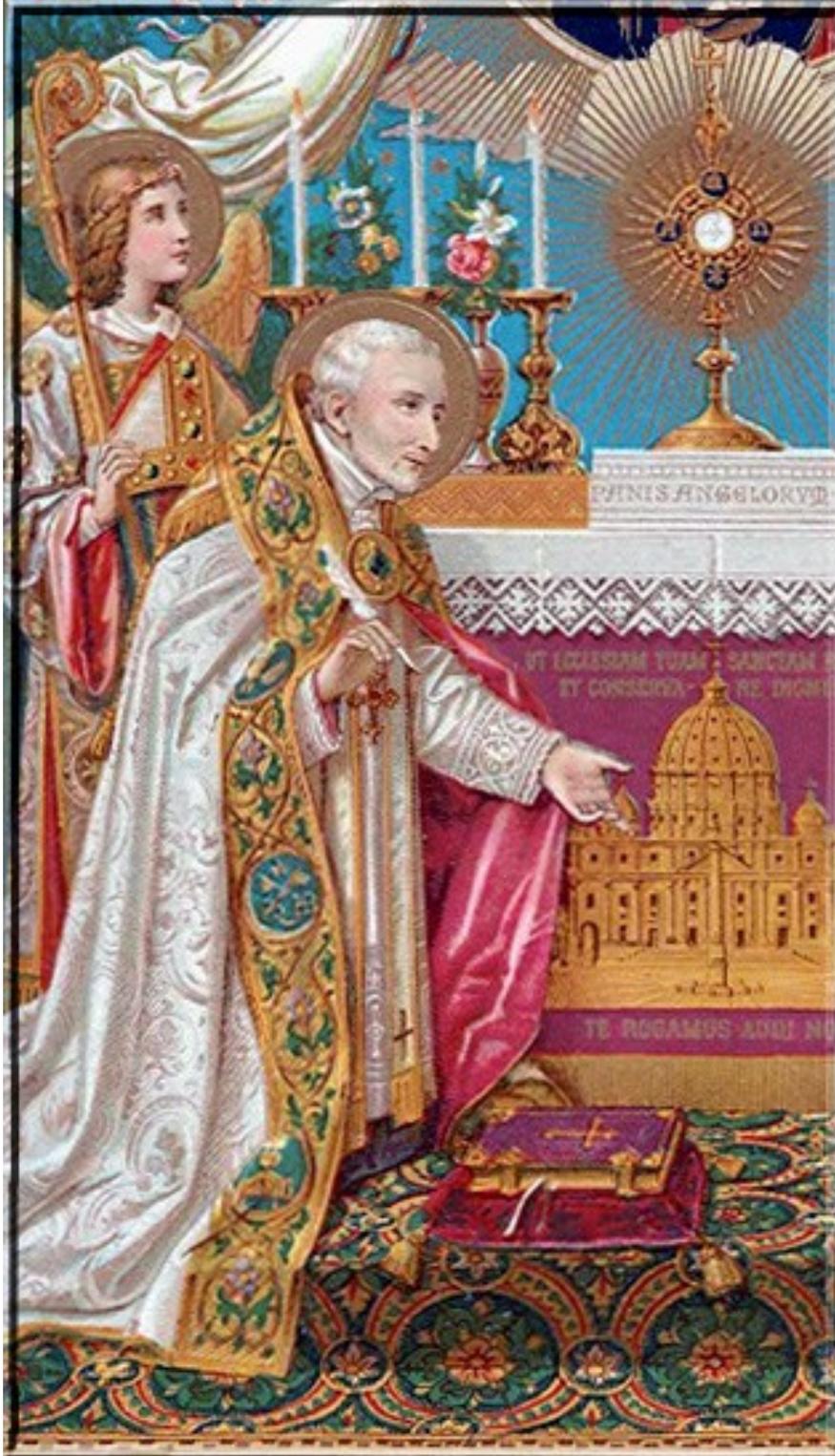


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J.M.J.

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI PRAYER BOOK

*Priest's Meditations, Considerations, Affections
Before and After Holy Mass*



†
Salus
Animarum
Lex
Suprema

**ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI'S
CONSIDERATIONS AND
AFFECTIONS.**

**"Acts for preparation and
thanksgiving,**

preceded by a few considerations
on the Holy Sacrifice of the
Mass."—

INTRODUCTION

1. IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY
SACRIFICE

Man cannot perform a more
holy, a more grand, and a more
sublime action than to celebrate a
Mass, in regard to which the
Council of Trent says: "We must
needs confess that no other work
can be performed by the faithful
so holy and divine as this
tremendous mystery itself."

[Necessario fatemur nullum aliud
opus adeo sanctum ac divinum a
Christi fidelibus tractari posse,
quam hoc tremendum
mysterium."-Sess. xxii. Decr, de
obs. in celebr. M.]

God himself cannot cause an
action to be performed that is
holier and grander than the
celebration of Mass. All the
sacrifices of the Old Law were but
a shadow, a figure, of our divine
Sacrifice. The sacrifice of the
lives of all the saints, of all the
angels, of the Mother of God
herself, would certainly never
procure for God the honor that a
single Mass procures, because
only the Mass renders to God an
infinite honor.

The Mass is therefore an action
that renders to God the greatest
honor that can be rendered to
him, and that obtains the most
powerful suffrage for the souls in
purgatory. It is also an action
that breaks most triumphantly
the powers of hell, that most
efficaciously appeases the anger
of the Lord against sinners, and
that obtains for us most abundant
graces. For what is the good thing

② of him, and what is his beautiful
thing, but the corn of the elect,
and wine springing forth virgins?
["Quid enim bonum ejus est. et
quid pulchrum ejus. nisi
frumentum electorum, et vinum
germinans virgins?"-Zach. ix. 17.]
At the Mass the Son of God
Himself sacrifices Himself to His
eternal Father and gives Himself
to us in the Holy Sacrament,
which contains all that is good
and beautiful in the Church; for,
as St. Thomas says, all the other
sacraments have as their end the
Eucharist—"Nearly all the
sacraments are brought to
perfection in the Eucharist."
["Fere omnia Sacramenta in
Eucharistia consummantur."
—P. 3, q. 65. a. 3.]

Every Mass that is celebrated
procures for the world the
greatest benefits that the Sacrifice
on the Cross procured for it,
according to the teaching of the
angelic Doctor who says:
"Whatever is the effect of the
Passion of our Lord, is also
entirely the effect of this
sacrament."

["Quidquid est effectus Dominicæ
passionis, totum etiam est
effectus hujus Sacramenti."
—In Jo. 6, lect. 6.]

The holy Church also assures us
of this when she says: "As many
times as this commemorative
sacrifice is celebrated, so often is
the work of our redemption
performed."

["Quoties hujus Hostiæ
commemoratio celebratur, opus
nostræ redemptionis
exercetur."—Dom. ix. post Pent.]

In fact, it is the same Redeemer
who is the Victim offered on the
altar where he offers Himself as a
sacrifice by the ministry of the
priests; and the Council of Trent
teaches: "For the victim is one
and the same—the same now
offering by the ministry of priests,
who then offered Himself on the

Cross, the manner alone of
offering being different."

["Una enim eademque est Hostia,
idem nunc offerens Sacerdotum
ministerio, qui seipsum tunc in
cruce obtulit, sola offerendi
ratione diversa."—Sess. xxii. De
sacrif. M. c. ii.]

Thus, as the Doctors teach, if
Jesus Christ had not yet come into
the world, the priest would make
Him come by pronouncing the
form of Consecration according to
the celebrated sentence of St.
Augustine: "O sublime dignity of
priests, in whose hands, as in the
womb of the Virgin, the Son of
God became incarnate!"

["O veneranda Sacerdotum
dignitas, in quorum manibus,
velut in utero Virginis, Filius Dei
incarnatur!"—Molina, Instit. Sac.
tr. I, c. 5, § 2.]

The sacrifice of the Cross is
applied to us by a Sacrifice of the
altar. The Passion of our Lord
renders us capable of
redemption; Mass puts us in
possession of it, and makes us
participate in the merits of Jesus
Christ.

We are then incapable, by any
work that we may perform, of
thanking God for the innumerable
benefits that He has conferred
upon us; but by offering to Him
Jesus Christ at the Sacrifice of the
Mass, we render Him worthy
thanksgiving. St. Irenæus says:
"The divine Sacrifice was
instituted that we might not be
ungrateful to God."
["Divinum Sacrificium ideo
institutum est, ne nos ingrati
simus apud Deum."
—Adv. Hær. 1. 4, c. 32.]

Moreover, by this sacrifice we
can obtain all graces. It has been
promised us that we shall obtain
all that we shall ask of God in the
name of Jesus Christ: If you ask
the Father anything in My name,
He will give it to you;
["Si quid petieritis Patrem in

nomine meo, dabit vobis.”

—John, xvi. 23.]

how much more confidently should we hope to obtain what we ask, when we offer Him Jesus Christ Himself! Our loving Redeemer is continually making intercession for us in heaven: Who also maketh intercession for us.

[“Qui etiam interpellat pro nobis.”
—Rom. viii. 34.]

But this is done more especially at the time of the Sacrifice of the Mass, in which, by the hands of the priest, He presents Himself to His Father to obtain graces for us. If we knew that all the saints, with the Blessed Virgin, were praying for us, what confidence would we not have to obtain favors! Now, a single prayer of Jesus Christ can effect infinitely more than all the prayers of the saints.

Poor, wretched sinners, what would become of us if we had not this divine Sacrifice to appease the Lord? “For the Lord,” says the Council of Trent, “appeases by the oblation thereof, and, granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins.”

[“Hujus quippe oblatione placatus Dominus, gratiam et donum poenitentiae concedens, crimina et peccata etiam ingentia dimittit.”—Sess. xxii. De Sacrif. M. c. ii.]

In a word, as the Passion of Jesus Christ was sufficient to save the whole world, so is a single Mass sufficient to save it. Hence, while offering the chalice, the priest says: “We offer unto Thee, O Lord! the chalice of salvation, . . . for our salvation, and for that of the whole world.”

[“Offerimus tibi, Domine, calicem salutaris . . . pro nostra et totius mundi salute.”]

2. THE MASS THAT IS CELEBRATED WITH BUT LITTLE RESPECT AND DEVOTION

Let us thence conclude what will be the account that will have to be rendered by priests who celebrate this great sacrifice without reverence. The Venerable Father John d’Avila, hearing that a priest had died after having celebrated his first Mass, cried out: “O what a terrible account will this priest have to render for this first Mass!”

Alas! where do we find devotion, reverence, among the priests that say Mass? Mass is, as we have said, the sublimest, the holiest action; so that, according to the Council of Trent, we should perform it with as much devotion and purity of conscience as possible: “It is sufficiently clear that all industry and diligence are to be applied to this end; that it be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart, and outward show of devotion and piety.”

[“Satis apparet omnem operam et diligentiam in eo ponendam esse, ut, quanta maxima fieri potest interiori cordis munditia atque exteriori devotionis ac pietatis specie, peragatur.”—Sess. xxii. Decr. de obs. in cel. M.]

Nevertheless, this action is the most neglected by many priests. Certainly, they would use more care in performing a part in a comedy than they would in celebrating Mass. There are some that go so far as to say Mass in less than a quarter of an hour. This cannot be excused from a mortal sin even when it would be a Mass for the dead, as we have proved in our Moral Theology, [Theol. mor. 1. 6, n. 400.] for it is impossible to celebrate Mass in so short a time without neglecting in a serious manner the words and the ceremonies;

3 without gravely failing in the respect and gravity that such a Sacrifice demands; and, moreover, without giving great scandal to seculars.

In speaking of this subject, one should shed tears, and tears of blood. On the day of judgment, priests that celebrate in this manner will be greatly to be pitied. But greatly are also to be compassionated bishops that permit them to celebrate Mass; for bishops, as in the common opinion of Doctors, and as is certain according to the Council of Trent, are strictly obliged to forbid priests to celebrate Mass if they say it with such an irreverence (called impiety by the Council), which, while speaking of this divine Sacrifice, expresses itself thus: “The holy Synod decrees that the ordinary bishops of places shall take diligent care, and be bound, to prohibit all those things that irreverence (which can hardly be separated from impiety) has introduced.” [“Decernit sancta synodus ut Ordinarii locorum ea omnia prohibere sedulo curent ac teneantur, quæ irreverentia (quæ ab impietate vix sejuncta esse potest) induxit.”

—Sess. xxii. de obs. in cel. M.]

To fulfil this precept of the Council conformably to the terms quoted, “they shall take diligent care, and be bound, to prohibit.” The bishops are therefore obliged continually to watch and to gather information in regard to the manner in which the Masses are celebrated in their dioceses, and to suspend from celebrating Mass those that perform this duty without due care and without befitting gravity. Besides, this obligation imposed on the bishops regards, not only secular priests, but also religious; for by the same decree the bishops are in this respect appointed

apostolic delegates—

“As delegates of the Apostolic See, they may prohibit, ordain, reform, and establish, and may compel the faithful people inviolably to observe them, by ecclesiastical censures and other penalties.” [“Ipsi, ut delegati Sedis Apostolicæ, prohibeant, mandent, corrigant, atque, ad ea servanda, censuris aliisque poenis compellant.”]

However, notwithstanding all this, we must say that it is a pity to see priests ordinarily holding in contempt Jesus Christ when they celebrate this august mystery; and what causes most astonishment is to see even religious belonging to the reformed Orders, in which regular observance should reign, saying Mass in such a way that they would scandalize even Turks and idolaters.

