

Treasures of the Mass



The Almighty God is, in Himself, eternal happiness. Therefore nothing can be wanting to Him. Were something lacking to Him, he would no longer be God, in whom all perfection dwells. And still, there was a time when God called the wonderful universe into existence. Millions and millions of blessed spirits now surround Him in heaven. A host of suns and myriads of stars form, as it were, a *via triumphalis* - a triumphal way, on which He treads. On our earth, the three kingdoms of nature: the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms, of which He made man the king, proclaim His wisdom and power, His beauty and goodness.

Considering this, we involuntarily ask ourselves: For what reason did God, to whom nothing is wanting, create all this beauty, and call these many creatures into existence? Reason and faith answer; God did it out of purest love and goodness, out of Divine generosity. He did not wish to enjoy His bliss and happiness alone;- He desired that other beings should share His glory and His riches. For this reason He called creation into existence.

The Sacrifice of Calvary Perpetuated

The Sacrifice of the Cross was the greatest act which the Divine and human love of Jesus Christ accomplished for us. Through the death of Christ on the Cross we were

redeemed. Through His immolation on the Cross, the Lamb of God took away the sins of the world and reconciled mankind with the Heavenly Father. No further sacrifice of redemption was necessary. However, the Sacrifice of Our Savior on the Cross did not do away with the personal duty of His creatures to pay unto their God and Creator the highest form of outward worship possible to man -- sacrifice. Otherwise man's worship would have been shorn of its most important features, its highest and principal function. Therefore the unfathomable love and wisdom of the Savior provided a means of daily renewing the Sacrifice of the Cross in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Sacrifice of the Cross MERITED for us immeasurable treasures of grace; through Holy Mass these graces are APPLIED to our souls.

Holy Mass is, according to the teaching of Holy Church, the same Sacrifice as that which Our Savior offered on the Cross, differing only in the manner of offering. "The same Sacrifice!" Who can fully grasp the purport of these words? Yet they are true, nevertheless, for in Holy Mass we have the same Priest and the same Victim as in the Sacrifice of Calvary. On the Cross Jesus Christ offered Himself by shedding his Blood and meriting for us; on our altars He sacrifices Himself through the ministry of the priest, without shedding His Blood, and applies to us the fruits of His Passion and Death. The Sacrifice of the Mass does not increase the merits of the Sacrifice of the Cross; it merely applies them to souls.

Since Holy Mass is a renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, it follows that Holy Mass is the most sublime means of honoring God and richest fountain of grace and blessings for the Church and for the faithful. A spiritual writer says: "Just as the sun surpasses all other planets in brightness and strength, and brings more benefit to the earth than all the stars combined, so the Sacrifice of the Mass surpasses all other works of devotion."

Holy Mass possesses an infinite value. The Heavenly Father looked with infinite complacency upon His Divine Son when He accomplished the Sacrifice of the Cross. With the same complacency His eye rests upon every altar whereon the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered. From each altar a stream of graces flows out over the whole Church of Christ. Ceaselessly we can draw from his stream of grace in Holy Mass for our life on earth and for our glory in eternity.

How great is the loss that one suffers who passes through life without drawing from this ocean of graces, to which he may so easily have access, the blessings which he needs to make him truly happy! Jesus on our altars offers us His help and His consolations, His blessing and His peace, His goodness and His joy, His sufferings

and His death with all their merit. He yearns to come to our assistance in our need, and whose need is not great?

The Structure of the Mass

The first part of the Mass is a kind of introductory service, made up of chants, prayers and lessons (i.e. readings from Holy Scripture) -- namely, the Introit, the Kyrie, the Collect, the Epistle or Lesson, and the Gospel. On certain days the Gloria and the Nicene Creed are added. This first part of the Mass is called the Mass of the Catechumens, while the remaining part is called the Mass of the Faithful. These names have their origin in the discipline of the early Church. In the first ages of Christianity, persons desiring to become Christians were obliged to undergo a course of instructions preparatory to baptism. They were called "catechumens," a Greek word meaning "one whose is being instructed." Such persons, being not yet fully initiated in the teachings and practices of Christianity, were dismissed before the sacrificial part of the Mass commenced. Likewise those who were undergoing a course of penance and had not yet been admitted to Communion were ordered to leave the church at this part of the Mass. That which followed was considered too holy for the presence of notorious sinners, and too mysterious to permit those to assist who were not yet fully instructed. Only those who were baptized, -- "the Faithful" -- could take part in the actual Eucharistic Sacrifice. The Church, during the course of centuries, changed her discipline in this regard, and all are now permitted to remain during the entire sacred rite.

The Mass is not a series of acts loosely joined together; the Mass is one continuous action, reproducing in a mysterious way the Life, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. The subdivisions of the parts of the Mass are intended only as an aid in studying the Mass. They are as follows: --

1. The Preparation -- which includes the prayers at the foot of the altar, the Introit, Kyrie and Gloria.
2. The Instruction -- which includes the Collect, the Epistle, Gradual, Alleluia, (or Tract, and on certain feasts the Sequence), the Gospel (usually followed by a sermon), and the Credo.
3. The Oblation -- which includes the Offertory antiphon, the offering of bread, the pouring of water and wine into the chalice, the offering of the chalice, the washing of the hands, the prayer to the Blessed Trinity, the "Orate fratres" and the Secret.
4. The Consecration -- which includes the Preface and the Canon of the Mass, embracing the prayer "Te igitur," the Memento of the living, the Communicantes and

the other two prayers before the Consecration and Elevation, the three prayers after the Consecration, the Commemoration for the Dead, the "Nobis quoque peccatoribus" and the Minor Elevation. (This part is, properly speaking, also a part of the oblation or sacrifice offering.)

5. The Communion -- which includes the Pater Noster, the Libera, the Agnus Dei, the three prayers before the Communion, the "Domine non sum dignus," and the Communion of the Priest and the Faithful.

6. The Thanksgiving--which includes the Communion antiphon, the Post-communion prayer, the "Ite missa est," and the Last Gospel.

