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SATURDAY APRIL 14, 1906.

Calendar for Next Week.

- 15—Easter Sunday. The Resurrection
of Our Lord.
- 16—Easter Monday.
- 17—Easter Tuesday.
- 18—Wednesday—Of the octave.
- 19—Thursday—Of the octave.
- 20—Friday—Of the octave.
- 21—Saturday—Of the octave.

DAILY COMMUNION

Relying more upon supernatural grace than upon human methods, our spiritually minded Pope has lately approved a decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council recommending and encouraging frequent and even daily communion. The Holy Father's great object, being, as he said himself at the beginning of his pontificate, "to restore all things in Christ," he takes the best means to attain that end. Learned apologetics and able controversy have their place, but that place is, after all, a secondary one in the super-human work of conversion and sanctification. The great instruments must ever be prayer and the sacraments, and especially the great Sacrament of Love. By this and the power of affirmation born of the experience of the spiritual life it gives, was the heathen world won over to Christianity. From daily Communion the early Christians drew the strength that made them martyrs, and saints of every land and age have found in daily Communion the source of holiness. Unfortunately, this early period of fervor was followed by another in which the faithful withdrew more and more from the Holy Table. Even in the days of St. John Chrysostom (end of fourth century) the charity of Christians had already grown cold and many heard Mass without communicating.

Afterwards, it was found necessary to oblige the faithful to communicate three times in the year. Finally, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) introduced the present rule of communicating once at least in the year, and that about Easter time.

Then came another period of renewed fervor through frequent Communion; but later on, the Renaissance brought in heathen laxity of morals and consequent neglect of the Bread of Life till in the beginning of the sixteenth century in many parts of Europe even clerical students did not communicate more than once or twice a year. This spiritual famine was the chief cause of the disorders upon which the so-called Reformers fastened as an excuse for their revolt against the Holy See. And now began the true reformation, set on foot by the Jesuits and other newly founded religious orders, all preaching frequent Communion. The reaction was so complete that early in the seventeenth century there were whole parishes where all the laity received the Holy Communion once a week, and it was then commonly taught that weekly Communion should be aimed at as a universal practice.

This renewal of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament as the wellspring of Catholic life bid fair to undo all the evil effects of the Protestant Reformation, when the Jansenists, those secret heretics who resorted to every subterfuge in order not to be excommunicated and to remain outwardly united to the Church, while really undermining its true spirit, began to exert their baneful influence in France, and through French ascendancy, which was then universally acknowledged, throughout most parts of the Catholic world. Their antipathy to frequent Communion on the false plea that the Blessed Eucharist was a reward for extraordinary virtue tainted the imaginations of a large and influential portion of the French clergy; so that even when Jansenism had been hunted down into its subtlest recesses by repeated Papal condemnations, the Jansenistic view of Holy Communion remained as a fatal leaven in the minds of devout Catholics both clerical and lay. This was a very common feature of many Catholic countries at the end of the eighteenth century and far into the nineteenth. Against this Jansenistic view of the sacraments, which made Confession a torture, and Communion a rare rite, the theology of St. Alphonsus Liguori and the propagation by the Jesuits of Devotion to the Sacred Heart proved a gradual dissolvent. But, even now, when saner views prevail everywhere, there lingers still in many sincerely Catholic minds an unconscious residue of Jansenism. Some confessors require that the faithful should have very perfect dispositions, such as freedom from any attachment



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to any venial sin, before they can be allowed to communicate every day. They seem to forget that, according to the Council of Trent, the Blessed Eucharist is "an antidote by which we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from mortal sins." Other confessors teach that the Church's law prescribes no more perfect dispositions for a daily than for a weekly or monthly Communion, and that the fruits of daily Communion are far greater.

In order to settle this domestic controversy, bishops from all parts of the world, anxious in these days of coldness and unbelief to bring back faith and fervor to their flocks, have appealed to the Holy Father to instruct the Faithful as to what dispositions are required by the Church for frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, and by the Holy Father's order the Congregation of the Council have fully discussed the question and have drawn up the decree which we print below.

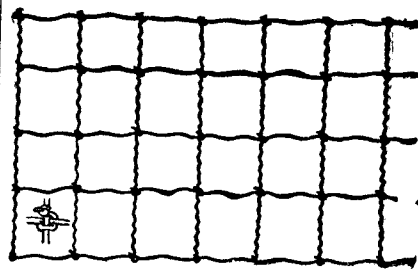
Its teaching is based on the express wish of the Council of Trent that everyone who is present at Mass should also approach the Holy Communion. Our Lord Who fed the Israelites in the desert with the daily manna, has left this Bread of Angels for the daily food of men, who are by Him bidden to pray each day, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and as the Fathers of the Church assure us, these words refer far more to daily Communion than to our earthly food. Daily Communion is no reward of virtue, but the most powerful means of acquiring virtue. Its strength saves us from falling into mortal sins, and in it we find loving sorrow for even those lesser faults into which the best of men daily fall. Consequently, this decree indirectly condemns those who would forbid daily Communion to great numbers of Catholics, including all married people and business men, and would restrict it to the very few who show those wonderfully perfect dispositions which they consider requisite, as though daily Communion were meant only for saints, and not for the daily food and remedy of sinful, struggling men. And although the decree considers freedom from deliberate venial sins and from any affection for such sins as highly desirable, yet it lays down the principle that freedom from mortal sin, with the firm determination never to sin again, is quite sufficient for those who receive daily.

