

Rummel, Joseph F.
- The Holy Eucharist
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THE HOLY EUCHARIST

by

Most Reverend Joseph F. Rummel, S.T.D., LL. D.



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Most Reverend Joseph F. Rummel, S.T.D., LL. D., Archbishop of New Orleans and Episcopal Chairman of the National Councils of Catholic Men and Women.

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(On Sundays from September 25 to October 9, 1938)

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✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.

Bishop of Fort Wayne

EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US

Address delivered on September 25, 1938

“Hosanna to our Eucharistic King!” May these words, borrowed from the prize hymn composed especially for the Eighth National Eucharistic Congress, serve simultaneously as a most reverential greeting and as an expression of faith, profoundly humble and intensely sincere, in the reality of Christ’s presence in the Most Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is the focal mystery of our Catholic faith, the beacon light whose brilliant rays illumine with rare brightness every phase of Catholic worship, the fountain whence souls draw spiritual life, vigour, and energy, the realization of God’s marvelous desire to be with the children of men, the consummation of man’s highest ambition to commune with His Maker and to anticipate, in a measure, the enrapturing joy of the beatifying vision of the countenance of God in heaven.

Firm, unequivocal, and constant is the doctrine of the Catholic Church that the Holy Eucharist contains the body and the blood, the soul and the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, under the forms of bread and wine. Nothing short of this belief will explain or justify the liturgy, the prayers, the customs of the Church. Her most solemn functions as well as the simple devotional practices in which her children find delight, strength, and solace, are inspired by the doctrine of the Real Presence. From the very outset the Church has accepted in the direct and obvious literal sense the promise made by Christ towards the end of the second year of His public ministry: “The bread that I will give

is my flesh, for the life of the world . . . Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you . . . As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead . . . He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day" (Jn. VI, 52 sqq.).

The doctrine thus expressed by Christ was novel, and the congregation at Capharnaum found it hard to accept its clear significance. Even for some of the disciples it proved a stumbling-block. They were evidently preoccupied about the manner in which Christ's body and blood could become food and nourishment. They lacked faith in His wisdom, goodness, and power, infinite resources which would find the way, even as on the day previous He had found the way of "healing them that were in need of healing", and of feeding the five thousand weary, hungry people that, heedless of their physical wants, had followed Him into the desert near Bethsaida. With St. Peter and the apostles, whose faith Christ challenged with the question, "Will you also go away?", the Church has ever answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed, and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn. VI, 66-70). Yes, faith in Christ is the key to the Mystery of the Eucharist!

An entire year elapsed after the pronouncement in the synagogue of Capharnaum, a year of anxious expectation regarding the fulfilment of the solemn promise. At length another pasch came around, the

last, most solemn, and unforgettable pasch in the Saviour's life. Christ chose the Paschal Supper as the setting for His leave-taking from the Apostles. They were not aware of the impending tragedy, but He knew that on the morrow, ere another sun would have set upon Jerusalem's proud domes and pinacles, His body would hang limp and lifeless upon a cross raised over the Hill of Skulls. Under such circumstances Jesus could be in no other mood but that of solemn earnestness, sincerity, and frankness. He was about to proclaim His testament, the testament of the God-man on the eve of His death. Hence the least suspicion of deception or vagueness must be eliminated from His actions and words, the words of the Incarnate God about to die.

With simple majesty "Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Mt. XXVI, 26-28). Here was the reward of Peter's faith: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life". Here was the answer to all those who had even the slightest misgiving either regarding the reality of Christ's promise or regarding the manner of its fulfilment. His flesh becomes meat indeed, His blood drink indeed; but the manner is lovingly considerate, divinely humane. Common bread retains the form of bread, while its substance is changed into the substance of the Body of the Saviour. It becomes the Bread of Life, the living Bread that came down from heaven, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this change of substance, which leaves unchanged the

appearance or form, is effected continuously in the Church by the priest in virtue of the power contained in the words, "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Lk. XXII, 19).

