

Beck, Bernard
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DIGEST
OF THE
LITURGICAL
SEASONS

from the works of

Dom Prosper Gueranger, O.S.B.

by

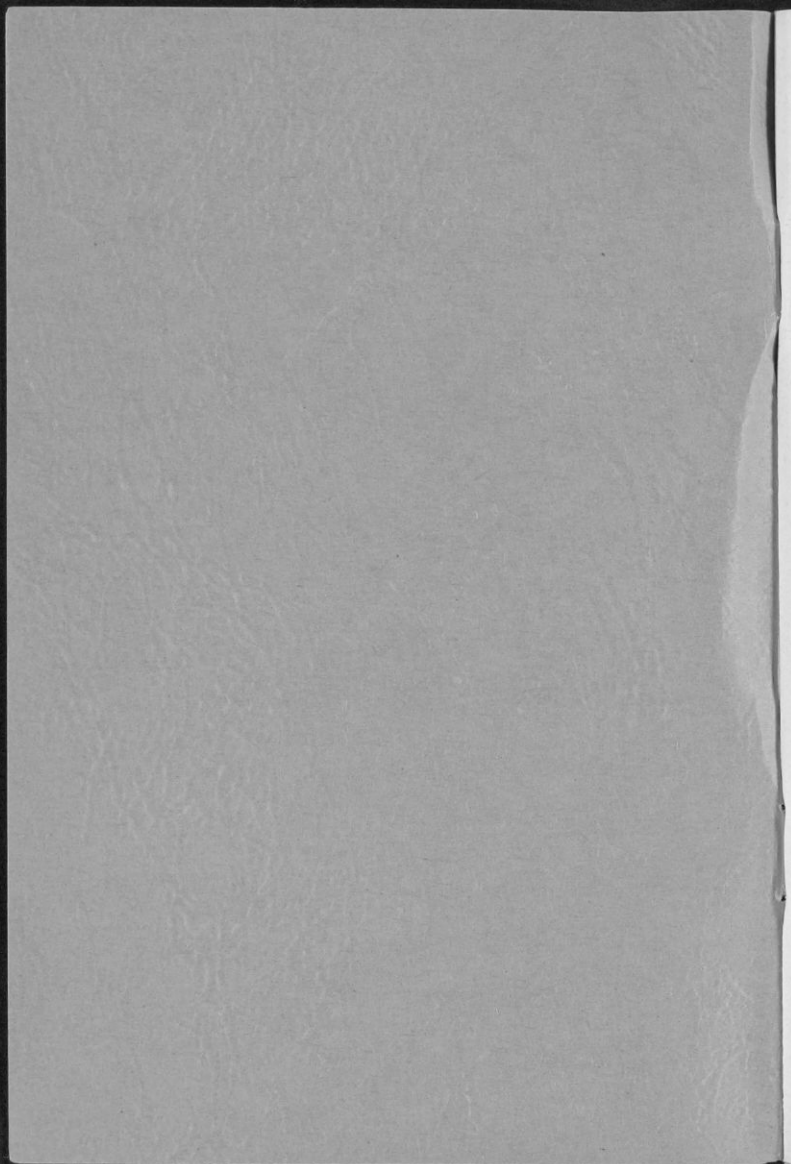
Bernard Beck, O.S.B., S.T.D.



A Grail Publication

St. Meinrad

Indiana



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Price twenty-five cents

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Indiana

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DVM NOX IN SVO CVRSV
MEDIVM ITER HABERET




OMNIPOTENS
SERMO TVS
DOMINE
DE CAELIS
VENIT +

Out of the darkness of the night of sin, Christ, the Word-Made-Flesh comes to the Virgin Mary to give Himself to the world for its salvation.

ADVENT

History of Advent

 HE NAME Advent (from the Latin word *adventus*, which signifies a *coming*) is applied to that period of the year during which the Church requires the faithful to prepare for the celebration of the feast of Christmas, the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. The mystery of that great day has every right to the honor of being prepared for by prayer and works of penance. We do not know with certainty when this season of preparation was first instituted. Still it would seem that its observance first began in the Western Church, because the Church of Rome kept the feast of Christmas on December 25 at a much earlier time than did the Eastern Church, which observed Christmas on December 25 only towards the close of the fourth century.

Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of our Savior by works of penance. We find, as far back as the fifth century in the Western Church, the custom of giving exhortations to the people in order to prepare them for the feast of Christmas. It was likened to the time of Lent, the period of preparation for Easter. Although not so strictly consecrated to penance as Lent, still in various places we see that the faithful were expected to fast three days a week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from the feast of St. Martin (Nov. 11) until Christmas, a period of forty-three days. This interval was commonly

called St. Martin's Lent. Later on (some time after the year 800) the practice of fasting during Advent, which had the force of sacred law, began to be relaxed so that only abstinence was observed. As time went on, even abstinence was no longer observed. The length of the period, moreover, was shortened to four weeks.

The Eastern Churches still continue to observe the fast of Advent, though with much less vigor than that of Lent. It consists of forty days, beginning with November 14, the day on which the fast of the Apostle St. Philip is kept. Fasting, in its strict sense, is binding only on seven out of the forty days, while the whole period goes under the name of St. Philip's Lent.

But if the exterior practices of penance which formerly sanctified the season of Advent have been, in the Western Church, so gradually relaxed as to have become quite obsolete except in monasteries, the general character of the liturgy of this holy time has not changed; and it is by their zeal in following its spirit, that the faithful will prove their earnestness in preparing for Christmas.

The liturgical form of Advent as it now exists in the Roman Church has gone through certain modifications. St. Gregory the Great († 604) seems to have been the first to draw up the office for this season, which originally included five Sundays. He it is who probably originated the ecclesiastical precept of Advent, although the custom of devoting a longer or shorter period to a preparation for Christmas

had been observed from the earliest times, and the abstinence and fast of this holy season first began in France. St. Gregory therefore fixed for the churches of the Latin rite the form of the Office for this Lent-like season, and sanctioned the fast which had already been established, granting a certain latitude to the several churches as to the manner of its observance.

It is remarkable that the five Sundays of Advent of ancient times were counted inversely, that is, the nearest to Christmas was called the first Sunday, and so on with the rest. So far back as the ninth and tenth centuries, these Sundays were reduced to four. From that time, the Roman Church has always observed this arrangement of Advent, which gives it four weeks, the four being that in which Christmas days falls, unless December 25 be a Sunday. We may therefore consider the present discipline of the observance of Advent as having lasted a thousand years, at least as far as the Church of Rome is concerned; for some of the churches in France kept up the number of five Sundays as late as the thirteenth century, while the Ambrosian liturgy, even to this day, has six weeks of Advent.

The Eastern Churches have no proper office for Advent, neither do they celebrate during this time the Mass of the Presanctified, as they do in Lent. In the offices for the saints whose feasts occur between November 14 and the Sunday nearest Christmas, there are frequent allusions to the birth of the Savior, to the maternity of Mary, to the cave of Bethlehem, etc. On

this Sunday preceding Christmas, in order to celebrate the expected coming of the Messias, they keep what they call the feast of the holy fathers, that is, the commemoration of the saints of the Old Law. They give the name of Antefeast of the Nativity to December 20, 21 22, and 23: and although they say the office of several saints on these four days, yet the mystery of the birth of Jesus pervades the whole liturgy.

The Mystery of Advent

Having described the characteristics which distinguish Advent from the rest of the year, let us look into the profound mystery which is signified by the liturgy. We find that the coming or Advent of Jesus is at once simple and threefold; simple because it is always the Son of God Who comes, threefold because He comes at three different times, and in three different ways.

The three comings of the Son of God are, the first in His own flesh, the second into the souls of men, and the third at the judgment. The first was His birth into this world as man. Holy Church, therefore, during Advent awaits in tears and with ardor the arrival of Jesus in His first coming. For this she borrows the fervid expressions of the prophets, to which she joins her own supplications. These longings for the Messias expressed by the Church are not a mere commemoration of the desires of the ancient Jewish people. They have a reality and efficacy of their own. The prayers the Church offers now for the coming of the Savior were foreseen by Almighty God before He sent the Messias in the flesh, and together with the prayers of the Jew-

ish people of old ascended to the hearing of God and called down the Son of God.

The second coming of Christ is His coming into the souls of men. It is the visit of the Bridegroom to the bride. This coming takes place each year at the feast of Christmas, when the new birth of the Son of God delivers the faithful from the yoke of bondage under which the enemy would oppress them. The expressions of the liturgy which the Church makes use of to ask for this loving and invisible coming into the souls of her children, good and bad, and also of infidels, are those which she employs when begging for the coming of Jesus in the flesh; for the two visits are for the same object. When the Son of God came into this world to save mankind, He came also to bring His grace into the soul of each one of us.

The Church looks forward to the third coming of Christ, namely in the general judgment. She is impatient to be loosed from her present temporal state; she longs for the number of the elect to be filled up, and to see, in the clouds of heaven, the sign of her deliverer. The day of this last coming will be a day of terror. The Church does not fear for herself, for she is the Bride of Christ and her crown is secure. But she is troubled at the thought that many of her children will stand condemned by the Judge. Consequently the liturgy of Advent often represents the coming of Christ as something terrible, to awaken a salutary fear in the mind of those who are sleeping the sleep of sin.

In order to express to the faithful these sentiments of the threefold coming of Christ, the Church has assembled the liturgical prayers and passages from the Bible found in the Advent Liturgy and has surrounded them with external rites peculiar to this holy time. The four weeks of Advent recall the four thousand years of preparation for the coming of Christ on the first Christmas day. As in Lent, so likewise during Advent marriage may not be solemnized lest worldly joy should distract Christians from the serious thoughts inspired by the expected coming of the sovereign judge. The sacred ministers of the altar wear the somber color of violet to remind us of the sadness which fills the heart of the Church. Formerly it was the custom in some places to wear black. The angelic canticle "Gloria in excelsis" and the hymn of jubilation "Te Deum laudamus" are suppressed; "Benedicamus Domino" is sung at the end of Mass to indicate to us the importance of uninterrupted prayer in preparation for the coming of the Savior. Only the joyful Alleluia goes on uninterruptedly, a vestige of joy blended with the holy mournfulness of the Church, because she knows that although she is praying for the coming of the Emmanuel with the Jewish people of old, still He is already come to her and is with us.

