

The Holy Sacrifice Of The Mass Part XVII

Quotations From Pope Benedict XVI

On endless innovations in the Mass: "By incessantly inventing new Eucharistic Prayers... we have sunk farther and farther into banality."

On the pope's power to change the Mass: "After the Second Vatican Council, the impression arose that the pope really could do anything in liturgical matters.... [But] the pope's authority is bound to the Tradition of faith, and that also applies to the liturgy. It is not 'manufactured' by the authorities. Even the pope can only be a humble servant of its lawful development and abiding integrity and identity."

On parish liturgy committees: "People try to reduce [the priest's] role by assigning all kinds of liturgical functions to different individuals and entrusting 'creative' planning of the liturgy to groups of people who like to, and are supposed to, 'make their own contribution.' Less and less God is in the picture. More and more important is what is done by human beings." On ripping out statues, paintings, and shrines from churches: "The destruction of images... left behind a void, the wretchedness of which we are now experiencing in a truly acute way."

On "active participation" at Mass: "Unfortunately, the [phrase] was very quickly misunderstood to mean something external, entailing a need for general activity, as if as many people as possible, as often as possible, should be visibly engaged in action."

On the idea of the Mass as a convivial "meal": "In no meal of the early Christian era, did the president of the banqueting assembly ever face the other participants. They were all sitting, or reclining, on the convex side of a C-shaped table, or of a table having approximately the shape of a horseshoe. The other side was always left empty for the service. Nowhere in Christian antiquity, could have arisen the idea of having to 'face the people' to preside at a meal. The communal character of a meal was emphasized just by the opposite disposition: the fact that all the participants were on the same side of the table."

On not kneeling at Mass: "A faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling would be sick at the core."

On liturgical dance: "Dancing is not a form of expression for the Christian liturgy."

On applause at Mass: "Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment."

On moving the tabernacle out: "A church without the Eucharistic Presence is somehow dead."

THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH THE MASS, CENTER OF CATHOLIC WORSHIP

From 'The Holy Sacrifice Of The Mass' by Gihr

IT yet remains for us to explain at least briefly the central position and fundamental signification pertaining to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Catholic Church, which was instituted for the salvation of souls. Then it will be seen that it is of vital importance for the very life and operation of the Church.

1. The Catholic Church is the divinely instituted means of salvation established by Christ for the entire world and for all times; as such she has the sublime mission to continue and accomplish throughout all ages the work of Christ's redemption by the conversion and salvation of all nations. God wills that all men by means of the Church and in the Church should receive heavenly light and life, and come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (I Tim. 2:4.). For this purpose the Lord remains with His Church; in her He lives and acts all days until the end of the world. In sacramental truth and reality the God-man continues always His mediatorship on earth by the ministry of His Church. As He redeemed mankind especially by the bloody sacrifice of the cross, so He carries out the work of redemption in His Church chiefly by the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, since it is the essential representation and mystical renewal of the world's redeeming sacrifice of the cross. This the

Church concisely and appropriately expresses when it says of the Mass: Quoties hujus hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redempionis exercetur. "As often as this memorial sacrifice is celebrated, the work of the redemption is performed." These simple words not merely express that by the Eucharistic sacrifice the fruits of the sacrifice of the cross are bestowed on men in regard to the redemption taken subjectively, but they also declare that all the features of the work of the redemption, taken in its objective sense, are mystically renewed and represented on the altar. All this is done already by the mere accomplishment of the sacrifice at the Consecration, but still more strikingly in the ecclesiastical rite which accompanies the sacrificial action, that is, in the liturgical celebration of Mass. From a twofold aspect the Mass represents the entire work of redemption, for in the Eucharistic service the three offices of Christ, as well as the different mysteries, are represented.