This same sense of reality, without the slightest indication of concern over the manner, marks the teaching of the great St. Paul. Not yet associated with the Apostles at the Last Supper, he proclaims to the Corinthians that by a special revelation he had received of the Lord, "That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is my body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew forth the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (I Cor. XI, 23-27).

This striking testimony reflects validly not only the teaching of St. Paul but also that of the other Apostles, their obvious interpretation of the Saviour's promise and fulfilment, and the belief of the entire Apostolic Church. And this belief, brought down to our day through an unbroken tradition of nineteen hundred years, is the dominant keynote of the religious life, worship, and influence of the Catholic Church at all times and in all places.

When the Prophet Isaias foretold the advent of the Messiah, he said: "Behold a virgin shall con-

ceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is. VII, 14). St. Matthew the Evangelist gives us the meaning of this designation, saying: "Which being interpreted, is *God with us*" (Mt. I, 23). This prophecy—"God with us"—was literally fulfilled in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Thereby the human nature was hypostatically united to the divine, and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became in a real manner associated with the human race, adding to it for all time a dignity unique in the realm of creation and unparalleled in the annals of God's dealing with men.

But in the Holy Eucharist that prophecy of Isaiah—"Emmanuel, or God with us"—receives even a more emphatic realization. It is to the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist that the words of Wisdom can be applied with genuine reality: "My delights *were* to be with the children of men" (Prov. VIII, 31).

"Emmanuel—God with us", is the inspiration of the architect and the artist in their joint aim to make the church indeed a "House of God", in which dwells not only the glory of the Lord as in a cloud (3 Kings VIII, 12), but Jesus Christ the Son of God, really, truly, and substantially present under the sacramental species in the tabernacle. This fact alone can adequately explain the wealth of gold, of stone, of precious woods and fabrics which the architectural geniuses of the ages have wrought into the great cathedrals to express man's reverence for the Sacred Host that in the tabernacle rests enshrined. Brush and chisel vie with each other in fashioning for "Emmanuel—God with us" the decorative setting that makes His earthly abode as perfect a vision of heaven as human fancy can con-

ceive and human skill execute. Gifted masters of harmony boldly attempt to emulate on earth the "Holy, Holy, Holy" which without cessation heaven's angels chant before the throne of the Lamb.

"Emmanuel—God with us", is that mysterious something, which creates in our churches the atmosphere of awe, peace, and confidence that even those perceive at times who have little or no religious faith. To the believing soul it is often sufficient to bask in the sense of the nearness of Christ, knowing that of old, power emanated even from the hem of His garment, mindful that there was a blessing in store for Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree, and consoled in the thought that the publican at the threshold of the temple was not missed by the merciful eye of the Saviour.

"Emmanuel—God with us", draws to the sanctuary and tabernacle the little child that seeks health and healing for an ailing mother or some great grace for a troubled father. In that sacred presence kneel the stalwart youth and the graceful maiden, each to implore light, guidance, and strength in the momentous decision of life's calling, confident that He who dwells within the tabernacle walls hears and sees, understands, and never fails to help. The light that ever burns before the Eucharistic Presence beckons gently, yet constantly and firmly, to all to approach with courage and confidence, repeating figuratively the invitation once uttered so lovingly by humanity's truest Friend: "Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mt. XI, 28). Watch the frequency with which the doors of churches swing open and shut in truly Catholic centers, and you will realize that myriads of souls must find Christ as ready to hear, heal, and comfort as He

was in those days when He walked over the hills of Judea and Galilee.

“Emmanuel—God with us”, is the magnet which in the last sixty years has attracted with increasing force and frequency the millions of faithful who participate with enthusiasm in Eucharistic Congresses. No phenomenon in the devotional life of the Church has grown with greater rapidity and intensity than have these Congresses since their inception in Lyons, France, June 21, 1881. Since that date the International Congresses alone have practically encircled the globe, creating in the important centers of the world, religious interest and fervour comparable to the holy zeal aroused by the crusades in the middle ages. With an equally intense spirit of faith and sacrifice Eucharistic Congresses have been organized for nations, provinces, and dioceses, followed by far-reaching results for the spiritual, moral, and social betterment of the respective areas.

