

What is the Mass?

It is not a form of prayer, but an act, in which, by the hands of His ministers, Jesus Christ is offered in expiation for sin, and for all those other ends for which it was instituted by Him. One alone stands forth and makes the awful offering; the rest kneel around, and join their intentions and devotions with his; but even were there not a solitary worshipper present, the sacrifice both for living and dead would be efficacious and complete. To join in this act of sacrifice, and to participate in its effects, it is not necessary to follow the priest or to use the words he uses. We need not hear, or even understand, what it is he says; and in fact Mass is said in Latin, which is an unknown tongue to the majority of people. This, indeed, is made a matter of accusation against us, as if the whole thing were a barren form or senseless mummerly, except, it may be, to the favoured few. Protestants have nothing in their religion corresponding to the Sacrifice of the Mass, their only notion of congregational worship is that of persons hearing or reading the same forms of prayer all together at one and the same time. Of the union of heart, of intention, and still more of action, which constitutes the very life of Catholic public services, and pre-eminently of the Mass, they are ignorant; and therefore it is that they charge the Catholic Church with putting ceremonial in the place of worship, and making the acts of the priest serve instead of the devotion of the people.

How contrary is the fact! Every Catholic knows what the priest is doing, though he may not know or even understand what he is saying, and is consequently able to follow with his devotions every portion of the Holy Sacrifice. Thus he rejoices in a liberty of heart to which the Protestant is an utter stranger. He can come before his God and Saviour, and while the tremendous action of the Mass proceeds, lay bare his whole soul before Him, tell Him of all his sins and failings, all his particular trials and temptations, all his personal joys and griefs, all his individual wants and desires, hampered by no devotional forms whatever, or assisted only by such as his feelings at the time approve. Hence that wonderful union of sacrificial, of congregational, and of individual devotion, which a public Mass presents. Before the altar stands the celebrating priest;—in himself nothing, in himself a sinner, and the mere minister only by whom the Eternal High Priest offers himself to the Divine Majesty. Absorbed in his awful work to an extent which the most devout of those who are not Catholics can scarcely conceive, he prays, he consecrates, he offers, he adores, he communicates, he gives thanks, hardly conscious the while whether he is alone or surrounded by thousands,—whether he is in silence, or whether the church is ringing with the voices of a numerous choir. In the multitude behind him each Catholic, while he never forgets that he is one with all his brethren in Christ, and is united to Christ by the very act of his adoption into His mystical body, approaches God, and shares in the Sacrifice with a full and free manifestation of all his necessities as an individual soul, for whom individually Christ died. In one place kneels perhaps some poor grey-headed aged man telling his beads, for he cannot read even his own language. By his side is a young child, with her little book full of pictures; and at each separate division of the Mass she says one of the short prayers before her, and spends the rest of her time in watching the movements of the priest and his assistants; and wonders, it may be, whether there is any thing more beautiful in heaven itself. Close at hand is a steady, sober, respectable gentleman, holding his spectacles in one hand, while with the other he supports a well-bound Missal, in which he attentively reads every word, either in Latin or in English; accompanying the priest as far as possible in every phrase, unconscious of the slightest desire for a more individual expression of his pious thoughts and well-ordered unenthusiastic feelings. Near him, again, is a young woman with her face buried in her hands, or with a look expressing the intensest adoration and love, gazing at the Adorable Presence before her, forgetting for a while every pang of heart or pain of body, and anticipating the ineffable joys of the moment when the unveiled Godhead shall be revealed to her for ever. Another, like herself, perhaps in poverty, perhaps in wealth, alternately reads and meditates. She has before her a brief outline of the Passion of Jesus Christ, the course of its incidents adapted to the course of the unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar; and at every step she has some special mercy to ask in immediate connection with the sufferings and death of

her Lord: she prays for pardon for some sin, for deliverance from some temptation, for protection in some trial, for the conversion of some friend or relation, for a blessing on some person who desires her prayers, or who has injured her, or whom she has injured, or on the Church itself, on the Pope, on her country; or she gives thanks for mercies past, or prays in some other of the innumerable ways in which the Christian heart draws near its God. By her side is a person hearing Mass for the second time that day, and after communicating at the first, converting every separate step in the second into the most acceptable of thanksgivings for the transcendent gift just vouchsafed to him. Or—to Protestant eye most strange of all—close at hand, in the midst of the people; a priest is saying his office; turning over the leaves of his Breviary, his lips rapidly moving in the recital of psalms and antiphons and collects; yet every now and then, by his rising up or kneeling down, or by his laying aside his book, showing that he too, in most un-Protestant fashion, is participating in the sacrifice, and sharing the intentions of both celebrant and congregation.

