

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

OCTOBER 15, 1922

WHAT ARE THEY DOING AT THE ALTAR?

(On the occasion of the recent Christian Endeavor convention in New York City, some of the visiting Protestant young men and women filled the center aisle of St. Patrick's Cathedral at the 10:30 services Sunday. Father McMahon, noticing the large number of visitors (as he was about to say Mass), sent out and had distributed among them 2,000 copies of a tract entitled as above.)

What are they doing at the altar? How many have gone into a Catholic church at High Mass and asked themselves this question, and perhaps they have been none to answer it? Here, then, is the answer: "He that readeth let him understand." A procession has passed up the aisle, acolytes with lighted candles, sometimes a surpliced choir, then the sacred ministers one by one, the subdeacon vested in alb, manipel, and tunic, and girl with a linen girdle, and the deacon vested like his brother-minister, but with dalmatic and stole hanging across his breast from the left shoulder; last of all, the priest with alb, girdle, manipel, stole crossed in front of him, and chasuble of the latter typical of the "sweet yoke" of Christ, for having received "the ministry and word of reconciliation," he is "going up to the altar of God," bearing upon his shoulders the sorrows and sins of Christ's people, that their burden may be made lighter, and that they may find rest unto their souls. Not by the direct command of the Most High, as under the elder Covenant, have these sacred vestments been fashioned for the Church's priests and levites; but they have grown into use, under the Spirit's guidance, who "ordureth all things sweetly."

They bow down before the altar, and make confession of sin—the priest to the people, and the people to the priest, and both to God in presence of His angels and saints, praying for forgiveness. Mounting the steps, the priest kisses the altar-stone in which are the relics of the martyrs and saints, whose souls are underneath the altar "of God in Heaven; incense is blessed, and he stands with the censor in his hand, even as on high the angel stands, "that he may offer the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which is before the Throne of God." There rises a threefold cry for mercy to each of the Persons of the Holy and undivided Trinity: Kyrie eleison; Christe eleison; Kyrie eleison. To this succeeds a song of joy, the Angels' Hymn, Gloria in excelsis; for a little while, and He who was born in Bethlehem, the "House of Bread," will be present among His people as the Bread of Life. Then the Collect is sung by the priest, the Epistle by the subdeacon, and after the Gradual—a kind of anthem—has been sung by the choir, the Gospel is solemnly chanted by the deacon, the book of the Gospels, held by the subdeacon between two acolytes with lighted candles, having been first incensed by him.

After the singing of the Nicene Creed, during which the priest and the sacred ministers have been seated, they go up the altar for the OFFERTORY. The chalice and paten are brought veiled from the credence-table by the subdeacon. The deacon gives the paten with the unleavened bread to the priest, who, lifting up his eyes to the crucifix, makes offering to the Holy Father, the Almighty and Eternal God, of the spotless Host, for his innumerable sins and negligences, and for all faithful Christians, living and dead. Wine is poured into the chalice by the deacon, with which a few drops of water, blessed with the sign of the Cross, are mingled by the subdeacon, in memory of the Blood and Water that flowed from our Redeemer's Side; and the saving chalice is offered by the priest, in the sight of God's Majesty, for the salvation of all present, and for that of the whole world. The altar having been again incensed, the priest washes his fingers, to show forth the purity required for the great mystery, to accomplish which he turns round and asks the aid of the prayers of his brethren: Oration Fratres. A collect is said in secret, the Preface, appropriate to the day, is sung by the priest, at the end of which the choir bursts into the song of praise: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, and the Canon, or most solemn part of the Mass, begins.

In a low voice the priest beseeches our most merciful Father to accept and bless the holy, spotless sacrifices which are offered to Him for His Holy Catholic Church, for His servants, our Pope, for our Bishop, and for all believers and professors of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith. He makes a silent remembrance of those for whom he intends specially to pray, and then, having honored the memory of the glorious and ever Virgin Mary, and of the Blessed Apostles and Martyrs, he spreads his hands over the oblation, and prays that it may become the Body and the Blood of God's most beloved Son. Taking the bread into his hands, and lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he blesses it, and, in the person of Christ, pronounces the words of consecration. He bends the knee, elevates the Body of Christ for the adoration of the faithful, and kneels again; for "the Bread which he break," says St. Paul, "is it not the partaking of (or the participation in) the Body of the Lord?" Then he takes the chalice in his hands, gives thanks to God, blesses it, and, pronouncing the sacred words, consecrates it into the "Precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," for "the chalice of benediction which we bless," says the Apostle, "is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?" Once more, the priest bends the knee, raises on high the Chalice of Salvation,

and again kneels. After the commemoration of the faithful departed, the *Pater Noster*, or Lord's Prayer, is sung by the priest, the choir in the name of the people singing the last clause, and the priest himself summing up their petition in the *Amen*; and the Sacred Host is broken into three parts, one of which is placed in the chalice while the priest sings: "The peace of the Lord be always with you!" The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, is twice besought for mercy, and once for peace; and after three touching prayers, addressed directly to our Blessed Lord, the priest receives His Most Sacred Body and Precious Blood. The sacred particles that may remain are carefully gathered up, the chalice is purified, first with wine, and then with wine and water, and

AFTER THE POST COMMUNION prayers have been sung, the deacon turns to the people, and sings: "Go, the Mass is offered." The blessing is given, and the Mass ends with the opening words of the Gospel according to St. John, in which is summed up the whole Mystery of the Incarnate God in the Sacrament of His Love: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him to them gave He the power to become the sons of God—And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us."

And now is not the question answered: What have they been doing at the altar? What have they been doing? The Sacrifice we have seen offered on the altar is the same as the Sacrifice of Calvary, only offered without blood-shedding, and by it are applied to our souls the merits and satisfaction of Christ's Death upon the Cross; and thus the priest at the altar, and the people who have knelt around Him, have been "showing forth the Lord's Death, until He come." It is the Sacrifice of Him, Who is a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.