a) Christ redeemed the world: as supreme teacher, inasmuch He announced the truths of faith; as high priest, inasmuch as He established peace between heaven and earth and regained for us the gifts of grace; as divine King, inasmuch as He founded a kingdom which, although in this world, is not of this world, a supernatural kingdom of truth, of grace, and of love, wherein He reigns over hearts. Christ continues to exercise His office of teacher, of priest, and of shepherd over the whole world in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. As in the earthly life of Christ, so likewise in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the sacerdotal operation of the Lord holds the prominent place; for the radiant central and culminating portion of the Mass lies in the Canon, in the course of which the real sacrificial act is accomplished, which secures for us reconciliation and mercy. Before our Saviour died in sacrifice on the cross, He taught the divine truth by word and deed; corresponding to this, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the oblation (His mystical death) is preceded by a preparation or an interior service, in which the prophetic teaching of Christ is represented and repeated, that we may be filled with the light and wisdom of faith. "For the ministry of Jesus Christ continues to live throughout all time and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass moves around the earth to serve ignorant and erring humanity. In the Holy Sacrifice, wherein Christ appears as the victim which upon the altar of the cross allowed itself to be consumed by the torments of death,

He is seen also as the heavenly teacher of men. As victim He is veiled under the material appearances of bread and wine. His voice is concealed and yet ever present by the voice of His messengers in Holy Scripture: in the Epistles and the Gospels" (Eberhard). Finally, as the Saviour by His sacrificial death entered into glory, as He established by means of the cross His supernatural kingdom and eternal dominion, thus the act of consecration or sacrifice in the Mass is followed by Holy Communion as the completion and conclusion of the sacrifice, and, by means of Holy Communion, Christ as a meek king takes possession of our hearts, and as Prince of Peace extends and consolidates the kingdom of God, the dominion of grace and love in our souls.

b) The work of redemption considered historically, namely, in its gracious beginning, in its blessed progress, and in its glorious completion, is also in this aspect represented in the Eucharistic sacrifice, for it is a living memorial of all the wonders and mysteries which the redeeming love of the triune God wrought for the salvation of man. The joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of the Incarnation, the life, death, and glory of the Saviour of the world are placed before the eyes of faith in the celebration of Mass. To the presence of the Lord on the altar in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, the words of the prophet may be applied: Ecce Salvator tuus venit: ecce coerces ejus cum eo, et opus ejus coram illo. "Behold thy Saviour cometh: behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him" (Isa. 62: I I). Yes, the God-man comes on the altar to sacrifice Himself for us; but where His presence is, there also appears the work and the price of the redemption accomplished by Him; with Him both are inseparably united.

In the Mass, first of all, Christ's painful and bloody death on the Cross is celebrated and represented. Now, as in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross all the other mysteries of redemption partly culminate and partly have their root, so also they must come together in the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, since it is the living and real representation of the bloody sacrifice of the cross. By the separate consecration of bread and wine, Christ's body and blood are offered under the symbol of death; therefore, the altar becomes Mount Calvary, the cross saturated with His blood. The wonders of the Incarnation, of

Bethlehem, are likewise repeated: the altar becomes the crib, the infant Jesus lies concealed therein in the humble little host.

Likewise renewed in mysterious reality upon the altar is all that transpired during the life of Christ, from Bethlehem to Golgatha. In the intervening period "three and thirty years of the Lord's earthly pilgrimage elapsed, such years as had never before been seen on earth, years that shone out in brighter light, resplendent with grace and benediction, truth and mercy, crowned by the presence, the dwelling and journeyings of the Son of God here below" (Eberhard). This silent, humble, hidden, obedient, adorable life of prayer and sacrifice is continued by the Saviour until the end of time under the veil of the Eucharistic species for the honour of God and the welfare of man. Finally, the Eucharistic sacrifice is also a memorial of the glory of the Lord, of His resurrection and ascension. As the risen, transfigured Saviour appeared unto His own, saying confidently to them: "Peace be to you; it is I, fear not," so He now is with us, remaining in our midst in His concealed glory and with His painless wounds, to console, to rejoice, to bless, and to protect us.

We thus not only behold in the Eucharistic sacrifice the glorious crown of the great work of redemption, but we also have there the summary and renewal of those adorable mysteries of profound annihilation and supreme glory which Christ once accomplished upon earth for the love of us and for our redemption. In a manner as simple as it is grand, the celebration of Mass places before the eyes of the faithful the way in which our Lord descended from the heights of heaven to live amongst us (Luke 1:78); how He "did not abhor the Virgin's womb" (Te Deum) and the hard manger (Hymn. Eccl.); how as a giant He entered with joy and hastened with exultation through the thorny career of our redemption (Ps. 18:6); how He dwelt and walked among men under the humble appearance of a servant, teaching, healing, doing good, bestowing blessings; how He finally descended to the lowest depths of sorrow and disgrace, and from the shadows of the tomb raised Himself to the brightest glory of heaven.

