeming it, tear that affection from your heart and trample it under your feet. It is a crooked, wrong affection and if you cherish it, it will sting you one day with remorse and sorrow. If, according to the ideas you have at present, it seems exaggerated to say that the poor and the little children who kneel devoutly before yonder altar this morning, were happier in that moment than the richest, the wisest, the mightiest of earth, correct those ideas by learning of Him who is meek and humble of heart, lest we be obliged to correct when it will be too late to profit by His instruction.

He who made the heart knows best how to satisfy its wants. Build a home for your heart by the altar.

**113.**

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, February 27, 1875 (2)

### **Visits to the Blessed Sacrament.**

"Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." Divine wisdom confirms human experience in this saying. Not time, nor distance, nor occupation, can keep our thoughts from dwelling on what we love for any length of time. To the exile from home there are rising up all the time images of the scenes where his childhood passed away, because he loved them.

The man who is treading the path of ambition cannot drive his plan from his

thoughts even when he tries to pray. The business man is counting costs even in his recreations, gaining and losing in his very dreams.

Love rules all the passions of the heart, so much so, that the philosophers reduce all emotions that swell or straiten it, to gratified or thwarted love.

Now God is the unmixed good--the spotless beauty for which the heart was created. And in repairing the ruin of Adam in making the cross our means of winning back the crown, he adapted Himself to our condition with wonderful sweetness and condescension. The subjection of sense to reason, and of reason to the uncorrupted will, being lost, our life is a warfare. A "fire burns in our meditation," whose light discloses the grandeur of eternal things and the paltriness of all that perishes; but when the meditating is over, the fire goes out, and we are buffeted and perplexed--often deceived and led astray--by the shifting emotions awakened by what we see and hear from hour to hour. We know that Almighty God is infinitely adorable and amiable; but love cannot linger without fancy, or take delight in dwelling on the perfect even, without giving it a form and expression, and traits of character, and proofs of affection given and taken.

So the Second Person of the Divine Trinity appeared in the flesh, that by His visible presence He might lay over our hearts the spell of love for things invisible. And in furtherance of this design He poured out all the treasures of His love upon us at the Last Supper by giving us Himself. He gave Himself to us in many ways as the Sacred Canticle expresses it--

"In the Manger for companion,  
In the Supper for food,  
On the Cross for Redemption,  
In Heaven for reward"--

but in the Eucharist He gives Himself for the object of our entire undivided love. Many are running to and fro through the world and saying, "Who will show us good?" and He answers from the tabernacle, "Come to Me."

Yet, how often He remains in His Tabernacle alone all day long! How few, even in crowded congregations, find delight in visiting the Prisoner of Love, and pouring out their heart's desires before Him! Leaving out those who stand irreverently in His presence, who gaze, and smile, and exchange greetings, and often gossip in His house; how many, even conscientious Christians, merely go into the Church when there is Mass or Vespers, or some special devotion--but never alone--and never solely to entertain themselves with Him Who alone should be their delight!

Christians should not wait for some feeling to seize upon them and carry them irresistibly to the Church, any more than they wait for any sentimental inclination to keep them from stealing. Sentimental love for God is like everything else sentimental, a self-delusion and a sham. Divine charity is intelligent and free. "If you love me, keep

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my commandments," said our Lord. Love is in action, not in dreaming. Do you want to love the Most Adorable Sacrament? Act as you would act if you felt the sentiment of attraction. Go to the foot of the altar with your joys and sorrows, your hopes and fears, your convictions and perplexities, your regrets and congratulations. Tell your secrets there. Go there not for show or company, but quietly and alone to seek a solitude from worldly thoughts in the sacred heart of Jesus.

Every Christian should love to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and to honor our Lord hidden there in every way.