Practice During Advent

The spirit of Advent is that of watchful expectation in penance and prayer for the coming

of the Lord. "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves be like unto men waiting for their master's return from the wedding" (Luke 12:35). Our first duty, then, during Advent is with the saints of the Old Testament to suppliantly beg in prayer for the first coming of the Messiah, namely into this world. Christians should reflect on the darkness and sin in which the world lay buried for four thousand years before our Savior's coming. Our hearts should be filled with lively gratitude towards him who saved man from death, and who came down from heaven that He himself might know our miseries by experiencing all of them, except sin. Let us cry to Him with confidence from the depths of our misery; for although He has already redeemed us, He still wishes us to beseech Him to save us. Our desires and our confidence should have their free utterance in the ardent supplications of the ancient prophets, which the Church puts on our lips during these days of expectation in the Mass and the Divine Office; let us give our closest attention to the sentiments which they express. Thus do we await the Savior's first coming.

To prepare ourselves for His second coming, namely into our souls, we must remember that we are pleasing to the heavenly Father only inasmuch as He sees in us His Son Jesus Christ. Hence, if we will but consent, our loving Savior will come to us, give us of His life, and transform us into himself. This is the one grand aim of the Christian religion, to make man divine in Jesus Christ. We are to live with the divine life

and grow into its fulness. During the season of Advent our Lord stands at the door of men's hearts and knocks. Make ready, then, by prayer and penance to receive Him that He may bestow greater light and strength on you, His faithful ones, living in His life and shaping your thoughts and works on the model of His. He will renew all things within you.

The spirit of the fear of God must take hold of our souls to prepare them for the third coming of Christ, that is, at the last day as Judge of the living and dead. Both sinners and just need to fear, the former because they are the enemies of God, the latter because no one is clean in the sight of God. A holy and salutary fear of God awakens even in the heart of the just man a keener sense of his own misery and of the unmerited mercy of His Redeemer. Nay, our holy Mother the Church herself, though so beloved by God, prays to Him to give her this fear: "Pierce my flesh with Thy fear."

Advent, then, is a season specially devoted to the purification of the soul. This is implied by the words of St. John: "Make ready the way of the Lord" (Matt. 3:3). All, therefore, should strive earnestly to make straight the path by which Jesus will enter into their souls. The just shall labor to acquire new merit. Let sinners at once break the chains which now enslave them and give up those bad habits which they contracted; they should now weaken the flesh, and enter upon the hard work of subjecting it to the spirit. Let them, above all, pray with the Church.

And when our Lord comes, they may hope that He will not pass them by, but that He will enter and dwell within them, for He spoke of all when He said: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man listens to my voice and opens the door to Me, I will come in to him" (Apoc. 3:20).



GAVDET CHORVS
COELESTIVM,
ET ANGELI
CANVNT
DEO +



PALAMQVE
FIT PASTORIBVS
PASTOR,
CREATOR
OMNIVM +

Christ the Shepherd of souls comes to lead and teach His flock the way to Heaven.

CHRISTMAS

History of Christmas



THE CHRISTMAS season is the name applied to the forty days which begin with the Nativity of Our Lord, December 25, and end with the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, February 2. It is a period which forms a distinct portion of the Liturgical Year, as distinct, by its own special spirit, from every other, as are Advent, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. One same mystery is celebrated and kept in view during the whole forty days. Neither the feasts of the saints nor the mournful season of Septuagesima, which often begins before Christmastide is over, are allowed to break in upon the joy which pervades the Church during this season.

The custom of celebrating the Solemnity of our Savior's Nativity by a commemoration of forty days' duration is founded on the Gospel itself. For it was forty days after the birth of Jesus that Mary took Him to the temple to offer Him to the Lord according to the Law. The feast of Mary's Purification is, therefore, part of that of the commemoration of Jesus' birth. The custom of keeping this holy period of forty days as one continued festival has every appearance of being an ancient one in the Roman Church. The Western Churches kept the feast of Christmas on December 25 from the early days of Christianity while the Eastern Churches began only in the fourth century to keep it in December as a separate feast. Up to that period they had kept it usually on January 6 and united it

with the feast of the Epiphany, that is, the Manifestation of our Savior made to the Magi, and in them to the Gentiles. The feast of our Lady's Purification, with which the forty days of Christmas close, is, like Christmas, of very ancient date in the Latin Church, but the Oriental Churches did not observe it until the sixth century.

Christmas in the Latin liturgy has a twofold characteristic: first, joy, which the whole Church feels at the coming of the Divine Word in the flesh, and secondly, admiration of the glorious Virgin who was made the Mother of God. There is scarcely a prayer or a rite in the liturgy of this glad season which does not imply these two grand mysteries: an Infant-God, and a Virgin-Mother.

The Mystery of Christmas

Everything is mystery in this holy season. The Word of God, Whose generation is before the creation of the world, is born in time, a Child is God, a Virgin becomes a mother and remains a Virgin, things divine are commingled with those that are human, and the sublime and unspeakable antithesis expressed by St. John in his Gospel, *The Word Was Made Flesh*, is repeated in a thousand different ways in all the prayers of the Church. And rightly so, for it admirably embodies the whole of the great marvel which unites in one Person the nature of man and the nature of God.

While the splendor of this mystery dazzles the understanding, it fills the heart with joy. The

birth of our Savior is the completion of the designs of God in time. It is the endless subject of admiration and wonder to the angels and saints; nay, it is the source and cause of their blessed state in heaven.

The Church offers this great mystery to her children, carried out in the splendor of the liturgy. After the four weeks of Advent, we arrive at the long awaited day of joy, Christmas Day. Unlike Easter and all the feasts that depend on it, the whole of which cycle varies in date from year to year, Christmas always falls on the same date, December 25. The holy doctor, St. Augustine (430), gives the reason. We solemnize, he explains, the day of our Savior's birth in order that we may honor that Birth which was for our salvation; but the precise day of the week on which He was born is void of any mystical signification. Sunday, on the contrary, the day of our Lord's resurrection, is the day marked in the Creator's designs to express a mystery which was to be commemorated for all ages.

Now what is that mystery of which St. Augustine, and other writers after him speak, and which is commemorated by the celebration of Easter on Sunday? According to a sacred tradition, the creation of man took place on a Friday. Further, Christ died on a Friday for the redemption of man. The resurrection of the Redeemer took place on the third day after His death, that is, on a Sunday. Since it was on the third day after His death, it coincided with the third day of creation when God created

light. The two solemnities then of Jesus's Passion and Resurrection remind us of those two works of creation, as they do of other holy and mysterious things.

The fact that the feast of Jesus's birth is fixed by the liturgy to a certain day of the month, December 25, also expresses a sacred mystery. According to this plan the Feast of Christmas is kept by turns on each of the days of the week that thus its holiness may cleanse and rid them of the curse which Adam's sin had put upon them. Secondly, the great mystery of December 25, being the Feast of Our Savior's Birth, has reference, not to the division of time marked out by God Himself, which is called the *Week*, but to the course of the Sun, the great luminary which gives life to the world because it gives it light and warmth. Jesus, Our Savior, *the Light of the World* (John 8:12) was born when the night of idolatry and crime was at its darkest. Now the day of His birth, December 25, is that on which the material Sun begins to gain his ascendancy over the reign of gloomy night, and to show to the world his triumph of brightness.

The diminution of the physical light of the sun during the weeks of Advent may be considered as emblematic of those dismal times which preceded the Incarnation. At that time we joined our prayers with those of the people of the Old Testament, and with Our Holy Mother the Church we cried out to the Divine *Orient*, the *Sun of Justice*, that He would come and deliver us from the twofold death of body and soul. God has heard our prayers. It is on the day of

the Winter Solstice—which the pagans of old made memorable by their fears and rejoicings—that He gives us both the increase of the natural light, and Him who is the Light of our souls. The great mystery of Jesus, the Light of the world, is frequently alluded to during this season of Christmas.

St. Augustine exclaims in the joy of his meditation on the great mystery of Jesus' birth: "He chose this day whereon to be born, as He chose the mother of whom to be born, and He made both the day and the mother. The day He chose was that on which the light begins to increase, and it typifies the works of Christ, who renews our interior man day by day. For the eternal Creator having willed to be born in time, His birthday would necessarily be in harmony with the rest of His creation" (Sermon on the Nativity of our Lord, 3). St. John the Baptist, the Precursor of our Lord, said: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John, 3:30), that is, the Baptist's mission was at its close, because Jesus was entering upon His. Now St. John was born on June 24, during that season of the year when the length and light of the day decreases, and Jesus was born on December 25, during the season of the year when the length and light of the day increases. Thus, there is mystery both in the rising of that glorious Star, the Baptist, at the summer solstice, and in the rising of the Divine Sun in the dark season of winter.

There is, too, a mystery of the place where Jesus was born, Bethlehem. A prophecy of

Micheas (5:2) foretold the place of His birth: "Out of Bethlehem shall He come forth that is to be the ruler in Israel." Why was this insignificant town chosen in preference to every other to be the birth-place of Jesus? Bethlehem, the City of David, signifies the House of Bread. Therefore did He, who is the living Bread come down from heaven (John 6:41), choose it for His first visible home. The ancient Hebrews ate manna, the bread rained down from heaven in the desert, but they died; while here is the Bread of angels, the Son of the incomparable Virgin Mary given by God through her to us for the nourishment of our souls, and which will transform us, making us partakers of the divine nature, and making us live forever.

Jesus would give Himself into our hearts at Christmas time. Unto this end He becomes our Bread, our spiritual nourishment. His coming into the souls of men at this mystic season has no other aim than this union. This divine lover of our souls will not be satisfied, therefore, until He has substituted himself in our place so that we may live not by ourselves, but He in us.

From Christmas Day itself until the end of the season at Our Lady's Purification there is in the calendar an extraordinary richness of Saints' Feasts, doing homage to the master feast of Bethlehem and clustering in adoring love round the crib of the Infant God. The choirs of apostles, martyrs, pontiffs, doctors, confessors, and of holy virgins all stand about the crib of Jesus singing their thanksgiving to the Savior

of their souls. Christmastide is a glorious festive season.

The meaning of the colors used by the Church during this season may be briefly summed up as follows. White, which her ministers wear from Christmas until the end of the Octave of Epiphany expresses the gladness to which the Angels invited the world, the beauty of our Divine Sun that has risen in Bethlehem, the spotless purity of the Virgin-Mother, and the clean-heartedness which they should have who come to worship at the mystic Crib. Green is the color used on the Sundays that follow Epiphany. This color is used to teach us that in the birth of Jesus, who is the flower of the fields, we first received the hope of salvation, and that after the bleak winter of heathendom and the Synagogue, there opened the verdant spring-time of grace.

