

CHURCH DECORATION.

What happens at almost every festival season, suggests another thought. On the day or days preceding the Great Feasts, will communicants gather in greater or less numbers to prepare the decorations for the church and altar. Before this end has been reached, the conversation is apt to fall into the tittle-tattle of gossip, criticism degenerates into witticism, and the whole place becomes vitiated with the most secular spirit. The entire affair smacks of a gathering for the decoration of a parlor for a party rather than of the House of God in honor of the Incarnate Son.

Why could not church decorators adopt two simple rules?

First, of silence throughout their work when speech is not necessary.

Second, to begin their work with a collect.

This is no more than they ought to do, if they would retain the feeling that they are doing something for the glory of God and not merely collecting decorations for the entertainment of men.—*Michigan Church Life.*

CONFIRMATION.

PART III.

From Qu'Appelle Messenger

THE HOLY COMMUNION.

These papers are Instructions or Preparation for Confirmation, not Holy Communion, nevertheless, it is necessary that we should say a few words about this Holy Sacrament, to which we are admitted after Confirmation, the highest and most important service of the Christian Church, and the chief of all the Means of Grace.

It is—

- (1) An Act of Worship, and
- (2) A Means of Grace.

It will be noticed that the Church Catechism makes a considerable difference in its teaching concerning this Holy Sacrament and that of Holy Baptism. In its teaching about the latter it speaks only of (1) an outward, visible sign and (2) an inward and spiritual grace. But in its teaching concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper it speaks of—

1. A *purpose*—for which it was ordained—“for the continual remembrance of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.”
2. An *outward part* or sign—“Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.”
3. An *inward part* or thing signified—“The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.”
4. The *benefits* whereof we are partakers thereby—“The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ.”

Thus it will be seen that the Catechism teaches, that in addition to the “outward visible sign” and the “benefits” we receive, corresponding to the “outward sign” and “inward grace” of the Sacrament of Baptism, there is in this Sacrament (1), a reason for its Institution, (2), an *inward part* or thing signified—both distinct from the *benefits* of which we are partakers thereby.

In Baptism there is no other reason for the Institution of the Sacrament than the benefit it confers on the individual soul that receives it; nor has the outward sign of the “water” any inward “part,” by virtue of consecration, assigned to it.

In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is a distinct reason for its Institution over and above the benefit it confers—the Memorial of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ; and the outward signs *have an inward part* independent of the recipients—“the Body and Blood of Christ.”

This great distinction between the two Sacraments is frequently overlooked, or forgotten.

It is owing to this great difference between the two great Sacraments that the Holy Communion must be regarded as—

1. A Great Act of Worship, as well as

2. A Great Means of Grace—or Sacrament.

1. *It is a Great Act of Worship.*

It is, indeed, the *ONLY* Service ordained by our Lord Himself for the *continual* observance of His people

For this purpose, therefore, the early Christians used to meet together every Lord's Day at least, some think much oftener (cf. Acts ii. 46, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xi. 20). When S. Paul exhorts the Hebrews not to “neglect” the assembling of themselves together (x. 25; cf. 1 Cor. xi. 20), he was doubtless alluding to their assembling together for the observance of this Holy Ordinance, for we read of no other purpose for which Christians were wont officially to assemble as Christ's Body, though they may have met for prayer in all times. Round this gathered all other acts of public Prayer and Praise and Instruction.

And thus the Forms of Service in which this Sacrament was celebrated were called “The Liturgy,” or act of “Service,” and the Rite itself was so called. All the Forms of earliest Christian Service that have come down to us (the most ancient of which are those of S. James of Jerusalem, S. Mark of Alexandria, S. Peter of Rome, S. John or of Ephesus) are entirely *Offices for the Holy Communion*. Other *Offices*, such as those for Morning and Evening Prayer, are of very much later date.

It must be remembered that all “Worship” that is mentioned in Holy Scripture as acceptable to God has some reference to the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ.

