

be continued to the end of time. The history of the Catholic Church is simply the history of the priest fulfilling the mission for which Christ Himself assumed human nature. In a sense the priest preaching is Christ announcing His saving doctrine to the world, the priest offering up the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass is Christ again renewing, in an unbloody manner, the sacrifice consummated on Calvary for the redemption of the human race, the priest seated in the confessional and imparting absolution to the repentant sinner is Christ exercising His omnipotent power and displaying His boundless mercy, welcoming back with all the excesses of paternal affections the prodigal son into the bosom of the family, the priest, administering the rest of the sacraments and performing his other sacerdotal functions, is Christ distributing with the extravagance of infinite love an abundance of grace to every state in life and to every condition in which we may be found, bringing strength to the weak, encouragement to the suffering, consolation to the sorrowful. Verily, the priest is another Christ, and that great saint who spoke the language of Catholic faith, who declared that, if he encountered a priest and an angel together, he would first do homage to the priest because of the Christ-like character stamped upon him by the sacrament of ordination.

It is necessary, my dear brethren, to call to mind only a few of the texts of Holy Scripture, that bear relation to the priest, to be convinced of his exalted station, and of the deep reverence that that station merits, and to make those of us who have been raised to it supremely grateful for its honor, but fearful also, lest we prove unworthy of it or fail to discharge with becoming zeal the grave duties that it imposes upon us.

It was to the priests of the Church as the successors of the Apostles and disciples that our Divine Master addressed the words "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." (Luke x. 16.) "Teach ye all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 19-20.) That is the same message brought with me from heaven as I have delivered to all future generations. Teach all nations, not the truths of human science, nor the means of acquiring temporal happiness or prosperity, but the method to adopt in order to procure positions of prominence; teach them that heavenly wisdom which I have come to impart to men; teach them the science of eternal truth; teach them the vanity of all things created and instruct them in that method of life through which they will come to the enjoyment of that abode of everlasting and infinite bliss whose wealth is the Author of all creation, and whose loss cannot be compensated for even by the possession of the entire world.

What other teacher of men has for the object of his instruction anything even remotely approaching in excellence that state of unbounded happiness and wealth to which the teaching of the priest would conduct them? To all those who would benefit human society by secular instruction, who would add to human science or increase human happiness by education we must be extremely grateful. They are to be numbered among the first of the world's benefactors. Yet in comparison to the teaching of the priest, theirs is in the language of the Apostle but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. But the priest has not been constituted by Christ simply as a teacher of truth. He is to do more than preach the unspeakable gorgeousness of heaven, the means to be employed in its acquisition, and the absolute necessity of one day securing its possession. He is to accompany man in the journey through life, constantly aiding him in his pilgrimage towards that celestial kingdom. He is to meet him at the very threshold of his existence with the purifying waters of the sacrament of baptism, to free him from the original guilt in which he was conceived; to change him from a child of wrath, unworthy of eternal life, to clothe him in the spotless garb of innocence and make him an object of delight to the angels and an heir to the kingdom of heaven.

And when man by his own perversity, falls from the grace of his Creator, when, through the commission of grievous sin, he brings upon himself the greatest of all calamities, it is to the priest that he has recourse to heal him of his mortal wound. And the priest, acting in the person of Christ making use of the marvelous power conferred on him by the words of our divine Saviour, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you; receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xv. 21-23) making use of this marvellous power, the priest pronounces the form of absolution, and immediately an effect is produced more wonderful than that of the creative act of God Himself, when the magnificent universe into being. In an instant, a sinner is transformed into a saint. He who had rendered his condition one of complete desolation, who had deprived himself of God's grace, who was in constant peril of eternal perdition, is enriched with the incomparable wealth of sanctifying grace, is restored to God's blessed friendship, and, instead of meriting to have passed upon him by

his Supreme Judge the awful sentence of final reprobation, is found worthy to have addressed to him those words of unending recompense that on the last day will bring untold delight to multitudes of the just. What all that means we can now but very imperfectly understand. It will be revealed to us in its all important significance when, in the life to come, we shall behold God's Infinite goodness incessantly praised and adored, praised by the Heavenly Chorus because of the mercy dispensed by Him with unmeasured prodigality in the absolution of His priests.