It is true that the Sacrifice of the altar suffices to pacify God for all the sins of the world; but how can it pacify him for the injuries that priests heap upon him during the time that they offer the sacrifice to him? In celebrating Mass with so little respect, they on their part cause God more dishonor than honor; they offend him then by outraging the divine Victim even though they offer him to God. The heretic who does not believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrifice is guilty; but more guilty is he who believes in it and manifests no respect for it. Moreover, the priest who celebrates Mass with little respect causes those that are present to lose the esteem and the veneration due to the majesty of so great a sacrament. The Jewish people had at first great veneration for Jesus Christ; but when they saw Him despised by the priests, they lost all the esteem that they had entertained for Him. So, also, at present the

4 people lose the respect that they had for Mass when they see it treated with so much negligence and indevotion by priests. As a Mass celebrated devoutly inspires devotion, so, on the contrary, the irreverence of the priest diminishes the veneration and even the faith of those that are present. In fact, how could the indevotion of the priest, who is the minister of this divine Sacrifice and the guardian of the body of Jesus Christ, inspire others with sentiments of respect and devotion? What idea can a priest give to others, of the sanctity and the majesty of so august a mystery, who shows for it contempt rather than veneration?

But one will say: Seculars complain of priests when the Mass is long. What! is the little devotion that seculars have, to be the rule governing the amount of respect with which the priest should celebrate Mass? I add that if all the priests would celebrate with the respect and the gravity that are due to this great sacrifice, seculars would assuredly be penetrated with a quite different veneration for Mass; and they would not complain of being obliged to hear a Mass that lasts half an hour. But usually seeing only Masses that inspire anything but respect and devotion, they assume the habit of indevotion and languor in the faith. Then if they see a priest celebrate Mass with befitting reverence, that bad habit makes them feel annoyed, and they complain; and those that do not grow tired by remaining several hours at a gaming-table, or in an ante-chamber to pay court to a man of this world, find it irksome to spend half an hour in a church in order to hear Mass. If all the priests, says an author, would celebrate Mass as priests, seculars would hear Mass

devoutly as Christians.

How astonishing! God enjoined upon priests of the Old Law to tremble at the mere sight of the sanctuary—[*Pavete ad sanctuarium meum*; Levit. xxvi. 2.] and the priests of Jesus Christ should dare to remain at the altar in the presence of the incarnate Word to offer Him as a sacrifice, to hold Him in their hands, and to nourish themselves with His adorable flesh,—to do all this with little respect!

For my part, says one of them, I do not fail in what is essential; to fail in the ceremonies is a trifling matter. Let him who speaks in this manner listen to the words that the Lord addressed to those that neglected the ceremonies of the ancient sacrifices: *But if thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep and to do all His commandments and ceremonies which I command thee this day, all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shall thou be in the city, cursed in the field. . . .*

[“*Quod si audire nolueris vocem Domini Dei tui, ut custodias et facias Omnia mandata ejus et cæremonias, quas ego præcipio tibi hodie, venient super te omnes maledictions istæ, et apprehendent te. Maledictus eris in civitate, maledictus in agro. . . .*”-Deut. xxviii. 15.]

St. Teresa used to say: “For the least of the ceremonies of the Church I would lay down my life a thousand times.” [Life, ch. 33.] And the priest should set little value on the ceremonies of Mass! Father Suarez [De Sacram. d. 84, s. 2.] teaches that the omission of any ceremony in the Mass is a sin; and Doctors agree in saying that a notable negligence in the ceremonies, which must necessarily be the case if one celebrates Mass too hurriedly, is a

mortal sin, as well on account of the great irreverence that one commits against the holy Sacrifice as on account of the scandal given thereby to those that are present by making them lose the veneration that is due to the Mass. To you, O priests, that despise My name, and have said: Wherein have we despised Thy name? . . . In that you say: The table of the Lord is contemptible. ["Ad vos, o Sacerdotes, qui despicitis nomen meum, et dixistis: In quo despeximus nomen tuum? . . . In eo quod dicitis: Mensa Domini despecta est."—Mal. i. 6.]

The contempt that priests have for the altar is the cause why others also show contempt for it.

Because Mass is so badly celebrated, we see that among so many priests there are so few saints. Moses did not emerge from the interview that he had with God without being entirely inflamed with love so that his face was resplendent with light; in the same way no priest should leave the altar without being inflamed with new fervor. But experience shows that the priests who celebrate Mass with little devotion always continue in the same faults. They are seen to be always lukewarm, always impatient, proud, envious, always attached to their own honor, to their own interest, to the pleasures and pastimes of the world. Where is therefore the fruit of so many divine Sacrifices that they offer every day on the altar of the Lord, and of so many Communions in which every day they nourish themselves with the flesh of Jesus Christ?

3. PREPARATION FOR MASS

Cardinal Bona gives us this advice: "The defect is not in the food, but in the disposition of the one that eats it." ["Defectus non in cibo est, sed in edentis dispositione."—De Sacr. M. c. 6, §6.] Hence, to come to the point, I say that the first cause why priests commit so many faults and celebrate with so little devotion and respect is that they go to the altar without thinking of what they are going to do; one goes to the altar through a motive of self-interest, through habit, without the proper disposition, and without preparation.

As for the *disposition*: in order to derive benefit from the Mass two things are necessary—the desire to advance in divine love, and detachment from earthly affections. Divine love finds no room in a heart filled with the things of the earth; it cannot enter there.

As for the *preparation*: at least a half-hour's, or, at the very least, a quarter of an hour's, meditation should be devoted to it. What devotion can be brought to the Mass by a priest who goes to celebrate Mass without preparation, passing at once to the altar from worldly occupations and discourse, without even thinking of what he is going to do?

It is indeed remarkable that so many excellent authors—Cardinal Bona, Fathers Molina, Mansi, and Sabatini, and many others—earnestly recommend the preparation for Mass, and have written for this purpose so beautiful considerations and affections; and yet how many are there that make this preparation? I have therefore thought of publishing the following Considerations and Affections as a preparation for Mass for every day of the week. I have tried to

5 make them very short, so that priests who cannot spend much time in preparation may at least read these few reflections before celebrating, and recite the acts that follow them.

4. THANKSGIVING

At the end I have added some other Affections and Prayers for thanksgiving after Mass; for the neglect of making the thanksgiving is also a very deplorable disorder, which is the cause why priests derive so little benefit from the holy Sacrifice. What a pity to see so many priests who, having scarcely said Mass, leave the church or begin to speak about useless things! Authors also strive to recommend the union with God after Communion; but who are the priests that observe this practice? There are some; but they are rare. We even see religious who, living in solitude, say many prayers at other times, but who are careless about uniting themselves to God after Mass.

Many grave authors, however, teach that holy Communion, as long as the sacramental species last, produce more and more fruit in the soul, according as we multiply the acts by which we dispose ourselves to receive graces. Besides, they say that the good acts after Communion are of much more value and merit before God than if they were made at some other time; and with reason, for then the soul is united with Jesus Christ, according to what He Himself has said: *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him.*

["Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo."—John, vi. 57.]

On His part our Lord, at this moment, seems to be more disposed to distribute His graces. St. Teresa assures us that Jesus Christ after Communion places himself in our soul as upon a throne of grace, and he says to it: What wilt thou that I should do to thee?

["Quid tibi vis faciam?"—Mark, x. 51.]

Dear soul, ask graces of me; I have expressly come to do thee favors; ask of me now what thou wishest of me, and thou wilt obtain it. In the same manner Father Balthasar Alvarez and all the mystical Doctors recommend that one should set a high value on the time that follows Communion. The Venerable John d'Avila, even during his missions, as is related in his life, spent at least two hours in prayer after Mass.

6 5. A WORD TO THOSE THAT ABSTAIN FROM SAYING MASS THROUGH HUMILITY

Before coming to the Considerations, it seems fitting to add here the opinion expressed by a wise author in regard to those who through humility abstain from celebrating Mass. These priests say: I abstain from celebrating Mass often, because I know that I am unworthy of such a privilege. The author answers them, that it is well to abstain from saying Mass out of humility, but that to do so is not the best act: the acts of humility procure honor to God, but it is a finite honor, which comes from us; while the honor that we render to him in celebrating Mass is an infinite honor, because it is given to God by a divine Person. When, therefore, we take care to prepare ourselves to celebrate Mass with such a devotion as our weakness will permit us, we procure much more glory to God by celebrating Mass than by abstaining from doing so through humility.

PREPARATION FOR MASS CONSIDERATIONS AND AFFECTIONS FOR EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK

I. FOR SUNDAY

CONSIDERATION

De stercore erigens pauperem,
ut colloquet eum cum
principibus populi sui. Ps. cxii.
7, 8.

(Raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dunghill).

Consider, O priest, that God could not have made you greater in this world than he has done. For to what greater dignity could he have raised you, than to make you his minister on earth for those things that belong to his greater glory? He has allowed you to ascend the altar, to sacrifice thereon his own Son. In how many ways has he not chosen you, in order to make you a priest! Out of innumerable creatures whom He might have made, He has chosen you, and has placed you in the world. Again, from the midst of millions of infidels and heretics He has chosen to place you in the true Church: He has made you a Christian and a Catholic. Moreover, out of so many millions of believers He has made you a priest.

Ah! if God should have honored but one man in the world with the priesthood, with the power of causing the Incarnate Word to descend upon this earth and of delivering souls from hell by absolving them from their sins, in what estimation would not such a priest be held by all? and what thanksgivings would not this priest offer to God? What would he not do out of love for him, in seeing himself chosen before all other men for so great an honor? But consider here, O priest, that the number of

other priests in no way diminishes your own dignity and your own obligations.

It is with reason, then, that Almighty God expects every priest to belong entirely to himself. The Holy Scriptures call a priest *homo Dei*, that is, a man who belongs to God alone. The priests of the Old Law extended their hands over the victims to signify that they themselves offered their own lives in sacrifice, in the same way as they sacrificed the lives of the animals: and so in like manner, when the priests of the New Law extend their hands over the oblata they likewise declare that they are bound to offer their lives and their entire selves to God, in union with the life of Jesus Christ, whom they offer in the Holy Sacrifice.

Behold, then, you are now about to approach the altar, where by a few words you will call down the divine Word into your hands, and at the sound of your voice the substance of the bread and of the wine will be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. You are going, moreover, to the altar as the ambassador of the human race, to intercede with God for the Church and for all mankind. Prepare yourself, then, by the following affections.

AFFECTIONS

O my God! it is in me indeed that the words of David have their proper fulfilment: *De stercore erigens pauperem, ut collocet eutti eum principibus populi sui*. For see how I, a miserable sinner, who for my sins have deserved these many years to be imprisoned in hell beneath the devil's feet, abandoned by all and by Thee my beloved Lord, am now about to celebrate, that is to

offer Thee in sacrifice Thine own Son. Behold, in a few moments the King of Heaven, the Eternal Word, will at my word come down upon the altar. He will come into my hands, to be offered by me, and then to feed me with his own most holy flesh. God of my soul, I, a priest! I, who have so often turned my back upon Thee! I, who for a mere trifle, or for a brief and empoisoned pleasure, have bartered Thy friendship and renounced Thy grace and Thy love. Ah! how wert Thou able to choose me among so many faithful and innocent souls to be Thy priest?

Enlighten me, I beseech Thee, O Lord; increase my faith: *Noverim te, noverim me*. Make me know who Thou art, who wilt give Thyself to me this morning; and who I am, who am about to receive Thee. I pray Thee, through the merits of Thy blood, cleanse my soul from its many stains before I ascend the altar. Pardon me, O my Jesus! before Thou comest into my hands and into my breast. I have offended and displeased Thee, the Sovereign Good: I am sorry for this with all my soul.

I believe, my Redeemer, that Thou art the Son of God; that Thou didst die for me, and that Thou hast left Thyself in the most Holy Sacrament to be sacrificed by Thy priests, and to become our food.

I hope of Thee, through Thy Passion and Thy promises, to love Thee always for the time to come, and to possess Thee in eternity. I love Thee, my dear Redeemer—I love Thee more than myself; and because I love Thee, I repent with my whole heart of all my offences against Thee, because by them I have offended Thee who art infinite goodness. [It is well to repeat every day, immediately before celebrating, these four

7 acts—of faith, hope, love, and contrition; and this even though the meditation be already made.]

I love Thee, my God; but I love Thee too little.

I would wish to love Thee as much as a priest is bound to love Thee. I desire to receive Thee with that love with which so many loving souls receive Thee. In flame me, I beseech Thee, with Thy love, and make me all Thine own.

Eternal Father, I offer Thee this Sacrifice in thanksgiving for all Thy benefits to mankind, especially for those conferred on the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, the most Blessed Virgin, on my guardian angel, and on all my patron saints: and I beg of Thee, through the merits of Jesus Christ, holy perseverance, Thy love, and all those other graces that Jesus, Mary, and my holy Advocates ask of Thee for me.

With regard to prayers for others, it will be well for the priest to recommend in the holy Mass those who are named in the following Memento:

MEMENTO OF THE LIVING

I. O Lord! I recommend to Thee the Sovereign Pontiff, and all prelates, confessors, preachers, and priests: grant them zeal and the spirit of their state, that they may give themselves to the salvation of souls.

II. My relatives, friends, and enemies; the dying who are on the point of leaving this world; and all the faithful who are in Thy grace: give them, O Lord, perseverance and the fervor in Thy love.

III. All infidels, heretics, and sinners: give them light and strength, that they may all know and love Thee.

MEMENTO OF THE DEAD

I. I recommend to Thee, O Lord! the souls of my parents, benefactors, friends, and enemies; and of those who are in Purgatory through my fault.