ORDINARY AND PROPER OF THE MASS

The Mass consists of a fixed framework into which at certain points the variable prayers, lessons and chants are fitted. The former is called the ordinary or common of the Mass, and the latter, the proper.* The variable or proper parts of the Mass, are the following: The Introit, Collect, Epistle, Gospel, Gradual, Alleluia (or Tract, and on some feasts the Sequence), the Offertory, Secret Communion and Post-communion. All the other parts remain the same in each Holy mass, except the Preface, which occupies an intermediate place between the changeable and unchangeable parts. Certain feasts and season have their own proper Preface, which changes after the introductory sentence. A common Preface is arranged for all days which do not have a proper Preface of their own. Similarly, a special clause is inserted in the prayer of the Canon called the Communicantes, on certain of the principal feasts.

Because of the parts of the Mass varying, we speak of the Mass of such a day or of such a feast. In order to follow the changeable parts of the Mass, it is necessary to have a Missal, in which the proper parts of the Mass for each day and feast are given. In our explanation of the Mass we have used the proper of the Mass of Corpus Christi, in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, which is one of the most beautiful combinations of psalms, prayers and hymns in the Catholic liturgy.

Mass of the Catechumens

The Ambassador of Christ

All the preparations for the Holy Sacrifice are completed; the altar is in readiness; a throng of devout souls, absorbed in God, is in expectation. A solemn stillness reigns in the house of God. The soft light of two blessed candles scarcely dispels the shadows of the morning twilight. Footsteps break the hallowed stillness. A priest

comes forth in an attire set apart for the Divine service and with serious mien. Slowly and reverently he approached the altar, genuflects, ascends the steps, place the veiled chalice he carries in his hands upon the corporal, moves to the Epistle side and opens the missal. He then returns to the center of the altar, inclines to the Crucifix, descends the steps, and being the most sublime of rituals -- Holy Mass.

Who is this priest? He may have come from the palace of a king, from the furrows of a farm, or from the noise of a workshop; his cradle may have stood in the lowly hut of a mountain village, or in the splendor of golden riches in the midst of a surging metropolis -- all this signifies nothing and alters nothing in the eminent nature and sublimity of his mission. That which invests him with this singular dignity and greatness is not from man; God Himself has impressed upon his soul a mysterious, indelible mark which places him above the mighty ones of earth. Heaven has given him a special mission and authority; hence, every door is open to him among Catholic people; to them he is the ambassador of Christ, a priest who has the right to ascend the steps of the altar.

When God wishes to give us commands, promises, admonitions or graces, He makes use, not of an angel, but of a priest. Everything must pass through the hands of this extraordinary man. And woe to the one who despises his office and mission, who persecutes him, or grieves him! Woe! For such a man despises God Himself, persecutes God Himself, offends God Himself, Jesus declared this in a solemn manner. But happy the Christian who honors the priest! Happy the family that receives him! Thus the priest is God's ambassador to man; but he is, at the same time, man's ambassador to God.

Dignity and Power of the Priest

An ambassador of God! How often from the pulpit has he announced heavenly tidings to the faithful! How often spoken to them of their binding obligations, of imperishable hopes, of eternal rewards and everlasting punishments! Now he ascends the altar. In a little while he will speak mysterious words of astounding power, and the almighty, immortal God, obeying his call, will descend from heaven upon the altar. He will raise Him aloft in his hands before the kneeling worshipers, and give Him to souls who believe in Him, long for Him, seek Him, love Him, and wish to live through Him.

The priest, in union with Jesus Christ, offers man's adoration, thanksgiving, expiation and petition to the Heavenly Father, who receives this gift with complacency. In our

name and for our salvation the priest offers to the Eternal Father His only-begotten Son Jesus; he offers to God the infinite merits of Jesus' life on each, and especially His sacrificial death on Calvary. What angel of God can compare with the priest in greatness and dignity?

The priest negotiates with God on the most momentous questions of life -- on the affairs of the soul. He raises his absolving hand, pronounces words of forgiveness, and the burden of sin is lifted from the repentant soul. He stands at the bedside of the dying, and equips the departing soul with the means to wage successfully its last conflict. It is his word that seals and gives validity to the covenant of peace which is daily made between earth and heaven.

Kings and rulers of this earth frequently experience that the scepter is snatched from their hand, the royal purple torn from their shoulders, and they themselves sent into exile. But the priest, the ambassador of Christ, remains a priest forever. God will never deprive him of his office. Of all ambassadors who speak and act in the name of a sovereign, the Catholic priest alone can, until his dying breath, treat with his Master with full authority in behalf of mankind, and with mankind in the name of God. -- Do we think of his exalted dignity when we meet a priest on the street, or see him at the altar in the act of celebrating Mass?

At the Foot of the Altar

By His first act, the priest, the ambassador of God, convinces the people of the lawfulness of the office which he is now exercising. He genuflects, makes the Sign of the Cross and solemnly utters the words: --

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, Amen.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Is there, in the solemn services of the Catholic Church, another moment when these words, so simple, so frequently used, imply such majesty and sublimity as here at the foot of the altar, at the beginning of Holy Mass? Can the priest give us a solemn explanation of his mission? to appear in the Name and with the authority of the eternal almighty Creator --his, O Priest of God, is thy portion alone! Alone thy dignity and power, O Anointed of the Lord!

The priest joins his hands and continues: --

V. Introibo ad altare Dei.

R. Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.

V. I will go unto the altar of God.

R. Unto God, who giveth joy to my youth.

Behold the young priest with the holy oils still fresh upon his consecrated hands. The moment for which he has been longing for years has arrived: he stands before the holy altar. He signs himself with the sacred Cross and the first exultant words that escape his lips are: "I will go unto the altar of God, unto, God, who giveth joy to my youth!" -- beautiful expression of a soul that has clung to God, who has led him to the mount of sacrifice; heavenly expression of love for God, for who he has despised all worldly and sinful pleasures, to find his joy in Him.

Day after day these words surge up from the heart of the minister of God. Years pass. Maturity is reached with its experience, and perhaps, honors; old age steals on with its rich harvest and its peculiar trials, yet the same lips pronounce the same exultant words: "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God, who giveth joy to my youth." And when the Anointed of the Lord shall stand at the threshold of eternity, when the vision of the Immolated Lamb shall break upon his purified soul in all its dazzling beauty, will not his lips once more exclaim: "I will go unto the altar of God, who giveth joy to my youth!" But now his feet must still tread the weary paths of earth and mindful of his own weakness, the priest presents his petitions in the words of the royal Psalmist (Ps. xlii), which he prays alternately with the server: --

P. Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam de gente non sancta; ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me.