Practice during the Christmas Season

The time has now come, after the penitential efforts of the faithful soul to prepare itself during Advent for the coming of Jesus, that the Lamb of God should come to it to take possession of it as His spouse. What garments, then, shall we put on to go and meet the Bridegroom? What must we do to make this meeting as worthy as possible of the sublime visit of the Son of God to our souls?

The Church offers to the Infant-God during this holy season the tribute of her profound adoration, the enthusiasm of her exceeding joy, the return of her unbounded gratitude, and the

fondness of her intense love. These four offerings of adoration, joy, gratitude, and love must also be those of every Christian to Jesus, the Emmanuel, the Babe of Bethlehem.

Adoration is religion's first act. If the angels and saints in heaven are forever prostrating themselves before the throne of the Lamb, what shall we poor sinners do, now that this same great God shows Himself to us, humbled for our sakes, and stripped of all His glory, now that the Creator Himself takes upon Himself the duties of the creature to his Creator, that is, of adoration, now that the eternal Son of God made flesh bows down not only before the sovereign majesty of the Godhead, but even before sinful man, his creature?

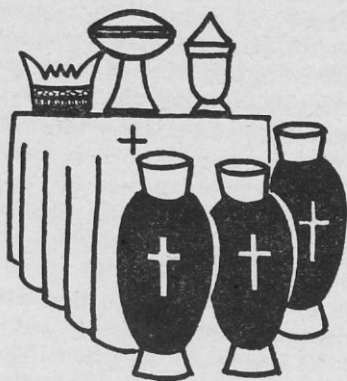
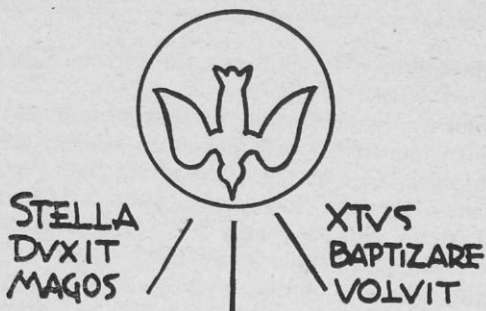
Because God is with her, the Church is full of joy. The coming of the angels that first Christmas night was a prelude to it. She therefore studies to imitate the fleet-footed shepherds who ran for joy to Bethlehem, and to imitate the glad Magi who were filled with delight when on quitting Jerusalem the star again appeared and led them to the cave where the Child was. Joy at Christmas is a Christian instinct. This is not the season for sighing or weeping. We must rejoice and be glad because Christ the Savior is born. Heaven sends us a present of its own joy. We need joy, and forty days are not too many for us to get it well into our hearts. The Scripture tells us that a secure mind is like a continual feast (Prov. 15:15), and a secure mind can only be where there is peace; now it is Peace which these blessed days bring

to the earth; "Peace," say the angels, "to men of good will!"

Then we owe gratitude to Him who deigned to be born one of us and to have a stable for His birth-place. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son for it (John 3:16). How shall we be able to repay God for this unspeakable gift by suitable gratitude? Only by love which, though finite, gives itself without measure, and may grow forever in intensity. The shepherds offered Jesus their simple gifts; the Magi brought Him their rich presents. We shall offer Him our hearts full of love. It was to receive our love that He came down from Heaven.

Jesus is not only born into this world at Christmas time; He is also born in our hearts. This is another important aspect of the Christmas mystery. We become sons of God with Jesus as the center of our spiritual life. We begin a new life with Jesus born in our souls.

If Jesus is to be born and to live within us, we must endeavor to imitate Him; we must be made like to the image of God's Son. The imitation of Jesus is a sign of eternal salvation. It is a sign that we are among the elect. We must with the shepherds go over to Bethlehem. The sign of recognition given to them was a child wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger (Luke 2:12). So must we become children. We must not disdain to enter upon the safe path of spiritual childhood, for unless we become as little children, that is, practice the virtues of a child, lowliness and simplicity, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.



VINVM
EX AQVA
FACTVM EST

*The three mysteries celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany:
The adoration of the Wisemen; the Baptism of Christ; and
the first miracle of Christ, the changing of the water into wine.*

EPIPHANY

The History of Epiphany



THE FEAST of the Epiphany is the continuation of the mystery of Christmas, but it appears on the calendar of the Church with its own special character. Its very name, which signifies *Manifestation*, implies that it celebrates the apparition of God to His creatures.

For several centuries the Nativity of our Lord was kept on this day; and when in the year 376 the decree of the Holy See obliged all churches to keep the Nativity on December 25, as Rome did, the Feast of January 6 was not robbed of all its ancient glory. It was still to be called the Epiphany, and the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ was also commemorated on this same Feast, which Tradition had marked as the day on which that Baptism took place.

The Greek Church gives this Feast the venerable and mysterious names of *Theophania*, which is of such frequent recurrence in the early Fathers, as signifying a divine Apparition. In the liturgical books of the Melchite Church the Feast goes under no other name.

The Orientals call this solemnity also the Holy Lights, because it was the day on which baptism was administered; for, as we have just mentioned, our Lord was baptized on this same day. Baptism is called Illumination by the holy Fathers, and they who received it Illuminated.

Then, in many countries, this feast is called King's Feast. This, of course, is an allusion to

the Magi, whose journey to Bethlehem is so continually mentioned in the office of the day.

The Epiphany shares with the feasts of Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost the honor of being called, in the Canon of the Mass, a Day most Holy. It is also one of the *cardinal* feasts, that is, one of those on which the arrangement of the Christian Year is based. As we have Sundays after Easter, and Sundays after Pentecost, so also we count six Sundays after the Epiphany.

The Mystery of Epiphany

The Epiphany is indeed a great Feast, and the joy caused by the birth of Jesus. must be renewed on it, for as though it were a second Christmas Day, it shows us the Incarnate God in a new light. It leaves us all the sweetness of the Babe of Bethlehem, who has appeared to us already in love; but to this it adds its own grand manifestation of the divinity of Jesus. At Christmas it was a few shepherds that were invited by the angels to go and recognize the *Word made flesh*. But now, at the Epiphany, the voice of God Himself calls the whole world to *adore* this Jesus and *hear Him*.

The mystery of the Epiphany brings upon us three magnificent rays of the Sun of Justice, our Savior. In the calendar of pagan Rome, this Sixth day of January was devoted to the celebration of a triple triumph of Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire. But when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, whose empire knows no

limits, had secured victory to His Church by the blood of the martyrs, then did this His Church decree that a triple triumph of the Immortal King should be substituted, in the Christian calendar, for those other three triumphs which had been won by the adopted son of Caesar.

The Sixth of January, therefore, restored the celebration of our Lord's birth to the twenty-fifth of December; but in return, there were united in the one same Epiphany three manifestations of Jesus's glory: the *mystery* of the Magi coming from the East, under the guidance of a star, and adoring the Infant of Bethlehem as the divine King; the *mystery* of the baptism of Christ, who, whilst standing in the waters of the Jordan, was proclaimed by the Eternal Father as the divine power of this same Jesus, when He changed the water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana.

The question may be asked: did these three mysteries really take place on this day? Is the Sixth of January the real anniversary of these great events? A great host of church historians assert that the adoration of the Magi happened on this very day. That the baptism of our Lord also happened on January 6 is admitted by the severest historical critics. The precise day of the miracle at the feast of Cana is far from being as certain as the other two mysteries. For us, the children of the Church, it is sufficient that our holy Mother has assigned the commemoration of these three manifestations for this feast. We need nothing more to make

us rejoice in the triple triumph of the Son of Mary.

If we now come to consider these three mysteries of the Feast of the Epiphany separately, we shall find that the Church of Rome, in her office and Mass of this day, is more intent on the adoration of the Magi than on the other two. That the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles should be made thus prominent by the Church of Rome is not to be wondered at; for by that heavenly vocation which, in the three Magi, called all nations to the admirable light of faith, Rome, which till then had been the head of the Gentile world, was made the head of the Christian Church and of the whole human race.

The Greek Church, on the contrary, makes no special mention, in her Office of today, of the adoration of the Magi, for she unites it with the mystery of our Savior's birth in her celebration of Christmas Day. The Baptism of Christ absorbs all her thoughts and praises on the solemnity of the Epiphany.

In the Latin Church this second mystery of the feast, namely, the baptism of Christ, is celebrated, unitedly with the other two, on January 6, and mention is made of it several times in the Office. But as the coming of the Magi to the crib of our new-born Kings absorbs the attention of Christian Rome on this day, the mystery of Christ's baptism and of the sanctification of the waters was to be commemorated on a day apart. The day chosen by the Western

Church for paying special honor to the baptism of our Savior is the Octave of the Epiphany.

The third mystery of the Epiphany, that of the miracle of water and wine at the marriage feast of Cana, being also kept in the background by the prominence given to the first (though allusion is several times made to it in the Office of the Feast), a special day has been appointed for its due celebration; and that day is the second Sunday after the Epiphany.

This great Feast, which brings us to the crib of the Prince of Peace, has been marked by two great events of the first ages of the Church. It was on the Sixth of January in the year 361, that Julian, who in heart was already an apostate, happened to be at Vienne in Gaul. He was soon to ascend the imperial throne, which would be left vacant by the death of Constantius, and he felt the need he had of the support of the Christian Church in which it is said that he had received the order of Lector, and which, nevertheless, he was preparing to attack with all cunning and cruelty. Like Herod, he too would fain go on this Feast of the Epiphany, and adore the new-born King. History relates of him that this crowned philosopher, who had been seen just before, coming out of the pagan temple, where he had been consulting the soothsayers, made his way through the porticoes of the church, and standing in the midst of the faithful people, offered to the God of the Christians his sacrilegious homage.

Eleven years later, in the year 372, another emperor found his way into the Church, on the

same feast of the Epiphany. It was Valens, a Christian like Julian, by baptism, but a persecutor in the name of Arianism, of that same Church which Julian persecuted in the name of his philosophy and still vainer gods. As Julian felt himself necessitated by motives of worldly policy to bow down, on this day, before the divinity of the Galilean, so on this same day the courage of the holy bishop, St. Basil, made Valens prostrate himself at the feet of Jesus, the King of kings.

Valens had come to Cæsarea, and with his soul defiled with the Arian heresy, he entered the basilica, when St. Basil was celebrating with his people the glorious Theophany. The chanting of the psalms echoed through the holy place like the rumbling of thunder. The people filled the house of God. Such was the order and pomp in and about the sanctuary that it looked more like heaven than earth. Basil himself stood erect before the people, his body and eyes and soul motionless, as though nothing strange had taken place. His whole being was fastened to his God and the holy altar. The sacred ministers, who surrounded the pontiff, were in deep recollection and reverence. The emperor heard and saw all this. He had never before witnessed a spectacle so imposing. He was overpowered.