II. The souls of the priests, and especially of those who labored for souls.

III. The souls of those who were most devout to the Passion of Jesus Christ, to the most Holy Sacrament, and to the divine Mother; the souls who are the most forgotten; those who are suffering the most; and those who are nearest to the gate of Paradise.

Each Memento may be repeated every day; at least the intention may be made of recommending those here specified.

FORMA INTENTIONIS A.D. MISSAM CELEBRANDAM

Ad laudem et gloriam Sanctissimæ Trinitatis, in memoriam benedicti Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi, vitæ, passionis, mortis, et resurrectionis, ac in operum et meritorum suorum omniumque Sanctorum unionem; ad laudem quoque et exaltationem Beatissimæ semper Virginis ejus matris Mariæ, coelestium Angelorum, Sanctorum atque Sanctarum, et signanter N. N. et aliorum devotorum meorum; offero, etiam cum ipsorum beatorum spiritu laudibus, Sanctorum omnium precibus et meritis, nunc et semper, hoc et omnia alia sacrificia, officia, orationes, et bona opera totius mundi, pro meis præsentibus et futuris animæ et corporis necessitatibus; in auxilium et consolationem meam, et in remissionem omnium peccatorum meorum, quorum veram contritionem semper habeo et habere intendo, Conor et cupio; omniumque vivorum et defunctorum meorum parentum, fratrum, sororum, consanguineorum, amicorum, inimicorum, benefactorum in spiritualibus et temporalibus, superiorum, subditorum, ac illorum,

8 quibus fui gravamen, scandalum, et occasio peccandi; pro omni gradu Sanctæ Catholicæ Ecclesiæ ac illius conservatione, augmento et exaltatione; christianorum principum unione et concordia, hæresum extirpatione, summi Pontificis salute, et animarum in purgatorio existentium liberatione; pro conservatione et augmento omnium observantium religionum, pro conversione omnium infidelium nationum, pro mihi commissis et commendatis. Denique pro illis omnibus vivis atque defunctis, pro quibus Dominus noster Jesus Christus et ejus Beatissima Mater et Virgo Maria sciunt et volunt me debere orare: sic oro et obsecro, sic consecrare et sacrificare intendo et propono, ac juxta intentionem Sanctæ Catholicæ Ecclesiæ et meorum Superiorum pro debito voluntatem.

Ego N. minister, licet indignus. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. Cum intentione lucrandi et acquirendi omnes quascumque possum indulgentias.

II. FOR MONDAY CONSIDERATION

Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.—*Luc. xxii. 19.*

(Do this for a commemoration of Me.)

It is the opinion of sound theologians that by these words priests are bound, when celebrating Mass, to call to mind the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. And it seems the Apostle requires the name of those who communicate: *Quotiescumque manducabitis panem hunc et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis* (I Cor. xi. 26). St. Thomas writes that for this very end the Redeemer has left us the most Holy Sacrament, namely, that we might ever remember the blessings that He has obtained for us and the love He has shown in dying for us: *Ut autem tanti beneficii jugis in nobis maneret*

memoria, Corpus suum in cibum et Sanguinem in potum fidelibus reliquit (Off. Ss. Sacr. lect. 4). And hence the most holy Sacrament is called, by the same holy Doctor, *Passionis memoriale*.

Consider, therefore, O priest, that this most Holy Victim which you are about to sacrifice is that same Lord who gave His blood and His life for you. But the Holy Mass is not only the memorial of the Sacrifice of the Cross, it is the very same Sacrifice; for He who offers it, and the Victim offered, are the same, namely, the Incarnate Word. The manner alone is different. The one was a sacrifice of blood, this is unbloody; in the one Jesus Christ really died, in the other He dies mystically: *Una eademque hostia, sola offerendi ratione diversa* (Trident Sess. xxii. c. 2). Imagine, therefore, when you celebrate, that you are on Calvary, and that you are offering to God the blood and the life of His Son. And when you communicate, imagine that you are drawing from the wounds of the Saviour His Precious Blood.

Consider, moreover, that in every Mass the work of Redemption is renewed; so much so, that if Jesus Christ had not died once upon the Cross, the celebration of one Mass would procure for the world the very same blessings that we have received from the death of our Redeemer. *Tantum valet* (says St. John Chrysostom) *celebratio Missæ quantum mors Christi in cruce*. So that all the merits of the Passion are applied to men by means of the Sacrifice of the altar, and more abundantly to the priests who offer it.

Hence St. Francis of Assisi (who considered himself unworthy of the priesthood, and therefore would never become a priest) exhorted priests to detach themselves from the things of the

world, and to give themselves solely to the love and honor of their God, who had so greatly love and honored them; and he added that those priests were indeed exceedingly unhappy who, whilst they have Jesus so near to them on the altar, cherish in their hearts an attachment for anything of this world: *Videte sacerdotes* (these are the saint's words) *Dignitatem vestram; et sicut super omnes propter hoc mysterium honoravit vos Dominus, ita et vos diligite eum, et honorate. Magna infirmitas, quando Jesum sic præsentem habetis, et aliud in toto mundo curatis.* [John Herold, De Sanct. s. 48.]

AFFECTIONS

O Lord! I am unworthy to appear before Thee; but encouraged by Thy goodness, who has chosen me in spite of my unworthiness to be Thy priest, I come this morning to offer unto Thee Thy Son. I offer Thee, then, O my God! the spotless Lamb, in satisfaction for my sins and for those of all mankind.

Ecce Agnus Dei. Here is the Lamb Thou didst behold one day sacrificed for Thy glory and for our salvation upon the altar of the Cross. For the love of this Victim, so dear to Thee, apply his merits to my soul, and pardon me all the offences, great and small, that I have committed against Thee. I grieve with my whole heart for having offended Thee, the Infinite Goodness.

And Thou, my Jesus, come and wash away in Thy blood all my stains, ere I receive Thee this morning. *Domine, non sum dingus, ut intres sub tectum meum; sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea.* I am not worthy to receive Thee; but Thou, O heavenly physician, art able with one word to heal all my

wounds. Come and heal me.

Erravi sicut ovis quæ periit. I am that sheep who have wilfully chosen to damn myself, by flying away from Thee, my Redeemer; but Thou art the good shepherd, who hast given Thy life to save me. *Quære servum tuum, quia mandata tua non sum oblitus.* Seek me, O my Jesus; do not abandon me. Seek me, and bind me on Thy shoulders, for I firmly purpose to serve and love Thee as much as I am able.

Thou has said, *Oves meæ vocem meam audiunt, et non rapiet eas quisque de manu mea.* Thou art calling me to love Thee: behold, I leave all and come to Thee, my Life. I desire to obey Thee in all things. I renounce all the pleasures of the world, since Thou dost deign to give me this morning Thy most holy flesh to be my food.

I love Thee, O my Jesus, above every good; and I desire to receive Thee, in order to love Thee more. Thou givest Thyself wholly to me; I give myself all to Thee. Thou shalt be always my all, my only good, my only love.

O Mary, my Mother, obtain for me a portion of that humility and fervor with which thou didst receive Jesus in thy Holy Communion.

III. FOR TUESDAY

CONSIDERATION

Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui.—*Matt. xvii. 5.*

(This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased).

In the Old Law, men honored God by many sacrifices; but in the New, God is more honored by one single Mass than by all the old sacrifices, for these were but the shadow and type of our Sacrifice

9 of the altar. In the Holy Mass, God is honored as much as he deserves to be honored, since the same infinite honor is paid to him again that Jesus Christ paid to him when he sacrificed himself upon the Cross. One single Mass gives more honor to God than have given to him, or will give him all the prayers and penances of the saints, the labors of the apostles, all the torments of the martyrs and all the burning love of the seraphim and of the divine Mother. Now, it is this honor, O priest, which God desires to receive this morning from you.

It is also just that God should be thanked for all the immense blessings which, in his infinite goodness, he has conferred upon us. But what fitting thanksgiving can we miserable creatures offer to Him? If the Lord had only but once shown us one single mark of affection, even then he would deserve an infinite thanksgiving from us, inasmuch as that affection is the gift and favor of an infinite God. But see he has given us a way of not remaining overwhelmed with confusion in the midst of such obligations, and of thanking him worthily. And how? By offering to him Jesus in the Mass. In this way God is fully thanked and satisfied.

This great Victim which is offered to him is his own very Son, in whom he finds his delight. The sacrifice is of the life of a God, who in the Consecration and in the Communion is sacrificed by a mystical death. It was in this way that David thanked God for all the graces he had received: *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi? calicem salutaris accipiam (Ps. cxv. 13).* And so Jesus himself thanked His divine Father for all the blessings conferred upon mankind: *Et accepto calice gratias egit et dixit: Accipite, et dividite inter vos*

(Luke, xxii..)

AFFECTIONS

O my God and my Creator, how couldst Thou choose me to honor Thee by means of the Sacrifice of Thy Son, when in past times I have so dishonored Thee by the insults I have offered Thee? Instead of punishing me in hell, Thou hast honored me in making me a priest and the minister of Thy glory.

Since, then, Thou dost deign and art pleased to receive this great Sacrifice from my hands, I unite my poor heart to the Heart of Jesus Christ, and in his name I offer it to Thee, in acknowledgment of Thy supreme dominion.

Would that I could see Thy infinite majesty adored and loved by all men! May the honor that I pay Thee this morning, in sacrificing to Thee Thy Son, make amends for all the dishonor that men have shown and show Thee by their sins!

I intend at the same time to thank Thee by this Mass for all the blessings conferred upon the world, and especially on me a miserable sinner, who have deserved for my ingratitude to be abandoned by Thee, for I have gone on multiplying my sins, and Thou hast continued to increase Thy graces to me. I thank Thee, O infinite Goodness; rather I will say, Jesus Christ thanks Thee for me.

Enlighten me, I beseech Thee, O Lord, this morning, through the merits of Jesus Christ; inflame me with Thy love, and detach me from the earth: do not allow me any longer to resist so many winning arts of Thy love. I love Thee, O Sovereign Good, with all my heart. I desire to leave all, in order to please Thee. O God, worthy of infinite love, make

10 known to me, I pray Thee, more and more the greatness of Thy goodness, so that I may become evermore enamoured of Thee, and may labor to please Thee in all things without reserve.

Thou hast shown Thyself enamoured of my soul, and shall I be able to love any but Thee? No, my Lord; henceforward I will live for Thee alone: I will love Thee only, who indeed deservest all my love. O Eternal Father, I hope in the blood of Jesus Christ that Thou by Thy grace wilt carry this my desire into effect. Thou hast shown me so many favors when I was flying away from Thee; much more than am I bound to hope from Thee, now that I seek and desire nought but Thy love. O Mary, my Mother, who carried in thy bosom that God whom I am going this morning to receive, help me to receive Him with humility and love.

IV. FOR WEDNESDAY

CONSIDERATION

Ipsa est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris.—I John, ii. 2.
(He is the propitiation for our sins.)

Consider that the punishment due to sins is remitted by the Sacrifice of the altar, and immense benefits are obtained in favor of sinners. Unhappy should we be were there not this great Sacrifice to withhold the divine justice from inflicting those just chastisements that our sins deserve. It is certain that all the victims of the Old Law were not able to appease the indignation of God against sinners. *Numquid placari potest Dominus in millibus arietum?* (Mich. vi. 7.) Even had the lives of all men and all angels been sacrificed, the divine justice would not have been worthily satisfied for one single sin

committed by a creature against its Creator. Jesus Christ alone was able to make satisfaction for our sins. *Ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris.* And for this end the eternal Father sent him into the world, that by becoming mortal man he might appease for sinners. And this sacrifice is renewed in every Mass that is celebrated.

Consider, therefore, O priest, your great office, to be the mediator between God and sinners, by offering upon the altar the life and merits of Jesus Christ, for the sake of which the Lord is moved to grant to sinners light and strength, and then the pardon of their sins: *Hac oblatione placatus Dominus, gratiam et donum poenitentiae concedens, crimina et peccata etiam ingentia dimittit* (Trid. Sess. xxii. c. 2).

Oh, how much more powerfully does the voice of the innocent blood of the Redeemer cry out for pity on us, than did the blood of Abel cry out for vengeance against Cain!

Accessistis ad Mediatorem Jesum, et sanguinis aspersionem melius loquentem quam Abel (Heb. xii. 22.)

AFFECTIONS

O great God, Thou art indignant against sinners, and with too great reason; for they repay Thee with ingratitude for all that great love Thou hast shown them. But if the sins of the world are great, greater is the offering and the gift which this morning I am about to present to Thee: *Non sicut delictum, ita et donum* (Rom. v. 15). I offer to Thee this morning the Sacrifice of Thine own Son: may this Victim, so dear to Thee, appease Thee, and move Thee to have pity on all poor sinners, who either know Thee not, or if they know Thee,

will not love Thee, and live deprived of Thy grace. Give them light and strength to come out of the miserable state in which they are blindly living.

I pray to Thee for all, but especially for myself who have been favored by Thee more highly than others, and who have been more ungrateful than others in offending and despising Thee. For the love of Jesus Christ, pardon me, O my God! all my sins, mortal and venial: all acts of impatience, my untruths, my intemperance, the distractions and negligences at Mass, in my Office, and in prayer. I repent of them all, because they have offended Thee, the infinite Goodness, who dost deserve from all men, but especially from me, a priest, infinite love.

I love Thee, infinite Goodness; I love Thee above all things; and I promise Thee to be willing to die rather than wilfully to give Thee the slightest displeasure. Ah, my Jesus, Thy death, Thy blood, are my hope. By Thy merits I ask of Thee and I hope for the grace to be faithful to Thee, and to love Thee with all my heart, and to love none but Thee. Most holy Mary, may thy assistance accompany me now that I go to offer this great Sacrifice to God.