These holy mysteries, contained as in their germ in the Eucharistic sacrifice, are fully developed and beautifully shown forth in the sacrificial rite of the

Church; for in the course of the year the formulas of the Mass, alternating in due order, place before us and prominently represent in turn the great mysteries of our redemption. The Eucharistic sacrifice is most intimately connected with the celebration of the ecclesiastical year; for the Holy Sacrifice finds therein its full illustration. The cycle of feast days and holy seasons casts its refulgence and its shadows upon the altar: the silent longing and joyful anticipation of Advent, the heartfelt blessedness and the delicious peace of soul of Christmas night, the serious penitential spirit of Lent and its sentiments of bitter regret, the unspeakable sorrows and the gloom and mourning of Holy Week, the joyous glory and the alleluias of Eastertide, the joy and supernal happiness of the grace of the octave of Pentecost, all find in the liturgical celebration of Mass appropriate and touching expression. At the altar our ears are greeted at one time with the sound of doleful lamentation, at another with the tones of joy and praise; we there behold the priest, now in the colour of love or of hope, and again in that of joy or of sorrow.

2. The work of redemption accomplished by Christ on the cross is always included and mystically represented in the Eucharistic sacrifice, to render due honour and worship to God as well as to apply to man all the benefits and blessings of redemption. It follows, then, that the Eucharistic sacrifice must be the center, the heart and soul of the entire liturgy: of divine worship and the dispensing of grace. The principal object of the liturgical activity and efficiency of the Church consists in rendering to God in the highest all honour, adoration, and glory, and to obtain for man on earth reconciliation, remission of sin, and sanctification. In the liturgy praise and thanksgiving ascend to heaven, blessing and grace descend upon earth; in the liturgy man elevates himself to God, and God descends to men. The liturgy daily procures and maintains the supernatural relation, the reciprocal intercourse, the mystical communion of life and love between heaven and earth, between God and men. This object is most perfectly attained by the celebration of Mass, which excels all other acts of worship." These acts are numerous and manifold; for in her liturgical worship the Church has always bestowed her heavenly treasures of grace with more lavish a hand and has exteriorly revealed more fully and universally her interior plenitude of life.

In the beauty and splendour of her liturgy she appears as that new and heavenly Jerusalem which the evangelist St. John saw descending from heaven as a bride richly adorned (Apoc. 21:2); therein she appears as the spouse of the King, betrothed to the Lord (II Cor. II : 2), standing at the right hand of the King in garments of gold, clothed round about with variety of splendour (Ps. 44:10-14): yet the most brilliant diadem and the most precious jewel of her rich, her divine bridal attire is the exalted and elevating sacrifice of the altar. It forms not merely the crown of her liturgy, but is also, in a certain sense, its vivifying root and noble stock. Catholic worship possesses, so to speak, the Eucharistic stamp, the Eucharistic colour, and the Eucharistic perfume, since all acts of worship are referred proximately or remotely to the Eucharistic sacrifice, or are joined to it, drawing thence fresh life, power of attraction, and consecration. Without the sacrifice this noble worship would be impoverished and stunted, would fade and die away, as is evident from nonCatholic denominations. This unrivaled supremacy the Eucharistic sacrifice obtains throughout the entire sphere of religious worship. To show this more in detail, let us first consider the divine service, that is, those acts of divine worship which relate principally to the honour of God; and secondly, the dispensation of grace, that is, those acts of worship which directly and chiefly relate to the sanctification of man.

