

## THE MASS OF REPARATION.

In these latter days the idea or spirit of Reparation to pervade all those special devotions which have been newly introduced among pious Catholics. And this idea or spirit is a natural outcome of the present state of religious belief and practice in all parts of the world. In every country faith is being attacked by both open and hidden adversaries, whilst devout practices are being more and more neglected by too many professing Catholics. Under one name or another errors are being plausibly advocated, not only by Freethinkers and those openly opposed to religion and morality, but far more fatally by those who would at first sight appear to be actuated by the love of all that is holy and elevating. This age seems to be one of reasoning and discussion, rather than one of humble, undoubting faith, and the consequence of this is that prayer and adoration are far too sparingly offered up to the Supreme Being, our Father in Heaven. Earnestness forms but a small part of our present system and hence loving veneration is in great danger of growing weaker and weaker.

Our mother, the Church, comes bountifully to the aid of those amongst her children who remain faithful and loving, and from the time of the revelation of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart up to the present moment, has been constantly approving of all those devotional developments, which have had their origin in the natural impulse of the human heart to redouble its own manifestations of love in order to make up for the lack of such manifestations in others towards the object of that love. This is an impulse which is laudable even in the natural order of things, as, for instance, when a child redoubles its caresses in order to soothe some sorrow from which its mother is suffering, or when a mother surrounds an afflicted or infirm child with even more tender affection than mothers are wont to bestow, lavish though that be. In a far higher degree in the supernatural order, is this loving impulse laudable when it expands into a sublime necessity of offering loving reparation to God, His Son, and His Blessed Mother to make amends for the neglects and insults that are heaped on them by public prints, by individuals, by whole communities, and, alas! even by entire nations.

Practices of Reparation and Institutions or Confraternities that further such practices, then, in these days, have become of an absolute necessity to fervent Catholics and, praise be to God, opportunities are not wanting for enabling each of us to give due expression to the loving sympathy and adoration with which our hearts are or should be filled.

It is well-known that towards the end of the 17th century, the acceptability of a special devotion to the Sacred Heart was made known to the Venerable Mother Marguerite Marie Alacoque, a Visitation nun. This devotion is specially one of reparation and atonement for the ingratitude of men, but it would lead us too far were we here to speak further of a devotion which is, so to speak, the parent of all modern devotions of reparation, and is besides too well-known for it to be necessary for us to do more than mention it here.

The Communion of Reparation (a branch of the Apostolate of Prayer), the Perpetual Rosary, the Work of Nocturnal Adoration, the Work of Reparatory Adoration (by means of a weekly half-hour spent before the Blessed Sacrament in a spirit of adoration and expiation), the Work of Universal Expiation, (founded in London, England) etc. etc., are all an outcome of that same spirit which has caused the Apostolate of Prayer to become so widely spread—the spirit of expiation and reparation. The two latest developments of this spirit are the Confraternity of "The Mass of Reparation" and the Association of "The Work of Perpetual Intercession for the Church and Sovereign Pontiff." It is with the Mass of Reparation that we have to do to-day, and we will briefly recount the origin and aim of this devotion.

In the month of October, 1882, at the Norbérine Convent at St. Anne de Boulieu, (Department of Drôme) France, there died a humble lay-sister known simply as Sister Rose, whose life, of singular merit, still remains to

be written. Her childhood was none of the happiest, but from her very earliest years she knew how to sanctify her sufferings and trials, and in spite of them, or perhaps because of them, attain to a nobility of mind and tenderness of heart seldom to be met with. Her childhood, wifehood, motherhood, and even her widowhood, were passed in sorrow and struggling with adverse circumstances of every description, and though from her sixteenth year she had felt the greatest desire of entering religion, it was only in comparative old age that she was able to satisfy this desire by entering as a Norbérine lay-sister at the above-named convent. We have not space here to speak of her heroic life, but we can refer our readers to a pamphlet, "Sister Rose and the Mass of Reparation," in which a sketch is given of her life and trials. We hope that some day she will meet with a worthy biographer, as a "Life" of this holy woman would furnish most useful matter of edification and encouragement to poor souls who, being in the world are yet not of the world, but to whom the convent haven is, for one reason or another, inaccessible. Sister Rose as we will call her (though she had not yet entered religion) had been a widow for some time and was already fifty years of age when the idea of a Mass of Reparation first presented itself to her mind. She tells us that the greatest of her sufferings was "to see that God, so deserving of love, was so little loved, . . . . . When I went into the church and saw those long rows of empty benches I felt my heart oppressed and broken with grief; I multiplied my acts of faith, hope, and contrition, doing my best to make them equal, nay, even to exceed, the number of empty places." On Sundays she was accustomed to hear several Masses in various intentions, but on one day in particular—the Feast of Corpus Christi, June 19th 1862—when on the point of leaving the Church after her four customary Masses, she felt herself deeply touched on beholding so many empty chairs around the altar\* denoting how many Catholics were absent.

As another Mass was about to commence "I resolved" she said "to remain, so that one less would be absent. . . . . I begged our Lord to do a good work for Himself by making Himself better known and loved." It was then she was struck by the thought of how little we think of making amends to the glory of our Father. She promised that on all Sundays and Holidays of obligation she would hear a Mass in the place of absent brethren and thereby make reparation to God's accidental glory. A clearer insight into the two kinds of glory which appertain to God was given her on the Feast of Corpus Christi that same year. She herself says: "It was given me to understand something of the two kinds of glory which belong to God, that the one is peculiar to God and, like His Divine Perfections, is far beyond the reach of man, who can neither add to it nor take away from it. The other, on the contrary He deigns to accept from us, and even derives from it a certain pleasure on account of the love He bears us." It is this *accidental glory* which it would be the joy of our lives to render unceasingly to God if we but possessed sufficient faith and charity. Sister Rose says further (still speaking of that Feast of Corpus Christi): "I prayed fervently that God would make all devout persons love the practice of hearing a second Mass in a spirit of reparation on Sundays and Feasts of obligation. Our dear Lord made me understand that He would grant many favours to those who should embrace that devotion." . . . . "Though I did not understand by what means this would become known, and when it would please God to make it popular and general throughout the world, I thought that some day the practice would become well known in the Catholic Church, and that it would be spread by means of an Association." Such, then, was the origin of this devotion of Reparation, which has now developed into an Archconfraternity. After the progress of the devotion had drawn the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities, his Lordship the Bishop of Valence, in 1886, erected a Confraternity

\*This was in France, it must be remembered, where the system of pews is not introduced but where chairs and kneeling-stools are used.