Faith in “Emmanuel—God with us” dominates the entire program of these Eucharistic Congresses. In fact these Congresses are precisely an eloquent public profession of that faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. This faith inspires and gives significance to the imposing functions of these Congresses, it suggests the keynote for the flow of sacred eloquence, it prompts acts of spiritual zeal, and in many instances it means the return to religious living after years of neglect or indifference. Thus inspired by the vision of Christ, the “Emmanuel, God with us”, a Eucharistic Congress becomes the occasion for a deep religious revival in the best sense of the word and the source of benediction to all who are touched ever so remotely by its spirit. Such is the blessing that, we

pray hopefully, may emanate from the Eighth National Eucharistic Congress to be held shortly here in New Orleans. May light, life, and strength of will descend upon the nation, our governing authorities, our fellow citizens, to the end that our steps may move in righteousness towards peace, safety, and prosperity under the unfailing guidance of "Emmanuel—God with us". May the Congress be the means of directing our attention to the tabernacle, where Christ rules in simple majesty, in meekness and lowliness, yet with sovereign power and inexhaustible mercy. To Him may our hearts be drawn in love, in devotion, in confidence, and in undying loyalty.

VICTIM AND HIGH PRIEST ETERNAL

Address delivered on October 2, 1938

“I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts: And I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: For my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. I, 10-11).

“In every place there is sacrifice”. These words may be interpreted as a record of fact and as a prophecy. As a record of fact they may be referred to the relative universality of sacrifice in the ancient forms of religious worship. This would seem an invariable canon of the natural law, written in the heart of man as a reflex of the divine law which regulates the order of the universe, prompting man to express through some form of sacrifice his highest religious sentiments and obligations.

Taken as a prophecy the text from Malachy—“In every place there is sacrifice”—certainly foreshadowed by four hundred years the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist, more generally known as the Mass, which today is offered literally “in every place, from the rising of the sun even to the going down”. Such is the cycle of Holy Masses that are celebrated throughout the world that scarcely a minute elapses in which we cannot visualize a priest actually ascending an altar in some corner of the earth to offer to the Lord of hosts in the Eucharistic sacrifice that “clean oblation”, the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world.

Sacrifice is of the very essence of true religion; it is the supreme expression of man's recognition of God's existence and of His absolute dominion over the universe; it is the external expression of man's consciousness that from God's infinite goodness all blessings flow; it is the outward manifestation of the love supreme which man owes to God, the sovereign good; it is our tribute of submission and fealty to the eternal Lawgiver and Ruler of the universe; it is an act of atonement whereby sinful man acknowledges his guilt, strives to appease divine justice and, as far as he may, make honorable amends to the injured majesty of God; it is a great social act, in which the participants solemnly pay their homage in recognition of the blessings which God bestows on them not only individually but also as a social organism—a community, a congregation, a city, a nation; in fine, sacrifice is an act, lawfully instituted, in which man acknowledges the sovereign dominion of God by substituting for himself a substantial sensible object and offering it to God through its real or morally equivalent destruction or change.

In the Old Law sacrifice makes its appearance at the very dawn of creation. Abel and Cain, sons of Adam and Eve, felt the urge to thank God for His blessings. Abel, a shepherd, "offered of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat"; Cain, a husbandman, "offered, of the fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord". The sacrifice of Abel found acceptance before the Lord; not so the sacrifice of Cain. Wherefore Cain slew Abel in a rage of jealousy and brought upon the human race the first stain of blood.

