

THE REASONABLENESS OF THE CEREMONIES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY REV. J. J. BURKE.

"The priest shall be vested with the tunic." (Leviticus vi, 10.)

"And he made of violet and purple, scarlet and fine linen, the vestments for Aaron to wear when he ministered in the holy places, as the Lord commanded Moses." (Exodus xxxix, 1.)

"In every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to My Name a clean offering." (Malachi i, 11.)

"And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God." (Apocalypse, or Revelation, viii., 3.)

The Catholic Church in the celebration of Mass and in the administration of the sacraments employs certain forms and rites. These are called ceremonies. By these ceremonies the Church wishes to appeal to the heart as well as to the intellect, and to impress the faithful with sentiments of faith and piety.

What is more capable of raising the heart and mind of man to God than a priest celebrating Mass? What more inspiring than some of our sacred music?

How beneficial and how lasting the impression formed by the ceremonies of the Church, the following incident will show:

One of our missionaries once went to visit a tribe of Indians who had been deprived of a priest for nearly half a century. After travelling through the forest for some days he came near their village.

It was Sunday morning. Suddenly the silence was broken by a number of voices in unison. He stopped to listen. To his great astonishment he distinguished the music of a Mass, and of Catholic hymns well known to him.

What could be more touching than this simple, savage people endeavoring to celebrate the Lord's Day as they had been taught by the priest fifty years before! What more elevating than those sacred songs—the "Stabat Mater," the "O Salutaris," or the "Te Deum"—uttered by pious lips and resounding through the forest primeval! What better evidence could we have of the beneficial effects of our ceremonies in raising the heart to God!

And yet few things connected with our holy religion have been more frequently subjected to ridicule than her ceremonies. People scoff at them, laugh at and unreasonably. Those people do not stop to consider that by doing so they, themselves, are acting most unreasonably. For no reasonable person, no judge, will condemn another without hearing both sides of the question.

These wiseacres, however, flatter themselves that they know all about the Catholic Church and her ceremonies without hearing her side of the case. Hence the misapprehensions and misrepresentations regarding her that exist among well-meaning people.

If people would but learn to speak about that which they know and understand; if they would accord to the Catholic Church the same treatment as to other institutions; if they would examine both sides of the question before criticising and ridiculing her teachings and her ceremonies; if they would but treat her with that openness, that fairness, that candor, that honesty characteristic of the American citizen when dealing with other questions—what a vast amount of ignorance, of prejudice, of sin would be avoided!

We claim that ceremonies used in the worship of God are reasonable, because they were sanctioned by God in the Old Testament and by Jesus Christ and His apostles in the New Law.

I. The angels are pure spirits. They have no body. Consequently the worship they render God is spiritual, interior.

The heavenly bodies are not spiritual, but entirely material substances. They render God a sort of external worship according to the words of the prophet Daniel, "Sun and moon bless the Lord, stars of heaven bless the Lord. Praise and exalt Him forever." Man has a soul, a spiritual substance similar to the angels; and a body, a material substance similar to the heavenly bodies. He should, therefore, honor God by the twofold form of worship, interior and exterior.

"God is a spirit; and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv., 24.)

From these words of the beloved disciple we are not to conclude that interior worship is prescribed as the only essential, and exterior worship commended. True piety must manifest itself externally. Man naturally manifests his feelings by outward signs and ceremonies.

The Catholic Church recognizes that man has a heart to be moved as well as an intellect to be enlightened. She enlightens the intellect by her good books, sermons, etc.; and she moves the heart by the grandeur of her ceremonies.

If any one doubts that God considers ceremonies necessary to divine worship, let him read the books of Leviticus and Exodus. Almost the whole of these books treats of the rites and ceremonies used by the then chosen people of God in their public worship.

The 26th, 27th and 28th chapters of Exodus prescribe the form of the tabernacle and its appurtenances; the size of the altar and the oil for the lamps; the holy vestments which Aaron and his sons were to wear during the performance of the public ceremonies.

The book of Leviticus treats more particularly of the sacrifices, rites and ceremonies of the priests and Levites. "And the Lord called Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of the testimony, saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them: The man among you that shall offer to the Lord a sacrifice of oxen and sheep, if his offering be a holocaust and of the herd, he shall offer a male, without blemish, at the door of the tabernacle of the testimony, to make the Lord favorable to him. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the victim, and it shall be acceptable and help to his expiation." (Leviticus i, 1 et seq.)