V. FOR THURSDAY

CONSIDERATION

In omnibus divites facti estis in illo.—I Cor. i. 5.

(In all things you are made rich in Him.)

Consider that by means of the Holy Mass Almighty God hears more quickly the prayers of his priests. God indeed at all times, as soon as he is asked through the merits of Jesus Christ, dispenses his graces; but St. John

Chrysostom says that during the Holy Mass he dispenses them more abundantly at the prayers of the priest, because it is then that these prayers have greater weight, from being united to the prayers of Jesus himself, who is the chief priest, and who offers Himself in this Sacrifice in order to obtain graces for us.

According to the Council of Trent,[Sess. xxii. cap. ii.] the time of the celebration of Mass is precisely that time in which the Lord is on the throne of grace, to which we are exhorted by the Apostle to have recourse, that we may obtain the Divine mercy and find grace: *Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno* (Heb. iv. 16).

St. John Chrysostom [De incompr. Dei nat. hom. 3.] says that the angels also wait for the time of Mass to intercede with greater efficacy in our favor; and he adds, that what is not obtained during Mass is with difficulty obtained at any other time.

Oh, what treasures of graces may a priest obtain for himself and others if he beseeches the Lord with confidence when he celebrates at the altar! The Venerable Father Antony de Colellis said: "When I am celebrating and hold in my hands my Jesus Christ, I obtain of him whatever I desire."

In a word, St. Paul declares that in Jesus Christ we obtain all riches and every grace, if we ask the Father for them through His merits: *In omnibus divites facti estis in illo; ita ut nihil vobis desit in ulla gratia* (I Cor. i. 5, 7). But this is especially the case when the priest honors Almighty God and propitiates him by the sacrifice of His own Son. And if the Father precisely by means of the Mass gives us in the most

11 Holy Sacrament this same Son who has been sacrificed to him, how can He, having given us His Son, deny us any other grace? *Quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?* (Rom. viii. 32.)

AFFECTIONS

O miserable being that I have been! how many graces have I lost, O my God, from having neglected to ask Thee for them in the Masses that I have celebrated! But since Thou now givest me light, I will no longer be negligent in this respect. I unite, then, O eternal Father, my prayers with those of Jesus Christ; and for the love of this Thy Son, whom this morning I am going to sacrifice to Thee, I pray Thee, in the first place, to grant me pardon for all my sins, of which I repent with my whole heart: and then make me know how infinitely Thou art deserving of being loved, and the immense obligation I am under of loving Thee for Thy goodness and the love Thou hast borne me: and give me strength to detach myself from all earthly affections, and to occupy my heart in the love of Thee alone, the sovereign Good, who hast loved me so much.

I pray Thee also to enlighten those who know Thee not, and who are living deprived of Thy grace. Give to all the gift of Thy grace. Give to all the gift of Thy holy fear. O infinite love of my God, make Thyself known, make Thyself loved.

And do Thou, my dear Saviour, make me wholly Thine before I die, and do not allow me to be ever again separated from Thee. Ah, my Jesus, as long as I live I am in this danger. I do not wish to lose Thee more. Beg of Thy Father to let me die sooner than to turn my back on Thee again. Beg of him to bind me ever more

closely to Thyself, who hast in so many ways obliged me to love Thee. My Jesus, Thou art my love and my hope. Grant that every time I behold Thee on the altar I may say to Thee with my whole heart that which St. Philip Neri said when he saw Thee in the most Holy Sacrament—"Behold my love, behold my love, behold all my love."

Most Holy Mary, do thou also pray for me. I am a priest. Make me by thy intercession that which a priest ought to be, all for Jesus Christ.

VI. FOR FRIDAY

CONSIDERATION

Accipite et comedite; hoc est corpus meum.—Matt. xxvi. 26.

(Take ye, and eat: This is My body.)

Consider that a priest who says Mass with devotion is in a special manner sanctified by it; for in the Mass he is admitted to an audience with the divine Majesty, and he converses familiarly with the Incarnate Word: it is then that he holds Him in his hands, and speaks to him confidentially, without ceremony and without attendants.

Moreover, it is then that he is allowed to feed himself with his own hands on the most holy flesh of Jesus Christ, and to drink His Blood; since it was to priests especially that the Redeemer said: *Accipite et comedite; hoc est corpus meum.*

The holy Communion is given also to lay persons, but they are not allowed to take the most holy Sacrament themselves, and to communicate whenever they please: they are obliged to receive Communion from the hands of the priest, and when the priest is pleased to give it to them; but the

12 priest can take Jesus Christ and communicate himself when he pleases.

Our Lord when speaking of the Sacraments, and especially of the Eucharist, forbade his priests to give it to sinners:

Nolite dare sanctum canibus, neque ponatis margaritis vestras ante porcos (Matt. vii. 6).

Margaritas vestras: by pearls are signified the consecrated particles—but observe the word *vestras*: this shows that the Sacrament of the Altar is, as it were, the property of the priest; for the priest takes it out of the tabernacle when he pleases, carries it where he likes; he feeds himself on it when he wills, and gives it to whom he wills. In a word, the priest holds the keys of all the divine treasures, to make use of them when he likes; for as St. John Chrysostom says, in the most Holy Sacrament there is the whole treasure of the goodness of God: *Dicendo Eucharistiam, omnem benignitatis Dei thesaurum aperio*. So that it seems when the priest celebrates he makes himself in a certain way the master of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: *De toto Deo dives est*.

Jesus Christ, then, belongs wholly to priests: but how many priests are there who belong wholly to Jesus Christ? O God! the greater number of them, how do they love their Saviour who has so loved and exalted them? O God, how many poor country people are there, poor peasants, who love Jesus Christ more than so many priests! Alas, what suffering for a priest who is damned, when in hell he shall find himself forever at a distance and separated from Jesus Christ, who on this earth was so near to Him, and belonged entirely to Him!

AFFECTIONS

O my dear Jesus, Thou didst make Thyself a Victim on the Cross that Thou mightest be sacrificed by me upon the altar, and mightest fill me with Thy divine blood. In short, in making me Thy priest, Thou hast made Thyself all mine; Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me; so that I can take Thee when I will, and feed myself on Thee when I will.

My beloved Redeemer, increase my faith; make me know who Thou art, when I hold Thee hidden in the Sacrament in my hands; when Thou art close to me on the altar; when I place Thy body in my mouth, and approach my lips to Thy blood. How is it that I do not burn with love in thinking of Thee who art my God, and who art pleased to be treated with such familiarity by me, as even to become my meat and drink? Thou wert not satisfied in giving all Thy blood and Thy life upon the Cross for love of me: it is Thy will that I should drink this very blood, in order to unite myself and to become one with Thee. *Ipsa re nos suum efficit corpus*, says St. John Chrysostom. [Ad pop. Ant. hom. 60.]

Enlighten me, I beseech Thee, O my God, and help me to be no longer ungrateful to Thine exceeding love. Detach me from the earth. Grant that I may no longer put any obstacles to the abundance of graces which Thou dost dispense to those who receive Thee with love in holy Communion. I love Thee, my Jesus, who died for me and hast become my food. Eternal Father, by the merits of Jesus Christ, whom I am about to offer to Thee this morning, give me, all those graces which I require in order to be wholly Thine. And do thou, most holy Mary, pray to Jesus for me.

VII. FOR SATURDAY

CONSIDERATION

Festinans descende; quia hodie in domo tua oportet me manere.—Luc. xix. 5.

(Make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house.)

Imagine that Jesus Christ says to you this morning those very words which He once addressed to Zaccheus: “Be quick, come to the altar; for I desire this day to enter into the house of your soul, to preserve its life, to heal its wounds, to inflame it with My love.” All this is done by the divine Sacrament. It is this bread that gives life to the soul: *Panis quem ego dabo, caro mea est pro mundi vita* (John, vi. 52). It is the medicine that frees and preserves us from sins. *Antidotum quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis, et a peccatis mortalibus præservedemur* (Trid. Sess. xiii. c. 2). It is the fire that inflames the soul with holy love, so that we all (as St. John Chrysostom says), if only we place no obstacle, should leave the altar *flammam spirantes, terribiles effecti diabolo*. 12830

But, O my God, how is it that so many priests who every morning feed on this heavenly bread, instead of burning with divine love, are seen to be always more attached to the world, and go always to the altar with the very same wilful venial sins? All proceeds from this, that they go to say Mass without the intention and the desire of becoming saints, or else for interested motives, or by way of routine.

And therefore they always commit the same faults; and so they approach their death, and go to give an account to Jesus Christ of the lukewarm and disorderly way in which their whole priestly life was passed.

O priest! if you are one of

these, consider that this heavenly bread will not help you to become a saint, but will, through your own fault, make you more guilty before the divine tribunal. Amend your life; consider that death is nigh. Consider those attachments and those faults that hinder your progress in the divine love, and do away with them. Remember that you are a priest; remember that God has chosen you for his favorite, and that he could not have made you greater.

AFFECTIONS

O God of infinite majesty, Thou wiltiest to come this morning to lodge in my soul; but those houses in which Thou art pleased to dwell ought to be holy: *Domum tuam decet sanctitudo, Domine* (Ps. xcii. 5). How shall I, who am so imperfect and so full of faults, be able to receive Thee? *Domine, non sum dignus ut infres sub tectum meum*.

Ah, my Redeemer, if I had now to appear before Thy judgment seat, what good account could I render Thee of so many Masses said, and of the years during which I have been a priest? Wait, O Lord, do not judge me yet: *Non intres in iudicium cum servo tuo*. For pity's sake, wait for me yet a little while: *Dimitte me, ut plangam paululum dolorem meum, antequam vadam, et non revertar*. Prolong my life still a while, that I may weep over the ingratitude with which I have treated Thee, O my Jesus, up to the present time. Thou hast made me a priest; but what kind of priestly life have I hitherto led? With so many Masses and Communion, I ought to have become all on fire with Thy love, all pure and holy. Thou hast not failed on Thy part; the failure has been through my own fault, and because of the obstacles I have

thrown in the way of Thy grace. 13 My life has not honored Thee—no, but has dishonored Thee in the sight of heaven and earth. Thou hast snatched me out of the world, and I have loved the world more than worldlings themselves. Have mercy on me, O my God! Do not abandon me, for I desire to amend my life. I repent with my whole heart of all the displeasure I have given Thee. I will begin to love Thee truly; I will begin this very morning, on which I am again about to receive Thee.

I love Thee, O God of my soul; I love Thee, my Saviour, who, in order to save me, and to make me Thy priest, didst give Thy life: *Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea*. Pardon me, O my Jesus, and heal me. Detach me from the world, and bind me closely to Thyself; make me live as a priest, Thou who hast made me a priest. Thy merits, my dear Redeemer, are my hope. Eternal Father, this morning I offer to Thee Jesus Christ, that Thou mayest make me all Thine own.

Most holy Mary, pray to Jesus for me.

THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY MASS FOR EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK

AFFECTIONS FOR EACH DAY OF THE WEEK

I. FOR SUNDAY

My dear Jesus, my Redeemer and my God! before celebrating I adored Thee in heaven, considering Thee in Thy glory enthroned at the right hand of Thy eternal Father: now I adore Thee hidden within my breast under the humble appearances of bread and wine, and thus made the meat and drink of my soul.

Welcome, my Lord, to my soul. I thank Thee with my whole heart: would that I could thank Thee as Thou deservest! But what fitting thanksgiving could a poor peasant offer who should behold his king enter into his cabin to visit him? He could but cast himself at his feet, and remain there prostrate in silence, in astonishment, and in thankfulness for this condescension. I cast myself, therefore, at Thy feet, O my divine King, O my Jesus, and I adore Thee from the depths of my misery. I unite my adoration to that which the Most Holy Mary offered Thee when she received Thee into her most sacred womb: and would that I could also love Thee as she loved Thee!

Ah, my Redeemer, in obedience to my words, Thou hast this morning come down from heaven into my hands; and I, how often by disobeying Thy commandments have I ungratefully turned my back upon Thee, and have renounced Thy grace and Thy love! My Jesus, I hope that now at this moment Thou hast forgiven me; but if through my fault Thou hast not yet pardoned me, pardon me this morning; for I repent with my whole heart of having

14 offended Thee, O Infinite Goodness.

O my Jesus, would that I had always loved Thee! At least from the day on which I said my first Mass I should have burned with love for Thee. Thou hast chosen me from the midst of so many millions of men to be Thy priest, Thy favorite: what couldst Thou have done more to make Thyself beloved by me? But I thank Thee, my love, that Thou givest me time to do that which I have not done. I wish to love Thee with all my heart. No, I will not cherish in my heart any affection save for Thee, who hast so greatly obliged me to love Thee.

Deus meus et omnia. O my God, what are riches, honors, the pleasures of the world! Thou art my All. Thou shalt be henceforth my only good, my only love. I will say to Thee with St. Paulinus, *Sibi habeant divitias suas divites, regna sua reges: mihi Christus gloria et regnum est.* Let the kings and rich ones of this world delight indeed in their kingdoms and in their riches; Thou alone, O my Jesus, shalt be my treasurer and my kingdom.

Eternal Father, for the love of that Son whom I have this morning sacrificed to Thee and received into my heart, give me holy perseverance in Thy grace and the gift of Thy holy love. I recommend to Thee again all my relatives, friends, and enemies. I recommend to Thee the souls in Purgatory, and all poor sinners.