Jesus, the true king, had conquered. Valens was disarmed; his resolution of using violence against the holy bishop was gone. If heresy kept him from at once adoring the Word of God, he at least united his exterior worship with that which Basil's flock was paying to the Incarnate

God. When the Offertory came, he advanced towards the sanctuary, and presented his gifts to Christ in the person of his holy priest.

Thus has the kingship of our new-born Savior been acknowledged by the great ones of this world. The Royal Psalmist has sung this prophecy—the kings of the earth shall serve Him, and His enemies shall lick the ground under His feet (Ps. 71:9,11).

Many great and holy monarchs have bent their knee before the Babe of Bethlehem and offered Him the homage of orthodox faith and devoted hearts. Theodosius, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Edward the Confessor, Stephen of Hungary, the Emperor Henry II, Ferdinand of Castile, Louis IX of France, are some of the Kings who had a special devotion to the Feast of the Epiphany. Their desire was to go in company with the Magi to the feet of the Divine Infant, and offer Him their gifts.

Practice during the time of Epiphany

In the Middle Ages, the faithful used to present on the Epiphany gold, frankincense, and myrrh to be blessed by the priest. These tokens of their devotedness to Jesus were kept as pledges of God's blessing upon their houses and families. There was another custom which originated in the Ages of Faith. In honor of the Three Kings who came from the East to adore the Babe of Bethlehem, each family chose one of its members to be King. The choice was made in the following manner. The family kept

a feast, which was an allusion to the third of the Epiphany mysteries—the Feast of Cana in Galilee—a cake was served and he who took the piece which had a certain secret mark was proclaimed the king of the day. Two portions of the cake were reserved for the poor in whom honor was paid to the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother; for on this day of the triumph of Him, Who though king, was humble and poor, it was fitting that the poor should have a share in the general joy. The happiness of home was here, as in so many other instances, blended with the sacredness of religion.

For at least three hundred years a puritanical zeal has decried these simple customs, wherein the seriousness of religion and the home enjoyment of certain festivals were blended together. The traditions of Christian family rejoicing have been discarded under the pretexts of abuses, as though a recreation in which religion had no share and no influence were less open to intemperance and sin! Even though, as some have said, the above mentioned custom is but a mere imitation of a pagan feast (which it is not), we would answer that many of the old pagan customs have undergone a Christian transformation, and no one thinks of refusing to accept them thus purified. All this mistaken zeal has produced the sad effect of divorcing the Church from family life and customs, or excluding every religious manifestation from our traditions, and of bringing about what is so pompously called (though the word is expressive enough) the secularization of society.

Epiphany then is the triumph of our Savior and King. His magnificence is manifested to us so brightly on this Feast. We should imitate the faith and obedience of the Magi; and let us adore with the holy Baptist the divine Lamb at the Jordan, over Whom the heavens open; and take our place at the mystic feast of Cana, where our King is present, thrice manifested, thrice glorified. In the last two mysteries, let us not lose sight of the Babe of Bethlehem; in the Babe of Bethlehem let us not cease to recognize the Great God, in Whom the Father was well pleased, and the Supreme Ruler and Creator of all things.





DEPART UNCLEAN
SPIRIT AND GIVE PLACE
TO THE HOLY GHOST



LENT

History of Lent



THE FORTY days' fast which we call Lent is the Church's preparation for Easter, and was instituted at the very commencement of Christianity. Our Blessed Lord Himself sanctioned it by fasting forty days and forty nights in the desert; and though He would not impose it on the world by an express commandment, yet He showed plainly enough, by His own example, that fasting, which God had so frequently ordered in the Old Law, was to be practiced also by the children of the New.

The disciples of St. John the Baptist came one day to Jesus and said to Him: "Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, whereas Thy disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matt. 9: 14,15).

Hence we find it mentioned, in the Acts of the Apostles, how the disciples of our Lord after the foundation of the Church applied themselves to fasting. In their epistles also they recommended it to the faithful. Nor could it be otherwise. Though the divine mysteries whereby our Savior wrought our redemption have been consummated, yet are we still sinners; and where there is sin, there must be expiation.

The apostles, therefore, instituted at the very commencement of the Christian Church that the solemnity of Easter should be preceded by a universal fast. It was only natural that they should

have made this period of penance to consist of forty days, seeing our Divine Master had consecrated that number by His own fast. In the beginning there was no uniform way of observing this period of penance.

The Orientals begin their Lent much earlier than the Latins, owing to their custom of never fasting on Saturdays. They are consequently obliged in order to make up the forty days to begin the Lenten fast some days before Ash Wednesday. The Latin Church as late as the sixth century kept only thirty-six days of fast, beginning with the Monday after the first Sunday of Lent. Sunday was never kept by the Church as a fast-day. Later on, however, the four days preceding the first Sunday of Lent were added to raise the number of fast-days to forty.

Lent, then, is a time consecrated in an especial manner to penance; and this penance is mainly practiced by fasting. Fasting is an abstinence which man voluntarily imposes upon himself as an expiation for sin, and which during Lent is practiced in obedience to the law of the Church. The fast of Lent is not more rigorous than that prescribed for the vigils of certain feasts and for the Ember Days. But it is kept up for forty successive days, with the single interruption of the intervening Sundays.

The importance and advantages of fasting are evident from the frequent praises of this holy practice found in the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament. The traditions of every nation and people and religion in the world,

no matter how much soever it may have lost the purity of primitive traditions, reveal the conviction that man may appease God by subjecting his body to penance. The command given our first parents in Paradise was one of abstinence, namely, from the fruit of a certain tree. By their not exercising this virtue of abstinence they brought every kind of evil upon themselves and upon their children. Because man would not keep this easy law of abstinence in Paradise, God put a heavier law of privation and penance upon him.

Anciently the Jews did not take the one full meal allowed them on fasting days until sunset, that is, evening. The Christian Church adopted the same custom. This practice did not suffer any relaxation until about the ninth century. From that time on it was gradually permitted that this full meal be taken about the middle of the afternoon. Later on the hour for this repast was moved up to midday. Then some refreshment became necessary in the evening. This was allowed and called a collation. It has always been understood that this is never to become a second full meal. For many centuries, too, no flesh-meat or products of animals was allowed during Lent. This regulation has been abandoned with the exception of the prohibition of flesh-meat on certain days. Thus has the more severe observance of Lent in former times been tempered to meet requirements of our own day—for better or for worse.

Lent, in all its long history, has already been a season during which all amusements and theat-

rical entertainments were forbidden. For many centuries even the law-courts were closed. Hunting was prohibited during this holy season as being too exciting and noisy a sport to be in harmony with the sacredness of the time. The Church took advantage of Lent to forbid her children to make war during the whole time. Thus she succeeded in preventing much bloodshed among many of the more warlike Christian peoples.

The influence of this forty days' penance was greatly felt, too, by the individual. It renewed man's energies, gave him fresh vigor in battling with his animal instincts, and by the restraint it put upon sensuality, ennobled the soul. There was restraint everywhere; and the present discipline of the Church, which forbids the solemnization of marriage during Lent, reminds Christians of that holy continency, which for many ages was observed during the whole forty days as a precept.

Besides the Lent preparatory to the feast of Easter, the Greeks keep three others in the year: that which is called "of the apostles," which lasts from the octave of Pentecost to the feast of SS. Peter and Paul; that "of the Virgin Mary," which begins on the first of August and ends with the vigil of the Assumption; and lastly, the Lent of preparation for Christmas, which consists of forty days. The fasting and abstinence of these three Lents are not quite so severe as those observed during the great Lent.

The Mystery of Lent

We may be sure that a season so sacred as this of Lent is rich in mysteries. The Church has made it a time of recollection and penance, in preparation for the greatest of all her feasts. She would, therefore, bring into it everything that could excite the faith of her children and encourage them to go through the arduous work of atonement for their sins.

The number "forty" is a number, as St. Jerome observes, which denotes punishment and affliction. There are the forty days and forty nights of the deluge sent by God in His anger, when He repented that He had made man, and destroyed the whole human race with the exception of the one family. The Hebrew people, in punishment for their ingratitude, wandered forty years in the desert, before they were permitted to enter the promised land. God commanded the prophet Ezechiel to lie forty days on his right side, as a figure of the siege which was to bring destruction on Jerusalem.

There are two persons in the Old Testament who represent the two manifestations of God: Moses, who typifies the Law; and Elias, who is the figure of the Prophets. Both of these are permitted to approach God: the first on Sinai, the second on Horeb; but both of them have to prepare for the great favor by an expiatory fast of forty days.

It is not, then, surprising to find our Lord Himself at the beginning of His public life spending forty days in fasting. The institution

of Lent is thus brought before us with everything that can impress the mind with its solemn character, and with its power of appeasing God and purifying our souls. We should, therefore, look beyond the little world which surrounds us, and see how the whole Christian universe is at this very time offering this forty days' penance as a sacrifice of propitiation to the offended majesty of God; we hope that, as in the case of the Ninivites, He will mercifully accept this year's offering of our atonement, and pardon us our sins.

The Church considers her children during Lent as an immense army, fighting day and night against their spiritual enemies. She calls Lent a Christian warfare. In order that we may have newness of spiritual life we must conquer our three enemies: the devil, the flesh, and the world. We are fellow combatants with Jesus, for He, too, submits to the triple temptation suggested to him by Satan in person. Therefore, we must have on our armor and watch unceasingly. And whereas it is of the utmost importance that our hearts be spirited and brave, the Church puts into our mouth certain prayers, and in particular the ninetieth psalm, that they might inspire us with hope of victory and confidence in God's help. But the Church does not only wish to animate us to the contest with our enemies. She would also have our minds engrossed with thoughts of deepest import. For this end she puts before us three great subjects, which she will gradually unfold to us between now and the great Easter solemnity.

First there is the conspiracy of the Jews against our Redeemer. It will be brought before us in its whole history, from its first formation to its final consummation on Good Friday, when we behold the Son of God hanging on the cross. Each day some passages of the Gospel, revealing the infamous workings of the Synagogue, will be presented to us that we may be able to follow the plot, meditate upon it, and be inflamed with love for the august Victim.

The second of the subjects offered to us for our instruction is the feast of Easter as the day of the new birth of our catechumens; in the early ages of the Church, Lent was the immediate and solemn preparation given to the candidates for baptism. The holy liturgy of the season retains much of the instruction she used to give to the catechumens. This preparation was called their initiation.

