

Now, what is the secret of this strong innate desire of a Catholic people to help in the creation of a Catholic priesthood. This desire springs from a principle of Catholic faith. The priest is a representative of Jesus Christ on earth. "He that heareth you heareth me." Luke, x. c., 16 v. He is the official public teacher of Christ's saving truths. "Go teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Mathew, xxviii. c., 19-20 v. He is the ambassador of Christ and the dispenser of His mysteries; he is the guardian of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. In his consecrated hands, as he stands at the altar and repeats the words of consecration, the Son of God becomes, as it were, incarnate, and offers Himself as a victim of propitiation to His eternal Father for the sins of men, and applies to immortal souls the saving merits of the bloody sacrifice of Calvary. The ministry 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 heavy-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