[This prayer (Eternal Father, etc.) should be repeated every day after Mass. It will also be well to recite each day the following Invocations, Anima Christi, etc., and repeat three times with particular fervor the verse, *Ne permittas me separari a te.* They are enriched with many indulgences. (Note by the author.)

—Above, the Invocations of St. Ignatius are given as they are in the Raccolta; we, however, give them here as St. Alphonsus quotes them in his opusculum, with the other prayers that he adds at the end.]

Most Holy Mary, my Mother, do thou obtain for me holy perseverance and the love of Jesus Christ.

INVOCATIONS

Anima Christi sanctissima,
sanctifica me
Corpus Christi sacratissimum,
custodi me
Sanguis Christi pretiosissime,
inebria me
Aqua lateris Christi purissima,
lava me.
Passio Christi amarissima,
conforta me.
O bone Jesu!
exaudi me:
Intra vulnera tua
absconde me.
**Ne permittas me
separari a te.**
Ab hoste maligno
defende me.
In hora mortis meæ
voca me.
Et jube me venire
ad te.
Ut cum Sanctis et Angelis tuis
collaudem te.
Per infinita sæcula sæculorum.
Amen.

VARIOUS PRAYERS

1. PRECATIUNCULA
SACERDOTIBUS QUOTIDIE
LEGENDA, UT IN DIES DEO
FERVENTIUS DESERVANT.
Adjuvet nos gratia tua,
omnipotens Deus, ut, qui
officium sacerdotale
suscepimus, digne ac devote tibi
in omni puritate et conscientia
bona famulari valeamus; et si
non possumus in tanta
innocentia vitæ conversari ut
debemus, concede nobis tamen,

digne flere mala, quæ gessimus, et, in spiritu humilitatis ac bonæ voluntatis proposito tibi ferventius de cætero deservire.

2. A.D. BEATISSIMAM VIRGINEM MARIAM PRECATIO

O serenissima et inclyta Virgo Maria, Mater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Regina coeli et terræ, quæ eumdem Creatorem omnium creaturarum in tuo sancto utero digna fuisti portare, cujus idem veracissimum corpus et sanguinem ego indignus sumere præsumpsi! rogo te, per virginalem humilitatem tuam et per passionem et mortem ejusdem Filii tui, ut apud ipsum pro me misero peccatore intercedere digneris: ut quidquid in hoc sacrosancto Sacrificio irreverenter, ignoranter, negligenter, vel incaute commisi, aut etiam omisi, tuis sanctissimis precibus mihi dignetur indulgere. Amen.

3. A.D. VULNERA CHRISTI ORATIO

Rogo te, Domine Jesu, per illa salutifera vulnera tua, quæ passus es in cruce pro salute nostra, ex quibus emanavit ille pretiosus sanguis, quo sumus redempti, vulnera hanc animam meam peccatricem, pro qua etiam mori dignatus es; vulnera eam igneo et potentissimo telo tuæ nimis charitatis.

Confige cor meum jaculo tui amoris, ut dicat tibi anima mea: Charitate tua vulnerata sum, ita ut ex ipso vulnere amoris tui uberrimæ fluent lacrymæ die ac nocte. Percute, Domine, percute, obsecro, hanc durissimam mentem meam pia et valida cuspe dilectionis tuæ, et altius ad intima penetra potenti virtute. Qui vivis et regnas Deus, in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

4. SALUTATIONES A.D. OMNIA MEMBRA CHRISTI ET SUI IPSIUS A.D. EUM COMMENDATIO

Salve, tremendum cunctis potestatibus Caput Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri, pro nobis coronatum et arundine percussum!

Salve, pretiosissima Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi Facies, pro nobis sputis et alapis cæsa! Salvete, benignissimi Domini Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri, Oculi, pro nobis lacrymis perfusi! Salve, mellifluum Os, guttuque suavissimum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, pro nobis felle et aceto potatum!

Salvete, Aures nobilissimæ Domini Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri, pro nobis contumeliis et opprobriis affectæ!

Salve, Collum humile Jesu Christi, pro nobis colaphyzatum, Dorsumque sanctissimum, pro nobis flagellatum!

Salvete, venerabiles Domini nostri Jesu Christi Manus et Brachia, pro nobis in cruce extensa!

Salve, Pectus mitissimum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri, pro nobis in passione conturbatum!

Salve, Latus gloriosum Domini nostril Jesu Christi, pro nobis lancea militis perforatum!

Salvete, Domini Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri, sacra misericordiæ Genua, pro nobis in orationibus flexa!

Salvete, Domini Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri, Pedes adorandi, pro nobis clavis affixi!

Salve, totum Corpus Jesu Christi, pro nobis in cruce suspensum, vulneratum, mortuum et sepultum!

Salve, Sanguis pretiosissime, de corpore Jesu Christi, Salvatoris nostri pro nobis effusus!

Salve, sanctissima Domini nostri Jesu Christi Anima, in cruce pro nobis in manus Patris commendata!

In eadem commendatione tibi

15 commendo hodie et quotidie animam meam, vitam meam, cor et corpus meum, omnes sensus et actus meos, omnes amicos, benefactores et consanguineos meos, animas parentum, fratrum, sororum, et omnium amicorum, ac inimicorum meorum: ut nos protegere, liberare et defendere digneris ab omnibus insidiis inimicorum nostrorum, visibilibus et invisibilibus, nunc et in perpetuum. Amen.

II. FOR MONDAY

O infinite Goodness! O infinite Love! A God has given himself wholly to me, and has made himself all mine! Unite, O my soul, all thy affections and bind thyself to thy Lord, who has come on purpose to unite himself to thee and to be loved by thee.

My dear Redeemer, I embrace Thee; my treasure, my life, I bind myself to Thee; do not Thou disdain me. Miserable being that I am, hitherto I have driven Thee from my soul, and have separated myself from Thee. But for the future I will rather lose my life a thousand times than lose Thee, my sovereign Good. Forget, O Lord, my many offences against Thee, and pardon me. I repent with my whole soul; would that I could die with grief!

But notwithstanding my offences, I feel that Thou art bidding me to love Thee: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde.* Ah, my Lord, who am I, that Thou dost so greatly desire to be loved by me? But if this indeed be Thy desire, I wish to please Thee. Thou didst die for me, Thou hast given Thy flesh to be my food. I leave all; I bid farewell to all; and I embrace Thee, my beloved Saviour: *Quis me separabit a caritate Christi?*

My beloved Redeemer, and

whom shall I desire to love, if I love not Thee, who art infinite Beauty, infinite Goodness, worthy of infinite love?

Quid mihi est in coelo? et a te quid volui super terram? Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum. Yes, my God, where can I find in heaven or on earth a good greater than Thyself, or one who has loved me more than Thou?

Adveniat regnum tuum. Take possession, I beseech Thee, my Jesus, this very morning, of my whole heart; give it all to Thee. Do Thou possess it always and entirely: banish from it every love that is not for Thee. Thee alone do I choose for my portion and my riches. *Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum.* Suffer me to beg and to ask of Thee always with St. Ignatius Loyola, *Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis.* Give me Thy love and Thy grace; that is, grant that I may love Thee and be loved by Thee, and with this I am rich enough; I desire and ask Thee for nothing more.

But Thou knowest my weakness, Thou knowest my past treachery; help me with Thy grace, and do not allow me ever again to separate myself from Thy holy love: *Ne permittas me separari a te.* I say it to Thee now, and I desire to repeat it always; and do Thou give me the grace to be able always to repeat it: *Ne permittas me, ne permittas me separari a te.*

Mary, most holy, my hope, do thou obtain for me from God these two graces—holy perseverance and holy love. I ask thee for nothing more.

III. FOR TUESDAY

Ah, my Lord, how could I have so many times offended Thee by my sins, when I knew that sin so

16 greatly displeased Thee! Pardon me, I beseech Thee, by the merits of Thy Passion, and bind me by Thy love wholly to Thyself: let not the stench of my sins drive Thee from me. Make me, I pray Thee, know always more and more how great a good Thou art, the love Thou deservest, and the affection Thou hast borne me.

I desire, my Jesus, to sacrifice myself entirely to Thee, who didst sacrifice Thyself wholly for me. Thou by so many artifices hast bound me to Thyself; do not allow me ever again to disjoin myself from Thee. I love Thee, my God, and I will love Thee always. And now that I have known Thy love, how should I be able to live any longer at a distance from Thee and deprived of Thy grace?

I thank Thee for having borne with me when I was not in Thy grace, and for now giving me time to love Thee. If I had died then, I could never have loved Thee more. But now that I am able to love Thee, I have the will to love Thee, O my Jesus, as much as I am able and I desire to do everything to please Thee. I love Thee, infinite Goodness, I love Thee more than myself; and because I love Thee I give Thee my body, my soul, and my whole will. Do with me and dispose of me, O Lord, as Thou wilt: I accept all. Enough, if Thou allowest me to love Thee always; I ask Thee for nothing more. Give to those who wish for them the goods of this earth: I desire and seek for nought but perseverance in Thy grace, and Thy holy love.

O eternal Father, trusting in the promise made me by Thy Son, *Amen, amen, dico vobis, si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis* (John, xvi. 23), I ask of Thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, holy perseverance, and the grace to love Thee with my whole heart, and perfectly to fulfil

henceforward Thy will. O my Jesus, Thou hast sacrificed Thyself wholly for me, and hast given me Thyself, in order that I should give myself to Thee, and sacrifice my entire will to Thee: for I hear Thee saying to me, *Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi* (Prov. xxiii. 26).

Behold, O Lord, behold my heart, my will; I give and sacrifice it all to Thee. But Thou knowest how weak I am: come to my assistance; suffer me not to take back again my will from Thee, by sinning against Thee. No, do not let it be: make me love Thee always, make me love Thee as much as a priest ought to love Thee: and as Thy Son when dying was able to say, *Consummatum est*, grant that I also at my death may be able to say, that from this day forward I have fulfilled Thy holy will. Grant that in all temptations and danger of offending Thee, may never cease to have recourse to Thee, and to beg Thee to assist me by the merits of Jesus Christ.

O Mary, most holy, obtain for me this grace, to recommend myself always in temptations to God and to thyself, who art all-powerful with God.

IV. FOR WEDNESDAY

Ah! my Jesus, I see how much Thou hast done and suffered for me, to put me under the necessity of loving Thee; and I have been so ungrateful to Thee! How many times, for the sake of some miserable pleasure or fancy, have I bartered away Thy grace, and have lost Thee, O God of my soul! I have been grateful enough to creatures; to Thee alone have I shown ingratitude. My dear God, pardon me: I am sorry; I grieve with my whole heart, and I hope for

pardon from Thee, because Thou art infinite goodness. If Thou wert not infinite goodness, I should lose hope, and I should not even have the courage to ask Thee to have mercy on me.

I thank Thee, my love, for not having sent me to hell, as I deserved; and for having borne with me so long a time. Ah, Thy patience with me, O my God, should alone suffice to fill me with love to Thee. And who indeed but Thou, who art a God of infinite mercy, would have borne with me? I see that Thou hast been following me for so long, in order that I should love Thee. I will no longer resist Thy love: behold, I give myself up entirely to Thee. I have offended Thee enough; now I wish to love Thee. I love Thee, my sovereign Good; I love Thee, infinite Goodness; I love Thee, my God, worthy of infinite love; and I desire to repeat, in time and in eternity, I love Thee, I love Thee.

Alas, O God, how many years have I lost, in which I might have loved Thee and have gained an increase of Thy love; and I have spent them in offending Thee! But Thy blood, O my Jesus, is my hope. I hope it will never be my lot again to cease to love Thee. I know not how long I have still to live; but the years that remain to me, be they few or many, I consecrate entirely to Thee. For this end Thou hast waited for me until now. Yes, my beloved Lord, I wish to please Thee; I wish to love Thee always, and to love Thee alone. What are pleasures, riches, honors? Thou alone, my God, Thou alone, art and shalt be always, my love, my all.

But I can do nothing except Thou helpst me by Thy grace. Wound, I beseech Thee, my heart; inflame it wholly with Thy holy love, and bind it entirely to Thyself; but so bind it that it can

never separate itself again from Thee. Thou hast promised to love those who love Thee:

Ego diligentes me diligo (Prov. viii. 17).

Now I love Thee: forgive my boldness, love me in return, and do not allow me to do anything that would force Thee to cease to love me: *Qui non diligit, manet in morte* (I John, iii. 14). Deliver me from this death, to remain deprived of the power of loving Thee. Make me love Thee always, in order that Thou mayest be always able to love me: and thus may our love be everlasting, and may no breach occur between me and Thee. Grant it, O eternal Father, for the love of Jesus Christ. Grant it, my Jesus, by Thy merits: through them I hope to love Thee always, and to be always loved by Thee.

Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, do thou also pray to Jesus for me.

V. FOR THURSDAY

O God of infinite Majesty, behold at Thy feet a traitor who has so often offended Thee. Thou hast so many times pardoned me, and I, notwithstanding the graces and lights that Thou hast given me, have begun again to offend Thee. Others have sinned in the midst of darkness, I in the midst of light: but listen to this Thy Son, whom I have this morning sacrificed to Thee, and who now is reposing within my breast. He is asking of Thee mercy and pardon for me. Pardon me for the love of Jesus Christ; for I repent with my whole heart of having offended Thee, the infinite Goodness.