M. Quia tu es, Deus fortitudo mea; quare me repulisti, et quare tristis incedo, dum affligit me inimicus?

P. Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam; ipse me deduxerunt et adduxerunt in montem sanctum tuum, et in tabernacula tua.

M. Et introibo ad altare Dei: ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.

P. Confitebor tibi in cithara, Deus, Deus meus; quare tristis ex, anima mea, et quare conturbas me?

M. Spera in Deo, quoniam adhuc confitebor illi: salutare vultus mei, et Deus meus..

P. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

M. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper: et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

P. Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy; deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man.

M. For Thou, O God, art my strength: why has Thou cast me off? and why do I go sorrowful whilst the enemy afflicteth me?

P. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth: they have conducted me and brought me unto Thy holy hill, and into Thy tabernacles.

M. And I will go unto the altar of God; unto God, who giveth joy to my youth.

P. I will praise Thee upon the harp, O God, my God: why art thou sad, O my soul? and why dost thou disquiet me?

M. Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him: the salvation of my countenance, and my God.

P. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

M. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

This is a touching supplication which the priest makes to Almighty God, to detach his sentiments from the spirit of the world and from his own corrupt nature; to keep him on the steep and narrow path and smooth away the difficulties on the way to the holy mount. Conscious of his own weakness, he trusts in God, his "strength"; he begs to be led by His "Light," Jesus Christ, the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, and His "Truth," the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father and teacheth us all truth, -- confident that he will thus reach his eternal destination. The priest promises the Most High to make known to men the Divine precepts. He entrusts to God the sorrow and grief that overwhelm his soul, but likewise the hopes that fill his heart.

The Antiphon "Introibo: is then repeated.* Thereupon the celebrant makes the Sign of the Cross and protests that he places all his trust in the Name and in the help of God: --

V. Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.

R. Qui fecit coelum et terram.

V. Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

* In Masses for the death and during Passiontide, the Psalm "Judica is omitted, and the Antiphon : "Introibo" is not repeated.

Plea for Pardon

At the same moment, the realization of his own unworthiness overpowers the priest; he remembers his past sins, for, though vested with unearthly power, he is still merely

a creature. In the consciousness of his guilt, he bends low before the altar and strikes his breast in all humility as he prays the act of contrition known as the

Confiteor

Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, beatae Mariae semper Virgini, beato Michaeli Archangelo, beato Joanni Baptistae, sanctis Apostolis Petro et Paulo, omnibus Sanctis, et vobis, fratres: quia peccavi nimis cogitatione, verbo et opere: mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. Ideo precor beatam Mariam semper Virginem, beatum Michaellem Archangelum, beatum Joannem Baptistam, sanctos Apostolos Petrum et Paulum, omnes sanctos, et vos, fratres, orare pro me ad Dominum Deum nostrum.

I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed; through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech blessed Mary, ever virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you, brethren, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

The acolyte answers: --

Misereatur tui omnipotens Deus, et dimissis peccatis tuis, perducatur te ad vitam aeternam.

May Almighty God have mercy upon thee, forgive thee thy sins and bring thee to life everlasting.

The priest says "Amen" and stands upright. The acolyte then repeats the Confiteor in the name of all present.

What a solemn moment! In the presence of the holy, omniscient God, both priest and people feel their guilt and publicly ask for grace and pardon. The soul must cleanse itself in the waters of contrition at the very beginning of this sublime act. How could it otherwise receive the full benefits of the approaching Mystery?

As once on the Cross Our Lord took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, to atone for them with His Blood, so now we lay our sins upon Him as upon a victim about to be immolated on the altar, that He may expiate them. It is to indicate this that the priest at the commencement of the Mass bows down at the foot of the altar, and in the spirit of humility presents himself as if laden with the sins of the people

before the Eternal Father, in order to prevail upon Him to have mercy. In this position he also personifies Christ upon the Mount of Olives, who, bowed down under the burden of the sins of the whole world, fell upon His face, His sweat becoming as drops of blood, and prayed earnestly to His Heavenly Father. In like manner, Christ's representative prays for the pardon of his own sins and the sins of all present, for whom the price of Redemption was once paid, and is daily offered anew to operate the remission of sin.

No sooner has the priest heard the faithful, in their turn, acknowledge their sins, than he invokes a blessing upon them:--

V. Misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus, et, dimissis peccatis vestris, perducatur vos ad vitam aeternam. R. Amen.

V. May Almighty God have mercy upon you, forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting. R. Amen.

Signing himself with the Sign of the Cross, the priest continues: --

V. Indulgentiam, absolutionem et remissionem peccatorum nostrorum, tribuat nobis omnipotens et misericors Dominus. R. Amen.

V. May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon, absolution, and remission of our sins. R. Amen.

The priest stands erect after his previous humble posture, to signify by this upright position that both he and the faithful are uplifted and comforted by the firm hope of receiving the forgiveness of their sins. Consolation now fills the heart of the priest, and bowing, he turns to God with these trustful words upon his lips: --

V. Deus, tu conversus vivificabis nos.

R. Et plebs tua laetabitur in te.

V. Ostende nobis, Domine, misericordiam tuam.

R. Et salutare tuum da nobis.

V. Domine, exaudi orationem meam.

R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

V. Dominus vobiscum.

R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

V. Thou shalt turn again, O God, and quicken us.

R. And Thy people shall rejoice in Thee.

V. Show unto us, O Lord, Thy mercy.

R. And grant us Thy salvation.
V. O Lord, hear my prayer.
R. And let my cry come unto Thee.
V. The Lord be with you.
R. And with they spirit.

Extending and then joining his hands, the priest says, :*"Oremus -- Let us Pray."*
The word *Oremus* introduces nearly all of the liturgical prayers. It implies an invitation to those present to join with the priest in presenting the petitions of the faithful in the name of Holy Mother Church, rather than to pursue their private devotions.