This, then, is what they were doing at the altar. This is what the priests of the Catholic Church have been doing at her altars ever since the Apostles died. This is what is meant by Holy Mass, our greatest act of worship, not a mere form of words, but a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth, not the invocation merely, but if we dare use the word, the evocation of the Eternal. This is what makes the humblest Catholic Church greater than the palaces of kings, for it makes it in very deed and in the presence-chamber, and its altars the mercy-seat of the Living God. "Surely, the Lord was in this place and we knew it not. How terrible is this place! There is no other but the House of God and the Gate of Heaven."

A Sterling Tribute to the Americanism of the Famous Prelate. In the Pantheon destined for the immortals of our own glorious Republic, I am quite sure, says a writer in the *Detroit Free Press*, that a conspicuous niche will be reserved for that prince of the Church and ideal ecclesiastic, Cardinal Gibbons. That he is an American in every fibre of his substance no one can now doubt who reads his magnificent eulogy, delivered at Rome some time ago, upon the institutions of his country and the principles underlying them. Since then, his profound utterances on all questions touching the eyes of the nation towards him for the sound wisdom embodied in his thoughts and suggestions.

But for myself I did not need to be reminded that, although a highly distinguished churchman, he was an American, cap-a-pie, for—oh, ye fleeting years—he impressed that fact upon me in divers ways during the lusty days of long ago, when we jointly were subject to the severe discipline of our scholastic training.

"The shining days when all was new And all was bright with morning dew." His present general appearance is familiar to many in this section who have had the felicity of meeting him, and I am inclined to think, it would strike the ordinary observer as somewhat ascetic. The burdens of his high office have, it is easily conceived, told upon his slender frame with advancing years, and yet, as he rises up before my mental retrospect, I cannot see much change in the supple, trim figure that entered so ardently into our youthful sports. He still preserves the grace of movement of his early days, when, with all his apparent delicacy, he proved himself to be as elastic as finely tempered steel.

Those were the days when the fixed rules of foot ball—a Rugby were unknown, or ignored, and I recall with an accelerated pulse the dash with which the cardinal in petto broke into the mele around the elusive sphere and ruthlessly beat down all opponents. Whatever he did, he did with all his might and main, and that, let me interpolate here, is the philosophy of his story. He engaged in his studies in the same earnest, indefatigable fashion that he exhibited at foot ball, or in the racquet court, and his mind was as active as his body, full of spring and resiliency.

THIRTY YEARS. Johnston, N. B., March 11, 1889. "I was troubled for thirty years with pains in my side, which increased and became very bad. I used ST. JACOBS OIL and it completely cured. I give it all praise." MRS. WM. RYDER. "ALL RIGHT! ST. JACOBS OIL DID IT."

toiling classes? But this apostolic spirit shines forth in every relation of his life, and the simplicity that regulates it is almost primitive in its severity. It is remarkable how the peculiarities of an author can be reflected in his literary work. Buffon has crystallized this thought in his pithy saying, "le style, c'est l'homme"—style, it is the man himself, and I have never seen such a perfect exemplification of that shrewd saying as is found in the Cardinal's volume entitled "The Faith of Our Fathers." While it is singularly pellucid in its style and rich with the wealth of different literatures bearing upon the subject, "it is still more captivating for the gentleness of spirit that breathes through every page. It was written, I believe, during the time when this exalted dignitary of the Church was a humble missionary in North Carolina, where, for many years, hardships and privations of every description were his daily lot. Perhaps he acquired his training in pedestrianism, of which art he is a whole-some exponent, in those days of heavy labor in the vineyard, but in his youth I have often seen him show his paces over the trying turnpikes of Maryland. Like Gladstone and other intellectual Titans, he has always felt the necessity of maintaining the just equilibrium between body and mind that careful and properly regulated exercise alone can secure.

The youth, indeed, of this great prelate and typical American has been father to the man. With him "life is real, life is earnest," and his lesson is really epitomized in the old classical maxim, "Quo agis, age"—whatever you do, do well.

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Wherefore, putting a truth every man with of the Day. Of all the vicious we are prone to more miserable, more than the one of here speaks. Their which Christians lax and careless a every one regard sense at least sinfulness hesitate about going on if they had to do. But in spite Communion is one which has just reced and truth will again to offend Hoods which are well as untrue.

Still, when there by telling a lie; suffers by it in good, there are, I see what a sin th and understand t reparation by tak have said, if the Christians. But many injurious li those who think th tians, and never e ven thought of who tell them! T slanders pass fro they are listened t the greatest int without any tro ascertain whether or not. These pe with their tong imagine for a mo circumstances w and it is very sel telling a fact be neighbor they ar first to find out whether it be ind the sin of an inju their souls.

There are, howe ded many, who who are really injurious lies, an tract what they others, if they fi the fact was no ground to believe by any means so ful about the tru and who do not lies, as they are. What are the are of two kind, which are told good, to get som self or for ano of some other pe to conceal a fault ment, or to save These are calle there are others do no good to a merely for fun tricks on others, or which one has may be taken b only meant to d still they are me for a moment, really lies. Now, officious bidden by God's ones, though, as those. And they really wer will say, "I tol four every day, in them." No other, people; i by bad example ence in your wo though there is that way. But harm than this liar does to the self, and, as far is the eternal unspcakably, a should love it not allow us to falsehood, thoug the whole worl bring all the s damned out of heaven. Remember th which are not no lies which a ful; no lies fo have to give a ment of God you, at once, and dishonorab will never be unless you ma purpose again then at once a the truth in sometimes lose both in your come.