I know that, for the love of Jesus Christ, Thou art pleased to make peace with sinners: *Complacuit per eum reconciliare*

¹⁷ *omnia in ipsum* (Coloss. i. 20). For the love, then, of Jesus Christ, be reconciled also to me: *Ne projicias me a facie tua*: Drive me not away from Thy face, as I should have deserved; pardon me, and change my heart: *Cor mundum crea in me, Deus*. Do so at least for Thine honor's sake, since Thou hast made me Thy priest, Thy minister, whose office it is to sacrifice to Thee Thine own Son. Make me live as a priest. Consume, I pray Thee, in the flames of Thy holy love, and destroy within me, all earthly affections. Grant that henceforth I may be grateful for the many graces Thou hast bestowed on me, and for the exceeding love Thou hast borne me. If in past time I have despised Thy friendship, now I value it more than all the kingdoms of the world, and I prefer that which pleases Thee to all the riches and pleasures of heaven and earth.

O my Father, for the love of Jesus Christ, detach me from all things. It is Thy will that Thy priests should be wholly separated from the world, in order to live for Thee alone, and for the things of Thy glory: *Segregate mihi Saulum et Barnabam in opus ad quod assumpsi eos* (Acts, xiii. 2). The same I know is Thy will for me. I resolve to do it; but do Thou help me with Thy grace. Draw me wholly to Thyself. Give me patience and resignation in difficulties and in contradictions. Give me the spirit of mortifying myself for Thy love. Give me the spirit of true humility, that I may even rejoice in being considered vile and full of faults: *Doce me facere voluntatem tuam*: Teach me to do Thy will, and then tell me what Thou willest of me, for I will do all. Allow, O my God, a sinner to love Thee, who in past times has offended Thee too

much, but who now desires to love Thee truly, and to be wholly Thine. O eternal God, I hope to love Thee forever; and therefore also I wish to love Thee exceedingly in this life, that I may love Thee exceedingly in eternity.

And because I love Thee, I would see Thee known and loved by all. And therefore, O Lord, since Thou hast made me Thy priest, give me the grace to labor for Thee, and to gain Thee souls. I hope for all, through Thy merits, O my Jesus Christ, and through thy intercession, O my Mother Mary.

VI. FOR FRIDAY

My Jesus, how couldst Thou choose me for Thy priest from the midst of so many men?—me, who have so often turned my back on Thee and despised Thy grace for a mere nothing? I am sorry for it, my beloved Saviour, from my whole soul. Tell me, hast Thou pardoned me? I hope so. Yes, Thou hast been my Redeemer, not once only, but as often as Thou hast pardoned me. O my Saviour, would that I had never offended Thee! Let me hear those words Thou didst say to Magdalene: *Remittuntur tibi peccata tua*. Let me hear that Thou hast reinstated me in Thy grace, in giving me a great sorrow for my sins.

In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum; redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis.
Ah, my divine Shepherd, Thou didst come down from heaven to seek after me, the lost sheep; and every day Thou descendest the altar for my good. Thou hast given Thy life to save me. Do not abandon me. I commend my soul into Thy hands: receive it in Thy mercy, and never allow it to be separated again from Thee.

18 Thou didst shed all Thy blood for me: *Te ergo, quæsumus, tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti*. Thou art now my advocate. Thou hast not yet become my judge. Obtain for me pardon from Thy Father. Obtain for me light and strength to love Thee with my whole soul. Give me the grace so to pass the remaining days of my life, that when I behold Thee as my judge I may behold Thee appeased with me.

Reign over my heart, I beseech Thee, with Thy love; make me wholly Thine; and for this end, recall to me always, my dear Saviour, the love Thou hast borne me, and all that Thou hast done to save me, and to make Thyself loved by me. It was for this that Thou hast made me a priest, that I should think of loving none but Thee.

Yes, my Jesus, I desire to please Thee: I love Thee, and will love none but Thee. Give me humility, resignation in the trials of this life, meekness when I am despised, mortification to earthly pleasures, and detachment from creatures, and grant that I may banish from my heart every affection that does not tend to Thee. I ask and hope for all through the merits of Thy passion. My dear Jesus, my beloved Jesus, O my good Jesus, hear Thou me: *O bone Jesu, exaudi me*.

And do thou, O Mary, my Mother and my hope, hear me, and pray to Jesus for me.

VII. FOR SATURDAY

My dear Jesus, Thou hast come again this morning to visit my soul: I thank Thee with all my heart. Since Thou hast come, speak to me, tell me what Thou willest of me, for I desire to do all. I should deserve that Thou didst no longer speak to me, for having

so many times been deaf to Thy voice, which called me to love Thee, and for having ungratefully turned my back upon Thee. But I have already repented of my offences against Thee: I repent anew, and I hope that Thou hast already pardoned me. Tell me, then, what Thou desirest of me, for I will fulfil all.

Oh, would that I had always loved Thee, my God! Unhappy that I am, how many years have I lost! But I hope, through Thy blood and Thy promises, to make up in future for the time I have lost, by attending solely to Thy love and pleasure.

I love Thee, my Redeemer; I love Thee, my God; I long for nothing but to love Thee with all my heart, and even to die for the love of Thee, who died for love of me. I will say to Thee with St. Francis:

Amore amoris tui moriar, qui amore amoris mei dignatus es mori.

[« Let me die of love for Your love, You who deigned to die for love of my love. »]

Thou, my Jesus, hast given Thyself wholly to me; Thou hast given me all Thy blood, Thy life, all Thy sweat, all Thy merits. Thou hast nothing left to give me: I give myself all to Thee. I give Thee all my satisfactions, all the pleasures of the earth, my body, my soul, my will. I have nothing more to give Thee: had I more, I would give Thee more. My dear Jesus, Thou art sufficient for me.

But do Thou, O Lord, make me faithful to Thee: do not let me change my will and leave Thee. I hope through Thy Passion, O my Saviour, that this will never happen. Thou hast said, *Nullus speravit in Domino et confusus est* (Ecclus. ii. 11). I also, therefore,

may resolutely say: *In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum.* I hope, and I will always hope, O God of my soul, that I shall never suffer the confusion of seeing myself separated from Thee, and deprived of Thy grace: *In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum.*

Thou, my God, art all-powerful. Make me holy: grant that I may love Thee exceedingly, that I may never neglect anything that I know to be for Thy glory. Grant that I may overcome all, in order to please Thee. Happy shall I be, if I lose all, to gain Thee and Thy love. For this end Thou hast given me my life. Grant that I may spend it wholly for Thee. I do not deserve graces, but punishments: and I say to Thee, punish me as Thou wilt, but do not deprive me of Thy love. Thou hast loved me without reserve. I wish to love Thee without reserve, O infinite Good, infinite love. O will of God, thou art my love. O my Jesus, Thou didst die for me. O would that I could die for Thee, and by my death cause all men to love Thee! O infinite Good worthy of infinite love, I prize Thee and love Thee above all things. O Mary, draw me wholly to God; give me confidence in thyself, and make me have continual recourse to thee. Thou, by thy prayers, must make me holy. So I hope.

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

I. IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE AND WHAT IT EXACTS OF THE PRIEST

For every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.

[“Omnis namque Pontifex, ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis quæ sunt ad Deum, ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis.” Heb. v. i.] The priest, then, is placed by God in the Church in order to offer sacrifice. This office is peculiar to the priests of the Law of grace, to whom has been given the power of offering the great sacrifice of the body and blood of the Son of God a sacrifice sublime and perfect in comparison with the ancient sacrifices, the entire perfection of which consisted in being the shadow and figure of our sacrifice. They were sacrifices of calves and oxen, but ours is the sacrifice of the eternal Word made Man. Of themselves they had no efficacy, and were therefore called by St. Paul *weak and needy elements*. [“Infirma et egena elementa.” Gal. iv. 9.] But ours has power to obtain the remission of the temporal penalties due to sins, and to procure an augmentation of grace, and more abundant helps for those in whose behalf it is offered.

The priest who has not a just idea of the Mass shall never offer that holy sacrifice as he ought. Jesus Christ performed no action on earth greater than the celebration of Mass. In a word, of all actions that can be performed, the Mass is the most holy and dear to God; as well on account of the oblation presented to God, that is, Jesus Christ, a victim of infinite dignity, as on account of the first offerer, Jesus Christ, who

19 offers Himself on the altar by the hand of the priest. “The same now offering,” says the Council of Trent, “by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the Cross.”

[“Idem nunc offerens, Sacerdotum ministerio, qui seipsum tunc in cruce obtulit.”

Sess. 22, cap. 2.]

St. John Chrysostom said: “When you see a priest offering, do not believe that this is done by the hand of a priest; the offering is made rather by the hand of God invisibly stretched out.”

[“Cum videris Sacerdotem offerentem, ne ut Sacerdotem esse putes, sed Christ! manum invisibiliter extensam.” Ad pop. Ant. Hom.60.]

All the honors that the angels by their homages, and men by their virtues, penances, and martyrdoms, and other holy works, have ever given to God could not give him as much glory as a single Mass. For all the honors of creatures are finite honors, but the honor given to God in the sacrifice of the altar, because it proceeds from a divine people, is an infinite honor. Hence we must confess that of all actions the Mass, as the Council of Trent says, is the most holy and divine: “*We must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself.*”

[“Necessario fatemur nullum aliud opus adeo sanctum ac divinum a Christ! fidelibus tractari posse, quam hoc tremendum mysterium. Sess. 22, Decr. de obs. in cel. M.”]

It is, then, as we have seen, an action the most holy and dear to God an action that appeases most efficaciously the anger of God against sinners, that beats down most effectually the powers of hell, that brings to men on earth

the greatest benefits, and that affords to the souls in purgatory the greatest relief. It is, in fine, an action in which, as St. Udone, Abbot of Cluny, has written, consists the entire salvation of the world: "Of all the favors granted to me this is the greatest: it is truly by the most generous ardor of his love that God instituted this mystery, without which there would be no salvation in this world."

["Hoc beneficium majus est inter omnia bona quæ hominibus concessa sunt, et hoc est quod Deus majori charitate mortalibus indulgit, quia in hoc mysterio salus mundi tota consistit." Collat, 1. 2, c. 28.]

And speaking of the Mass, Timothy of Jerusalem said that by it the world is preserved.

["Per quam orbis terræ consistit." Or. de proph. Sim.]

But for the Mass the earth should have long since perished on account of the sins of men.

St. Bonaventure says that in each Mass God bestows on the world a benefit not inferior to that which He conferred by His incarnation.

["Non minus videtur facere Deus in hoc quod quotidie dignatur descendere de coelo super altare, quam cum naturam humani generis assumpsit." De Inst. Novit. p. I, c. n.]

This is conformable to the celebrated words of St.

Augustine: "O venerable dignity of the priests, in whose hands, as in the womb of the Virgin, the Son of God became incarnate!"

["O veneranda Sacerdotum dignitas, in quorum manibus, velut in utero Virginis, Filius Dei incarnatur." Molina, Instr. Sac. tr. i, c. 5, 2.]

Moreover, St. Thomas teaches that since the sacrifice of the altar is nothing else than the application and renewal of the

20 sacrifice of the cross, a single Mass brings to men the same benefits and salvation that were produced by the sacrifice of the Cross.

["In qualibet Missa invenitur omnis fructus quem Christus operatus est in cruce." J. Herolt, De Sanct. s. 48. "Quidquid est effectus Dominicæ passionis, est effectus hujus Sacramend." In Jo. 6, lect. 6.]

St. John Chrysostom says: "The celebration of a Mass has the same value as the death of Christ on the Cross."

["Tantum valet celebratio Missæ, quantum mors Christi in cruce." J. Herolt, De Sanct. s. 48.]

And of this we are still more assured by the holy Church in the Collect for the Sunday after Pentecost: "As many times as this commemorative sacrifice is celebrated, so often is the work of our redemption performed."

["Quoties hujus Hostiæ commemoratio celebratur, opus nostræ redemptionis exercetur." Miss. Doni. 9 / Pent.]

The same Redeemer who once offered Himself on the Cross is immolated on the altar by the ministry of his priests. "For the victim is one and the same," says the Council of Trent: "the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the Cross, the manner alone of offering being different."

["Una enim eademque est Hostiæ, idem nunc offerens Sacerdotum ministerio, qui seipsum tunc in cruce obtulit, sola offerendi ratione di versa." Sess. 22, cap. 2.]

In a word, the Mass is, according to the prediction of the prophet, "the good and the beautiful thing" of the Church: For what is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins?

["Quid enim bonum ejus est, et

quid pulchrum ejus, nisi frumentum electorum, et vinum germinans virgines?" Zach. ix. 17.] In the Mass, Jesus Christ gives Himself to us by means of the most holy sacrament of the altar, which is the end and object of all the other sacraments, says the angelic Doctor.

["Sacramenta in Eucharistia consummantur." P. 3, q. 65, a. 3.] Justly, then, has St. Bonaventure called the Mass a compendium of all God's love and of all his benefits to men.

["Et ideo hoc est memoriale totius dilectionis sue, et quasi compendium quoddam omnium beneficiorum suorum." De Inst. Novit. p. i, c. ii.]

Hence the devil has always sought to deprive the world of the Mass by means of the heretics, constituting them precursors of Antichrist, whose first efforts shall be to abolish the holy sacrifice of the altar, and, according to the prophet Daniel, in punishment of the sins of men, his efforts shall be successful: *And strength was given him against the continual sacrifice because of sins.*

["Robur autem datum est ei contra jure Sacrificium propter peccata." Dan. viii. 12.]

Most justly, then, does the holy Council of Trent require of priests to be most careful to celebrate Mass with the greatest possible devotion and purity of conscience: "It is sufficiently clear that all industry and diligence is to be applied to this end, that it (the mystery) be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart."