And yet, my dear brethren, in the creation of the priesthood our Blessed Redeemer endowed it with a power more stupendous still than that of forgiving sins. As, on the first Holy Thursday night, He sat in the midst of His chosen ones, He performed the greatest and most affectionate work that has proceeded from the Hand of God, in the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and in the power with which He invested His Apostles over His own Precious Body and Blood. Seated with Him on that memorable occasion were all the priests of the Church in the person of those beloved Apostles. And, in virtue of the commission contained in the discourse that Christ then pronounced, throughout the universe to-day, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, as though the world were converted into one vast altar, there is constantly being celebrated by an army of priests that most excellent sacrifice through which the homage of the human race is offered up to the Most High, expiation is rendered His Infinite Majesty for the outrages committed against it, superabundant thanksgiving is paid Him for His countless and priceless favors, and every grace procured for the leading of a saintly life and the assuring of a glorious eternity hereafter. More than that. The faithful of every clime and of every race and of every condition are daily sanctified a thousand fold by the reception of the same Sacred Body and Blood as the Apostles partook at the Last Supper and as the angels and saints now adore in Heaven. If a long and rigorous season of fasting and mortification and prayer were required, if a journey to the extremities of the earth had to be undertaken, if all the riches of the world had to be expended to secure assistance at but one Mass or to receive but one Holy Communion the blessing would be cheaply purchased. How then can we ever repay God's limitless love as evidenced in the multiplicity of His priests and in the daily frequency with which they officiate at the Altar and distribute the Bread of Life? How can we ever sufficiently honor them because of the God-like office they discharge in the Sacrifice of the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist.

There are many other functions of the priest that should arouse the reverence and the love of those for whose spiritual welfare he labors. He stands at the altar as the youthful couple kneel before him to vow to each other undying fidelity, he stands there as God's representative, to receive their mutual consent, to place upon their union the Church's approbation, to pour down upon it Heaven's benediction, and to give to them every assurance that, in the fulfillment of the duties of the state into which they are entering and in the encountering of the trials they will have to endure, they may rely with entire confidence upon the help of Divine Assistance.

And when crosses visit the family to whom does the afflicted mother or wife look for consolation and aid? To whom do the desolate children instinctively turn for guidance and protection? To whom does the grief stricken husband or father betake himself for strength in the hour of anguish? To the priest of the Church who has been long and well schooled in the charity of Christ, who has renounced all to follow in the footsteps of Him Who was compassion itself and Who always displayed affection for the sorrowing and the lowly.

And when the last solemn moment approaches, when human science is of no further avail, and the affection of friends finds itself helpless, it is again to the priest that appeal is made for the last sad anointing, and with prayers, with words of solace and encouragement he prepares the soul for its passage into eternity. When it has gone forth to meet its Judge, he sends up to heaven the public prayers of the Church in its behalf. And as the lifeless body is being lowered into the tomb it is the voice of the priest that beseeches forgiveness for the trespasses of the past, and implores admission for the immortal soul into the Paradise of joy. And ever afterwards, each time that he ascends the steps of the altar to offer up the August Sacrifice, he prays for that soul and for all others that have gone before in the sleep of Christ, supplicating for them the blessing of light and peace eternal.

Such, my dear brethren, is the priest, and such are the reasons why he should be enshrined in the affection and loyalty and veneration of every Catholic community, of every Catholic home, and of every Catholic heart.

May he who has this morning received the sacerdotal unction live long in the faithful exercise of its manifold powers. May he ever remain without stain and without reproach in his holy vocation, an ornament to the priesthood by the saintliness of his life, an edification and an inspiration to the flocks over

whom he may be appointed, an honor and a pride to the place of his birth and to the parish in which he has been ordained, a tower of strength to the Church that to-day admits him into the number of her sacred ministers, a joy and a gladness to the remaining members of that Christian family wherein he received his Catholic formation and wherein were fostered with the tenderest care every indication of priestly calling.

