

istry of the Catholic priest is linked with the dearest associations of Catholic life. The priest baptizes the new born infant, and thus makes it a child of God, and an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven; he unfolds to the young mind the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and teaches it those great truths that flame out like beacons of salvation on the darksome journey of life; he causes the child to be enrolled, through confirmation, amongst the soldiers of Jesus Christ, and thus equips him for warfare against the enemies of salvation. When the sinner comes heavily-laden with the burden of guilt and of sorrow, which is ever its companion, the priest of God receives him like the Father of the Prodigal, forgives him his sins through the Sacrament of Penance, and through this wondrous mystery of reconciliation, restores him to the friendship of his heavenly Father and to the peace and protection and privileges of his Father's house. But the priest not only takes up this poor wounded traveller of life, whom he finds robbed and wounded by the wayside of sin and error; he cares tenderly for him; he pours the oil and wine of Christ's healing merits into his wounded soul; he feeds him with the bread of life—the body and blood of Christ—and thus enables him to reach the land of promise—the kingdom of God's eternal happiness. The priest comforts and relieves the poor; he consoles the afflicted and sorrow-stricken; he brings the peace of Christ into families torn by dissensions; he reconciles neighbors who had become estranged; he admonishes and reproves the erring; he encourages the wavering; and by word and example he points out to all his flock the road that leads to Heaven and to happiness. And when sickness enters the home—stead, and when medical aid is impotent to stay the ravages of disease, and to assuage the pains of illness, the priest, the physician of the soul, comes and ministers to the mind diseased, heals the infirmities of the soul, consoles and fortifies the dying Christian with the Sacraments of Christ, reconciles him to death as coming from the will of God, and thus by his Christian ministrations makes death a sacred and holy thing, and the gate that opens into a happy eternity. When the poor body, cold and lifeless, is borne to the Church, amid the tears of friends and the sympathetic regrets of neighbors, the priest is there to offer up the holy sacrifice for the soul that is gone, to beseech for it