a) The celebration of Mass is the most worthy and the most perfect divine service, for it procures to the Most High a worship and a veneration which millions of worlds would be incapable of rendering Him. The Eucharistic sacrifice is of itself the most glorious chant to the praise and glory of the triune God. It is the summary of divine worship, for it is our highest adoration and best thanksgiving, our most efficacious propitiation and most powerful petition. The duty of praising God, of thanking Him, of rendering Him due honour and satisfaction, and of petitioning Him, can and must be complied with also by prayer; but how naked, poor, and deficient would this divine service be if we had not the sacrifice of the altar, whereby the name of the Lord is magnified and glorified among all nations! (Mal. i s i i.) This unique sacrifice infinitely excels in value and dignity, in power and efficacy, all the many prayers of the Church and of the faithful. Christ offers Himself on the

altar by our hands, and we, as intimately united with Him as the branches are with the vine, should enter wholly into His sentiments and unite ourselves to His sacrifice. It is only by such a union that our praise, thanksgiving, petition, and atonement become meritorious and pleasing in the sight of God. The ivy vine left to itself can but creep on the ground and must miserably decay; but if planted near a tree, it finds a support, it clings to it and climbs upwards. In like manner our divine worship would be of itself very weak and imperfect, and would hardly rise above the dust of the earth; but when in union with the worship of the sacrifice of Christ it ascends even to heaven. At the celebration of Mass we say:

Behold, O heavenly Father, to Thee we owe infinite praise on account of Thy infinite majesty; because of Thy numberless graces and benefits, we owe infinite thanks; for the innumerable offences we have committed against Thee, we owe infinite atonement; and because of our manifold needs and dangers, we owe the tribute of our humble supplication; but all our acts of praise, of thanksgiving, of atonement, and of supplication, how miserable they are, and how unworthy to be offered to Thee! Still we unite them to the sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, propitiation, and petition of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, infinitely pleasing to Thee, with which we offer them to Thee, imploring Thee that for His sake Thou wilt graciously accept this our unworthy homage, with all that we are and have, and be merciful and favourable to us.

Since in the Eucharistic sacrifice the divine history of the Redeemer and of His redemption are mystically represented, the Holy Mass, too, takes precedence in the ecclesiastical festivals. What the sun in the heavens is to all nature, shedding light and imparting warmth, the Eucharistic sacrifice is in the house of God, beautifying and adorning its every feast with celestial splendour. Wherefore the Church of Christ celebrates the mysteries of grace by the Eucharistic sacrifice, with which the faithful unite acts of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition, propitiation, and love. We likewise celebrate the mysteries, the privileges, the graces, the virtues, the glories, the power, and the goodness of the Virgin Mother of God by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In what way do we most worthily celebrate the annual commemoration of the

saints? By offering the Eucharistic sacrifice in order to praise and thank God, because He is wonderful in His saints, because He has adorned them with the greatest diversity of graces, virtues, and miracles, crowned them with honour and glory, and given them to us as bright models and powerful patrons. Thus the Eucharistic sacrifice, like a gold ring, moves around the liturgical cycle of the holy feasts and seasons. On the most pleasant of all feasts, Christmas, "when the heavens are overflowing with honey, and true joy hath come to us from on high," the Church permits her priests to celebrate three Masses, in order to express more perfectly her exceeding exultation over "this day of the new redemption of the ancient reconciliation and eternal bliss." On sorrowful Good Friday, on the contrary, when the Church with deepest compassion is entirely absorbed in her meditation and contemplation of the cross and of her divine spouse dying in torments for the sins of the world, on this great day of mourning the Church, so to speak, forgets what is dearest and most precious to her, the joy and consolation of the Holy Sacrifice, denying herself the chalice of refreshment and salvation in view of the bitter cup of sorrow which her divine spouse drank upon Golgotha.

Finally, all that the faithful do for and give to His service, is referred principally to the worthy celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For what purpose are all those magnificent churches and altars built, dedicated, and furnished with every adornment that art and nature can produce? Principally for the celebration of Holy Mass. For what purpose are the gold and silver sacred vessels and the magnificent vestments? Chiefly for the celebration of the Mass. For what purpose the lights that burn on the altar, the flowers that exhale their perfume, the clouds of incense that fill the sanctuary, for what else than to honour and to place before our eyes the majesty of the Eucharistic sacrifice?

It must not be forgotten, in fine, that the Eucharistic sacrifice is an inexhaustible source of holy thoughts and pious emotions, always refreshing, comforting, and quickening both mind and heart." At the altar all the rays of heavenly truth and grace meet as in a focus. Who can approach this glowing hearth without being inflamed with ardent devotion and a fervent love of God?

