

# The Catholic.

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Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

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## ON THE MASS.

As Mass is the Supreme act of Worship in the Catholic Church, we make it the first object of consideration to our readers; many of whom, we have reason to think, know nothing of it but from its misrepresentation. We deem it, therefore, our duty to lay before the lovers of truth a full, fair, and faithful, exposition of it.

*Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech.—Ps. 109, 4. Heb. 5, 6.*

THE Mass is accounted by Catholics the unbloody sacrifice of the new law; and the most solemn and sacred part of their worship. In its whole ceremonial, and in the very robes the priest puts on, when about to celebrate, the passion of Jesus Christ is particularly alluded to; and the dress represented, which our Supreme Pontiff wore at the time he offered himself up for us as a bloody sacrifice on the cross. The memory of this bloody sacrifice is thus renewed; and, according to St. Paul, *the death of our Lord is shewn forth till he come.*—1 Cor. xi. 26.

Considering, therefore, that this is the greatest and most important act of the Catholic worship; it may not be unacceptable to most persons to be informed of the meaning which this most ancient and universal of all Christian Churches is wont to attach to its several ceremonies.

The priest, therefore, when going to celebrate, puts over his head and ties about his neck a white linen cloth, called the *Amice*; as an emblem of the handkerchief, with which our Saviour on the eve of his crucifixion was blindfolded by his enemies; who, spitting upon him, and smiting him on the face, desired him in this state to prophecy who it was that struck him.

He next puts on the *Alb*, a white linen robe, which represents the white garment, or fool's coat, with which King Herod ordered our Lord to be clothed in derision, as a fool. For, to this day, in Eastern Countries, and particularly among the Turks, the fool's coat is white, emblematical of his spotless innocence. It is hence also intended to denote the mystical robe of spotless innocence and mental purity, styled in the gospel *the wedding garment*, (Matt xxii. 11, 12.) with which the souls of those should be decked, who present themselves as guests at his divine supper, or marriage-feast; in which he comes to wed himself to our humanity; that, as he says, *He may be in us, and we in him.*—John, 14, 20—17, 23.

The *Girdle*, *Stole*, and *Manipule*, signify the cords, with which he was bound, like a malefactor; tied to the pillar to be whipped; and drag-

ged by his executioners through the streets of Jerusalem to Mount Calvary.

The *Chasuble*, or upper vestment, signifies the purple garment, with which the Roman soldiery in the Court of Pilate dressed him, as a mocking; and on the back of his robe the figure of the cross is commonly seen represented; because he carried the cross on his shoulders to the place of his execution.

Such were the Pontifical robes, in which our High Priest himself in person was pleased to offer up for once the great atoning, bloody sacrifice, to his heavenly Father in our behalf: and such in figure are still retained in the Catholic Church, by those who are his representatives; through whom he continues still invisibly, in an unbloody manner, to renew this same sacrifice; and to apply its merits to the souls of all, and of each individually, down to the end of time.

It is true, these robes of ignominy, on account of the infinite worth and dignity of him who wore them, are now changed into robes of honour; being made of the richest stuffs that can be afforded, magnificently embroidered with gold and silver, and ornamented with precious gems. For Christ, though he humbled himself in this life for our sake, is now to be honoured, exalted, and glorified by all in all.

The candles are then lighted on the altar: the meaning of which ceremony will be hereafter explained.

Then, as nothing renders us so acceptable to God, as humility; for he rejects the proud, and gives his grace to the humble—James 4, 6; the Mass begins with a most solemn act of that virtue. The priest or prelate, who celebrates, withdraws himself in the first instance from the altar; bows himself down before it; and strikes his breast, like the humble publican in the gospel, loudly acknowledges himself a sinner, and guilty, through his own repeated fault, of having grievously offended his God in thought, word, and deed. At the same time he invokes the prayers of the whole court of heaven, in whose presence he avows his unworthiness. Then putting his trust in the mercy of the Most High, saying: *Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*—Ps. 123, 8; and begging that his prayer may be heard, he goes up to the altar; and kissing it, prays God to take away his sins, in order that he may approach with a pure mind to the *holy of holies*; and through the merits of the Saints, whose relics are there; and of all the Saints, Almighty God may the more readily be induced to forgive him all his iniquities. He

then passes to the right hand side of the altar, where he reads the *Introit*, which is a sentence or two of holy scripture, chosen analagous to the feast of the day. He thence returns to the middle of the altar, where, in the immediate presence of Jesus Christ, who is supposed residing in the tabernacle under the sacramental form of the consecrated host, he makes the solemn and repeated invocation of mercy, in the *Kyrie e leison*. After this he recites that sublime act of praise to God, called *the Gloria in excelsis*. Then kissing again the altar, as the Almighty's footstool and his throne of mercy, he turns round to the people, and greets them with the scriptural salutation: *Dominus vobiscum!* or, *the Lord be with you*—Gen. 48, 21; 2 Parab. 15, 2, 19, 11; Job 7, 15; 2 Cor. 13, 11. And he is answered by the people, or by the clerk in their name: *Et cum spiritu tuo!* *And with thy spirit!* He returns again to the right-side of the altar, and recites the Collects, or prayers for the day. After which follows the *Epistle*, which is always selected from the inspired writings of the prophets or apostles, and alluding particularly to the subject of the feast that is celebrated. The book is then changed from the right to the left-hand side, where the Gospel for the day, selected from one of the four evangelists, and alluding also to the occasion of the solemnity, is read. Previous to this, the celebrator, on crossing the altar, bows down before the middle of it, and prays that God of his free mercy would vouchsafe to purify his heart and lips, as he did those of his prophet *Isaiah* with a burning coal, in order that he may worthily and adequately announce the Gospel to the faithful. On his naming aloud the Gospel, all present stand up, to shew their respect for the words of the Redeemer; and their readiness to walk in that path of perfection, which he himself in person has deigned to point out to us: and with the priest all sign themselves on the forehead, mouth, and breast, with the sign of the cross, to signify that their countenance shall never blush for the ignominy of the cross of Christ; that their lips shall ever readily confess their belief in their crucified God; and that they shall ever cherish in their hearts that faith which he has taught, and the remembrance of all he has done and suffered for them.

I must here observe that the Catholic Church attaches a mystical meaning even to the act of shifting the *Missal*, or Mass-book, from one side of the altar to the other. She thereby indicates the loss sustained by the Jews of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, their Messiah; and of the true faith