Under the Patriarchs, Divine Worship appears to have consisted solely of acts of Sacrifice. Under the Mosaic Dispensation, the Divine Worship “instituted by direct revelation from God” was entirely “a system of perpetual daily and other Sacrifices,” “combined with continual acts of Praise.” And those Sacrifices, whether the “bloody” Sacrifices of the Burnt Offering and the Trespass Offering or the “unbloody” Sacrifices of the Meat and Drink Offerings—or Bread and Wine—by means of which the Sacrifice of the slain victim was always *presented*—were only acceptable to God as being the means then ordained to foreshadow, or to “show forth,” the “One true, pure, immortal Sacrifice” of Christ—“the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Even in the Worship of Heaven, the praises of redeemed men and the angels centre round the Throne, in the midst of which is the “Lamb as it had been slain” (Rev. v. 6 to end). It is thus also in the Christian Church. All perfect Worship centres in the “*Memorial*” of Christ.

“This do in Remembrance of [as a Memorial of] Me,” said Christ.

“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till He come” [1 Cor. xi. 26].

As those Sacrifices under the Mosaic Dispensation were the prefigurements, and “showing forth” before the event, of that One Sacrifice, so in an exactly similar manner is *this* Service the “showing forth” of that Sacrifice after the event. Only this Service is far more *closely connected* with that One Sacrifice than any of the Sacrifices that preceded it, and that “*by express appointment and institution of Christ Himself*.” “Respecting the flesh of no victim ever offered in old times were such words said as ‘This is my body which is given for you.’ Respecting the blood of no victim was it ever said, ‘This is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you for the remission of sins.’” [Sadler's “Church Doctrine Bible Truth.”]

“By commanding His Church to do this: in remembrance of Him, He bids her, in truth, do that continually which He did in the upper room, and which He is ever doing in heaven. We believe that He is continually interceding for us at the right hand of the Father, presenting night and day before the Mercy Seat His glorified Body, with all its wounds, and thereby reminding the Father of the one oblation of Himself, once for all offered upon the Cross; and in the Holy Eucharist the Church on earth joins in the memorial which He is making, and pleads with Him the unspeakable merits of His Death and Passion.” [Young's “Daily Readings,” vol. i, p. 438.]

Archdeacon Freeman, in his standard work on the “Principles of Divine Service,” an exhaustive treatise on the ancient sacrifices says, “It is not to be doubted that the Christian Eucharist possesses in perfection the powers of the personal or congregational burnt-offering, sin-offering, and peace-offering, all in one; and *stands in the same relation to the Original and Continual Sacrifice of Christ, as all of them together did to the Mosaic Continual Sacrifice.*”

This, then, certainly ought to be considered by all Christians as their one great *obligatory* Act of Service and Worship—as being the one ordained by Christ Himself—the one most acceptable to God as the continual showing forth and pleading of that “One Sacrifice” through which only man has access to Him. In and with It should ascend to heaven our deepest confessions of penitence, our highest acts of adoration and praise, and the best of all other acts wherewith we can honor and reverence our God and Him Who died for us. We must, however, be careful to remember two things which will prevent us falling into errors into which some have fallen.

1. Though this Service may be truly called the Christian Sacrifice, as the early Christians frequently called it, because of its being an “offering to God of that which is precious to us, and acceptable to Him,” and “by which we are joined to Him in a holy bond of union,” it is in no sense a *reiteration* or a *continuation* of that “One, full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice” offered by Christ on the Cross. He “*dieth no more*,” nor can He suffer any more. It is only a “*Memorial*,” or *re-presentation* thereof.

2. We have no right to separate the pleading of the Sacrifice from the partaking of the Sacramental Feast. What Christ told His disciples they were to “do in remembrance of Him,” was to “Eat this,” “Drink this.” Of the Cup, He very expressly said, “Do this, *as oft as ye shall drink it*, in remembrance of Me.” S. Paul also distinctly says, “As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.”

We may, indeed, mingle our prayers when others are communicating, at times when we are unable to do so, as e.g., if we have been to an earlier Service, or if we are preparing for a first or renewed Communion, believing that our prayers will specially avail when the Sacrifice of Christ's Death is being pleaded in His own appointed way; but we must never allow ourselves to imagine that such attendance at the