



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. III.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 1853.

NO. 32.

CONCLUDING SERMON BY HIS EMINENCE THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER,

Delivered in St. Mary's Church, Moorfields, on the Evening of Sunday, Feb. 13th, 1853.

SUBJECT:—DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST.
(From the Catholic Standard.)

"The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction."—APOCALYPTIC v. 12.

I have been engaged, my dear brethren, for three Sundays in placing before you the principal motives and grounds of devotion to the most adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Perhaps it may have been thought by some that I have taken a circuitous route to reach conclusions which Catholic instinct would at one bound have gained—that I have been creeping on the ground when there were wings at hand by which we could have flown to our object—that I might at once have said, pointing to that altar, "There is your God; your Blessed Redeemer is there present;" and every body would have been prostrate, every heart inflamed with love, every soul enrapt in deep adoration. Yet, my brethren, I feel that, for our devotion to be truly solid and lasting, it is right that it should be based upon argument and reason; and at any rate, the course which I have pursued was necessary to bring me to the conclusions which I wish to develop this evening. For I have to unite deductions from all that I have said, to place them before you in a practical form, and to shew you, as I promised, that the suggestions of our former considerations find their realisation in that devotion on which we have entered here this day—in that continued adoration of our Blessed Redeemer in this most solemn and holy mystery—a devotion now so well known to every Catholic, and so fully appreciated by every child of the faith.

In the three discourses which have preceded my present address, I have endeavored to keep constantly before you the true and real parallel which exists between what our Blessed Lord is pleased to do for us through this most admirable institution, and what He did for us through His incarnation and death.—I shewed you how, step by step, there is an exact conformity in His affectionate dealings with man in these two marvellous dispensations. As St. Bernard when beautifully dilating upon the mysteries of our Saviour's birth, invites us, saying, "Come to Bethlehem, where we have so much to admire; so much to love; so much to imitate?" so may I draw likewise a threefold conclusion from the three motives which I have laid before you for love and devotion towards this blessed Sacrament, and show you how the three forms of devotion which are drawn from these three divers motives unite together, and may be said to be most perfectly blended under that form in which the Church invites you now to indulge in.

For, my brethren, I first endeavored to shew you that as in the birth of our Blessed Redeemer, the angels of God were called to adore Him, because He was present on earth, who was true God no less than His Father (Heb. i. 6); so likewise, having faith that in this blessed Sacrament the same Lord and God is truly and really present, it becomes necessarily a duty from which we cannot shrink, to adore Him. It is in this devotion particularly that we are invited to a *loving adoration* of Him.

Then I shewed you that that presence of our Lord upon earth was not merely that he might be a spectacle for us to gaze on, but that He might give Himself to us—that in His presence there was the surrender of Himself entirely to man, and therefore, that none could refuse to love Him with grateful affection; so likewise, as in this new form of mercy He yields Himself over to us, makes Himself our own possession, communicates Himself entirely to us, so must we meet Him here with love of another character. In this devotion we are called to draw near to Him in a *contemplative love*.

Finally, as in each of these dispensations, the giving of Himself to us involved Him necessarily in humiliation, and in subjection to injuries, and as under the one name that knew Him could refuse to pay Him a homage of affectionate compassion, and strive to make Him compensation if possible; so likewise here, especially in this peculiar form of worship of the adorable Eucharist, we have the opportunity of atoning to Him, and making Him *loving expiation*. Such are the three peculiar advantages of this special form of devotion to our blessed Lord.

When the mysteries of heaven were opened to John, it was not merely that he himself might be consoled and refreshed by the wonderful spectacle which was presented to his view, but it was that the Church should learn lessons from what he made known, so that whatever was done in that heaven of which the Church on earth was to be the counterpart, should serve as a lesson and as a model for her imitation.—John, then, saw the heavens opened. There was a

magnificent throne, dazzling to the sight, upon which sat One, majestic, beautiful, and awful in His grandeur. That throne was the throne of God; and He who sat upon it is He who hath sat there from endless eternity, and whose kingdom passes not away.—the Lord of Glory,—the Lord of Hosts,—the God of Gods,—the same who appeared to the prophets of old in a similar form of divine majesty. And who was that God, but He who, Three in One, forms the object of our constant adoration, that blessed Trinity, indivisible, in whom we cannot admit any difference or inferiority of divinity or attributes! The Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, sat as One upon that throne. Jesus was then at the right hand of His Father; for He was taken up from earth, and He sitteth at the right hand of God. At that right hand of God did Stephen see him (Acts vii. 55), looking down upon him with a glance of affectionate compassion, which gave him strength to overcome all the rage of his enemies. There He is still; from that throne none shall ever move Him.

Then, what is this that John goes on to exhibit before us? What is this new and unprecedented worship of which there has until now been no trace among the prophets as existing in heaven? In the midst of that throne, in the midst of the elders that surround it, there stands a Lamb as if slain; and He becomes an object of distinct adoration to the whole of the celestial hierarchy. The sound of their songs is as of thousands of thousands; those four and twenty elders cast themselves at His feet; and the song which is uttered forms the words of my text, "The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." And thus the shout of praise goes on, until at length it is hushed, and there is silence in heaven. There is deep and silent adoration; and an altar is before that Lamb, and upon it angels cast abundance of incense, which represents the prayers of the faithful on earth.