At the Altar

Hands which touch things sacred can never be sufficiently pure, nor can souls called by God to the sublime dignity of the priesthood ever be sufficiently innocent. Conscious of this fact, the priest, although he has just implored pardon of his sins and has heard from the faithful a heartfelt *Misereatur*, still feels keenly his need of Divine mercy. Therefore, as he ascends the altar steps, he implores the Lord to look with kindness upon him and upon all present, to grant them pardon, and to lend a merciful ear to the silent yet mighty cry of the hearts of the faithful:

Aufer a nobis, quaesumus, Domine, iniquitates nostras: ut ad Sancta sanctorum puris mereamur mentibus introire. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Take away from us our iniquities, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that we may be worthy to enter with pure minds into the holy of holies. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Will God hear his prayer? Of this the priest cannot be certain; therefore he calls upon the saints, the friends of God, to intercede for him with the Almighty. Bowing low over the altar, he kisses the altar stone which encloses the relics of the saints, while he prays: --

Oramus, te, Domine, per merita Sanctorum tuorum, quorum reliquiae hic sunt, et omnium Sanctorum, ut indulgere digneris omnia peccata mea. Amen.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins. Amen.

In the beautiful language of symbolism, this kiss is expressive also of a greeting to Christ, the Bridegroom, who is represented by the altar, on the part of His Bride, the Church.

The priest then goes to the Epistle side of the altar, makes the Sign of the Cross and recites the Introit.

The Introit is a verse from the Psalms or the Old Testament and varies according to the feast celebrated, or the season of the year. It stands in close relationship with, and is so to say the key to a right understanding of, the Epistle and Gospel. It expresses the spirit of the feast or the mystery being celebrated --whether of joy, of gratitude, of hope, of longing, of desire, of petition -- and the sentiments which ought principally to animate the hearts of the faithful.

On the feasts of saints, the Introit recalls the vocation, the outstanding work, the sufferings, the glorification, etc. of the saint who is being honored. On the various Sundays of the year, the Introit announces some truth of religion, or a Divine promise, or recalls some event which inspires confidence, reverence, resignation, or some other virtue. Sometimes it is a plea for help or for mercy, or again, an invitation to give praise and thanks to God.

During Advent we cry with ardent longing for the Redeemer in the words of Isaias, "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a savior" (Isaias xiv.8). At Christmas we rejoice in the birth of the "Prince of Peace." In the Introit of the Mass of Corpus Christi we rejoice in the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, the Heavenly Bread with which we are fed.

Cibavit eos ex adipe frumenti, alleluia; et de petra, melle saturavit eos, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Ps. Exsultate Deo adjutori nostro; jubilate Deo Jacob. v. Gloria.

He fed them with the fat of wheat, alleluia; and filled them with honey out of the rock, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Ps. Rejoice to God our helper; sing aloud to the God of Jacob. v. Glory.

KYRIE

With sentiments of complete dependence on God, the priest, returning to the center of the altar, with hands joined before his breast, implores mercy for himself and the people, repeating alternately with the server, the words: "Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison," each invocation being repeated three times.

The words Kyrie eleison are taken from the Greek language and mean "Lord, have mercy on us." Though the prayers of the Mass are in Latin, these Greek words, as also : "Amen," "Alleluia" and "Hosanna" taken from the Hebrew, are retained. This threefold petition to each Person of the Holy Trinity is expressive of the earnestness with which we implore the Divine mercy. We call upon the Father to be merciful to us through his omnipotence; upon the Son, to be merciful to us through His wisdom; and upon the Holy Ghost, to be merciful through His goodness. We implore mercy because we have often offended the Heavenly Father, who in His Power has created us; because we have often offended the Eternal Son, who through His wisdom has endured such great sufferings to redeem us; because we have often offended the Holy Spirit, who through His goodness has sanctified us.

Mercy is one of the most touching attributes of God. Our creation, our redemption and our sanctification are effects of God's mercy. We need not fear to ask for great mercies; the more He gives the more glory He receives. His mercy lies before us as a boundless ocean which envelops us; we need but reach out to draw therefrom. It is true, God's justice demands its rights, but precisely on account of His justice God will be merciful to those who implore mercy, because of justice to His only-begotten Son, who has paid so great a price to obtain mercy for us.

The Psalmist cries out "Thou, O Lord, are sweet and mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee" (Ps. lxxxv. 5). God desires to give; He loves to be entreated to give; it is His nature to be ever giving; and regarding man it has been said: "There is nothing more Godlike than to give." The mercy of God is infinite. We take into consideration far too little the essence of God. We forget that with Him nothing may be measured by our standards. He loves us in an infinity degree. We must be convinced of this, after all He has done for us. The damned will regret nothing so much as not to have benefited by the goodness and mercy of God.

As Jesus Christ suffered so inexpressibly much for us and shed His Blood even to the last drop, is it not meet that the power and efficacy of this Blood should come to Its just rights wherever and whenever the hand of man reaches out for It? Consider the penitent thief on the cross. We, too, speak words imploring mercy at Holy Mass. The words are short -- "Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, have mercy on us; Lord, have mercy on us." With God our words are not counted but weighed. May these words, Kyrie eleison, ever come forth from our heart as a burning petition for mercy from the Triune God!

Joy in God

Gloria*

Having said the last "Kyrie," the priest, standing in the same place, extends his hands, raises them, and intone the "Gloria in excelsis Deo." At the word "Deo" he joins his hands and bows his head to the Crucifix; then, standing erect, he continues the "Gloria" to the end with hands joined, bowing his head when he says: Adoramus te; Gratias agimus tibi; Jesu Christe: Suscipe deprecationem nostram." At the end he makes the Sign of the Cross on himself when he says: "Cum Sancto Spiritu."

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Adoramus te. Glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus sanctus. Tu Solus Dominus. Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we adore Thee; we glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou only art holy; Thou only art Lord; Thou only, O Jesus Christ, art most high, together with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

*The "Gloria," being a hymn of praise, is omitted in Masses for the dead, during the seasons of Advent and Lent, and also on other occasions when the expression of joy is inappropriate.