The altar on which the God-man day after day offers Himself before our eyes and by our hands, is the holy hearth where faith, hope, and love are enkindled and inflamed, where the spirit of prayer is enlivened and devotion is aroused and ascends to heaven itself. "The fire on the altar shall always burn," God said in the Old Law (Lev. 6:12). But in reality it is upon our altars that God has enkindled a fire that shall never be extinguished. All the mysteries and truths which are hidden in the Sacrifice of the Mass and which appeal to the heart with a wonderful force from the altar, call forth the spirit and words of prayer. Is it difficult to raise ourselves in thought to heaven, to lift our mind to God, although the earth as a leaden weight ever drags us downward, when in the Mass heaven descends to us, when our God and Redeemer stands before us, humbly veiled under the appearances of bread and wine? Christ descends under the mean appearances of material food, with which our thoughts and cares are concerned that silently and gently He may wean us from those thoughts and cares and raise our hearts heavenward.

We are in a wonderland of mysteries, where under the shadow of foreign appearances the manna of life eternal grows and the waters of salvation rush along. Our Lord and Saviour is there awaiting the tribute of our adoration. Behold! the Church raises aloft the cross of the Redeemer, crying unto us: "You are poor sinners, altogether destitute of honour before God," and she points out to us the avenging hand of justice raised above our life and our sins. Then we strike our breast; our conscience awakes, accuses and convicts, so that we exclaim: Through my fault! And we bow our head under the weight of the reproaches and accusations of our thoughts. But we do not sink into the abyss of despair. The night, through the mercy of God, has become light. For "Peace to men of good will" the angels sang; and over the cross this peace embraced impending justice and disarmed it. We have before us Christ's body and blood, which prove to us the great love of God and wrest from our hearts a thanksgiving full of joy. As our Saviour has given us the most encouraging assurance in the words: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you" (John 16: 23), our courage must then be boundless when we hold in our hands Christ, the well-beloved Son Himself, when we pray to Him and He Himself prays for us. Then our gaze falls upon the great community of

those who are united with us at the sacred family table of Jesus Christ, upon His holy Church, upon our brothers and sisters gone before us and detained in the purification and expiation of purgatory, upon all for whom Christ died. Our heart, enlarged to embrace them all in view of the love of Christ, includes them in our prayers. Thus naturally prayers crowd each other within us and on our lips.

Prayer finds forcible expression in the numerous ceremonies performed by the priest: in bowing, kissing the altar, in the sign of the cross, in genuflecting, and in many other symbolic actions. The Church would do violence to herself and act contrary to the current of her feelings if she did not thus in a variety of ways reveal the spirit of prayer. Who would not be moved on beholding in the spirit of faith our wounded Saviour stretched on the hard wood of the cross, His body bruised and torn, His blood poured out, and all the love blazing out from His wounds? Hence it is not surprising if these lively sentiments burst forth into unceasing prayers and into a multitude of ceremonies surrounding the Holy Sacrifice, down even to the colour of the sacerdotal vestments. These are not mere empty forms, they are customs disposed to move the very soul of man, in which the ever youthful and fresh emotions of our Church find expression. These noble and holy sentiments manifest themselves in the ancient prayers and chants woven into the rite of the Mass: in prayers which for their sublime simplicity cannot be surpassed, in choral chants which resound through the halls of the Church as melodies from a better world. They are prayers and chants that bloom in an eternal youth, ever full of the vigour of life, ever attractive, as is all that emanates from the mind of the highly gifted human soul when filled with God.

b) Among the ordinances for the dispensation of grace which principally and immediately relate to the sanctification of man, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass holds, in many respects, the most prominent place. This is based on the relation which the Sacrifice of the Mass bears to the sacrifice of the cross. The sacrifice of the cross is the original source of all grace; for from the sacrifice of the cross all the blessings of redemption proceed and all the means of grace draw their virtue and efficacy. Now, in the Sacrifice of the Mass the inexhaustible source

of grace and salvation of the sacrifice of the cross is transferred from the past to the present; from a distance it is brought near to us. For this reason and under this aspect, the Eucharistic sacrifice can, in a certain sense, be designated as the source of the grace-giving sacraments and sacramentals.