Yet amidst all this endless variety, there is but one mind. The prayers of the priest are not substituted for those of the people. No one desires to force his brother against his will. No one desires to participate in a more congregational service. No one complains that Latin is the only language used; or that much of what the priest says is heard by no one, and that many of the congregation understand not a single word he utters. It is the most marvellous union of liberty and law which this earth can show. It is a more perfect harmonising of the duties of man, both as a brother and as an individual, than the unbelieving world can conceive. It is the most striking exemplification of that union of discipline and freedom which is the guiding principle of the Church in her treatment of her children, which she can any where exhibit. Like the direct works of the Almighty, it displays an astonishing instance of that unity in variety, which man in his secular works is ever seeking to attain, and so seldom accomplishing. It is at once the joy of the Catholic, the wonder of the candid Protestant, and the scoff of the vulgar unbeliever. To those who are without, it may seem a mummerly; but to those who are within, it is the foretaste of heaven. "O sacred banquet! in which Christ is received; the memory of His Passion is renewed; the mind is filled with grace; and a pledge of future glory is given to us." The beggar with his beads, the child with her pictures, the gentleman with his Missal, the maiden meditating on each mystery of the Passion, or adoring her God in silent love too deep for words, the grateful communicant, and the priest with his breviary,—have but one intent, one meaning, and one heart, as they have one action, one object, before their mental vision. They bow themselves to the dust as sinners; they pray to be heard for Christ's sake; they joyfully accept His words as the words of God; they offer the bread and wine; they unite themselves with the celebrant in the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, which he as their priest offers for them; they communicate spiritually; they give thanks for the ineffable gift which God has given them. Their words differ, their thoughts vary; but their hearts are united, and their will is one. Therefore is their offering pure and acceptable in the sight of Him who knows their secret souls, and who accepts a man, not for the multitude or for the fewness of his sayings, for his book, or for his beads, but for the intention with which he has, according to his sphere and capacities, fulfilled His sacred will, through the merits of the Adorable Victim who is offered for him.

His Opinion of His People.

During a recent speech Archbishop Croke thus defined the Irish character:—"O'Connell used to say of the Irish people that they were the finest peasantry in the world. He meant physically speaking, and he was right. But I go a step further, and I say they are the most faithful, the most grateful, the most gentle, the most generous, the most hospitable and pious people in the world. Englishmen are brave and resolute; Scotchmen selfish, calculating and cute; Frenchmen gay and gallant; Italians lively and artistic; German thoughtful, strong and sulky; Spaniards proud, and perhaps pedantic; but Irishmen have some of the best qualities of all these nationalities—they are brave, humorous, intelligent, fond of fun and friendship, and, I might add, of a reasonable share of fight—grave and gay, as need may be, and withal supremely religious.

Books.

Most great men are lovers of books. Fenelon said: "If all the crowns of the kingdom of Europe were laid at my feet in exchange for my books, I would spurn them all." Macaulay said of his books: "These old friends that are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. Plato is never sullen; Cervantes is never petulant; Demosthenes never comes unseasonably; Dante never stays too long; no difference of political opinion can ever alienate Cicero."

"The late Mark Pattison, rector of Lincoln," says the New York Tribune, "had a human fondness for his books. Nothing annoyed him so much as to hear one of them fall; and dusting them, which he reduced to a science, seemed to give him real pleasure. In his last illness the sight of any of his favorites depressed him greatly. 'Ah,' he would say, 'I am to leave my books,' and sometimes, 'They have been more to me than my friends.' He would ask for them one after the other, till he was literary covered almost to his shoulders as he lay, and the floor around him was strewn with them. He used to say that the sight of books was necessary to him at his work; and once, reading how Schiller always kept 'rotten apples' in his study because their scent was beneficial to him, he pointed to some shelves above his head, where he kept his oldest and most prized editions, and said, 'There are my rotten apples.'"

It should be the ambition of every young man and woman to have a good library. For youthful readers who are beginning the collection of books a few rules will not be amiss:

1. Set apart a regular weekly or monthly sum for books, and spend that, and that only.
2. Devote a portion of your money to books of reference.
3. Never purchase a worthless book, nor an infidel work, nor a poor edition.
4. Buy the best. Plutarch said: "We ought to regard books as we do sweetmeats—not wholly to aim at the pleasantest, but chiefly to respect the wholesomest."
5. Where there is a choice, buy small books rather than large ones. "Books that you can carry to the fire and hold readily in the hand are the most useful, after all," was the conclusion of Samuel Johnson.
6. Do not buy too many books of one class.
7. Do not buy sets off an author until you have a fair library and plenty of money.
8. Take one monthly magazine and one or two weekly religious papers.
9. Make a catalogue of your books.
10. In each book write your name, the date of the purchase and the price paid.
11. Have a blank book in which to put all particulars in reference to loans.
12. "Read what you buy, and buy only what you will read."

Good Coffee—How to Make It.

A good and economical way of making coffee is to put the proper amount for the family—a heaping tablespoonful for each cup—into the coffee pot, pouring over it an equal number of cups of cold water and letting it stand over night. In the morning bring it to the boiling point before serving. Made in this manner it needs neither egg or other "settling" to make it clear. Egg, however, makes it richer. Never be puffed foolish and get anything but the best coffee.

The Body and its Health.

The "Medical Journal" states that a few handfuls of common salt thrown daily into closets, and an occasional handful into wash basins, goes far toward counteracting the noxious effects of omnipresent sewer gas.

A high medical authority says that half a teaspoonful of common salt dissolved in a little cold water and drunk will instantly relieve heart burn or dyspepsia. If taken every morning before breakfast, increasing the quantity gradually to a teaspoonful of salt and a tumbler of water, it will, in a few days, cure any ordinary case of dyspepsia, if at the same time due attention is paid to the diet.

To Stop Nose-Bleed.—The "Scientific American" gives the following novel plan. The best remedy for bleeding at the nose, as given by Dr. Gleason in one of his lectures, is in the vigorous motion of the jaws as if in the act of chewing. In the case of a child a wad of paper should be placed in its mouth, and the child should be instructed to chew it hard. It is the motion of the jaws that stops the flow of blood. This remedy is so very simple that many will feel inclined to laugh at it, but it has never been known to fail in a single instance, even in very severe cases.

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