Truly, this is a prayer of "joy in God." It is an expression of gratitude and joy for our Redemption, which is renewed in every Holy Mass. Holy Church borrows from the angels the canticle of joy which they sang above the manger of the Infant God and adds to it her own expressions of gratitude and praise. As the angels intoned this canticle when the great work of our Redemption began in Bethlehem, so we echo their song as we are preparing to celebrate the renewal of the Redemption in Holy Mass and to offer the sublime Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Our hearts overflow with gratitude for the benefits of the incarnation, and we voice our thanksgiving in these fervent exclamations:-- Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te! Whenever we wish to give expression to our praise of God, these words are most beautiful to repeat: "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee!" We also thank God for His glory, for we and all things have been created for His glory. What a sublime thought: To thank God --not for His benefits to man, -- creation, redemption, the promise of heaven -- but to thank Him for His own glory--to think only of God and His attributes!

After we have praised God for His great glory, we turn to the Eternal Son enthroned at the right hand of the Father, and call upon His mercy and goodness. We behold in our Savior the Lamb of God immolated for the sins of the world. We implore Him to take away our sins and to receive our prayer. We plead with Him in the oft- repeated cry of the liturgy, in virtue of His power -- "Who sittest at the right hand of the Father"--to have mercy on us. We praise and extol Him as the highest King and Lord who lives and reigns from eternity to eternity and who will prepare a throne for us near His own, He who is one with the Holy Ghost in unending glory.

The Gloria is a sublime hymn of praise, and we should repeat it in the spirit of a joyful welcome to our Savior who is soon to be born anew upon the altar as He was born in the cave at Bethlehem.--Jesus is present in the Most Blessed Sacrament as He was in the grotto. The tabernacle is the stable of His Eucharistic life. The ciborium is His manger, the white form of the Sacred Host His swathing bands, and here, too, He is often exposed to bitter cold. It is winter about Him because many times He is surrounded by the cold blasts of the indifference and ingratitude of the hearts of men. Let us join with the angels to praise Him, with the shepherds to adore Him, with the Magi to glorify Him.

Dominus Vobiscum

When the "Gloria is ended, the priest turns to the people, extends his arms and says: -

Dominus vobiscum.
The Lord be with you.

Frequently during Holy Mass the priest salutes the congregation with these words, Dominus vobiscum. This is an ancient form of greeting, expressive of everything good, for whosoever has the Lord with him wants nothing. These words express the

wish of the priest in behalf of the faithful who are present, that God may be with them and assist them to pray in spirit and in truth, for special grace is needed in order to pray well. We need the Divine assistance in order that our petitions may be offered for things that are best and may find a ready hearing at the throne of Divine Mercy. The congregation answers, through the server: --

Et cum spiritu tuo.
And with thy spirit.

It is as though the faithful were to say: "May the Lord be with thy spirit, O Shepherd of our souls, for thou prayest for us and teachest us the way of life eternal; therefore does thy spirit need the Lord to be near.: This versicle and response, repeated so often during Mass, signify the close relation that exists between the priest and the people. When the priest says, Dominus vobiscum, he extends his arms and hands toward the people as a sign of reverent affection, and to indicate a blessing.

Jesus Christ was announced by the prophets and prefigured by numerous types in the Old Law to prepare the people for His coming. Now that He abides with us under the appearance of the Eucharist, it is the same. At every Holy Mass He sends His precursor before Him to prepare the way. The great line of patriarchs and prophets has been increased by the apostles and evangelists. All these great men of God were heralds of the Almighty. They spoke of a God, a Man, a Redeemer, a King of heaven and earth, a Law-giver, a Judge and a Recompenser. They made known His commands, His promises, His threats. They also portrayed His life and death.

The office of teaching likewise constitutes an essential part of the sublime Sacrifice of Redemption. The Epistle and Gospel represent to us the teaching of Christ; portions of Holy Scripture, proper to the feast or season, are chose for each day. The Epistle unfolds to us the indirect teaching of the Redeemer, as transmitted through the patriarchs, prophets and apostles. This teaching should prepare the heart and lead it to Christ, who speaks to it Himself in the holy Gospel. For this reason the Epistle precedes the Gospel.

Epistle

In the first ages of Christianity, passages from the prophets were read before the holy Gospel; later, also passages from the letters of the apostles. In the Roman liturgy, the Epistle varies. It is taken from the Old or from the New Testament, and the lessons are more frequently taken from the letters of the apostles than from the prophet.

Therefore we call the Lesson "Epistle," which means "letter." Formerly the Epistle was read by the lector from a special elevated place, a kind of pulpit; since the eighth century, the Epistle is read by the subdeacon, at Solemn High Mass, and at the ordinary celebration of Mass, the priest himself reads it. Formerly, the celebrating bishop or priest decided what was to be read each time. The present order of the Epistles and Gospels was arranged by St. Jerome (died 420) and finally established by Pope Pius V in 1570.

The priest lays his hand upon the book or altar while reading the Epistle, to show us that we should be ready at once to put our hand to the work in order to conform our life to the principles laid down for us in the Epistle.

What a wealth of instruction and what an unerring guide for our conduct is given to us by St. Paul in the Epistle for the feast of Corpus Christi:--

Fratres, Ego enim accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis, quoniam Dominus Jesus, in qua nocte tradebatur, accepit panem, et gratias agens fregit, et dixit: Accipite, et manducate: hoc est Corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur; hoc facite in mean commemorationem. Similiter et calicem, postquam coenavit, dicens: Hic calix novum Testamentum est in meo Sanguine. Hoc facite, quotiescumque bibetis, in mean commemorationem. Quotiescumque enim manducabitis panem hunc, vel biberit calicem Domini indigne, reus erit Corporis et Sanguinis Domini. Probet autem seipsum homo, et sic de pane illo edat, et de calice bibat. Qui enim manducat et bibit indigne, judicium sibi manducat et bibit, non dijudicans Corpus Domini (1 Cor. xi)

Brethren: I have received of the Lord that which also I have delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat; this is My Body which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the new Testament in My Blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink this Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this Bread, or drink of the Chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of the Chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord (1 Cor. xi)

At the conclusion of the Epistle, the server answers, in the name of the people, "Deo gratias! -- Thanks be to God!" in order to express their gratitude for the Divine

revelation, which God does not grant to everyone. Willingness to fulfill God's precepts, and gratitude for His sacred Word are the sentiments which should animate the Christian during the Epistle and the Gradual which immediately follows it.