Thirdly we must remember how formerly the public penitents, who had been separated on Ash Wednesday from the assembly of the faithful, were the object of the Church's maternal solicitude during the whole forty days of Lent, and were to be admitted to reconciliation on Maunday Thursday, if their repentance were such as to merit this public forgiveness. We shall have the admirable course of instructions, which were originally designed for those penitents and which the liturgy still retains for our sake.

In order to keep up the character of mournfulness and austerity which is so well suited to Lent, the Church has very few feasts in this portion of the ecclesiastical year, inasmuch as

there is always joy where there is even a spiritual feast. The Western Church is less strict than the Eastern Church on this point, because the Christians of the West have never looked upon the celebration of a feast as incompatible with fasting. The Orientals, on the contrary, believe that the two are irreconcilable, and as a consequence of this principle, never observe Saturday as a day of fast, because they always keep it a solemnity, though they make Holy Saturday an exception and fast upon it. For the same reason they do not fast on the Annunciation, the only feast celebrated by the Eastern Church during Lent.

This idea gave rise, in or about the seventh century, to a custom which is peculiar to the Greek Church. It is called the *Mass of the Presanctified*, that is to say, consecrated in a previous sacrifice. On each Sunday of Lent, the priest consecrates six hosts, one of which he receives in that Mass; but the remaining five are reserved for a simple Communion, which is made on each of the five following days, without the Holy Sacrifice being offered. The Latin Church practices this rite only once in the year, that is, on Good Friday.

The Greeks felt that the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice was incompatible with fasting, in that the Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord was supposed to break the Lenten fast. This gave rise to the Mass of the Presanctified. The Greeks celebrate this rite in the evening after Vespers, and the priest alone communicates, as is done now in the Roman liturgy on Good

Friday. But for many centuries they have made an exception for the Annunciation; they interrupt the Lenten fast on this feast, they celebrate Mass, and the faithful are allowed to receive Holy Communion.

In the celebration of the liturgy of Lent the Church suspends those rites which are in a special way expressions of joy. Thus the *Alleluia*, *Gloria in Excelsis*, and *Te Deum* are laid aside. The sacred ministers lay aside all but violet vestments. A penitential attitude of prayer, namely kneeling, is adopted more often. Toward the end of Lent the crucifixes and holy images are covered with a violet cloth to excite in the faithful a livelier sense of penance.

Practice During Lent

Because we have sinned we must be ready to do penance. Sin offends the justice and holiness of God, and punishment awaits the impenitent soul. We bid farewell, then, to the vain joys and baubles of the world. Our pride is humbled by the prophecy, that these bodies will soon be like the ashes that wrote the memento of death upon our foreheads.

During the long forty days of penance we shall take courage in the remembrance of the company of Jesus. He, like us, wears the semblance of a sinner, trembling and humbling Himself before the sovereign Majesty of His Father whom we have offended, and to whom He now offers Himself as the victim of propitiation. He loves us with a brother's love, and seeing that the season

for doing penance has begun, He comes to cheer us on by His presence and His own example.

Our Savior goes on before us on the holy path of Lent. During His forty days of fasting in the desert, He has borne all the fatigues and hardships of Lent. This He has done that we, when called upon to tread the narrow way of our lenten penance, might have His example wherewith to silence the excuses, the sophisms, and repugnances of self-love and pride. The lesson of the Savior's fast in the desert is too plainly given not to be understood. The law of doing penance for sin is too clearly shown there, and we cannot plead ignorance. Let us honestly accept the teaching and practise it. Jesus leaves the desert, where He has spent the forty days, and begins His preaching with these words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Let us not harden our hearts to this invitation, lest there be fulfilled in us the terrible threat contained in those other words of our Redeemer: "Unless you repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13:3).

Now penance consists in contrition of the soul and mortification of the body; these two parts are essential to it. The soul has willed the sin; the body has frequently co-operated in its commission. Moreover, man is composed of both body and soul; both, then, should pay homage to their Creator. The body is to share with the soul either the delights of heaven or the torments of hell. There cannot, therefore, be any thorough Christian life, or any earnest penance,

where the body does not take part in both with the soul.

It is the soul which gives reality to penance. It must be resolved to give up every sin; it must heartily grieve over those it has committed; it must hate sin; it must shun the occasions of sin. The Holy Scripture calls this inward disposition of the soul, conversion. While this conversion of heart is necessary and essential to the Lenten exercises, it is not sufficient without the mortification of the body. The Church, therefore, tells us that the repentance of the heart will not be accepted by God unless it be accompanied by fasting and abstinence.

That Christian is the subject of an illusion who forgets his past sins, even though they be confessed, and fails to do penance for them. Such, being satisfied with themselves, think that the life they have led since that time is a sufficient proof of their solid piety. Why should any one speak to them of the justice of God and mortification? Accordingly, as soon as Lent approaches, they must be dispensed from fasting. Abstinence is an inconvenience to them. Fasting has a bad effect on their health; it is such a change from their ordinary way of living. Besides, there are so many people who are better than themselves, and yet who never fast or abstain. To these persons, after dispensing themselves, it never occurs to supply other penitential exercises for the penances prescribed by the Church. They are interested only in relieving themselves of all inconvenience. Such as these gradually and unsuspectingly lose the Christian

spirit. They force the Church to relax her discipline. They never think of judging their lives by the lives of Jesus and His saints, but only by their own wishes and whims.

Such is the indifference wherewith this non-observance of Lent is treated, that it never excites the slightest trouble or remorse of conscience. Here in life they have all kinds of ways to excuse themselves. But what will they say on the day of judgment? The very persons, who will go through incomparably greater fatigues for the sake of temporal gain or worldly enjoyment, will not lift a finger to keep the Lenten fast, nay, even its spirit. They complain of *feeling* the fast and observance of Lent. But do they forget that the very aim of fasting and abstinence is to make their bodies of sin suffer and feel? The observance of Lent is an essential mark of Catholicity.

Those to whom a dispensation from fasting is really necessary, and to whom it is granted, should endeavor to supply by other works of penance those which their health does not allow them to observe. Such ought rather to be grieved than relieved, because they cannot fast, for they miss the opportunity of making satisfaction for their many sins. They should pray that God may accept the little penances they actually undertake, in order to share in the merits of their fellow-Christians.

The children of the Church then should courageously observe the lenten practices of penance. Peace of conscience is essential to Christian life; and yet it is promised to none but

truly penitent souls. Lost innocence is to be regained by the humble confession of sin; but let the faithful be on their guard against the dangerous error which would persuade them that they have nothing to do when once pardoned: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven!" (Ecclus. 5:5). Our confidence of our having been forgiven should be in proportion to the change of conversion of our heart; the greater our present detestation of our past sins and the more earnest our desire to do penance for them for the rest of our lives, the better founded is our confidence that they have been pardoned. "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Ecclese. 9:1). But he that keeps up within him the spirit of penance has every reason to hope that God loves him.

The courageous observance of the Church's precept of fasting and abstaining during Lent must be accompanied by those two other eminently good works to which God so frequently urges us in the Scripture, namely, prayer and almsdeeds. Just as under the term "fasting" the Church includes all kinds of mortification, so under the word "prayer" she includes all those exercises of piety whereby the soul holds intercourse with her God. More frequent attendance at the services of the Church, assisting daily at Mass, spiritual reading, meditation upon the eternal truths and the Passion of Christ, hearing sermons, and above all, approaching the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist—these are the chief means whereby the faithful should to the dignity of acts of religion, which have God

for their direct object, and have the power of appeasing His divine justice. The Archangel offer to God the homage of prayer during this holy season.

Almsgiving comprises all the works of mercy to our neighbor. They are the necessary complement of fasting and prayer during Lent. God has made it a law, to which He has graciously bound Himself, that charity shown towards our fellow-creatures shall be rewarded as though it were done to Himself. This shows us vividly the reality and sacredness of the tie which He would have to exist between all men. Hence it is that almsdeeds, done with this intention, are not merely acts of human kindness, but are raised Raphael said to Tobias when he was on the point of taking leave of his holy family: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold, for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting" (Tob. 12:8,9).

There is one means more whereby we are to secure to ourselves the great graces of Lent; it is the spirit of retirement and separation from the world. Our life during Lent should be different. The Christian ought during Lent to forbid himself all the vain amusements, entertainments, and parties of the world he lives in. The world has thrown off all external indications of mourning and penance. It goes on just the same during Lent as at other times. It is entirely secularized from religion and God. While this may make it more difficult for the Christian to

detach himself from its ways during Lent, his obligation to appease God's justice will prompt him to take a very definite stand against all forms of vain amusements.

Thus does the Church expect us to observe the forty days of preparation for the great feast of Easter. The faithful member of the Church will enter wholeheartedly into this season with its burden of penance and mortification. But like the true lover of Christ, Who goes before him leading the way, he takes up his cross and dies with Christ to the old man with his sins and concupiscences that he may rise with Christ on Easter to a new life. Remembering his sins, he will not falsely spare himself, that he may go forward to his judgment with greater security and meet his Judge, Whom he did not fail to accompany along the bitter way of the cross.



The wages of sin is death.

By the grace of God we may gain eternal life.



Christ, the mystical Phoenix, consumed by the flame of love dies upon the cross only to rise to a new life. "Have confidence! I have overcome the world!"

[PASCHAL TIME

History of Paschal Time



THE NAME of Paschal Time is given to the period between Easter Sunday and the Saturday following Pentecost Sunday. It is the most sacred portion of the liturgical year, and the one towards which the whole cycle converges. We shall easily understand how this is, if we reflect upon the greatness of Easter, which is called the feast of feasts, and the solemnity of solemnities, in the same manner as the most sacred part of the temple was called the Holy of holies. It is on this day that the mission of the Word Incarnate attains the object towards which it has hitherto been tending, namely, man is raised up from his fall and regains what he had lost by Adam's sin.

Christmas gives us a Man-God; Good Friday presents Him as the victim of sin, shedding His precious Blood for us; while Easter shows Jesus as a conqueror who destroys death, the child of sin, and who proclaims the life which He has purchased for us. The humiliation of his swaddling bands, the sufferings of His agony and cross are all passed; all is now glory—glory for Himself, and glory also for us. On Easter day God regains by the resurrection of the God-Man His creation such as He made it at the beginning. Jesus has not risen to eternal life alone; the whole human race also has risen to immortality together with Him.

The anniversary of this resurrection is, therefore, the great day of joy to which the whole

year looks forward in expectation. Because it is the holiest of all days we were well prepared for it by the bodily mortification and compunction of heart of Lent. Now the Easter sun has risen upon us and fills our hearts with joy. Jesus, our Light, has risen from the darkness of the tomb. It was on the first day of the week that God created light. This day received a second consecration by the resurrection of Jesus on it, so that from that time forward Sunday was to be the Lord's Day instead of Saturday. The early Church also broke away from the date of the Jewish Pasch which could be celebrated on any day of the week, and decided that Easter, the Christian Pasch, should always be celebrated on Sunday.