May he never fail to remember at the altar, in priestly gratitude, all who have in any wise aided him in attaining to the hour of triumph and rejoicing. There are that loving father and mother who have long since gone to their reward, to the influence of whose exemplary lives, to whose anxious solitude and noble self sacrifice, he owes a debt beyond computation. But in their departure they have been well replaced by that kind relative and benefactor to whose long continued and generous sympathy and assistance is to be attributed, in a large degree, the advent of this happy day. In his generous sense of Catholicity he feels amply recompensed in the fact that he has played a part in consecrating a life to the service of the altar. But, as long as that life endures, it will in grateful recognition, each day beseech for him from the Divine Victim every grace and blessing. And may all of us, my dear brethren, receive a token of this ceremony in an occasional prayer addressed to the throne of Heaven by him at whose ordination we have assisted, asking that, by fear of the Lord and reverence to his priests, by the faithful accomplishment of every obligation, we may ultimately be united in endless veneration and adoration to the Great High Priest in the Kingdom of His Glory.

CONVERTS AND MEN OF GOOD-WILL

The hour is one for reverence and peace; when we read of quiet converts, through the voice of a Benedictine who knows how to respect, also, loving friends and kind hearts from whose eyes scales have not fallen, or who but see men as trees walking, the mist blowing round them from many an ill-wind, and the confusion of many discords in their ears. We read of former co-religionists to Caldey monks are "heart rending." A convert can well believe it—those whose grave and scholarly but simply earnest clergymen of younger days wrote only this wisdom, in answer to announcements of his intention: "Do not let your words run before your actions, nor your actions fall short of your words;" whose non-Christian guide in college learning but said, "Well, I hope you'll be a good Catholic;" and whose surviving parent, though Protestant, had the "wish to live to see you a priest."

This is not so very long ago, and yet near twenty years since; when some may say there was less of today's treating of all religions with equal neglect. Old Catholics, half thoughtlessly but quite sincerely, cannot understand why good people of Catholic belief should go on tormenting themselves with the mixed traditions of a body which is patient of such sacred beliefs, but also of their contradictions; and which is so nervous and self-conscious when dressed in Catholic attire, which has no whole-heartedness about that which, if it can be known, should be loved and adored. It all seems so sad, so perverse, so self-torturing, so unworthy; so foolish even and useless. But such old Catholics do sometimes pause, reflect, and answer themselves to their understanding, if not to their sympathy: look at Newman's long years after he first saw the ghost; listen to Manning's tribute that he had never received an Anglican clergyman who had not been in good faith. It takes long to see, and some never see. A Dr. Pusey was never near the Catholic Church at all, in Newman's judgment. And did this reverence of Keble say, when someone suggested that Keble had not been honest of purpose in staying behind within the city of confusion, "I spit the suggestion out?"

And so Catholics have to submit to see these men so strangely wandering howlforth in what the Guardian once called, "our warm theological fog." Now again we hear them saying: "Something must be done to heal our unhappy divisions; our bishops must defend the faith; the Church of England must say what it believes. As if, to any logical mind, it mattered in the least whether that present body decided for the whole faith of Trent and of the Vatican; when its past is there, with lines of Calvinist bishops, with its centuries-long patronage of haters of the old religion and despisers of its rites, with its not less infamous indifference to such things, if indeed they were revealed truth and the expression thereof. For if the Church of England really holds Catholic truths, she is the wisest institution that ever appeared on earth, thought St. George Mirart, who reflected that in his youth none of its ministers had let such things be heard fall from their lips. And even to-day, a clergyman holding many Catholic truths can say to me, "I keep back many of these truths I believe from my pulpits; if I preached them all, no one would come to church." This is a successful, parochially popular "Ritualist."

It is an awful subject, if there be an awful subject on this side the

grave. And yet we say to those whose positions are so absurd to a cynic, and doubtless so terrible to a saint, that the general attitude of the Catholic people is not contempt, not censoriousness, not anger, but a kindly or even humble wondering pity. Why would they not be Catholics; would not it be the happy day for them, when they found, without effort, in all about them, their faith, their pity, the recognition at least of the one truth; no advancing, no retiring, no ceremonial attractions merely, no waste talk about the set of opinions irrational creed repeating mortals happen to have?

Yet Catholics can never recall St. Augustine too often or too much, warning or reproaching those who dare judge their neighbour passing through difficulties which easy-judging and happy-go lucky minds have never known. What, however, the present writer would recall to-day, in the interests of mutual respect if not love, of patience, and of the wisdom that comes through peace, is the kindness and Christian charity experienced by one who has returned to the on Church of his baptism from those who judged he died a needless act, or even an impious one. But, they, too, can separate the sinner from the sin. It is to remind us once more how far are material heretics from being the children of heresy which by our thoughts (and, indeed, by their own sometimes wretched heretical words of suspicions, negations, and irritable captiousness) they ought to be. But they cannot help being so much more kindly than is that ungenerous thing—a reforming creed.