When the waters of the flood had receded Noe offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving and as a reward

he received the divine promise, sealed in the sign of the "bow in the clouds", that "there shall no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh". Historic and prophetic was the sacrifice offered in bread and wine by Melchisedech, the Priest-King, after the battle of the kings in the valley of Save and the rescue of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. That sacrifice became the type for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the New Law, even as the priesthood of Melchisedech, styled by St. Paul "the king of justice" and "the king of peace", became the figure of the eternal priesthood of Christ: "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent"; sings the royal psalmist "Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. CIX, 4: Hebr. VII).

Although the offering of sacrifice can be traced through the entire patriarchal period of the Old Testament, Melchisedech, the king without a genealogy, is the only person dignified with the title of priest until the institution of the priesthood of Aaron and the Tribe of Levi. That institution marks the beginning of the parallel development of the relationship between sacrifice and priesthood. It ordained that priests alone were authorized to prepare the victims for sacrifice, to keep ever burning the fire on the altar for burnt offerings, and not to allow to be extinguished the lamps of the golden candlestick that stood sentinel in the holy place. Only the high priest was permitted to enter the inner sanctuary or holy of holies, and that but once a year, namely on the day of expiation when he offered sacrifice for the sins of the whole people.

Sacrifices under the Old Law were many and varied. There were sacrifices of animals, of fruits, and of liquids. There were holocausts, in which the

whole victim was burned; sin offerings, of which a part was burned and a part given to the priests for their use; peace or thank offerings, of which a third part was returned to the one making the offering. According to the end or purpose of the act, there were sacrifices of pure devotion and worship, sacrifices of propitiation for sin, and gifts of impetration and thanksgiving also called peace offerings.

While the sacrificial ritual of the Old Testament was minutely outlined to the finest detail and had the appearance of a permanent institution, its sacrifices were but transitory prophesies or figures of the one great, all embracing sacrifice to be offered by the Messiah, Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world. The sacrifices of the Old Law had no efficacy except in relation to and in anticipation of the Sacrifice of the God-man. They represented grace and holiness, but could not communicate it; they disposed the sinner to repent and amend, but of themselves his sacrifices could impart no pardoning grace. In the words of St. Paul writing to the Hebrews: "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things; by the selfsame sacrifices which they offer continually every year, can never make the comers thereunto perfect—for it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away" (Hebr. X, 1-4).

After summarizing the ritual of sacrifice in the Old Law, especially the ceremonious entry of the high priest into the holy of holies, for the sacrifice of expiation, the great apostle writes again to the Hebrews: "But Christ, being come an high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, that is, not of this creation: neither by the blood of goats or of

calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And therefore he is the mediator of the new testament: that by means of his death, for the redemption of those transgressions, which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebr. IX, 11-15).

In the New Law then there is but one sacrifice in blood, the Sacrifice on the Cross in the Blood of the Saviour, "which was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. XIII, 8). In that sacrifice Jesus Christ was both High Priest and Victim. He was offered because He freely willed it. St. John the Baptist had pointed Him out: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. I, 29). In the Garden of Gethsemani the Saviour prayed: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done" (Mt. XXVI, 42). With His dying breath on the Cross He cried with a loud voice: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. XXIII, 46). St. Paul expresses the thought beautifully, when he exhorts the Hebrews to patience and constancy in bearing their crosses: "Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebr. XII, 1-2). All of which indicates that in His

death upon the Cross, Christ was at one and the same time the Victim offered in sacrifice for sin and the officiating High Priest: "Being consummated, he became, to all that obey him, the cause of eternal salvation. Called by God a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech" (Hebr. V, 9-10).

The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross stands out as the one sacrifice of the New Law, an infinitely perfect and complete act of homage offered to God, an act of expiation which satisfied all the demands of divine justice for the sins of all men, an inexhaustible source of merit, a sublime prayer arising out of the bleeding, broken Heart of the God-man to plead effectively for all the graces of which to the end of time the children of men may stand in need. In its manner, as involving the actual death of Christ, it can never again be repeated, for the risen glorified Christ can die no more: "Christ Jesus that died, yea that is risen again; who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. VIII, 34).