In deference to the great solemnity of Easter, decrees were passed by the early Christian emperors which forbade all law proceedings from Palm Sunday to White Sunday. St. Augustine, in a sermon he preached on the octave of Easter, exhorts the faithful to extend to the whole year this suspension of lawsuits, disputes, and enmities, which the civil law forbade during these fifteen days.

The Church imposes upon her children the obligation of receiving Holy Communion at Easter. In early ages Communion was frequent, even daily. By degrees the fervor of the faithful grew cold towards this august mystery. In the sixth century the faithful were required to receive Holy Communion at least at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. In the thirteenth century the Church, seeing the ever-growing indifference

of her children, decreed with regret that Christians should be strictly bound to Holy Communion only once a year, and that at Easter time.

The fifty days between Easter and Pentecost have ever been considered by the Church as most holy. The first week, which is more expressly devoted to celebrating Our Lord's Resurrection, is kept as one continued feast; but the remainder of the fifty days is also marked with special honors. To say nothing of the joy which is the characteristic of this period of the year, and of which the *Alleluia* is the expression, Christian tradition has assigned to Eastertide two practices, which distinguish it from every other season. The first is that fasting is not prescribed during the entire interval. It is an extension of the ancient precept of never fasting on a Sunday, and the whole of Eastertide is considered as one long Sunday. This practice, which would seem to have come down from the time of the Apostles, was accepted by the Religious Rules of both East and West, even by the severest. The second consists in not kneeling at the Divine Office from Easter to Pentecost. Inasmuch as the faithful seldom assist at the canonical hours, this practice is little known to them.

The Mystery of Paschal Time

Of all the seasons of the liturgical year Eastertide is by far the richest in mystery. One might even say that Easter is the summit of the Mystery of the sacred liturgy. The Christian

who is happy enough to enter with his whole mind and heart into the knowledge and love of the Paschal Mystery has reached the very center of the supernatural life. Hence it is that the Church uses every effort in order to effect this. What she has hitherto done was all intended as a preparation for Easter. The holy longings of Advent, the sweet joys of Christmas, the severe truths of Septuagesima, the contrition and penance of Lent, the heart-rending sight of the Passion—all were given us as preliminaries, as paths, to the substance and glorious Pasch, which is now ours.

God prepared for the Christian Easter and Pentecost by those of the Jewish law—a thousand five hundred years of typical beauty prefigured the reality. During the Paschal season, then, we have brought before us the two great manifestations of God's goodness towards mankind, the Pasch of Israel and the Christian Pasch, the Pentecost of Sinai and the Pentecost of the Church. The figures of the Old Law were fulfilled in the realities of the new Easter and Pentecost, and the twilight of the Mosaic Law made way for the full daylight of the Gospel.

Eternity in heaven is the true Pasch. Hence, our Pasch here on earth is the feast of feasts, the solemnity of solemnities. The human race was dead; it was the victim of that sentence whereby it was condemned to lie, mere dust, in the tomb; the gates of life were shut against it. But the Son of God rises from His grave and takes possession of eternal life. Since, as

St. Paul says, "He is the first-born from the dead," (Coloss. 1:18), that is, we shall rise as Christ has risen, the Church would have us consider ourselves as having already risen with Jesus and as having already taken possession of eternal life. The holy Fathers bid us look on these fifty days of Easter as the image of our eternal happiness. They are days devoted exclusively to joy; every sort of sadness is forbidden; and the Church cannot speak to her divine Spouse without the glorious cry of heaven, the *Alleluia*.

Our Lord chose Sunday for His resurrection. It was on this favored day of the week that He had, four thousand years previously, created light. By selecting it now for the commencement of the new life which He graciously imparts to man, He would show us that Easter is the renewal of the entire creation. Not only is the anniversary of His glorious resurrection to be henceforth the greatest of days, but every Sunday throughout the year is to be a sort of Easter, a holy and sacred day. Now that she is illumined with the brightness of the resurrection, she devotes to the contemplation of His work, the first day of the week. It is the day of light, for on it He called forth material light (which was the first manifestation of life upon chaos) and on the same, He that is the "Brightness of his glory" (Heb. 1:3) and the "Light of the world" (John 8:12) rose from the darkness of the tomb.

Let, then, the week with its Sabbath pass by; what we Christians want is the eighth day, the day that is beyond the measure of time, the day

of eternity, the day whose light is not intermittent or partial, but endless and unlimited. Thus speak the holy Fathers when explaining the substitution of the Sunday for the Saturday. The ancient Sabbath was a memorial of the visible creation. But our Sabbath has been transferred from the seventh to the eighth day, and the eighth is the first. And rightly was the seventh changed into the eighth, because we Christians put our joy in a better work than the creation of the world. This is no less than the salvation of the world.

The mystery of the seventh followed by an eighth day, as the holy one, is again brought before us by the number of weeks which form Eastertide. These weeks are seven; they form a week of weeks, and their morrow is again a Sunday, the glorious feast of Pentecost. These mysterious numbers—which God Himself fixed when He instituted the first Pentecost after the first Pasch—were adopted by the Apostles when they regulated the Christian Easter, as we learn from all the ancient interpreters of the mysteries of the holy liturgy.

The whole season of Easter, then, is marked with the mystery expressed by each Sunday of the year. Sunday is to us the great day of our week, because it is beautified with the splendor of our Lord's resurrection, of which the creation of material light was but a type. The Christian Paschal Time was prefigured in the Old Law. Their Pentecost fell on the fiftieth day after the Pasch; it was the morrow of the seven weeks. Another figure of our Eastertide

was the year of Jubilee, which God bade Moses to prescribe to His people. Each fiftieth year the houses and lands that had been alienated during the preceding forty-nine years returned to their original owners; and those Israelites who had been compelled by poverty to sell themselves as slaves recovered their liberty. This year, which was properly called the sabbatical year, was the sequel of the preceding seven weeks of years, and was thus the image of our eighth day, whereon the Son of Mary, by His Resurrection, redeemed us from the slavery of the tomb and restored us to the inheritance of our immortality.

The rites peculiar to Eastertide are two: the unceasing repetition of the *Alleluia*, and the color of the vestments used for its two great solemnities: white for the first, Easter; and red for the second, Pentecost. White is appropriate to the resurrection, for it is the mystery of eternal light, which knows neither spot nor shadow; it is the mystery that produces in a faithful soul the sentiment of purity and joy. Pentecost, which gives us the Holy Spirit, the "consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29), is symbolized by the red vestments, which express the mystery of the divine Paraclete coming down in the form of fiery tongues upon them that were assembled in the Cenacle.

Practice During Paschal Time

The practice for this holy season mainly consists in the spiritual joy which it should produce

in every soul that is risen with Jesus. This joy is a foretaste of eternal happiness, and the Christian ought to consider it a duty to keep it up within him by ardently seeking after that life which is in our divine Head, and by carefully shunning sin which causes death. During the last nine weeks we have mourned for our sins and done penance for them; we have followed Jesus to Calvary; but now our Holy Mother the Church is urgent in bidding us rejoice. She herself has laid aside all sorrow. The voice of her weeping is changed into the song of a delighted Spouse.

Among the children of the Church there are two classes, the strong and spiritual minded and the weak and carnal minded. In order that she might impart the Paschal joy to all her children, the Church has taken their weakness into account. While she requires a strict fast of forty days in preparation for the feast of the resurrection, she holds out at the same time the bright promise of the gladness, light, life, joy, and peace of Easter when the restraint of the Lenten mortification comes to an end. Thus does she produce in those of her children who have no elevation of soul sentiments in harmony with the great feast, such as the most perfect feel. By this means all, both fervent and tepid, unite their voices in one same hymn of praise to the risen Lord.

The reason why many people are not much affected by Easter lies in this that a love of ease and a false conscience lead so many Christians to treat the law of Lent with as much indiffer-

ence as if there were no such law existing. Hence, Easter comes upon them as a feast—it may be as a great feast—but that is all; they experience little of that thrilling joy which fills the heart of the Church during this season, and which she evinces in everything she does. And if this be their case even on the glorious day itself, how can it be expected that they should keep up, for the whole fifty days, the spirit of gladness which is the very essence of Easter? They have not observed the fast or the abstinence of Lent. Even the mitigated form in which the Church now presents them to her children, in consideration of their weakness, was too severe for them. They sought, or took, a total dispensation from this law of Lenten mortification, and without regret or remorse. Easter comes with its *Alleluia*, and it finds no response in their soul. How could it? Penance has not done its work of purification; it has not spiritualized them; how then could they follow their risen Jesus, whose life is henceforth more of heaven than of earth?

To her faithful children the Church holds out her Easter joy, from which, now, nothing can distract them. "Can the wedding guests mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them?" (Matt. 9:15). Jesus is to be with us for forty days; He is to suffer no more and die no more; let our feelings be in keeping with His now endless glory and bliss. True, He is to leave us, He is to ascend to the right hand of His Father, but He will not leave us orphans. He will send us the Divine Comforter, who will abide with us

forever (John 14:16-18). The consoling words just quoted above must be our Eastertide text. They are the key to the whole liturgy of this holy season. We must have them before us, and we shall find by experience that the joy of Eastertide is as salutary as the contrition and penance of Lent.

Easter

This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein! This is the glad day on which Jesus rose triumphant from the tomb. At its dawn Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, is waiting in hope and patience for the blissful moment of her Son's return from the grave and death. Magdalen and the other holy women are preparing to start for the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus. In limbo the soul of our crucified Lord is about to give the glad word of departure to the myriads of long-imprisoned holy souls who surround Him in adoring love. Death is still holding silent sway over the sepulchre, where rests the body of Jesus. Never has Death held in his grasp a prey so noble as this that now lies in the tomb near Calvary; but, too, never has Death received such a defeat as the one about to take place. The Victim of Calvary is to conquer him forever, for this is He of whom it is written in the prophecy: "O Death! I will be thy death!" (Osee 13:14).

Divine Justice could not allow the body that was united to the Word of God to see corruption. So neither could it permit the dominion of death

to be long over such a Victim. The sign of Jonas the prophet is about to be given to the world. Three days in the tomb—the afternoon and night of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and a few hours of the Sunday—were enough to satisfy divine justice, enough to certify the death of the Crucified, enough to complete the martyrdom of the Queen of Sorrows.

