

As it is with the body, so it is with the mind. We go to school and we are taught how to read. The schoolmaster is the minister by whom we receive food for the mind.

So it is also with the soul. God has His gifts for the soul, and He gives them to us through the ministry of our fellow-men,—just as He gives His gifts for body and mind through our fellow-men. The gift of spiritual life comes to us in Baptism. Then we are “born again of water and of the SPIRIT,” as the LORD said we must be (St. John iii. 5). But we cannot baptize ourselves. So we receive the first gift for our soul through the ministry of a Clergyman. Well; the good work begun then needs help later on: the young life requires to be strengthened. So children are brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, and by the laying on of his hands they receive the HOLY GHOST, as people of old did by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands (Acts. viii. and xix.)

God uses the Bishop as His instrument. The Apostles were not able to convey the gift of the Blessed SPIRIT by their own power or holiness, and yet men “saw that through the laying-on of the Apostles’ hand the HOLY GHOST was given” (Act viii 18). And so it is now with our Bishops.

Sometimes, the spiritual life is attacked by the deadly disease of sin. Then medicine is needed. This medicine is called Absolution, or the Forgiveness of Sins. It comes from God, of course, as every good gift does. But it comes to us through the Priest, to whom it has been said, “Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven.”

Again, the constant food of the Christian soul through life is the

Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Here again, therefore, the gift comes to us from God through His appointed minister and steward.

So it is, too, with Bible-reading and with sermons. Holy men of old, moved by the HOLY GHOST, wrote down the books of the Bible. Others copied them out, and others at last printed them. In the ministry of the Words and Sacraments our Clergy, who are God’s stewards, give to the members of the LORD’s household “their portion of meat in due season” (Luke xii. 42.). It is the LORD Who has made them rulers over His household.

Little children get their first ideas of God from their mothers. The mothers come between the children’s souls and God. He means them to do so. Not, of course, to hinder them from coming to Him; but to bring them to Him, as the Jewish mothers of old brought their little ones to the SAVIOUR (St. Mark x. 13).

This foolish saying, then, about having no man between your soul and God is nothing but wicked self-will. You might as well say Put no water-pipe between my house and the reservoir. Or, Put no stair-case between me and my bedroom. Or, I don’t want any post-man to come between my friend and me. Don’t you see that these things are channels and help—not hindrances?

And, moreover, the Clergy and the Church did not invent them. The Sacraments were appointed by our LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself. So that if you say that you won’t have anything to do with them, it is not merely the Church whom you are rejecting, but the Lord. And