Now, my brethren, this is the worship which the Church presents to us in the blessed Eucharist, and especially in that form in which she invites us now to adore our Lord, in the same manner as in heaven, in a distinct form as seen by John. And yet it was not the form in which he had seen our Blessed Lord at the very beginning of his vision, where he recognised his well beloved Master, as He addressed to him messages for the angels of the churches; but in a visible form, to John, distinct from that which He had on earth, He appears as an object of adoration in heaven. John recognises a direct act of worship to that Lamb with an altar before Him, separate as though there was in Him a peculiar claim to adoration from those celestial beings, distinct from that which they pay to Him as standing at the right hand of His Father, as claiming not a share, for such worship is indivisible, but the full tide of song and hymn from those blessed spirits.

The Church acts in like manner towards Him.—Here is God. In His temple He is present. Over that altar, we believe that His majesty is especially concentrated far more than it was in the Jewish temple of old. But while we adore God,—while we daily offer up our prayers to the three blessed and undivided persons of the holy Trinity, we have that same distinct worship of the Lamb slain for our salvation. That Lamb is placed upon the altar under another disguise, but not more a disguise than was that in which He appeared to John, and in which He was worshipped in heaven. In the same manner, we surround the throne on which we place Him. We worship Him; we lift up our voices in sacred hymns to Him. Then we fall down in silent adoration before Him. Then the altar is spread at his feet, and the prayer symbolised by the incense, and the incense that symbolises the prayer rise together to Him.

This is the worship to which I invite you, asking you affectionately to join in it. And in truth, my brethren, the worship of the blessed Eucharist in the Church corresponds, in the Catholic heart, and in Catholic faith, most exactly to this homage which we see directed towards that same Son of God, in the very character in which we here adore Him, as the victim of our salvation.

It is true that the highest and the most sublime worship that we can pay to Him is that which we daily render, when we assist at those divine mysteries in which more especially His death is commemorated. In the Mass it is that the solemn rite is performed, of bringing that Lamb, who is as slain, from the altar in heaven down to the altar on earth. And who can see any great distance between the two? Is it further in that which is infinite from the altar in heaven to the altar on earth, than it is from the throne on which He sits with His Father, to that altar which represents Him in heaven as a victim? No, my brethren; it is the same worship, the same victim. We believe therefore, that each day that same sacrifice comes down to us, and is renewed upon our altars; and we

pray and adore around it. But this is, if I may so express it, the more active worship of that most sacred victim. We are, then, necessarily guided, led along, by the very rite which is performed; our minds are not allowed to unloose themselves from the direction which the Church gives them, and we are more especially drawn, at that time, to commemorate the actual passion of our Redeemer. The mysteries which are represented in this sacrifice connect our thoughts with His sorrows and torments, and for what He endured for us on His cross. It is a time, not of simple adoration (except for a moment), so much as of active devotion in communion with the prayers of the Church. It is the time, too, generally, when we have to pour out supplications for the day and when our special prayers prescribed to us, either by rule or by our own usual practice, occupy us in conjunction with the solemn rite. This corresponds to the loud and united homage paid by angels and elders to the Lamb. It is natural, therefore, that the Church should also give us the opportunity of indulging in that which is a truly angelic and celestial worship—that of simple and individual adoration.

For, my brethren, although we believe that heaven is a joyous place, and that there is not a moment in which a song in honor of God and the Lamb is not bursting forth from the lips of angels and of saints, yet we know that this is only the expression of the real and essential bliss there enjoyed, and forms not the sole occupation of those heavenly spirits. We believe rather that their felicity consists in being watchful and ever intent on the face of God; in having their eyes never satiated with its glory, but drinking in constantly that stream of light which is full of gladness and which forms their intelligence, and in having their ears ever intent on absorbing the flow of harmonious wisdom which, far richer than any strain of even heavenly music, from Him is ever flowing; while their hearts (I speak humanly), are as vessels into which is poured an unceasing stream of unspeakable delight, and which, overflowing through their entire being, steep in universal fruition. This passive, this calm, this unstriving contemplation of God in deep and silent adoration forms—we cannot doubt it—the true occupation and enjoyment of the blessed.