But the religion which Christ instituted nevertheless had need of an act of worship, corresponding in perfection to the supreme perfection of that religion; it had need of an act of prayer, which finds supreme expression in sacrifice; it had need of an external act, that would be expressive of the submission of man to the sovereign dominion of God; it had need of a means of perpetuating in some appreciable sensible form the Passion and Death of Christ; it had need of an external instrument whereby the merits of Christ's death upon the Cross, the fruits of the Redemption, can be forever applied to the souls of men.

This need Christ provided most lovingly in the

Holy Eucharist through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. That sacrifice Christ instituted on the eve of His death, as the words uttered at the Last Supper clearly demonstrate: "This is my body, which is given for you" (Lk. XXII, 19). And again: "This is the chalice, of the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you" (Lk. XXII, 20), or, as St. Matthew records the words of the Saviour: "This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Mt. XXVI, 28). That these words referred not only to the actual death of Christ but to the continued commemoration of His death, is clear from the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come" (I Cor. XI, 26).

In the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass we have therefore the daily and the only proper realization of the prophecy of Malachy: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation". That oblation is the body and blood of Christ, the same that was offered on the Cross; that oblation is offered by Christ Himself, the High Priest Eternal according to the order of Melchisedech, functioning through the priests of His own institution, whom He deigned to associate with Himself and empower in the solemn words: "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Lk. XXII, 19). The Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass is the daily "shewing forth of the death of Christ", to remind us of His infinite love: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn.

XV, 13). The Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass is the fulfillment of the prophesy of Christ made at the well of Jacob: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore him" (Jn. IV, 23). These words would imply that the noblest kind of adoration is not the sacrifice that was confined to Mount Garizin among the Samaritans, nor the sacrifices offered in Jerusalem, but a new sacrifice that can be offered "in every place, from the rising of the sun even to the going down", the clean oblation foretold by Malachy, the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Saviour Himself after the mystical manner of the Mass, the sacrifice which commemorates the death of Christ in the separate consecration of the bread and wine: "This do ye . . . for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come" (I Cor. XI, 24).

Wonder not that the Church, which has received this priceless heritage from Christ through the Apostles, has never wanted for valiant exponents and defenders of the Eucharistic Sacrifice from the earliest days. Wonder not that the Church has taken pains to set this priceless jewel of the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the most dignified and inspiring setting of her liturgy with its artistically designed vestments, elaborate sanctuary adornment, uplifting music, and the accurately defined and measured movement of her ministers. Wonder not that the faithful find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass the most gratifying source of spiritual satisfaction, the most refreshing fountain of divine grace and benediction. Wonder not that kings and statesmen,

scholars and artists, professional men and captains of industry find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass no less spiritual delight than do the faithful of the more modest walks of life. The Mass is everybody's opportunity to lay at the feet of the all good, all merciful God the longing for light, guidance, and grace through the merits of the Crucified Saviour. The Mass is the antidote to materialism that has robbed humanity of peace and dulled its sense of justice, the bulwark against communism that threatens to destroy the social order, the remedy against atheism that in defiance of reason and human experience would dethrone the very God and deprive man of his crown as king of creation. The Mass is the infallible means of restoring religion, spirituality, and charity to a world that is gradually sinking back into the darkness of paganism and the night of despair. Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass may the name of the Lord of hosts become truly great among the Gentiles, the nations of the earth, and may it become effectively to all men the source of that true life that Christ came to give us more abundantly: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (Jn. X, 10).

BREAD OF LIFE—BOND OF UNITY

Address Delivered on October 9, 1938

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world” (Jn. VI, 51-52).

There is no more convincing demonstration of the value which God sets upon the human soul than the Mystery of the Incarnation. In creation God elevated and dignified man’s soul by sealing it with His own image and likeness and bestowing on it the gift of immortality. In the Incarnation God decrees through love to save that soul, fallen from grace, by sending His only-begotten Son into the world to endure the shame of the Cross and suffer the pangs of death: “For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting” (Jn. III, 16).