As the dawn of Sunday struggles with the gloom of night, the soul of Jesus darts from the prison of limbo, followed by the whole multitude of the holy souls that are around Him. It reaches and enters the sepulchre, where it reunites itself with its body. The sacred body returns to life, raises itself up and throws aside the winding-sheet, the spices, and the bands. The bruises have disappeared, the blood has been brought back to the veins, and from those limbs that had been torn by the scourging, from that head that had been mangled by the thorns, from those hands and feet that had been pierced with nails, there darts forth a dazzling light that fills the tomb. The holy angels had clustered round the stable and adored the Babe of Bethlehem; they are now around the sepulchre adoring the conqueror of death.

Quicker than a ray of light Jesus passed through the stone that closed the entrance to the tomb. Unmoved was the stone and untouched the seal of Pilate upon it, and yet Jesus was free. Thus, as the Holy Fathers teach us, was it at His birth. He appeared to the gaze of Mary without having offered the slightest violence to her maternal womb. The birth and the resurrec-

tion bear on them the seal of resemblance: in the first, it is a Virgin Mother; in the last, it is a sealed tomb giving forth its captive God.

As at the death of Jesus, so at His resurrection an earthquake shakes the foundations of the world. The stone is rolled back by an angel. His presence struck the guards with fear and terror. Recovering from their shock they rush to the city and relate what they have seen.

Jesus, however, not yet seen by mortal eye, speeds to His holy Mother. She stood near Him to the last. She had united the sacrifice of her mother's heart with that He made upon the cross. It is just, therefore, that she should be the first to partake of the joy of His resurrection. The gospel does not speak of it. The reason why it mentions other appearances of Jesus and not this one is that the former were intended as proofs of the resurrection, while this visit to His Mother was made by Jesus because of the tender love of His sacred heart for her. Both nature and grace required that this first visit should be to such a mother, and Christian hearts dwell with delight on the meditation of the mystery. What must have been the rapture of the soul of Mary during the visit of her Divine Son? Certainly the joy of it must have made her forget all the sorrow she had endured and bathed her soul in consolation.

After this first manifestation of Jesus to His holy mother, He leaves her to show Himself to others, that so the glory of His resurrection may be made known to the world. His next manifestation is again to a woman, Mary Magdalen,

to whom much had been forgiven because she had loved much. Neither death nor the tomb has shaken her faith in Jesus or her love for Him. She is one of the holy women who go, before the sun is risen, to embalm the body of Jesus. After their disappointment at the tomb in not finding the body of Jesus and when they are taught by the angels to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, they are commissioned to "go, tell His disciples and Peter, that He goes before you into Galilee" (Mark 16:7).

The holy women faithfully and joyfully deliver their message. but it is all set down as womanish excitement. Magdalen hastens once more to the tomb of her dear Master. A soul like hers, ever earnest, and now tormented with anxiety, cannot endure to rest. Where is the body of Jesus? Suddenly she sees a man standing before her, but she does not recognize him. Her love distracts her, for it is not guided by faith. Her desire to find Him as she thinks Him to be, that is, dead, blinds her from seeing Him as He really is, living and near her. A single word from Him, however, is enough to make her understand. Jesus says to her in the tone of voice she so well understands: "Mary." "Master," exclaims the delighted and humble Magdalen. All is now clear; she believes.

Jesus does not allow a demonstration of her affection by allowing her to kiss His sacred feet as on the happy day when she received her pardon in the house of the pharisee. Instead, He sends her, the first witness of His resurrection, to publish the great mystery to His apostles.

She becomes, as the Fathers express it, the Apostle of the very apostles.

The second apparition of Jesus, then, is to Mary Magdalen; it is the first in testimony of His resurrection, for the one to His Blessed Mother was for another reason. We see in the apparition to Magdalen the infinite goodness of the Redeemer, Who, before seeking to fix the faith of His resurrection in them that are to preach it to all nations, deigns to recompense the love of this woman, who followed Him even to the cross, was faithful to Him after His death, and loved Him most, because most forgiven. By thus showing Himself to Magdalen, Jesus teaches us that He is more anxious to satisfy the love He bears His faithful creature than to provide for His own glory.

The third apparition of Jesus is again to women, to Salome and Mary, the mother of James, the companions of Magdalen in the early morning. They are going back to the city of Jerusalem when Jesus meets and greets them. Overcome with joy, they fall down and adore Him and kiss His sacred feet. These two favored women are permitted to do what was denied the more favored and fervent Magdalen. Before the day is over, Jesus will show Himself to them whom He has chosen as the heralds of His glory. But He first wishes to honor these generous women who, braving every danger, and triumphing over the weakness of their sex, were more faithful to Him in His passion than the men He had so highly honored as to make them His Apostles.

For His first worshippers at Bethlehem, Jesus chose a few simple-minded shepherds, whose power to herald the great event was confined to their own village. And yet the birthday of this little Child is now the era of every civilized nation. For the first witnesses of His resurrection, He chose three weak women, and yet the whole earth now celebrates the anniversary of His resurrection. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways not our ways. He does not need the apparently great ones of this world to advance His cause, but He uses the humble and lowly in order that proud man may learn to know the power of God and be constrained to exclaim with Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea: "Who, O Lord, is like unto Thee among the strong?" (Exod. 15:1).

The day is fast advancing and Jesus has not yet shown Himself to His disciples. They have heard of His resurrection through the holy women, but being disappointed in their Master, they will not believe. Although Jesus has often spoken of His resurrection to them, this does not recur to their minds. They are still carnal-minded men. To these men, however, who are to preach His divinity to the farthest ends of the world, Jesus must now show Himself. He must now provide for His own honor and glory. But again He sets that aside to show the generosity of His heart. Peter, the head of the apostolic college, had denied Him. Touched by the look of reproach and pardon of his Master, he had done nothing since then, save shed tears. Jesus would now console the humble penitent, tell him with

His own lips that He has pardoned him, and confirm him by this mark of His divine predilection in his high office. Jesus appears suddenly before him, the conqueror, the glorious Messiah. Yet, what most affects the apostle is the unspeakable goodness of his Lord who comes to console him. Who shall describe this interview between the penitent Peter and his offended but forgiving Master? What joy must have filled the apostle's heart? This was the fourth of Jesus's manifestations.

The Sunday is slowly drawing to its end. Still Jesus does not make His apostles the witnesses of His next manifestation. He would first console two hearts that are grieving on His account, though their grief comes from their want of faith. These are the two disciples who went to Emmaus on that first Easter Day. So absorbed are they in their sorrow that they do not recognize Jesus as He overtakes and walks with them. Their hearts burn to hear Him talk and they take Him into their house at Emmaus. But as yet they do not recognize Him. We are like these disciples when we allow ourselves to be influenced by human thoughts and feelings. Jesus is near us, He speaks to us, He instructs us, He consoles us; and yet, oftentimes, it is long before we recognize Him.

At length they recognize Him in the breaking of bread. They would throw themselves at His feet, but He is gone, leaving them mute with surprise, and yet transported with exceeding joy. It is the fifth apparition. The two disciples cannot wait. They hurry back to Jerusalem to

inform the rest of their grand experience. The apostles have just been informed by Peter that he had seen Jesus. Yes, they are convinced now that the Lord is risen.

But how fearful they are. They are all together in one house behind bolted doors. The people, believing the story of grave-robbing as told by the soldiers, might attempt to use violence against them. As the ten of them, for Thomas had gone into the city under cover of darkness, were discussing the great events of this day, lo! Jesus stands before them. That well-known voice and figure and face!—yes, it is Jesus! “Peace be to you.” But they are afraid. They firmly believe Jesus to be risen, but might not this be a phantom? Therefore Jesus invites them to touch Him, and He eats in their presence. This loving familiarity of their Master makes them weep with joy, and when Thomas returns to them, they express their delight in these simple words: “We have seen the Lord” (John 20:25). It is the sixth apparition of Jesus on the day of His resurrection. Thus did Jesus give abundant proof of His victory over death. He appeared six times on that first glorious Easter Day to content His own love and confirm our faith. Lord Jesus, may we so live as to merit to enjoy the eternal Easter with Thee in heaven.

The Ascension of Our Lord

After His glorious resurrection Jesus spent forty days with His dear ones on earth before taking possession of His eternal glory at the

right hand of His Father. The angelic choirs are preparing to receive Jesus, their promised King, into heaven. The holy souls that were liberated from limbo on the morning of the resurrection are waiting for the happy moment when they will enter heaven's gate in company with their Redeemer.

Meanwhile Jesus has to visit His disciples and bid them farewell, for they are to be left for some years longer in this vale of tears. They are in the cenacle impatiently awaiting His coming. Suddenly He appears in their midst. His mother is carried away with joy. His disciples and the holy women fall down and affectionately adore the Master, Who has come to take His leave of them. He sits down to table with them and this celebrated company eats its last repast with Jesus. Their ears are attuned to hear Him speak, for His parting words will be highly treasured. His language is not all affection. He begins by chiding them for their incredulity, wherewith they heard of His resurrection. He is going to entrust His apostles with the most sublime mission ever given to man. He would, therefore, prepare them for it by humbling them.

Then assuming a tone of authority, He says to them: "Go into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:14). They are to accomplish their mission by miracles. These grand signs are to be the foundation of His Church just as He had made them the argument of His own divine mission. Here, then, we have men unknown to the world and devoid of every human means, and yet commissioned

to conquer the earth and make it acknowledge Jesus as its King. The world ignores their very existence. But they will be strengthened for their great expedition. "But wait here in the city," says Jesus, "until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:19). The armor that they are to put on consists in this that "you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4-5).

But now the hour of separation is come. Jesus rises; His Blessed Mother and the hundred and twenty persons assembled there prepare to follow Him. The holy group makes its way to the Mount of Olives. It is the last time Jesus walks through the faithless city. He is invisible to the eyes of people who denied Him, but visible to His disciples, and goes before them, as heretofore the pillar of fire led on the Israelites. How beautiful and imposing a sight! Mary, the disciples, and the holy women accompanying Jesus in His heavenward journey, which is to lead Him to the right hand of His eternal Father! It was commemorated in the Middle Ages by a solemn procession before the Mass of Ascension Day. What religious times were those, when Christians took delight in honoring every action of our Redeemer! They could not be satisfied as we are with a few vague notions which can produce nothing but an equally vague devotion.