It will be observed that the only requisites for daily Communion are the state of grace and a right intention, which is explained as consisting in a wish to please God. One of our esteemed Catholic contemporaries, perhaps through the unconscious influence of past training, interpolates the word "solely," making the decree say that one should communicate "solely in order to please Almighty God;" but the decree does not use any such word, which would imply too great perfection.

It may be as well here to explain the technical expression "ex opere operato," on which the decree lays considerable stress, and we cannot do so better than in the words of the great Cardinal Bellarmine: "When we say the sac-

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rament confers grace *ex opere operato*, our meaning is that grace is conferred by virtue of the sacramental act itself instituted by God for this end, not by the merit of the minister or the recipient."

Most opportunely are we enabled to publish this decree on Thursday in Holy week, the anniversary of the institution of the Sacrament of Love. Our paper, which is generally issued on Friday, appears this week on Holy Thursday, owing to the public holiday on Good Friday.

DECREE ON DAILY COMMUNION

(1) Frequent and daily Communion is a thing most fervently desired by Christ Our Lord and the Catholic Church, and therefore must be left free to all Christians of every rank and condition, so that no one can be forbidden to approach the Holy Table if he does so in a state of grace and with a right and pious intention. (2) A right intention consists in approaching the Holy Table not from custom or from vanity, or from merely human reasons, but in order to please Almighty God, to cling closer to Him in love, and by this divine remedy to heal our faults and weakness. (3) Freedom from venial sins—at least those that are fully deliberate—and from any affection for such sins, is highly desirable in those who go to Holy Communion frequently or daily, but freedom from mortal sin with the firm determination never to sin again, is quite sufficient; for by this firm resolution daily Communicants cannot fail to free themselves little by little from even venial sins and all affection for them. (4) The Sacraments of the New Law produce their effect *ex opere operato*, yet greater effects are produced if there are greater dispositions in the receiver. Hence, each one, according to his strength, position, and duties, should strive to make a careful preparation before Holy Communion and a fitting thanksgiving afterwards. (5) To show greater prudence and obtain more merit from frequent and daily Communion, a confessor's advice should be taken. But confessors must beware of dissuading anyone from frequent or daily Communion if they are in a state of grace and go with a right intention. (6) By frequent or daily Communion it is clear that we become more closely united with Christ, our spiritual life receives more abundant nourishment, our soul is more filled with virtues, and a stronger pledge of eternal happiness is given to the receiver. Hence, parish priests, confessors, and preachers according to the approved doctrine of the Roman Catechism (Part II., chapter 63) should by frequent and most earnest exhortations lead the Christian people to this most pious and most salutary custom. (7) Frequent and daily Communion should be especially promoted in religious institutes of every class (the decree "Quemadmodum" passed by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on December 17, 1890, remaining in force for them), and it should also be encouraged to the ut-

most extent in clerical seminaries, whose pupils are looking forward longingly to their future service at the altar, and also in other Catholic educational establishments of every class. (8) If Communion on certain days are ordered in the rules, constitutions or calendars of particular religious institutes of solemn or simple vows, these arrangements are to be taken as a mere direction and not as a command. If a certain number of Communion is prescribed, this must be taken according to the piety of the religious as a minimum, and they must be left quite free to go frequently or even daily to Holy Communion, as already explained in this decree. To give to all religious, both male and female, the opportunity of knowing what this decree appoints, the superior of every religious house will take care to have this decree read in common in the vernacular tongue within the octave of Corpus Christi every year. (9) After the promulgation of this decree, all ecclesiastical writers must abstain from contentious discussions as to the dispositions required for frequent and daily Communion.

In an audience of December 17, 1905, the Holy Father approved and confirmed this decree and ordered it to be published. The publication was made early in March.

CURRENT COMMENT

(Continued from page 1.)

While we believe that our esteemed contemporary "La Verite" holds rather extreme views on the subject of Freemasonry and its influence upon those of our public men who belong to its lower degrees, we share its suspicions that those who belong to the higher degrees have some sort of connection with the atheistic Grand Orient of France. For instance, the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree for Canada sends fraternal greetings to the Supreme Council of France, through Senator John V. Ellis, of St. John. Now, the Supreme Council of France holds fraternal relations with the Grand Orient, as the following extract from the latter's official Bulletin for 1892 clearly shows. At the banquet of the Convention of 1892, Brother Blatin, President of the Convention, gave the toast: "To the Masons who have the same ideas, the same loves and the same hates, and who are represented on my right by Brother Gonnard, representing the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite. Whenever it is necessary to march against our eternal enemy, clericalism, all French Freemasons will be found united." If these be the fraternal relations between the Supreme Council of France and the Grand Orient, we have certainly good reason to look with suspicion upon the fraternal relations between the Supreme Council of Canada and the Supreme Council of France.

Here is another example from the same issue of the same paper, of a similar kind of Pharisaism supported by the same secret influences which poison all

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