["Satis apparet omnem operam et diligentiam in eo ponendam esse, ut quanta maxima fieri potest interiori cordis munditia peragatur." Sess. 22, Decr. de obs. in cel. M.]

And in the same place the Council

justly remarks, that on priests who celebrate this great sacrifice negligently, and without devotion, shall fall the malediction threatened by the prophet Jeremiah: *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently.*

[“Maledictus, qui facit opus Domini fraudulenter.” Jer. xlvi. 10.]

And St. Bonaventure says that he who approaches the altar without reverence and consideration, celebrates or communicates unworthily.

[“Cave ne nimis tepidus accedas; quia indigne sumis, si non accedis reverenter et considerate.” De Præp. ad M. c. 5.]

In order, then, to avoid this malediction, let us see what the priest must do before Mass, during Mass, and after Mass. Before Mass preparation is necessary, during the celebration of Mass reverence and devotion are necessary, after Mass thanksgiving is necessary. A servant of God used to say that the life of a priest should be nothing else than preparation and thanksgiving for Mass.

II. THE PREPARATION FOR MASS

In the first place, then, the priest must make his preparation before Mass.

Before we come to practice, I ask how does it happen that there are so many priests in the world and so few holy priests? St. Francis de Sales called the Mass a mystery which comprises the entire abyss of divine love.

[Introd. p. 2, ch. 14.] St. John Chrysostom used to say that the most holy sacrament of the altar is the treasure of all Gods benignity. [Dicendo Eucharistiam, omnem benignitatis Dei thesaurum aperio.”

In I Cor. Hom.24.]

There is no doubt that the Holy Eucharist has been instituted for all the faithful, but it is a gift bestowed in a special manner on priests. Give not, says our Lord, addressing priests, *that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine.*

[“Nolite dare sanctum canibus, neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos.” Matt. vii. 6.]

Mark the words *your pearls.*

In the Greek the consecrated particles are called pearls; but these pearls are called, as it were, the property of priests: your pearls. Hence, as St. John Chrysostom says, every priest should leave the altar all inflamed with divine love, so as to strike terror into the powers of hell: “Like lions breathing forth fire should we leave that table, so that we may become terrible to the devil.”

[“Tamquam leones ignem spirantes ab illa mensa recedamus. facti diabolo terribiles.” Ad pop. Ant. Hom.61.]

But this is not the case. The greater number depart from the altar always more tepid, more impatient, proud, jealous, and more attached to self-esteem, to

21 self-interest, and to earthly pleasures. “The defect is not in the food,” says Cardinal Bona. [“Defectus non in cibo est, sed in edentis dispositione “ De Sacr. M. c. 6, 6,]

The defect does not arise from the food that they take on the altar; for, as St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to say, that food taken once would be sufficient to make them saints, but it arises from the little preparation that they make for the celebration of Mass.

Preparation for Mass is twofold: remote and proximate.

The remote preparation consists in the pure and virtuous life that a priest should lead in order to celebrate worthily. If God required purity in the priests of the Old Law because they had to carry the sacred vessels, Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord [“Mundamini, qui fertis vasa Domini.” Is. lii. 11.] how much greater should be the purity and sanctity of the priest who has to carry in his hands and in his body the Incarnate Word, says Peter de Blois! [“Quarito mundiores esse oportet, qui in manibus et in corpore portant Christum.” Epist. 123]

But to be pure and holy it is not enough for the priest to be exempt from mortal sins: he must be also free from venial sins that are fully deliberate; otherwise he shall have no part with Jesus Christ. “Let no one,” says St. Bernard, “disregard little faults, for thus it was said to Peter, that unless Christ purifies of them, we shall have no part in Christ.”

[“Hæc nemo contemnat, quoniam ut audivit Petrus nisi laverit ea Christus, non habebimus partem cum eo.” S. in Coena Dom.]

Hence all the actions and words of the priest who wishes to celebrate Mass must be holy, and serve to prepare him for the

worthy celebration of the sacred mysteries.

For the immediate preparation, mental prayer is, in the first place, necessary. How can the priest celebrate Mass with devotion without having first made mental prayer? The Venerable John d'Avila used to say that a priest should make mental prayer for an hour or, at least, half an hour, before Mass.

I would be content with half an hour, or, and for some, with even a quarter of an hour; but a quarter is too little. There are so many beautiful books containing meditations preparatory to Mass, but who makes use of them? It is through neglect of meditation that we see so many Masses said without devotion and with irreverence. The Mass is a representation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Hence Pope Alexander I. justly said that in the Mass we should always commemorate the Passion of our Lord. ["Inter Missarum solemnias, semper passio Domini miscenda est, ut ejus, cujus corpus et sanguis conficitur, passio celebretur." Epist. i.] And before him the Apostle said: *For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come.*

["Quotiescumque enim manducabitis Panem hunc, et Calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis." i Cor. xi. 26.] According to St. Thomas, the Redeemer has instituted the most holy sacrament that we might always have a lively remembrance of the love that he has shown us, and of the great benefits that he obtained for us by offering himself in sacrifice on the Cross. [Offic. Corp. Chr.] But if all should continually remember the Passion of Jesus Christ, how much more should the priest

22 reflect on it when he goes to renew on the altar, though in a different manner, the same sacrifice which the Son of God offered on the Cross! Moreover, even though he had made his meditation, the priest should before he begins Mass always recollect himself at least for a short time, and consider what he is going to do. The Council of Milan, in the time of St. Charles, ordained that all priests should do so.

["Antequam celebrent, se colligant, et orantes mentem in tanti ministerii cogitatione defigant," Const, p. 2, n. 5.]

In entering the sacristy to celebrate Mass the priest should take leave of all worldly thoughts, and say with St. Bernard: *"Ye cares, solitudes, earthly troubles, remain here: let me go freely to my God, with all my intelligence and with all my heart, and when we have adored we shall return to you; we shall return, alas! and we shall return too soon."*

["Curse, sollicitudines, servitutes, expectate me hie, donee ego cum puero, ratio cum intelligentia, usque illuc properantes, postquam adoraverimus, revertamur ad vos; revertemur enim, et, heu! revertemur quam citissime." De Antore Dei, c. i.]

In a letter to St. Jane Chantal, St. Francis de Sales said: When I turn to the altar to begin Mass, I lose sight of everything on this earth. Hence, during the celebration of Mass, the priest should take leave of all worldly thoughts, and should think only of the great action that he is going to perform, and of the heavenly bread he is going to eat at the divine table. When thou shalt sit to eat with a prince, says Solomon, consider diligently what is set before thy face. ["Quando sederis ut

comedas cum principe, diligenter attende quæ apposita sunt ante faciem tuam." Prov. xxiii. i.] Let him consider that he is going to call from heaven to earth the Incarnate Word; to treat with him familiarly on the altar; to offer him again to the eternal Father; and finally to partake of his sacred flesh. In preparing to celebrate, Father John d'Avila would endeavor to excite his fervor by saying: "I am now going to consecrate the Son of God, to hold him in my hands, to converse and treat with him, and to receive him into my heart." The priest should also consider that he ascends the altar to perform the office of intercessor for all sinners, says St. Laurence Justinian.

["Mediatoris gerit officium; propterea delinquentium omnium debet esse precator." Serm. de Euchar.] Thus the priest on the altar stands between God and men, presents their petitions, and obtains for them the divine graces, says St. Chrysostom. ["Medius stat Sacerdos inter Deum et naturam humanam, illinc venientia beneficia ad nos deferens," In Isaiam, Hom.5.]

It is for this reason, says St. Thomas, that the sacrifice of the altar is called the Mass: "On this account it is called Mass, because the priest sends his prayers to God through the angel, and the people send them through the priest."

[Propter hoc Missa nominatur, quia per Angelum Sacerdos preces ad Deum mittit, sicut populus ad Sacerdotem." P. 3, q. 83, a. 4.]

In the Old Law the priest was permitted to enter the holy of holies only once in the year; but now every priest is allowed to immolate every day the Lamb of God, in order to obtain the divine

graces for himself and the entire people, says St. Laurence Justinian.

[Ipsis profecto Sacerdotibus licet, non tantum semel in anno, ut olim, sed diebus singulis introire Sancta Sanctorum, et tarn pro ipsis quam pro populi reconciliatione, offerre Hostiam.”

De Inst. præl. c. 10.]

Hence, according to St. Bonaventure, in going to celebrate, a priest should propose to himself three ends: to honor God, to commemorate the Passion of Jesus Christ, and to obtain graces for the whole Church.

[“ Tria sunt, quæ celebraturus intenderedebet, scilicet: Deum colere, Christi mortem memorari, et totam Ecclesiam juvare.” De Præp. ad M. c. 9.]

III. THE REVERENCE AND THE DEVOTION WITH WHICH THE PRIEST SHOULD CELEBRATE MASS

Secondly, it is necessary to celebrate Mass with reverence and devotion. It is well known that the maniple was introduced for the purpose of wiping away the tears of devotion that flowed from the eyes of the priest; for in former times priests wept continually during the celebration of Mass. It has been already said that a priest on the altar represents the very people of Jesus Christ, says St. Cyprian.¹¹³⁶⁶ There he says in the person of Jesus Christ, *hoc est corpus meum: hic est calix sanguinis mei*. O God! it would be necessary to weep, and even to shed tears of blood, at the manner in which many priests celebrate Mass. It excites compassion to see the contempt with which some priests and religious, and even priests of the reformed Orders, treat Jesus Christ on the altar. Observe with what kind of attention certain priests celebrate Mass. I hope their number is small. Of them we may well say what Clement of Alexandria said of the pagan priests, that they turned heaven into a stage, and God into the subject of the comedy.¹¹³⁶⁷

But why do I say a comedy? Oh! how great would be their attention if they had to recite a part in a comedy! But with what sort of attention do they celebrate Mass? Mutilated words; genuflexions that appear to be acts of contempt rather than of reverence; benedictions which I know not what to call. They move and turn on the altar in a disrespectful manner; they confound the words with the ceremonies which they perform before the time prescribed by the rubrics, although these rubrics

²³ are, according to the true opinion, all preceptive. For St. Pius V in the Bull inserted in the Missal commands us “strictly, by virtue of holy obedience,”¹¹³⁶⁸ to celebrate Mass according to the rubrics of the Missal: “According to the rite, mode, and norm prescribed in the Missal.”¹¹³⁶⁹ Hence he who violates the rubrics cannot be excused from sin, and he who is guilty of a grievous neglect of them cannot be excused from mortal sin.

All arises from an anxiety to have the Mass soon finished. Some say Mass with as much haste as if the walls were about to fall, or as if they expected to be attacked by pirates without getting time to fly away. Some priests spend two hours in useless conversation, or in treating of worldly affairs, and are all haste in celebrating Mass. As they begin the Mass without reverence, so they proceed to consecrate, to take Jesus Christ in their hands, and to communicate with as much irreverence as if the holy sacrament were common bread. They should be told what the Venerable John d’Avila said one day to a priest who celebrated with haste and irreverence: “For God’s sake treat him better, for he is the Son of a good Father.”

The Lord commanded the priests of the Old Law to tremble through reverence in approaching his sanctuary: *Reverence My sanctuary*. [“ Pavete ad Sanctuarium meum.” Lev. xxvi. 2.] And still we see scandalous irreverence in priests of the New Law while they stand at the altar in the presence of Jesus Christ; while they converse with Him, take Him in their hands, offer Him in sacrifice, and eat His flesh. In the Old Law the Lord threatened several maledictions against priests who neglected the

ceremonies of sacrifices, which were but figures of our sacrifice. *But if Thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep . . . all His ceremonies, . . . All these curses shall come upon thee; . . . cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field.*

[“ Quod si audire nolueris vocem Domini Dei tui, ut custodiascæremonias, . . . venient super te omnes maledictiones istæ. . . . Maledictus eris in civitate, maledictus in agro.” Deut. xxviii. 15.]

St. Teresa used to say: *“I would give my life for a ceremony of the Church.”* [Life, ch. 33.] And will a priest despise the ceremonies of the holy Mass? Suarez [De Sacram. d. 84, s. 2.] teaches that the omission of any ceremony prescribed in the Mass cannot be excused from sin; and it is the opinion of many theologians, that a notable neglect of the ceremonies may be a mortal sin.

In my Moral Theology [Theol. mor. 1. 6, n. 400.] I have shown, by the authority of many theologians, that to celebrate Mass in less than a quarter of an hour cannot be excused from grievous sin. This doctrine rests on two reasons: first, the irreverence that in so short a Mass is offered to the holy sacrifice; secondly, the scandal that is given to the people.

As to the reverence due to the sacrifice, we have adduced the words of the Council of Trent, commanding priests to celebrate Mass with the greatest possible devotion: “All industry and diligence are to be applied that it be performed with the greatest possible outward show of devotion and piety.”

[“Omnem operam ponendam esse, ut quanta maxima fieri potest exteriori devotionis ac pietatis specie peragatur.” Decr. de obs. in M]

24 The Council adds, that to neglect even this external devotion due to the sacrifice is a species of impiety: “Irreverence that can hardly be separated from impiety.”

[“Irreverentia, quæ ab impietate vix sejuncta esse potest.” Sess. 22.]

As the due performance of the ceremonies constitutes reverence, so to perform them badly is an irreverence which, when grievous, is a mortal sin. And to perform the ceremonies with the reverence due to so great a sacrifice, it is not enough to go through them; for some who are very quick in their articulation and motions may be able to perform the ceremonies in less than a quarter of an hour, but it is necessary to perform them with becoming gravity, which belongs intrinsically to the reverence due to the Mass.