The good Abbot at Caldey, we are told, took care to have a priest for a poor Catholic boy who had left him. I was looking to-day at Cardinal Logue's letter witnessing to the efforts made to keep young Catholics to their duties by that free lance Robert Dolling, whom I am honored by saying I knew. Nearer to myself I knew a clergyman who tried (but I think failed) to get a Scottish Catholic doctor to return to religion at his death and have a priest. Certainly some of us brought up in a Protestant Irish house heard the priest spoken of as a most salutary guide, whom the servants were helped in every way to follow; and never heard, concerning him and his office, anything but words of respect, and became a Catholic man, and her sister-nuns tell me, saint. She corresponded till her death with some of her Anglican sisters; her respect for them, her reverence for their piety, was as unbounded as was her feeling of submission to the Holy See. What her pain was in leaving such people, and such a home, she could not dare to describe; only the prayer was found after her death: "Dear Lord, you won't forget the number of loved ones I left for you, and the dear little children I cared for for your sake." In our justest controversy in our right heart—ever let us keep hearts on which could our opponents look, they would see them to be of brother's temper and pitiful; and minds ever conscious that we are dealing with what expresses often such loyalty, such enthusiasm, such nobility, such earnestness, such strictness with self, even such humility.

The present writer was received into the Church with one who for long years had been an Anglican clergyman of such a spirit as that. And, one parishioner, a young man of the world, cried from his heart that when he came to die he would have no other man at his bed than this friend of the dying. Grown men, colonial farmers, dour enough when they came to say good-bye, embraced him, and in tears. He has gone to his reward now, buried after twenty years of Catholic life, in the habit of a Franciscan tertiary. No one knew better than he—though a passionate lover of his England—that the root of Catholic piety is not in any settings of religion with national or racial pride. He thought such things the chief obstacles to conversions. Yet the point now is that as an Anglican he had had no anti-Catholic principles, and had given no anti-Catholic pulpits utterances that a Catholic can recall. It is unwisdom and injustice and ignorance to state the contrary about many; nor would they recognize the travesty made of their spirit and teaching by those who think they know of them and do not.

THE HEART OF MARY

What is so winning in this world as a face radiant with purity? To look into the innocent eyes of children is almost like getting a glimpse of paradise; it often gives even to the sensual a momentary view of a beauty more than earthly. All good people feel this. But while we feel innocent to be lovely, we are moved more deeply at sight of an outshining purity in maturer years. Such a purity, we mean, as reveals a heart untaunted of evil; more than this, as a heart that loves purity with ardor, as others love impurity, and a mind in which only pure and chaste and heavenly thoughts dwell and move about as ease in their true home. This purity is the glory and ornament of maidenhood; and we have often seen its light on the faces of good mothers, a light so radiant of purity and innocence that it seems a reflection from the face of the Virgin Mother. At the sight of such purity, every good man understands the beatitude: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." In a true sense, is not the promise realized even here below? "Do they not live in God's presence and see Him, in a way that belongs only to the pure of heart?"

If the heart of a sinful child of man can carry in itself so much of heaven, what shall be said of the purist of hearts, the heart of Mary? Here is purity unstained. We call her immaculate. She was that and far more. A bit of glass, in its transparent purity, may be immaculate, without spot or flaw. Mary's purity is more than this; it is the purity of a perfect diamond, which is not only free from flaw or blemish or dimness, but radiates pure light. Who would not have loved to look on the face of the Virgin of Nazareth? She was the tabernacle of the All-pure and All-holy; and her every glance and movement must have revealed the

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unequalled purity dwelling within her soul. And so, throughout the Christian ages she has shone forth as the one perfect example of purity; and it is a simple historical fact, as Lecky admits, and not mere poetry or sentiment, that the larger influence of the Blessed Virgin has done more to purify the hearts and lives of women than all other influences combined. Very wisely therefore does the Church turn the minds of her children to contemplate the most pure heart of Mary; and she asks them, during this month of August,

to make it the special object of their prayers and their devotion, knowing well that no child of Mary can honor and love her most pure heart without drawing from it treasures of purity and holiness.—New World.

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