After enumerating all the sacrifices and ceremonies, the sacred writer closes the book of Leviticus with the words: "These are the precepts which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai," thus showing that He considers ceremonies necessary to divine worship.

The religion instituted by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is more spiritual than that of the Old Law. Nevertheless He did not discard ceremonies. He accompanied all His religious acts by ceremonies. In the Garden of Gethsemani He fell upon His knees in humble supplication. He went in procession to Jerusalem preceded by a great multitude strewing palm-branches on the road and singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Before He cured the deaf and dumb man, He put His fingers into his ears and touched his tongue with spittle, and looking up to heaven He groaned and said, "Ephpheta," which is, "Be thou opened."

At the Last Supper He invoked a blessing on the bread and wine, and after the supper He chanted a hymn with His disciples—ceremonies similar to those used in the Mass. When He imparted the Holy Ghost to His apostles, He breathed upon them. In a similar way they and their successors communicated the Holy Ghost upon others by breathing upon them, laying their hands upon them and praying over them, when conferring the sacrament of holy orders.

St. James directs that if any man is sick he shall call in a priest of the Church, who shall anoint him with oil, as is done in the sacrament of extreme unction.

We must, therefore, admit that ceremonies used in the worship of God are reasonable, since they are sanctioned by God in the Old Law and by Jesus Christ and His apostles in the New Testament.

All these acts of Our Saviour—the prostration in the Garden, the procession to Jerusalem, the touching of the deaf man's ears, the chanting of the hymn, the laying on of hands, the anointing of the sick—are but so many ceremonies serving as models of the ceremonies used by the Catholic Church in her public worship and in the administration of her sacraments.

II. Before entering upon an explanation of the ceremonies of the Mass, which is our principal act of public worship, let us examine the meaning of the vestments worn by the priests during the celebration of that august sacrifice.

First, it is well to remember that these vestments come down to us from the time of the apostles, and have the weight of antiquity hanging upon them. Hence, if they did not demand our respect as memorials of Christ, they are at least deserving of attention on account of their antiquity.

The 28th chapter of Exodus tells us the sacred vestments God wished the priests of the Old Law to wear during the public worship. "And these shall be the vestments which they shall make: a rational and an ephod, a tunic and a straight linen garment, a mitre and a girdle. They shall make the holy vestments for thy brother Aaron and his sons, that they may do the office of priesthood unto Me." As God in the Old Law prescribed vestments for the priests, so the Church, guided by God, prescribes sacred vestments to be worn by the priest of the New Law while engaged in the sacred mysteries.

The long black garment which the priest wears around the church in all the sacred functions is called a cassock. Kings and officers of the army wear a special uniform when performing their public duties; priests wear cassocks and other special garments when performing their public duties. These vestments are used to excite the minds of the faithful to the contemplation of heavenly things.

Who, for example, can behold the cross on the chasuble the priest wears without thinking of all Christ suffered for us on the cross? As the priest in celebrating Mass represents the person of Christ, and the Mass represents His passion, the vestments he wears represent those with which Christ was clothed at the time of the passion.

The first vestment the priest puts on over the cassock is called an amice. It is made of linen, and reminds us of the veil that covered the face of Jesus when His persecutors struck Him. (Luke xxii., 64.)

When the priest puts on the amice he first places it on his head, thus recalling to mind the crown of thorns that pierced the head of Jesus.

The alb (from *Albus*, white) represents the white garment with which Christ was vested by Herod when sent back to Pilate dressed as a fool. (Luke xxiii., 11.)

White is emblematic of purity. Hence the wearer is reminded of that purity of mind and body which he should have who serves the altar of the Most High.

The cincture, or girdle, as well as the maniplo and stole, represent the cords and bands with which Christ was bound in the different stages of His passion. St. Matthew says in the 22nd verse of the 27th chapter, "They brought Him bound and delivered

Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." The chasuble, or outer vestment the priest wears, represents the purple garment with which Christ was clothed as a mock king. "And they clothed Him with purple." (Mark xv, 17.)

Upon the back of the chasuble you see a cross. This represents the cross Christ bore on His sacred shoulders to Calvary, and upon which He was crucified.

In these vestments, that is, in the chasuble, stole, and maniplo, the Church uses five colors—white, red, purple, green, and black.

