

Every time therefore that a Priest performs Mass, he produces by the priestly might, Jesus Christ.

Every time that a Priest performs Mass, he offers up this immaculate Victim in sacrifice to God.

I will not now describe or explain the various ceremonies and circumstances by which this most solemn service is attended. First, because you may find them described in so many Catholic books, in our catechisms, and forms of prayer, and many others. Secondly, because I wish exclusively to direct your mind to understand the feeling of Roman Catholics in regard to this daily sacred service. When any ceremony assists me in doing this, I will speak of it.

Represent now to yourself the High-Priest of the Jews offering the morning sacrifice, and the people around him devoutly uniting with him in heart and mind.

Then think of us in this quiet village, kneeling around the altar of our beautiful little Church, offering by our Priest the reality of the sacrifice which those ancient services prefigured, and I will try to bring you to understand something of our feeling at these sacred moments.

One of the first duties of a Roman Catholic is, to assist at the Mass with fitting devotion, which he is taught to attain to by meditation and prayer. Thus as I have before told you, he must endeavour to 'prepare his heart,' previously to the commencement of the service by preserving his mind in repose; and forming his intention—the intention for which he wishes to offer the sacrifice.

There were four principal intentions, in one or other of which every one of the ancient sacrifices was offered.

I. The holocaust or whole burnt-offering, which was wholly consumed for the honour and glory of God.

II. The sin-offering, which was offered as a confession of sins, and as a propitiation for them.

III. The peace-offering, which was offered either as an offering of thanksgiving, or for the obtaining blessings or graces.

Under the christian law we have but one sacrifice namely: that of the Body and Blood of Christ, but this one sacrifice perfectly answers all the ends of the four ancient sacrifices, and both Priest and people join in offering it up for these four ends: namely,

I. To the honour and glory of God.

II. As propitiatory for sin.

III. As a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

IV. For the obtaining of fresh blessings.

In union with these four principal ends, the Christian sacrifice is generally offered for some special end, sometimes for some particular person or object. This is the Priest's care; and the people do not always know what the particular intention of the Priest is.

Besides these, each individual present may offer it for himself, or for some private end of his own.

Thus each must consider before the service begins, what are the intentions with which he is going to assist in offering Mass: or in other words, the Christian Sacrifice.

This teaches him to think for himself, as books would not help much, but rather interfere with his reflections.

He prays and meditates something in this way, supposing him to have already offered his first morning prayer as before. He is on his way to Church, and awakens his mind to a sense of the great duty he is about to perform, by pious ejaculations such as these:

'I am approaching the mount Calvary, to witness my Saviour's sacrifice of Himself for me. By thy cross and precious death, Jesus, have mercy upon me.'

'By the offering which thou wilt make of thyself for me this day, Jesus, have mercy upon me.' On entering the Church, he makes the sign of the cross, saying, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, I come into the presence of the Almighty God.'

Kneeling devoutly down before the altar, he prepares for the service, in something like such a meditation as this:

'I renew the dedication which I have already made of myself to thee, O my God, here in thy special presence. I have already offered to thee all I am and have; I now lay all upon thine altar, and offer it in union with the blessed sacrifice which Christ is about to make of himself for me.'

'I offer unto thee my thoughts—regulate and guide them to be wholly thine this day.'

'I offer unto thee my words—set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. If I should be tempted to sin with my mouth this day, let me remember that I have given my words to thee, and that I must, therefore, speak only to thy honour and glory.'

'I offer unto thee my works—especially my religious duties—my hearing this mass—my prayers and meditations. I offer unto thee my daily occupations: if they should be wearisome, or painful, or mean, or humiliating, let me make a sacrifice of all pleasure therein to thee. I offer unto thee my feelings: if they are peaceful or joyous, accept them as an offering of thanksgiving; if painful and sorrowful, I beseech thee accept them in penance for the sufferings my sins have deserved.'

'I offer all to be sacrificed to thee wholly, take what thou wilt, and teach me to say, Thy will be done. Or if thou see fit to return these blessings to me, return them sanctified with thy blessing.'

'Prepare my heart to assist at this mass, with the fear, reverence, and devotion, which such awful mysteries demand. I believe that the sacrifice which thy Priest is about to offer is the real body and blood of Christ. I believe that Christ is about to descend upon this altar, in his divine and human nature. I believe that He is about to renew the sa-