The Incarnation was planned in the loving providence of God to restore to the human soul the heritage of the supernatural life, lost through sin, and to open again for it the gates of eternal happiness: “I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly” (Jn. X, 10); “To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely” (Apoc. XXI, 6). That life was merited through death, the death of Christ upon the Cross. It is communicated through baptism, by which the soul is incorporated in Christ, “The Way, the Truth, and the Life”; made a member of the Mystical Body of Christ: “For as the body,” in the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “is one, and hath many

members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also *is* Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink" (I Cor. XII, 12-13).

The marvel is, and this is another most eloquent proof of the value which God sets upon the human soul, that for the preservation and nourishment of its supernatural life no food found in the vast expanse of creation or even in the highest heavens could suffice, short of the flesh and blood of the Incarnate God, the Saviour Himself. Pagan mythology discoursed and poetized about ambrosia and nectar, the sustaining meat and drink of their imaginary deities; the true God institutes in the Eucharist a food whereby His own flesh and blood become the sustaining principle of human souls. "I am the living bread", the Saviour proclaims to His startled hearers at the Synagogue of Capharnaum in that crucial discourse that marked the parting of the ways for so many, even among His disciples, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world" (Jn. VI, 41-52). What a challenge this, to those who today question the very existence of the soul and deny to man the distinction of being made but a little less than the angels, crowned with glory and honor, and set over the works of God's hands! (Ps. VIII, 6). What a glorious incentive to us all to permit the light of faith to flood our souls, to allow the fires of divine charity to mellow our hearts, and to revel in the knowledge that, in the words of our American poet:

“Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul”. *

For the man of deep religious faith and genuine love of God there is no higher ideal, no more gratifying realization than union with the infinite object of his love. That union can be realized in its perfection only in the entrancing possession of God and of the joy that no man shall take from us. But in the Holy Eucharist Jesus Christ has made it possible for mortal man to be united with Him even here on earth and in a manner that transcends our fondest hopes. Through Holy Communion there is effected an immanence, whereby the bonds forged between Christ and the soul in the regeneration of baptism are strengthened and perfected: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him” (Jn. VI, 57). St. Augustine, however, cautions us, that this immanence or assimilation does not result from a change of the body of Christ into ourselves but in the transformation of ourselves into the body of Christ, making us spiritually, constantly more conformable to Christ. And thus the communicant can say in truth with the great St. Paul: “I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. II, 20).

This abiding of the soul in Christ and of Christ in the soul implies the communication of the principle of life to the soul by Christ: “He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me” (Jn. VI, 58). Thus is realized that intimate participation of the soul in the life of Christ, which He illustrated under

* A Psalm of Life—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

the parable of the vine and the branches: "I am the vine; you are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (Jn. XV, 5).

It is clear that He whose essence is life cannot enter a soul properly disposed without communicating life—and communicating it abundantly. With that life comes vigour, sustaining strength, and power of resistance against the forces and ills that menace the spiritual life. It is related in the Book of Kings that Elias the prophet, fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel, was fed in the desert on bread and water by an angel, and that he "walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God, Horeb" (3 K. XIX, 8). Even so will the Christian soul, nourished of the Eucharistic bread, the body and blood of the Saviour, receive strength and support in its journey through the wilderness of this world to the Mountain of God, its ultimate destination, the heavenly Jerusalem.

One of the most beautiful legacies bequeathed to us by Jesus Christ and elaborated with much care and insistence by St. Paul is the doctrine of the Mystical Body. According to this doctrine the Church instituted by Christ is not just another religious system or organization but a living, active organism, having, like the human body, many members with diversified functions and capacities. This living organism St. Paul in fact repeatedly compares to the human body: "Being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part" (Eph. IV, 16). The Head of this organism or body, which we call mystical to distinguish it from

the historic or natural body of Christ, is Christ Himself. It is He who animates it, invigorates it, directs its operations, and gives to each member the power to function according to its proper end and capacity. In the words of St. Paul to the Colossians: "He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church" (Col. I, 18); and to the Ephesians: "Doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, *even* Christ: from whom the whole body . . . maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity" (Eph. IV, 15-16).