To celebrate Mass in so short a time is also a grievous sin on account of the scandal given to the people who are present. And here it is necessary to consider what the same Council of Trent says in another place, that the ceremonies have been instituted by the Church in order to excite in the faithful the veneration and esteem due to so great a sacrifice, and to the most sublime mysteries that it contains. *“The Church,”* says the holy Council, *“has employed ceremonies, whereby both the majesty of so great a sacrifice might be recommended and the minds of the faithful be excited, by those visible signs of religion and piety, to the contemplation of those most sublime things which are hidden in this sacrifice.”*

[“ Ecclesia cæremonias adhibuit, quo et majestas tanti Sacrificii commendaretur, et mentes fidelium, per hæc visibilia religionis signa, ad rerum

altissimarum, quæ in hoc Sacrificio latent, contemplationem excitarentur.” Sess. 22, De Sacrif. M. c. 5.]

But instead of inspiring reverence, these ceremonies, when performed with great haste, diminish and destroy the veneration of the people for so holy a mystery. Peter de Blois says that the irreverence with which Mass is celebrated makes people think little of the most holy sacrament.

[“Ex inordinata et indisciplinata multitudine Sacerdotum, hodie datur ostentui nostræ redemptionis venerabile Sacramentum.” Epist. 123.]

This scandal cannot be excused from mortal sin. Hence in the year 1583 the Council of Tours ordained that priests should be well instructed in the ceremonies of the Mass:

“For fear that the people intrusted to their care, far from entertaining veneration for our divine mysteries, might regard them only with indifference.”

[“Ne populum sibi commissum a devotione potius revocent, quam ad sacrorum mysteriorum venerationem invitent.”]

How can priests expect by Masses said with such irreverence to obtain graces from God, when during the oblation of these Masses they offend and dishonor him more than they honor him? Should a priest not believe in the most holy sacrament of the altar, he would offend God; but it is a still greater offence to believe in it, and to celebrate Mass without due reverence, and thus make the people who are present lose their veneration for the holy sacrament. In the beginning the Jews respected Jesus Christ, but when they saw him despised by their priests they lost their esteem for him, and in the end

joined in the cry of the priests: *"Away with this man; crucify him!"* ["Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum!"] And in like manner, seculars, seeing a priest treat the Mass with such irreverence, lose their respect and veneration for it. A Mass said with reverence excites devotion in all who are present at it; but, on the other hand, a Mass celebrated with irreverence destroys devotion and even faith in those that are present. A religious of high reputation told me that a certain heretic had resolved to renounce his errors, but having been afterwards present at a Mass said without reverence, he went to the bishop and said that he no longer intended to abjure his heresy, because he felt convinced that priests who celebrated Mass in such a manner did not sincerely believe in the truth of the Catholic Church; and added: "If I were Pope, and knew that a priest said Mass with irreverence, I would command him to be burned alive." After these words he withdrew, resolved to continue in his heresy.

But some priests say that seculars complain when the Mass is long. Then I ask: Shall the want of devotion in seculars be the rule for the respect due to the Mass? Besides, if all priests said Mass with becoming reverence and gravity, seculars would feel the veneration due to so great a sacrifice, and would not complain of being obliged to spend half an hour in attending Mass. But because Masses are frequently so short, and so little calculated to excite devotion, seculars, after the example of priests, attend Mass with in devotion and with little faith; and when they find that it lasts longer than half an hour, they, on account of the bad habit that they have contracted, grow weary and begin to complain; and

though they spend without tediousness several hours at play, or in the street, to pass the time, they feel it tedious and fatiguing to spend half an hour in hearing Mass. Of this evil, priests are the cause. *To you O priests, that despise My name, and have said: Wherein have we despised Thy name? . . . In that you say: The table of the Lord is contemptible.* [Ad vos, o Sacerdotes, qui despicitis nomen meum, et dixistis: In quo despeximus nomen tuum? . . . In eo quod dicitis: Mensa Domini despecta est." Mal. i. 6.] The want of reverence with which many priests celebrate Mass is the cause that it is treated with contempt by others.

Poor priests! Having heard that a priest died after celebrating his first Mass, the Venerable Father [St.] John d'Avila said: "Oh what a terrible account shall he have to render to God for his first Mass!" But what should Father d'Avila say of priests who have for thirty or forty years said Mass with haste and irreverence, so as to scandalize all that were present at it? And how, I ask again, can such priests propitiate the Lord and obtain His graces, when by celebrating in such a manner they insult rather than honor Him? *"Since every sin,"* says Pope Julius, *"is wiped out by the holy sacrifice, what would be offered to the Lord in atonement of sin if in offering the sacrifice sin is committed?"* ["Cum omne crimen sacrificis deletur, quid pro delictorum expiatione Domino dabitur, quando in ipsa sacrificii oblatione erratur?"—Cap. Cum omne, de Consecr. dist. 2.] Miserable priests! and miserable the bishop who permits such priests to celebrate. For, as the Council of Trent prescribes, bishops are bound to prevent all

(25) irreverences in the celebration of Mass: *"The holy synod decrees that the ordinary bishops of places shall take diligent care and be bound to prohibit irreverence, which can hardly be separated from impiety."* ["Decernit sancta synodus, ut Ordinarii locorum ea omnia prohibere sedulo curent ac teneantur, quæ irreverentia (quæ ab impietate vix sejuncta esse potest) induxit." Sess. 22, Decr. de obs. in M.]

Mark the words, shall take diligent care and be bound; they are bound to suspend the priest who celebrates without due reverence. And this they are obliged to do even with regard to regulars; for in this every bishop is constituted a delegate of the Apostolic See, and is therefore bound to seek for information regarding the manner in which Mass is celebrated in his diocese.

And let us, dearly beloved priests, endeavor to amend, if we have hitherto offered this great sacrifice with a want of reverence and devotion. Let us, at least from this day forward, repair the evil we have done. Let us, in preparing for Mass, reflect on the nature of the action that we are going to perform: in celebrating Mass we perform an action the most sublime and holy that man can perform. Ah, what blessings does a Mass, said with devotion, bring on him who offers it, and on those that hear it! With regard to the priest who offers it, the Disciple writes: "Prayer is more quickly heard when recited in the presence of a priest saying Mass." ["Oratio citius exauditur in ecclesia in præsentia Sacerdotis celebrantis."] Now, if God hears more speedily the prayers which a secular offers in the presence of a priest celebrating Mass, how much more readily will He hear the

prayers of the priest himself if he celebrates with devotion! He who offers the holy Mass every day with devotion shall always receive new lights and new strength from God. Jesus Christ will always infuse increased knowledge and consolation; He will encourage him, and grant him the graces that he desires.

A priest may feel assured, particularly after the consecration, that he shall receive from Jesus Christ all the graces he asks. The Venerable Father D. Anthony de Colellis, of the Congregation of the Pious Workers, used to say: "When I celebrate and hold Jesus Christ in my hands I obtain whatsoever I wish for." With regard to him who celebrates, and to those that hear Mass, it is related in the life of St. Peter of Alcantara that the Mass that he so devoutly celebrated produced more fruit than all the sermons preached in the province in which he lived. The Council of Rhodes commanded priests *to show their faith and devotion towards Jesus Christ by pronouncing the words with piety, and performing the ceremonies with reverence and devotion towards Jesus Christ, who is present in the Mass.*

[Actio et pronuntiatio ostendat fidem et intentionem quam (Sacerdos) habere debet de Christi et Angelorum in Sacrificio præsentia.]"

The external deportment, says St. Bonaventure, is what shows the interior dispositions of the celebrant.

["Intrinsecos motus gestus exterior attestatur. Spec. disc. p. 2, c. I.]

And here let us call to mind, in passing, the command of Innocent III.: "*We also command that the oratories, vases, corporals, and vestments should be kept clean; for it seems to be*

26 *absurd to neglect in so holy actions what would be unbecoming in profane actions."*

[Præcipimus quoque ut oratoria, vasa, corporalia, et vestimenta, munda,

et nitida conserventur; nimis enim videtur absurdum in sacris sordes negligere, quæ dedecerent etiam in profanis." Tit. 44, can. i, Relinqui. 15]

O God! the Pontiff has too much reason to speak in this manner; for some priests have no repugnance to celebrate with corporals, purificators, and chalices which they could not bear to use at table.

IV. THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS

In the third place, after Mass thanksgiving is necessary. The thanksgiving should terminate only with the day. St. John Chrysostom says that for every trifling favor that they confer upon us men expect that we should show our gratitude by making some return. How much more grateful should we be to God, who expects no recompense for His gifts, but wishes us to thank Him solely for our welfare.

["Si homines parvum beneficium prestiterint, exspectant a nobis gratitudinem; quanto magis id nobis faciendum in iis quæ a Deo accepimus, qui hoc solum ob nostrum utilitatem vult fieri?" In Gen, Hom.26.]

If, continues the saint, we are not able to thank the Lord as much as He deserves, let us at least thank Him as much as we can. But what a misery to see so many priests who, after Mass, say a few short prayers in the sacristy, without attention or devotion, and then begin to speak on useless subjects or on worldly business, or perhaps leave the church

immediately after Mass, and carry Jesus Christ into the street! They should be treated in the manner in which Father John d'Avila once acted toward a priest who left the church immediately after celebrating Mass. He sent two ecclesiastics with lighted torches to accompany him; when asked by the priest why they followed him, they answered:

"We accompany the most Holy Sacrament which you carry in your breast." To such priests we may well apply the words of St. Bernard to the Archdeacon Fulcone: "*How is it possible that you so quickly grow tired of Christ?*" ["Heu ! quomodo Christum tam cito fastidis?" Epist. 2.]

O God! how can you become so soon weary of the company of Jesus Christ, who is within you?

So many books of devotion exhort thanksgiving after Mass; but how many priests make it? It is easy to point to those who practise it. Some make mental prayer, recite many vocal prayers, but spend little or no time with Jesus Christ after Mass. They might at least continue in prayer as long as the consecrated species remain within their breast. Father John d'Avila used to say that we ought to set great value on the time after Mass; he ordinarily spent two hours in recollection with God after celebrating Mass.

After Communion the Lord dispenses His graces most abundantly. St. Teresa said that then Jesus Christ remains in the soul as on a throne of grace, and says to her: "*What do you wish that I should do for you ?*" ["Quid vis ut tibi faciam ?"] Besides, it is necessary to know that, according to the opinion of Suarez, [De Sacram. disp. 63, sect. 7.] Gonet, [Man. Thom, p. 3, tr. 4, c. 9.] and many other theologians,

the more the soul disposes herself by good acts, while the consecrated species remain, the greater the fruit she derives from the holy Communion. For, as the Council of Florence [Decr, ad Arm.] teaches, this sacrament has been instituted in the form of food, and therefore as the longer earthly food remains in the stomach the more nutriment it gives to the body so the longer this heavenly food continues in the body the more it nourishes the soul with grace, provided there be corresponding dispositions in the communicant. This increase of grace is the more confidently to be expected, because during that time every good act has greater value and merit; for the soul is then united with Jesus Christ, as He Himself has said: *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him.*

["Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo."

—John, vi. 57.]

And according to St. John Chrysostom, the soul is then made one thing with Jesus Christ. Hence, good acts are then more meritorious, because they are performed by the soul while she is united with Jesus Christ.

["Ipsa re nos suum efficit corpus." Ad pop. Ant. hom. 60.]

But, on the other hand, St.

Bernard tells us that the Lord will not lose his graces by giving them to the ungrateful.

["Numquid non perit, quod donatur ingrato?" In Cant. s. 51.]

Let us then remain, at least for half an hour, with Jesus Christ after Mass; or at least for a quarter. But, O God! a quarter of an hour is too little. We should remember that from the day of his ordination the priest belongs no longer to himself, but to God, says St. Ambrose.

["Verus minister altaris, Deo, non sibi, natus est." In Ps. 118, s. 8.] And before him God Himself said the same: They offer the burnt-offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God, and therefore they shall be holy.

["Incensum enim Domini et panes Dei sui offerunt, et ideo sancti erunt." —Lev. xxi. 6.]

V. THE PRIEST WHO ABSTAINS FROM SAYING MASS

Some abstain through humility from the celebration of Mass. A word on this subject. To abstain from saying Mass through humility is a good act, but it is not the most perfect: acts of humility give God a finite honor, but the Mass gives him infinite honor, because this honor is offered by a divine people. Attend to the words of Venerable Bede:

"A priest who without an important reason omits to say Mass robs the Blessed Trinity of glory, the angels of joy, sinners of pardon, the just of divine assistance, the souls in purgatory of refreshment, the Church of a benefit, and himself of a medicine." ["Cum Sacerdos, non habens legitimum impedimentum, celebrare omittit, quantum in se est, privat Trinitatem gloria, Angelos lætitia, peccatores venia, justos subsidio, in purgatorio existentes refrigerio Ecclesiam beneficio, et seipsum medicina." Dt Præp. ad M. c. 5]]

St. Cajetan, while in Naples, heard that a Cardinal in Rome, a particular friend, who was accustomed to say Mass every day, had begun to omit it on account of his occupations. The saint resolved to go, and actually went to Rome, in the burning heat of summer, at the risk of his life, in order to persuade his friend to resume his former custom.

27 The Venerable John d'Avila, as we read in his life, going one day to say Mass in a hermitage, felt himself so feeble that he began to despair of being able to reach the place, which was at a distance, and intended to omit Mass; but Jesus Christ appeared to him in the form of a pilgrim, uncovered His breast, showed him His wounds, and particularly the wound in His side, and said to him. "When I was wounded, I felt more fatigued and feeble than you are." He then disappeared: Father d'Avila took courage, went to the oratory, and celebrated Mass.