If we consider the Sacrifice of the Mass chiefly as a means of grace, it is inferior, indeed, to the sacraments, inasmuch as it cannot, as they do, directly efface sin and impart sanctifying grace; but in other respects the sacrifice excels them, since by the sacraments only certain graces are obtained and those merely for the recipient, while the Mass can obtain directly or at least indirectly all divine graces and blessings, and those not only for the one who celebrates, but also for others, especially those in whose behalf it is celebrated. Consequently the efficacy of the Mass is more universal and comprehensive than that of the sacraments. The Eucharistic sacrifice is truly a means of salvation; for it has great power to avert all evil from us and to procure for us all goods, all kinds of benefits and blessings. The Mass reconciles God's justice and leads us to the treasury of graces, by which we are disposed worthily to receive the sacraments and to obtain sacramental graces. In this manner the Eucharistic sacrifice tends to the possession, increase, and preservation of sacramental grace; but in how far has it its origin in the Holy Sacrifice?

The chief blessing of grace is contained in the holy sacraments. The sacraments are "stars that light up the firmament of fallen humanity, wellsprings in the desert of the pilgrimage of life, miracles of the love of God, mercies of Jesus Christ." They obtain those graces which correspond to and relieve the general continual necessities of Christian life. Their efficacy consists essentially in removing the curse of sin and in infusing into the soul the great grace of sanctification. They were instituted by Jesus Christ to produce and awaken, to preserve and strengthen, to heal and restore, to increase and perfect, the higher, supernatural life of the soul, that mystical life of grace of the children of God. The sacrifice of the cross is the primary source, which, at the altar in the Mass, gushes forth anew day by day to refill continually the channels of the sacraments which bring to us the saving waters of redemption. Inasmuch as on the altar the same sacrifice is offered as was

offered on the cross, we may designate the Mass also as the sacrificial source whence flow the sacramental streams of grace and salvation. Or the Mass may be regarded as a daily rising sun of grace whose pure, white rays of light are refracted sevenfold in the sacraments, and thus form the golden peace bow which connects the riches of heaven with the poverty of the earth.

The relation of the sacraments to the sacrifice of Christ is mystically indicated, inasmuch as from the pierced heart of the Saviour on the cross flowed forth a stream of water and of blood. The water flowing from the side of Christ symbolizes the water of baptism, which cleanses from sin; the stream of blood refers to the blood of Christ, wherewith the soul in the sacrament of the altar is nourished and strengthened unto life eternal. In these two sacraments the others are comprised, since baptism is the beginning, the Eucharist the term and consummation of them all. Hence by the flow of blood and water from the heart of the Crucified is mystically indicated that the sacraments draw their power from the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross and, consequently, also from the renewal of this sacrificial death on the altar in the Mass.

The sacramentals are also means of salvation, but in a weaker sense and in an essentially different manner from the sacraments. The sacramentals have been instituted by the Church. As the divine institution of salvation, the Church has received from Christ the mission and the power to impart in full measure, not merely to man, but also to nature, the blessings of redemption, and to make all things new. We know that in consequence of sin the entire creation is in mourning and misery, enslaved and liable to perish, and therefore longs to be freed from the thrall of corruption and, with the children of God, to be glorified in liberty (Rom. 8: 19). This final renovation and transformation of all creation is begun, or anticipated, by the use of the sacramentals, which are destined to remove as far as possible the consequences and misery of sin, not merely among men, but throughout the domain of created nature; for this also pertains to complete redemption. Through the merits and intercession of the Church, the sacramentals acquire a special power to remove the curse of sin, to destroy the dominion of Satan or to render it harmless, to free man from manifold wants, to impart temporal welfare and blessings, to obtain for us the

divine protection and assistance, to dedicate and sanctify persons and objects destined to the service of God.

The sacramentals are divided into exorcisms, blessings, and consecrations; their salutary effects extend to mankind and to the work of man's hands, as well as to objects of nature. The Church employs her exorcisms over man and irrational creatures to expel from them the influence of the evil spirit who by sin has obtained power to injure and ruin us and our belongings. Man and objects in nature withdrawn from evil influence are then dedicated and sanctified for the service of the Lord. The blessings obtain for man, both spiritually and corporally, and for all that belongs to him or serves to his use, the divine protection against evil and the divine favour for all that is good and salutary.