As the Eucharist is the principle of supernatural life and the bond of unity between Christ and individual souls, so it becomes by the same token the principle of life and bond of unity between Christ the Head and His Mystical Body, namely the Church or the aggregation of members who partake of the Eucharistic body. This thought St. Paul again brings out clearly, when he reminds the faithful of Corinth: "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (I Cor. X, 16-17).

If we keep in mind this spiritual or mystical unity, we can understand why among the early christians the Eucharistic rite was associated with the *agape* or love feast. The breaking of bread and communion, St. Thomas Aquinas says, "signifies the unity of the Church to which men are aggregated by this sacrament" (S. Th. III, Q. 73, Art. 4). We can also understand how the altar becomes symbolic of Christ, and all its adornments become symbolic of the faithful with whom Christ enfolds Himself as

with precious garments (Ord. of Subdeacons). We can also appreciate the devotional sense of spiritual writers who see symbols of the same unity in the coalescence of many grains of wheat to make the bread, and in the commingling of the juice of many individual grapes to make the wine, used in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The collective offering by the faithful of bread and wine and other gifts, and the passing from the officiating priest to the members of the congregation of the so-called "symbol of peace", once practiced in the Church, are additional reminders that the Eucharist is the great unifying, life-giving bond that draws together the members of the Mystical Body, which is the Church, and constitutes it an organism whose principle of life, love, and action is Christ Jesus.

If we would see an exemplification of the unifying power and influence of the Eucharist, then let us take our stand at the Banquet Table where the faithful partake of this Bread of Life. There mingling promiscuously, as scarcely anywhere else, are rich and poor, prince and peasant, the learned and the unlettered, business men and shopworkers, social leaders and mill-hands, bankers and innkeepers. In a word, all classes, grades, and shades of human society, who have faith in Christ and a desire for kinship with Him, meet there before the altar and know that a welcome awaits them at His festive board. To all He calls out from the very depths of His loving Heart: "Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mt. XI, 28).

Within another week there will be given in the City of New Orleans another demonstration of the unifying power of the Holy Eucharist. The Eighth National Eucharistic Congress will be held during

the week following October 16 amidst functions and scenes of solemn splendour, as worthy of the object of the faith of the Church as human ingenuity, skill, and resources can produce. In that Congress will participate, under the leadership of His Eminence George Cardinal Mundelein, distinguished Archbishop of Chicago, who will act as special Legate and Representative of the Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, prelates, priests, religious, and laity from every state in the Union and from a number of foreign countries.

The Congress will be a demonstration of the unity of faith among Catholics, but especially of their faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist; it will demonstrate unity of worship in the gathering of all around a common altar to render supreme homage to the Sovereign God; it will demonstrate unity of charity, bringing together all classes of human society, all states of life, and all ages at the communion rails of the churches in the city, aye, even throughout the nation—for Sunday, October 16th, has been proclaimed National Communion Sunday; it will demonstrate unity of discipline and government, for all will be united under the Vicar of Christ through his personal Legate; it will demonstrate unity of aspiration, for all will be at one on the goal set for every soul redeemed by the blood of Christ, namely union with God in this life through grace and in the life to come through the vision beatific. In this unity we pray all may participate who are of good will and animated by the spirit in which Christ uttered His parting prayer over His apostles to the heavenly Father: "Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth. As thou has sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the

world. And for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn. XVII, 17-21). Of this unity the world never had greater need than in this hour, when nation is rising against nation, coalition against coalition, class against class, when all the horrors of a great world strife seem imminent. So let us turn towards the Prince of Peace, really, truly and substantially present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, praying to Him and with Him: "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me".

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