White, which is symbolic of purity and innocence, is used on the feasts of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, of the angels, and of the saints that were not martyrs.

Red, the symbol of fortitude, is used on the feast of Pentecost, of the Exaltation of the Cross, of the apostles and martyrs.

Purple, or violet (the color of penance) is used in Advent and Lent.

Green (the color of hope) is used on all Sundays when no special feast is celebrated, except the Sundays of Lent and Advent.

Black (the color of mourning) is used on Good Friday and during the celebration of Mass for the dead.

Thus we see that each vestment and every color used has a special significance.

All are calculated to attract our attention, elevate our minds to God, and fill us with a desire to do something for Him Who has done so much for us—to at least keep His commandments.

One word about the use of Latin in the celebration of Mass will perhaps be appropriate here. History tells us that when Christianity was established the Roman Empire had control of nearly all of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Wherever the Roman flag floated to the breeze the Latin language was spoken. Just as English is spoken, where the sovereign of Great Britain or the President of the United States hold sway. The Church naturally adopted in her liturgy the language spoken by the people.

In the beginning of the fifth century vast hordes of barbarians began to come from the north of Europe and spread desolation over the fairest portions of the Roman Empire. Soon the Empire was broken up. New kingdoms began to be formed, new languages to be developed. The Latin finally ceased to be a living language. The Church retained it in her liturgy, 1st, because, as her doctrine and liturgy are unchangeable, she wishes the language of her doctrine and liturgy to be unchangeable; 2d, because, as the Church is spread over the whole world, embracing in her fold children of all climes, nations and languages—as she is universal—she must have a universal language; 3d, because the Catholic clergy are in constant communication with the Holy See, and this requires a uniform language.

Besides when a priest says Mass the people, by their English Missals or other prayer-books, are able to follow him from beginning to end.

The Mass is a sacrifice. The prayers of the Mass are offered to God. Hence when the priest says Mass he is speaking not to the people, but to God, to whom all languages are equally intelligible. Are not these sufficient reasons for the use of the Latin language? Are not good Catholics more attentive, more devout at Mass than others at their prayer meetings? The good Catholic knows that the Mass represents the passion and death of Christ: that the sinners' only refuge, the just man's only hope; that it cannot but be good and wholesome to turn our minds and our hearts toward this subject; that frequent meditation on Christ's passion will move us to avoid sin, which caused it; and that nothing can more efficaciously cause us to think of Christ's passion and death than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Blessed Sacrament.

We who live near to this great Sacrament are like people dying of thirst beside a stream of running water, yet they need but stoop to quench their thirst. We are like people who stay in their poverty beside a rich treasure, and yet they need but hold out their hand to be rich. Without the divine Eucharist there would be no happiness in the world. Life would be unbearable. When we receive Holy Communion we receive our joy and happiness. When we come home after Holy Communion if anybody asked us what we were bringing with us, we might answer, "Heaven."

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TEMPTATION.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him.—(St. James 1:2.)

These words, my dear brethren, are from the Scripture, read in the Divine Office for to day. They also, and very appropriately, have a prominent place in the Office read on the feasts of martyrs through the year.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." "Yes," you may say, "certainly, if a man does endure and resist temptation, it is a good thing, and one for which he has reason to be thankful; but, for my part, I would rather get along without being tempted." This is a thought which is very likely to occur to those who are in earnest about saving their souls, and are therefore afraid that they may give way to temptation, commit mortal sin, and be lost. They are inclined to envy others who seem to have a good and innocent natural disposition, and sometimes they may, perhaps, wish that they themselves had died in their baptismal innocence, before temptation and sin were possible.

Now this wish is not altogether wrong; it is certainly pleasing to God for us to desire that it might be impossible to offend Him, and that our own salvation might be made secure. But it is a mistake, when He does allow temptation to come on us without our fault, to think that it would be better for us if He had not done so.

It is a mistake, and why? Because far the greater part of us cannot acquire supernatural virtue in any high degree, give much glory to God, or be entitled to much reward at His hands, without a good deal of temptation. If it would please God to infuse all the virtues into our souls without any trouble or labor on our part, it might indeed be very well; but this He is not bound to do, and generally He does not choose to do it. He prefers that we should obtain our virtues partly by our own exertions. And as we will not pray or meditate, do penance or mortify ourselves enough to accomplish this end, there is no way to make any virtue strong and hardy in us except by forcing us to oppose its contrary vice. It is quite easy to seem very pleasant and good natured when one has no crosses or provocations; but let a sharp or insulting word be said, and it will soon be seen how much real patience there is in this seeming good-humor; perhaps passion will flame out all the more violently for being long in repose. But if one's patience is often tried, and stands the test by means of our own earnest struggles, it will become after a time something which we can really count on.