The Church blesses and consecrates to God not only persons, but also inanimate things: thus she blesses or dedicates or consecrates churches, cemeteries, altars and bells, crosses and pictures, candles and incense, water and oil, the vessels and articles for Mass, the vestments of the priest, candles for the feast of the Purification, the ashes on Ash Wednesday, the palms of Holy Week, and so forth. She blesses what is necessary for the support of the body: food and medicine, cattle and the fruits of the field; as well as the requirements of human society: weapons and tools, houses and ships, bridges and streets. In brief, there is scarcely an important requisite of the natural and supernatural life of man to which the Church denies the protection and blessing of her sacramentals. Like the sacraments, the sacramentals are also connected with the Eucharistic sacrifice, the source of blessings, from which they, in a certain sense, draw their salutary efficacy; for on the altar in the Mass that stream of blood and water from Golgotha continues to flow, in whose flood the earth, the sea, the starry firmament, in a word, the universe is cleansed, that is, touched with the blessing of redemption and led on to its future transformation: *Unda manat et cruor: terra, pontus, astra, mundus quo lavantur flumine!* (Hymn. Eccl.)

Therefore, while Christ's sacrifice is the fountainhead of all the blessings of redemption, the sacraments and sacramentals should be regarded as brooks

and rivulets which convey to all who are well disposed the inexhaustible blessings of that sacrifice. This connection of the sacramental means of salvation with the Mass is expressed and sanctioned in various ways in the liturgy of the Church. At the ordination of priests the Church says: "It behooves the priest to offer sacrifice, to bless, to baptize"; and at the consecration of bishops, she says: "It behooves the bishop . . . to consecrate, to offer sacrifice." Here the power of offering sacrifice is placed in the closest relation with the power of blessing and consecrating. The administration of the sacraments and the sacramentals is entrusted to the same persons (priests and bishops) who are called and authorized to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice; for the power of administering the sacraments and the sacramentals has, so to speak, its source in the higher and more eminent power of celebrating Mass. Because priests and bishops offer sacrifice, they can and may in the name of Christ and of the Church dispense graces and blessings. The power of blessing is, so to speak, the outcome and extension of the power of offering sacrifice, an accessory to the divine service.

The connection of the sacramental graces with the Eucharistic sacrifice is, moreover indicated by the fact that many liturgical formulas of blessing are inserted in the missal, and still more so by the regulation of the Church requiring that the administration of the sacraments and sacramentals should take place, as much as possible, in connection with the Mass. Thus the sacrament of the altar is consummated and prepared during the celebration of Mass and should also, as much as possible, be then administered and received.", Minor orders and especially major orders are conferred on clerics at the altar during the celebration of Mass. In connection with the Mass the material of many sacraments is blessed; thus baptismal water on Holy Saturday and on the eve of Pentecost, the holy oils on Holy Thursday. Immediately before Mass the blessing of the candles, of the ashes, and of palms takes place. The coronation of the pope, the clothing and profession of religious, the anointing of kings, the consecration of churches and altars, are rites and ceremonies most closely connected with the celebration of Mass.

In the Eucharistic sacrifice originates also the sacredness and sublime dignity of the Catholic priesthood, which imprints on the soul at ordination the ineffaceable sacerdotal character. The grades by which the ministers of the Church step by step ascend to the highest (the episcopal) dignity, are chiefly distinguished according to the power concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass. The first, the minor orders, empower the cleric with a more remote participation in the service of the altar; while the subdiaconate and diaconate have closer participation in the Holy Sacrifice and permit a closer assistance in its celebration. The priest possesses the power to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, that is, to celebrate the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which imparts to him an indescribably sublime dignity. Finally, the bishop is raised and exalted above the simple priest in this, that he not only possesses this heavenly power of sacrifice for himself, but he can also communicate it to others, and propagate it by the sacramental ordination of priests.