GRADUAL

The priest remaining in the same position as at the Epistle, now reads the "Gradual." The Gradual formerly consisted of an entire psalm or psalms and was sung with great solemnity. It is so called because it used to be sung from the steps (*gradus*) of the altar or pulpit. Pope Gregory the Great (died 604) reduced the length of the psalm to the present few verses which epitomize the Epistle. These few verses are so appropriately selected that they are little masterpieces, both from a literary and a spiritual standpoint. Like a golden thread the spirit of the Mass is woven through the Collect, Epistle and Gradual, showing the completeness and the exceedingly beautiful arrangement of the liturgy. The Gradual expresses the sentiments and dispositions which the Epistle should produce in our souls.

For instance, in the Mass of Corpus Christi we honor the Most Blessed Sacrament as the memorial of the Passion, and in the Collect we ask that through the sacred mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood we may feel within us the fruit of the Redemption. St. Paul speaks to us in the Epistle, exhorting us to receive the most sacred Body and Blood of the Lord worthily. The Gradual, after exciting us to trust in God's Providence and gratitude for His benefits, ends with those beautiful words of Our Lord which tell us of our inestimable privilege and dignity of being united with Jesus Christ through the Holy Eucharist:--

Oculi omnium in te sperant, Domine: et tu das illis escam in tempore opportuno. v. Aperis tu manum tuam, et implebis omne animal benedictione. Alleluia, alleluia. v. Caro mea vere est cibus, et Sanguis meus vere est potus: qui manducat meam Carnem, et bibit meum Sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in eo (John vi).

The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season. v. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest every living creature with Thy blessing. Alleluia, alleluia. v. My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed: he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in him (John vi).

The Gradual changes according to the feasts and different seasons of the year. It is omitted during Paschal time, and two other verses are said in its place. Like the Introit, the Gradual verses announce the purpose for which the Mass is being said; --

whether it be in honor of some saint, of some mystery of our holy religion, for the departed, or for some other intention.

In times of joy and special solemnity, two Alleluias with a verse, followed by a third Alleluia, are added to the Gradual. Alleluia is a Hebrew word which means "Praise the Lord." As it expresses a transport of joy which cannot be adequately rendered by any term in Greek or Latin, it has been retained in its original form.

TRACT and SEQUENCE

In times of penance and sorrow the Alleluias would be out of place. They are, therefore, omitted on such occasions, together with the versicle, and several other verses substituted. These latter verses, taken from the psalms or the Old Testament, form what is called the Tract.

On certain days, when Holy Church wishes to prolong the joy of the Alleluia or the sorrow and expression of penance in the Tract, she adds a hymn or psalm called the Sequence. There are now five Sequences in our Missal, as follows:--

Victimae Paschali for Easter Sunday, supposed to have been composed by a priest named Wipo about 1048.

Veni Sancte Spiritus for Pentecost, ascribed to Pope Innocent III about 1198.

Lauda Sion for Corpus Christi, composed by St. Thomas Aquinas about 1274.

Stabat Mater, for the Feast of the Sorrowful Mother, generally attributed to a Franciscan friar; composed about 1306.

Dies Irae, in Mass for the Departed, also believed to have been composed by a Franciscan friar about 1250.

These Sequences abound in poetic beauty, depth of thought and doctrinal soundness, as we will fully realize by reading attentively the incomparable Sequence for the feast of Corpus Christi.

Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem,
lauda ducem et pastorem in hymnis et canticis.
Quantum potes, tantum aude:
quia major omni laude,
nec laudare sufficis.

Laudis thema specialis,
panis vivus et vitalis hodie proponitur.
Quem in sacrae mensa coenae,
turbae fratrum duodenae datum non ambigitur.

Sit laus plena,
sit sonora, sit jucunda,
sit decora mentis jubilatio.
Dies enim solemnis agitur,
in qua mensae prima recolitur hujus institutio.

In hac mensa novi Regis,
novum Pascha novae legis,
Phase vetus terminat.
Vertustatem novitas,
umbram fugat veritas,
noctem lux eliminat.

Quod in coena Christus gessit,
faciendum hoc expressit in sui memoriam
Docti sacris institutis, panem,
vinum in salutis consecramus hostiam.
Dogma datus Christianis, quod in carnem
transit panis, et vinum in sanguinem.

Quod non capis, quod non vides,
animosa firmat fides
praeter rerum ordinem.
Sub diversis speciebus,
signis tantum, et non rebus,
latent res eximiae.

Caro cibus, sanguis potus:
manet tamen Christus totus,
Sub utraque specie.
Asumente non concisus,
non confractus, non divisus:
integer accipitur.

Sumit unus, sumunt mille:
Quantum isti, tantum ille:
nec sumptus consumitur.
Sumunt boni, sumunt mali:
sorte tamen inaequali,
vitae, vel interitus.

Mors est malis, vita bonis:
vide paris sumptionis quam
sit dispar exitus Fracto demum sacramento,
ne vacilles, sed memento,
tantum esse sub fragmento
quantum toto tegitur.

Nulla rei fit Angelorum,
factus cibus viatorum:
vere panis filiorum,
non mittendus canibus.
In figuris praesignatur,
cum Isaac immolatur:
agnus paschae deputatur:
datur manna patribus.

Bone pastor, panis vere,
Jesu, nostri miserere:
tu nos pasce, nos tuere:
tu nos bona fac videre in terra viventium.

Tu, qui cuncta scis et vales,
qui nos pascis hic mortales:
tuos ibi commensales,
coheredes et sodales fac sanctorum civium.
Amen. Alleluia.

Sion, lift thy voice and sing,
Praise thy Savior, praise thy King;
Praise with hymns thy Shepherd true:
Strive thy best to praise Him well,
For He doth all praise excel;

None can ever reach His due.