And how can we come nearer to this, than when the Church, in whom we believe, places before us that same Lamb who was adored as if slain in heaven, and gives time and his leisure, undisturbed by any outward worship, to fill our souls with the contemplation of Him, and in the very depths of our being lowly to adore Him? It produces an annihilation, if one may so speak, of self. The world is forgotten. Each one is in a solitude alone with God. He sees standing before and near to him, Him who is God, in majesty and in glory. But that glory and majesty are so attempered by the sweetness of the loveful mystery, that he feels he can be in His presence, and yet not sink overwhelmed with fear. He sees his Saviour before him in all the sternness of His purity and holiness, but, this is so softened by the tenderness of His look, that, instead of saying like Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man," we require almost to be told like Magdalene, "Touch me not," to prevent our rushing forward and embracing Him, when He appears to us as he did to her, and was recognised by her, though still in a disguise (St. John xxi. 17). They who had seen an angel of old, as Tobias and his son, recognising in him but the symbol of God, would remain for three hours prostrate in adoration after his departure; and during these three hours neither spoke to, nor thought of, the other, but each was entirely absorbed in the abyss of his own thoughts, thinking to himself how infinitely gracious and good that God must have been who had deputed one of His archangels from near His throne to bear to them mercy and blessing (Job. xii. 22). This thought of the immense greatness and goodness of God was sufficient to keep them thus entranced and unconscious of all earthly things through that long space. And shall not any of us in like manner, in contemplating the greatness of that God who is pleased thus to come near us, in considering that we stand in His real presence, that we have Him close to us, whom the heavens cannot contain, whom the angels cannot comprehend, whom eternity cannot measure, whom infinite space cannot limit—shall we not spend one brief hour, or a portion of it at least, in this only appropriate homage of adoring love, not presenting to Him any distinct petition, but merely throwing ourselves down in the divine presence, worshipping in spirit and in truth, making our whole being a sacrifice immolated and consumed before Him, and losing sight even of our most spiritual wants, because all our thought is lost in that of giving honor and glory to Him alone.

This silent adoration will still not be unaccompanied by songs of praise, which will break forth from time to time. It will not be with our lips that we

shall give them utterance, but there will be a quiet and still music within our hearts, which will be as the return of some long lost strain, not in a connected form, but going and coming in snatches and gushing tones, like those of the swelling breeze; or it will sound to us rather as if it were the echo within our hearts of distant angels' songs. For we shall find ourselves unconsciously, almost without thought, repeating, "O truly this Lamb that was slain, this God who is present, this Blessed Redeemer who thus comes down to me, is worthy of praise, is worthy of benediction, is worthy of divinity, of wisdom, and of power." Thus we shall find ourselves united in adoration of the Holiest with sinless spirits above, whose every words become so naturally ours. Deep and long be our dive into this ocean of boundless love; and let our spiritual sense hardly brook return from its all-absorbing and entrancing gulf, to the bleak consciousness of an earthly existence!

But, my brethren, the love that thus contemplates, and feels that such contemplation is necessary for adoration, will soon pass on to other thoughts and other feelings. It is not merely to adore our Blessed Redeemer that He is exposed to us solemnly upon our altars; it is likewise, that in thus adoring Him we may speak to Him in all the affection of our heart, as we contemplate in Him the various forms of His mercy and kindness towards us. You see Him before you; your hearts tell you that it is the same Saviour who was born and died for your sakes, and your imagination, under the conduct of your faith, will easily lead you into the various scenes in which He appeals to your love.

You will delight to remember Him as He was when He came into the world, as we have contemplated Him before, as a child in the arms of His mother, helpless, and having but one thought, the love of you and the determination to redeem you. You will dwell familiarly on all that enhances His love in that hour. You will picture to yourselves the desolation of that place in which He first appeared on earth, its nakedness, and its coldness, and His neglect by men. You will think of the love of His Blessed Mother, and of the worship of those poor shepherds who came to honor Him, and you will then feel as if you were in the midst of them. You will kneel with them, and ask Him if He will not allow you in return to love Him when He has thus in the very first instant of life, given you such evidence of affection.

You will then, in another moment of thought, find yourselves transported to that mountain of sorrow on which He is surrounded by so few faithful and loving souls. You will believe and know that you have before you, veiled and concealed from your sight, but not less really there, that same victim who offered Himself on the cross for your sakes. And will you not feel that you have a right to stand at His feet and weep with those that love him, shrinking not from being at His side? Will you not pour forth loving words here as fervently as you would have done had it been your happiness there to address your Lord?

It is in this silence, when you are alone, when there is naught to give direction to your thoughts but your own affectionate feelings, that you will pass in the contemplation of Him from one mystery to another; and in each you will find motives of love, which will enable you to speak to Him as your heart dictates, face to face, as a friend speaks to a friend.

But this is not all. For, my brethren, this is the advantage of this devotion, that in the solitude in which each one places himself, he directly expresses his thoughts as he feels them, and as none other could feel for him. He enters at once into the depths of his own heart, and then searches for the many motives of gratitude which are not granted to every one, but which each of us can find in those abundant proofs of love which our Divine Saviour has manifested to us. Do you think that when Magdalene sat at His feet, and others were busy around her as she was listening to His word, that her thoughts were engaged merely with common-place motives of love; that while they were asking cautious questions, and receiving wise and sublime answers to them, she was following the mere didactic lessons that our Saviour might be imparting? No; she heard indeed all that came from His heart of love; but her eyes were fixed untriflingly upon Him, and the thought within her was, "What a wonderful position for one like me to be in, this day! What would have become of me had He not on that happy day crossed my path? What would have become of me if those seven demons which He cast forth had still remained within me? What would have become of me if I had not gone to the Pharisee's house, and poured out my ointment and my tears on His blessed feet? And here I, the sinner, the outcast, am allowed to nestle at those feet, and privileged to look into His meek countenance, and seek consolation and forgiveness from those tender eyes. I am privileged thus to be