3. The Eucharistic sacrifice is, therefore, the soul or life of the entire divine worship, the sun that illuminates all religious celebrations, the heart that gives pulse to all sacramental cult, the fountainhead of the whole ecclesiastical life of grace; in short, it is the center of the Catholic liturgy. If the Catholic liturgy is a mighty stream with its sweet salutary waters cleansing, sanctifying, vivifying, fructifying, beautifying, transforming, inundating, the entire Church, all this is due to the holy fountain of the Mass, which ceases not to flow on the altar and to diffuse the vigour of life throughout all the members of the mystical body of Christ. Every grace, every consecration, every blessing issues from the depths of the sacrifice of Christ. Under the influence of the celestial light and supernal heat which daily radiate anew from that sun of grace, the Eucharistic sacrifice, all creation tends towards its final consummation and eternal transfiguration.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the center of the Christian religion, the sun of spiritual exercises, the heart of devotion, and the soul of piety; hence that ever-new, never-failing power by which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass attracts all Catholic hearts and gathers Catholic nations around its altars. Already before the dawn of day, before the morning flush enters our churches, the bells ring

out their summons to the Holy Sacrifice; and soon here and there a light appears at the window; over the crisp snow steps are hastening to the house of God, while the moon still looks down from heaven. "Happy does he rise at early dawn who strives after what is good." Everywhere the Mass retains this magnetic power of attraction, whether celebrated within the marble walls of St. Peter's at Rome, in gorgeous vestments, amid thousands of brilliant lights, encompassed with the master-pieces of Christian art, and adorned with its fairest festal robe of flowers and blossoms; or whether it is celebrated without pomp under a canopy of branches of tress or in a poor wooden shed erected by the hands of new converts now gathered around the missionary celebrating the holy mysteries. All this is but a striking proof that Catholics do not worship the exterior, but the substance, and that it is not the charm of religious pageantry but the reality which attracts them. Who has not from childhood the sweetest and purest recollections of the celebration of the Mass, even though he witnessed it in only a poor village church? And this magnetic attraction is not of today, nor was it but of yesterday, nor will it perhaps tomorrow die away. It is not the fictitious power of novelty. More than fifteen centuries ago the Holy Sacrifice drew our forefathers around the altar with a power that overcame all the terrors of persecution, which often broke in upon the peaceful celebration of Mass. Thus St. Dionysius of Alexandria, who lived in the third century, relates: "Though hunted after and persecuted by everybody, even then we did not omit the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. In every place, wherever we, torn from each other, bore our numerous trials, the field, the desert, the ship, the habitations of animals served us as temples for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice." When the storm of persecution raged throughout the whole world, the stream of grace and benediction poured from the Holy Mass celebrated in the catacombs, or underground caverns; just as at a much later period this Holy Sacrifice, persecuted by Protestantism, took refuge in the garrets. But even in this dire extremity the attractive power of the Mass was not weakened. Catholics went down into underground dens, into the catacombs, and climbed up under the rafters of houses, to pray for those whose hatred had driven to the most wretched nooks what was most holy to them, and who were vaunting themselves in edifices reared by Catholic piety.

What should not the Holy Sacrifice, therefore, be for us priests, and what should not we priests be for the Holy Sacrifice? The priesthood was instituted for the Eucharist. Our priestly life is made up of duties connected with it. To this end we have been chosen out of the world and separated from it. The seal of Jesus Christ is stamped upon us; the spirit and the ways of the world, and even the permissible things of the world, should not be for us what they are for others. By the chisel of the Holy Ghost an invisible character has been engraved on our soul that we may forever be the property of the Blessed Sacrament. What are we, and what should we be? Once only did Mary draw the eternal Word down from heaven, whilst every day we priests draw Him down from heaven to earth. She carried Jesus in her arms until He had reached the age of boyhood, but for us He prolongs His childhood throughout our lifetime. Can we look into the face of our Mother and tell her that in this respect we are greater than she was, and not think on the sanctity that our awe-inspiring office requires of us? Oh, how happy would the long martyrdom of our spiritual life be if we but aspired to priestly holiness! The attraction of the Eucharist should be our vocation, our ecclesiastical spirit, our joy. The fires of hell cannot in all eternity burn out the sacerdotal character imprinted on our soul in ordination; but the splendours of heaven will make that sacred character shine out with so much the greater luster.

To Be Cont'd.