See today before us laid
Living and life-giving Bread,
Theme for praise and joy profound;
Bread which at the sacred board
Was, by our Incarnate Lord,
Giv'n to His apostles round.

Let the praise be loud and high;
Sweet and rev'rent be the joy
Felt today in every breast;
On this festival Divine,
Which records the origin
Of the glorious Eucharist.

On this table of the new King,
This, the new Law's paschal off'ring
Brings to end the olden rite.
Here, for empty shadows fled,
Is reality instead;
Here, instead of darkness, light.

What He did at supper seated,
Christ ordained to be repeated,
In His memory Divine;
Wherefore we, with adoration
Thus the Host of our salvation
Consecrate from bread and wine.

Taught by Christ, the Church maintaineth,
That the bread its substance changeth
Into Flesh, the wine to Blood,
Doth is pass thy comprehending?
Faith, the law of sight transcending
Leaps to things not understood.

Here beneath these signs, are hidden
Priceless things, to sense forbidden

Signs, not things, are all we see,--
Flesh from bread, and Blood from wine,
Yet is Christ in either sing,
All entire, confessed to be.

They, too, who of Him partake,
Sever not, nor rend, nor break,
But entire, their Lord receive.
Whether one or thousands eat,
All receive the self-same meat,
Nor the less for other leave.

Lo, the wicked with the good
Eat of this celestial food:
Yet with ends how opposite!
Life to these, 'tis death to those:
See how from like taking flows
Diff'rence truly infinite.

Nor do thou doubts entertain
When the Host is broken in twain:
But be sure, each part contains
What was in the whole before:
'Tis the simple sign alone
Which hath changed in size and form,
Whilst the signified is one
And the same for evermore.

Lo, upon the altar lies,
Hidden deep from human eyes,
Bread of angels from the skies,
Made the food of mortal man:
Children's meat, to dogs denied;
In old types foreshadowed:
In the manna heaven supplied,
Isaac, and the Paschal Lamb.

Jesu, Shepherd, Bread indeed,
Thou take pity on our need:

Thou Thy flock in safety feed,
Thou protect us, Thou us lead
To the land of heavenly grace.
Thou, who feedest us below.
Source of all we have or know,
Grant that, at Thy feast of love,
Sitting with the saints above,
We may see Thee face to face.
Amen. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Having read the Epistle and the prayers which follow, the priest leaves the Missal open and goes to the center of the altar, where, raising his eyes to the Crucifix, and immediately lowering them again, he inclines profoundly, keeping his hands joined. Meanwhile the acolyte goes up to the altar, takes the Missal from the Epistle side, descends to the foot of the steps, genuflects, and takes it up to the left or Gospel side.

The priest is about to read the holy Gospel, but out of reverence for its sacred words he first stands with bowed head before the center of the altar and prays:--

Munda cor meum, ac labia mea, omnipotens Deus, qui labia Isaiae Prophetiae calculo mundasti ignite: ita me tua grata miseratione dignare mundare, ut sanctum Evangelium tuum digne valeam nuntiare. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Cleanse my heart and my lips, O God Almighty, who didst cleanse the lips of the Prophet Isaias* with a burning coal; and vouchsafe through Thy gracious mercy, so to purify me that I may worthily proclaim Thy holy Gospel. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jube, Domine, benedicere. Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis, ut digne et competenter annuntiem Evangelium suum. Amen. Pray, Lord, a blessing. The Lord be in my heart and on my lips, that I may worthily and in a becoming manner announce His holy Gospel. Amen.

*The following quotation explains the reference to the burning coal: -- "Woe is me, because I have held my peace; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts. And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a live coal,

which he had taken with the tongs off the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed" (Isaias vi. 5-7).

Well may the priest ask that his lips be cleansed, because he is about to proclaim the words of Christ, which are great in their holiness, great in their wisdom and great in their power. From the Divine lips came, in a few, clear, significant words, the truest, the most exalted, the most practical doctrine concerning God and heavenly things, concerning man and his destiny, concerning the world and its final dissolution. The speech of Jesus is full of beauty; His words are luminous, "enlightening every one that cometh into this world" (John i. 9). His words are powerful and convincing when He teaches those truths which the greatest and most devout intellects have studied uninterruptedly for over nineteen hundred years without fully comprehending; and which other great but impious minds of all ages have not yet been able to overthrow, despite all their painstaking efforts. His words are strong and terrible, thundering against the profaners of the temple and against the deceitful pharisees. His words are most touching, especially when, at the Last Supper, He gives the final pledges of His love and bids His apostles a last farewell. His words are inimitable, whether He teaches or condemns, whether He prays or mourns. His words distill a heavenly unction; they bear the stamp of Divinity.

The Missal is carried from the Epistle to the Gospel side of the altar to indicate that the light of Faith, having been rejected by the Jews, was carried to the Gentiles. No book should be preferred to the book of the holy Gospel. With the deepest reverence, with a holy timidity and a heart overflowing with gratitude should we read these living words of Jesus Christ.

Having prayed that his lips be purified, the priest stands erect and with hands joined goes to the Gospel side and says:--

v. Dominus vobiscum.

v. The Lord be with you.

r. Et cum spiritu tuo.

r. And with the spirit.

v. Sequentia (sive Initium) sancti Evangelii secundum N.

v. The continuation (or beginning) of the holy Gospel according to N.

r. Gloria tibi, Domine.

r. Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

The priest makes the Sign of the Cross on the book at the beginning of the Gospel, then on his forehead, lips and breast. This is a prayer that the holy Gospel may be, first, in our mind, that we may know Our Lord's teachings; secondly, on our lips, that we may fearlessly proclaim the truths of our holy Faith, thirdly, in our heart, that we may faithfully live according to the precepts of the holy Gospel. The faithful also rise, to express their readiness to follow the teachings contained in Our Savior's words.

In the Gospel, Christ speaks directly to each one of us. The parables and example He shows us contain lessons for our daily life. They tell us of His love, mercy, gentleness, patience, long-suffering and charity. Every action, every word, has its special meaning. How sublime and majestic are His words as He announces the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, in which all the laws of nature are set aside to make way for the law of His infinite Love:--

In illo tempore: Dixit Jesus turbis Judaeorum: Caro mea vere est cibus, et Sanguis meus vere est potus. Qui manducat meam Carnem, et bibit meum Sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo. Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem: et qui mandat me, et ipse vivet propter me. Hic est panis qui de coelo descendit. Non sicut manducaverunt patres vestri manna, et mortui sunt. Qui manducat hunc panem, vivet in aeternum. At that time: Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews: My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me: This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live forever.