This, then, is one good in temptation, that it makes our virtue really strong and solid for future use. But another value of it is to enable us to make acts at the very moment which will have an eternal reward and merit, and which we should never make were we left alone. Let one be tempted by impure thoughts for a day, and faithfully resist them; in that day he will perhaps have done more to please God and obtain merit and glory in heaven than in a year of ordinary life.

So if temptation comes without our own fault, we may indeed rejoice and count ourselves blessed, as St. James says; for it is indeed an earnest of the crown of life which our tried and strengthened souls shall win, and which shall be decked with the innumerable gems which our battles with sin have merited. But let us not allow it to come by our fault, for then we cannot hope for a blessing with it. "Lead us not into temptation," we say every day; profitable as the contest may be to us, it would be presumption to offer ourselves to it, or to ask from God an opportunity for it. Let us wait till He chooses to call us to the strife, and then thank Him for the trial which shall give us, with His help, the crown of life which He has promised to those who love Him, and for His love hate and resist sin.

A Word of Advice.

"Name the Church among your heirs," says the Catholic Columbian to Catholic will makers. Give liberally during your life, according to your means, say we. Do not by your will make the Church a party to post-mortem wrangles and scandalous lawsuits. He who contributes generously when he can hold his money deserves and receives more merit than he who gives when he can't keep it.

The relatives of post-mortem donors, as a rule, feel that the Church has insinuated herself between them and their interests. This feeling is apt to inject gall into their Church relations—unless they are saints. But it is not prudent to count on that contingency. Cases have been known of relatives of wealthy defuncts who were not saints. We think our always bright and much-admired contemporary will admit this fact.—Catholic Times.

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The Profundity of Faith.

Men could never rightly conceive the ends and objects of creation were not the element of religious belief implanted in their souls. It requires faith in the powers and purposes of divinity to sustain humanity's conception of its own existence. Men could have no confidence in their mission on earth, the reason of their being, were they not impressed through faith with the designs of Him who moulded them into life.

When men wonder why they are here, when they attempt to solve the problem of creation, they must fall back upon religious faith. They cannot answer the questions that press upon them through the intellect alone. Aristotle and the ancient philosophers, into whose souls the rays of religious faith had not coursed their way, could not satisfactorily determine the end of human existence. Even while they admitted the immortality of the soul, and conceived some reason therefore why the soul had been created, they could not fathom the great object of creation, nor yet learn that it sprang from one source, because they were pagans, devoted to worship and knowledge of smaller gods. To these putative powers they attributed the beginnings of creation, and if they investigated at all the reason of their being it was to conclude that they were created manifestations of the forces they worshipped. With the Christian era came different conceptions of creation. The whole divine economy became clear; the purpose of creation was manifest. Faith was born—the element that makes creation comprehensible. With the eyes of faith men understand why they have been brought into existence. They comprehend why God has made them and what He expects of them. They see the reason for conforming to certain definite standards of action, for practising the virtues and moral rules of righteous living. In a word they recognize the scheme of creation, they realize the objects of life. Faith is the milestone that points the way to eternity, the sign that directs human conduct at the crossroads of existence. Were the element of religious belief, knowledge of a superior power whence all created things proceeded, to be eradicated entirely from the human soul, mankind would find itself to day in the condition of the ancients who worshipped sticks and stones and broken bones as forces higher than humanity. Faith is the corner-stone on which human progress is safely built. It is the bulwark on which is reared man's knowledge of his work on earth. Should not men, therefore, carefully preserve and nourish their religious faith? Should they not sedulously guard the treasure that gives them knowledge of themselves and inspires them to high ideals of right living? Read the answer in the vast majority that hold some form of Christian belief.

It is the profundity of faith that enables men to grasp the immensity of creation. Without it they would grope, as did the men of pagan times, amid the alleys of ignorance and misconception of their existence. Faith is the guide-book that tells them who and what they are, and what they have come on earth to do.—Connecticut Catholic.

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