Jesus proceeded to the very place, the Mount of Olives, where He had begun His passion, to begin His life in heaven. The path to humiliation and death becomes the path to triumph and glory. As the holy group stands on the elevation

overlooking the city of Jerusalem, the apostles, still dreaming their vain dreams of an earthly kingdom, venture to ask the Master: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Something great is about to happen, and their carnal thoughts can conjecture only a material future. To their query Jesus answers in a tone of severity that it is not for them to know the times or days appointed by the Father. Their task, and this ought to be uppermost in the minds of the disciples, is the conversion of the pagan world, the establishment of the Church. Jesus reminds them of the mission He has just given to them: "You shall receive," He says, "power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

According to a tradition which has been handed down from the earliest ages of Christianity, it is midday, the same hour at which He was raised up when nailed to His cross. Giving His blessed mother a look of filial affection, and another of fond farewell to the rest of the group that stand around Him, Jesus raises up His hands and blesses them all. While thus blessing them, He is raised up from the ground whereon He stands, and ascends into heaven. Their eyes follow Him until a cloud comes and receives Him out of their sight.

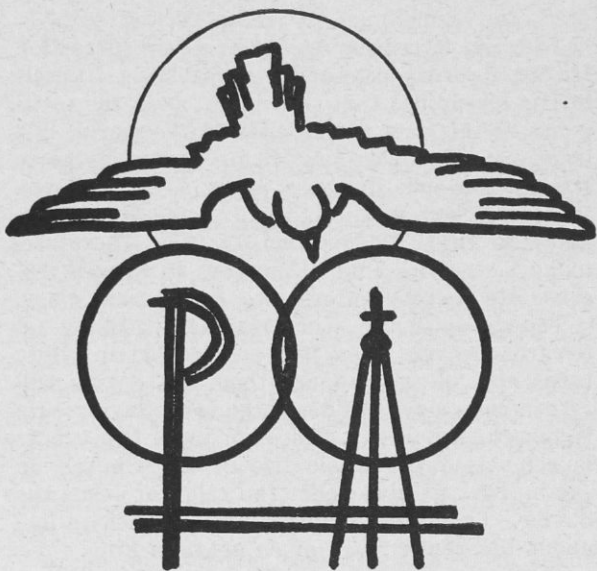
The Master is gone! For four thousand years the world had waited for its Redeemer. He came and spent thirty-three years with us, the God-

Man, the Emmanuel, to show us the path to heaven and to redeem us. After His resurrection He spends forty days more manifesting Himself to His loved ones that they might bear the testimony of this fact to the ends of the world. We believe in Him; we love Him. But to us as to His mother and disciples Jesus says: "If you loved me, you would indeed rejoice that I am going to the Father (John 14:28). Therefore, today we rejoice that Jesus goes to heaven, because He thereby enters into His eternal glory.

The disciples are still steadfastly looking up towards heaven when two angels clad in white robes appear and promise them that Jesus will return some day. He has ascended a Savior; He is to return a Judge. Between these two events is comprised the whole life of the Church on earth. Now we live under the reign of Jesus the Savior. The apostles must invite all men to live under the gentle sway of so gentle a king.

The spirit of the feast of the Ascension is that of joy and triumph. This solemnity is the completion of the mysteries of our redemption; it is one that was instituted by the very apostles. It has impressed a character of sacredness on the Thursday of each week, the day already so highly honored by the institution of the Eucharist.





+ COELESTI +
+ SPONSO +
+ IUNCTA EST +
+ ECCLESIA +

Christ's union with the Church is consummated through the union of the Holy Spirit with His Spouse, the Church.

PENTECOST



THE FEAST of Pentecost is the feast of the reign of the Holy Spirit. We have frequently been told, while following the mysteries of the liturgical year, of the action of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Our respectful attention was turned towards this divine Spirit, Who seemed to be shrouded in mystery, the time for Him to be made manifest not having yet arrived. But the workings of God in His creatures, while not coming all at once, that is, coming in slow succession, will most certainly come.

Now the Holy Spirit's visible reign on earth was deferred until the Man-God should be enthroned on the Father's right hand. He was not, however, inactive before that time. Allusion is made again and again to Him in the Old Testament. It was through His divine operation that the Word of God was made flesh in the womb of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. The earth was to catch the first glimpse of Him as He manifested Himself on the day of Jesus's baptism. Even then, to the bystanders, John excepted, He did not deign to reveal His eternal secrets.

When Jesus returned to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to reign over the Church He had founded. These middle ages, that is, between Christ's ascension and His coming again as Judge, are under the reign of the Holy Spirit. "It is expedient for you that I depart," said Jesus, "for if I do not, the Advocate will not come to you" (John 16:7). This new sovereign is not to become man or redeem

the world. He is to come among men with an immensurable love. To Him Jesus entrusts His bride, the Church, that He may perpetuate His work and direct it in her.

We, who were once nothingness, are destined to become, by the operation of the Word and the Spirit, children of the heavenly Father. And if we would know what preparation we should make for the visit of the Paraclete, let us return in thought to the cenacle, where we left the disciples assembled, persevering with one mind in prayer, and waiting, as their Master had commanded them, for the power of the Most High to descend upon them and arm them for their future combat.

The first we find there is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the masterpiece of the Holy Ghost, the Church of the living God, from whom is to be born, by the action of the same divine Spirit, the Church militant. The apostles are gathered around this temple of the Holy Ghost. They are to be the pillars and foundations of the true Church of Jesus, of which He Himself, and Peter with and in Him, is the chief cornerstone. Matthias, elected to fill the place of Judas, and many other disciples and the holy women are all present. A hundred and twenty souls are gathered in recollectedness to receive the Holy Spirit and become His first-fruits.

The great day which consummates the work that God has undertaken for the human race has at last dawned. We have had seven weeks since the Pasch and now comes the day that opens the mysterious number of fifty. It is to bring us

to the fulness of God. The Pentecost (or fiftieth day after the Pasch, or deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt) in the Old Law was the day on which God promulgated the Ten Commandments; and every following year the Israelites celebrated the great event by a solemn festival. But their Pentecost was figurative, like their Pasch; there was to be a second Pentecost for all people, as there was to be a second Pasch for the redemption of the whole world. The Pasch with all its triumphant joys, belongs to the Son of God, the conqueror of death; Pentecost belongs to the Holy Spirit, for it is the day whereon He began His mission into this world, which henceforward was to be under His law.

Jerusalem is filled with pilgrims who have flocked thither from every country in the Gentile world. They are Jews or converts to Judaism. This influx of strangers gives the city a Babel-like appearance, for each nation has its own language. It is the middle of the morning. Suddenly is heard, coming from heaven, the sound of a violent wind. It startles the people in the city; it fills the cenacle with its mighty breath. A crowd is soon round the house that stands on Mount Sion. Within, a silent shower, a shower of fire, falls on all present, a fire that burns not but enlightens, consumes not but shines. Flakes of fire, in the shape of tongues, rest on the heads of the hundred and twenty disciples; it is the Holy Spirit taking possession of all and each. The Church is now not only in Mary, but also in these hundred and twenty disciples. All

belong now to the Spirit that has descended upon them: His kingdom is begun, it is manifested, its conquests will be speedy and glorious.

The Holy Spirit, who appeared on the occasion of Jesus's baptism in the Jordan under the endearing form of a dove, now appears under that of fire. He is the Spirit of love; and love is not only gentle and tender but is also ardent as fire. Now, therefore, that the world is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, it must needs be on fire, and the fire shall not be checked. And why this form of tongues? To show that the heavenly fire is to spread by the word, by speech. The words of these hundred and twenty will find thousands to believe and welcome it. Those that receive it shall be united in one faith; they shall be called the Catholic Church, that is, universal, existing in all places and times. The tongue and the fire are now given to these first disciples, who by the assistance of the Holy Spirit will transmit them to others. So will it be to the end of time. The workings of the Holy Spirit were wondrous in the souls that received Him. First of all, Mary is now more than ever full of grace. After all the grace Jesus has already given her we should think that heaven had nothing more in store for her. But no. Here is a new mission opened for Mary. The Church is born; she is born of Mary. New duties fall upon the mother of the Church, the mother of the Bride of her Son. She is left upon earth to nurse the infant Church. For this office she received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Therefore she received the richest portion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

She is become the mother of the Christian people. The Spirit of love now fulfils the intention expressed by our Redeemer when dying on the cross: "Woman, behold thy son." For this Pentecost day she acts as mother of the infant Church; and when at length the Church no longer needs her visible presence, this mother quits the earth for heaven, where she is crowned Queen; but there, too, she exercises her glorious title and office of Mother of Men.

The apostles receive the next richest portion of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day. The frequent instructions they have been receiving from their Lord during the forty days after His resurrection have changed them into quite other men, but now that they have received the Holy Spirit, the change and conversion is complete. They are filled with the enthusiasm of faith; their souls are on fire with divine love; the conquest of the whole world is their ambition, and they know it is their mission. All that their beloved Master has taught them is now clear to them. They understood it all. Far from suffering any fear, they are ready and even long to suffer persecution in the discharge of the office entrusted to them by Jesus, that of preaching His name and His glory unto all nations.

The disciples, too, and the holy women, though in a less degree than the apostles, are sharers of the divine gift. They too are to go forth and preach the resurrection. The love the holy women showed at the foot of the cross and at the tomb is now redoubled. Their words will produce a hundredfold of fruit.

The apostles immediately begin their great work of preaching. So full of unction were they, and so powerfully did the Holy Spirit make His presence and influence felt in the hearts of their hearers, that three thousand, filled with the simple and full faith in Christ, are baptized. How admirable is the early progress of the Church of Christ! How wonderful is the first reception of the divine Spirit by the multitude of disciples. Truly is Pentecost the birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ under the reign of His divine and Holy Spirit.

The mystery of Pentecost holds so important a place in the Christian dispensation that the Church ranks it in her liturgy on an equality with the Paschal solemnity. The Pasch is the redemption of man by the victory of Christ. Pentecost is the Holy Spirit taking possession of man redeemed. The Ascension is the intermediate mystery; it consummates the Pasch by placing the Man-God at the right hand of the Father; it prepares the mission of the Holy Spirit to our earth. This mission could not take place until Jesus had been glorified. This divine mission was not to be given to the Third Person until men were deprived of the visible presence of Jesus. The hearts of the faithful were henceforward to follow their absent Redeemer by a purer and wholly spiritual love. Now who was to bring us this new love if not He who is the link of the eternal love of the Father and of the Son? This Holy Spirit of love and union is called in the sacred Scripture the "Gift of God"; and it is on the day of Pentecost that the

Father and the Son send us this ineffable Gift. From this day forward He inundates the whole earth with His fire, He gives spiritual life to all, He makes His influence felt in every place. We know the Gift of God; we have but to open our hearts to receive Him, as did the three thousand who became members of the Church on the first Pentecost Day.



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