The faithful answer, through the server: "Laus tibi, Christe! -- Praise be to Thee, O Christ!" as an expression of their gratitude for the teachings of Our Lord contained in the Gospel, and as an act of thanksgiving to Jesus Christ who Himself brought the glad tidings of Redemption and God's kingdom. When the Gospel is finished, the priest raises the Missal with both hands, inclines a little, and kisses it where he signed it at the beginning, to show his love and veneration for the Divine word.* While kissing the Gospel, the priest says, in a low voice: "Per evangelica dicta deleantur nostra delicta--By the words of the Gospel may our sins be blotted out." The words of the Gospel, attentively and devoutly received, impart grace which leads to contrition and confession for the cleansing of our sins.

The moment when Our Savior is to be in our midst draws ever nearer. The Church wishes, before she gives Our Redeemer to us, to show us, through the holy Gospel, who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and what He expects of us. This is usually explained to the faithful by Christ's minister who on Sundays and holy days delivers a sermon after the Gospel. ----

*In Masses for the Departed, *Munda cor meum* is said, but a blessing is not asked, nor does the priest kiss the book.

The Torch of Faith

Nicene Creed

We have heard proclaimed the joyous Gospel tidings. We have read from the book of life. The Divine Teacher has Himself instructed us by His powerful words, His heavenly words, His grace-giving words. He has told us that He came to seek and to save. He has exhorted us to carry our cross after Him if we wish to be His disciples. He has given proofs of His goodness and love. He has told us of the beauty of heaven and the reward awaiting those who strive to attain it. Still under the wondrous spell of His great miracles, His sublime teaching and His Divine example, the Catholic heart with joy cries out:--

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium, et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum: et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula; Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero; genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri; per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem, descendit de coelis (hic genuflectitur). Et incarnatus est de Spiritu sancto ex Maria Virgine; et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis; sub Pontio Pilato passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas. Et ascendit in coelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos; cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum sanctum Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of

God, born of the Father before all ages; God of God, light of light, true God of true God; begotten not made; consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven (here all kneel): and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary; and was made man. He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the scriptures; and ascended into heaven. he sitteth at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; and His kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the remission of sins. And I await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

"Credo--I believe!" Glorious word! How impressive it sounds at this moment when the Savior is nigh. He will soon be on the altar. With the greatest ardor we should long for His coming. There is no more appropriate time than now to pour forth to Jesus the beautiful profession of our faith. Truly, the faithful soul most of necessity break forth in jubilation: "My Lord and my God, I believe in Thee, I believe in Thy word, and in this faith I will live and die."

The Substance of our Belief

The priest, standing at the middle of the altar, extends, elevates and then joins his hands while he says the "Nicene Creed." When he says "Deum" he bows his head to the Crucifix, as also at the words "Jesum Christum" and "simul adoratur." When uttering the words: "Et incarnatus est -- and was made Flesh," he genuflects on one knee until after the words: "Et homo factus est-- and was made man." As he says the last words of the "Credo," he makes the Sign of the Cross. At the word "Amen: he places his hands on the altar.

Let us too, with holy fervor, bend our knee at the words: Et incarnatus est. Let us worship the Divine Babe in the spirit of the shepherds and the Magi, when they adored Him at the crib in Bethlehem. If Our Savior had not become incarnate, there would be no Creed, no Holy Catholic Church; there would be no hope for us of forgiveness of sins or the glory of heaven to come. The Creed contains the whole substance of our Catholic belief.

Our Lord in all His mysteries can be placed before us under four titles: (1) As our great God; (2) as our loving Brother; (3) as our Oblation; (4) as our Bridegroom. He

is presented to us under these four aspects in the Creed. (1) We acknowledge that he is true God of true God; (2) that He made Himself our Brother by taking our human flesh with all the affections of a human heart; (3) that he suffered and died for us, thus becoming our Sacrifice, our Oblation; (4) that He is our glorious Bridegroom, who "on the third day arose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.: In these sentences of the Creed, the whole adorable Person of Christ is presented to us. We review the mystery of His life, starting from the highest throne in heaven where He is and always has been adored eternally; then we follow Him to the abasement of His incarnation; next, to the sufferings of His bitter Passion and Death, and finally back to His glory in heaven, with the hope of one day rising with Him to everlasting life.

The Fruit of the Gospel

The Nicene Creed in the confession of faith as it was formulated at the first general Council of Nice (325) and developed at the Council of Constantinople (381). It was prayed at Holy Mass in all the Eastern churches from about the middle of the fifth century. In the churches of the West it was not introduced until some time later. The Creed marks the end of the "Mass of the Catechumens" or the first part of the Holy Sacrifice. It is placed at the end of the prophetic part of Holy Mass and constitutes, as it were, the fruit of the Gospel. The Creed is, at the same time, a fitting transition to the second part of Holy Mass, the true Sacrifice. The true love of sacrifice springs from a living faith; therefore those present once more reanimate their faith so that they may with fervor take part in the sacrifice itself. The Creed is not always said at Mass, but only on certain days. The days on which it is to be said are arranged in the liturgy according to the mysteries of our religion it is to be said on all the festivals of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother; by reason of the doctrine of faith it is to be said on all the feasts of the apostles and doctors of the Church; and by reason of celebration or solemnity it is to be said on the feasts of patrons and other feasts of the first and second class, when the people are supposed to attend Mass in greater numbers. It is also said during the octave of feasts.

Sentiments of gratitude should fill our hearts while we sing or pray the Creed. Too often we say it thoughtlessly, without realizing that it is something holy, something sublime, which the Church has preserved for us down through the centuries, and which sets forth the same truths which the apostles taught, taking them from the lips of their Master. These are the same truths for which the confessors and martyrs have given their life and their blood.

Benedictine Nuns of Perpetual Adoration
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