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Short Instructions on the Mass

For Children



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EDITOR'S NOTE.

The idea of these twenty-eight instructions is to take those incidents of the Mass which are most easily OBSERVABLE by children, and to use them as vehicles for some instruction. As they stand, the instructions are arranged to be given by the priest at Mass itself, one every Sunday, before Mass begins or at the Gospel; and this is probably the best way; but doubtless they will also be found useful and suggestive to those who have to instruct in other ways and at other times.

F. H. D.

July 10, 1922.



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Short Instructions on the Mass

1.—The Sign of the Cross.

Every Sunday I am going to tell you about something that is done in the Mass, so that you will be able to watch out for it, and understand better what is going on, and join yourselves better to it. So we'll begin to-day with the very first thing you do, at the very beginning of the Mass. You do it at the same time as the priest and the server, and it shows you are really going to take part in that Mass. What is it you do?

You make the Sign of the Cross.

Try now, just for a minute, to think why you do it, and what it means.

As you make the Sign you say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

That means, *in Their name, or for Their sake*, you are going to do this good action of hearing Mass. Everything you do in your lives must be done as for God; even quite little things like washing and dressing and having meals. You should try and remember to offer them to God, and do them well for His sake. A good way to

do it would be just to make a Sign of the Cross. In old days people used to do that much more often. For instance, when they lighted a candle they always made a Sign of the Cross, because the flame reminded them of the Light of the world, Christ Our Lord. When they got out of bed in the morning they made a Sign of the Cross, and offered God all their day. As they went out of the house to go to work they made the sign. When they wrote letters they put a Cross at the beginning and the end. And they made a Sign of the Cross last thing before getting into bed; and at many other times, too. It is a good thing to do, and very pleasing to Our Lord, because it is His Cross you are making over yourself.

But if you do it before unimportant things like meals, *of course* you must do it before Mass, because hearing Mass is the biggest, most important thing you do in the week, the thing most pleasing to God you *can* do. If you start with a good Sign of the Cross, God will help you to hear Mass well; that is, with real love in your hearts for Our Lord, and the thought of pleasing Him.

You must make the Sign slowly and carefully, thinking what it means, for it is like *a signal to Our Lord* that you are on His side, in the big game of life. When Our Lady appeared in the grotto at Lourdes to the little girl Bernadette,

she taught her how to make the Sign of the Cross very reverently and carefully, and Bernadette always remembered what Our Lady had said. Afterwards people who saw Bernadette make the Sign of the Cross never forgot it, for she did it with so much love and meaning. Try and copy Bernadette in this, especially at Mass.

2.—The Confiteor.

Last Sunday I talked to you about the Sign of the Cross. Remember always to make it specially well at the beginning of Mass. Make up your minds that all your lives, even when you are grown up, you will do it well; it is a signal to Our Lord, and He never fails to see it.

After the Priest has made the Sign of the Cross, and said through a Psalm, he bows down and says something, and then the Server bows and says it, too. What is it they say? And why do they bow down?

It is the Confiteor, which means the "I confess." The Priest says it because he is just going to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and he must have a pure heart to do that. Why does the Server say it? *For you.* Because you are going really to take part in the Mass, and you can only do that if you have got rid of your sins by being sorry for them, confessing them, and getting God to forgive them. In your heart you join with the Server in what he is saying so that your soul

may be made quite pure, before the real part of the Mass begins.

Besides confessing to Almighty God and asking for forgiveness, the Server (and you) confess to Our Lady and the Saints, and to the Priest; because it is a good thing to own up to other people when you have done wrong; it shows you are really ashamed of yourself and really sorry. And at the end you say: "Pray to the Lord Our God for me."

The priest *bows down* because that is a sign of being *humble*—that is, owning you are nothing, and God is everything, and that you are ashamed of being a sinner, and adore God, who is *all good*.

At the words "through my fault" we strike our breast three times. That reminds us that sins deserve a punishment. Our Lord was beaten with scourges. Was it for sins? Yes. Not for His own, because *He had none*. It was for *ours*, to save us from punishment. So when we strike our breast it is another sign that we are really and truly sorry.

Saying the Confiteor is like the publican in Our Lord's story, who went up into the temple to pray, and would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast and said: "O God be merciful to me a sinner."

So remember always to join in the Confiteor with all your heart.

3.—“By the Merits of the Saints Whose Relics are Here.”

After the Confiteor the priest walks up the steps to the Altar, and when he gets to the Altar you'll notice that the first thing he does is to bow down and kiss it. In fact, if you notice you will see that the priest kisses the Altar several times during the Mass. That is because in the middle of the Altar there is a square stone called the Altar-stone. It is specially consecrated by the Bishop, and it *is* the Altar really, because you must always have a consecrated Altar-stone to say Mass on. If a priest has to say Mass in all sorts of different places (like the priests who said Mass for the soldiers in the war), he must have a little thin Altar-stone that he can carry about.

Of all the bricks and stones in the Church, the Altar-stone is the chief. So it stands for Christ Our Lord, because He said He was the stone which the builders rejected, and which God had made the head of the corner. And the priest kisses the Altar-stone because it stands for Christ Our Lord. There's one day in the year when you can come up and kiss the stone, too, and that is Good Friday, after the Altar is stripped in the morning.

While the priest kisses the Altar this time he says a little prayer like this: “We beseech thee, O Lord by the merits of thy Saints, whose relics are here, and of all thy Saints, that Thou wouldst

vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins." Inside the Altar-stone there are always some real relics of the Saints; a little piece of their bones or something like that. The Bishop puts them in when he consecrates the stone. Of course, the *souls* of the Saints are in Heaven, but the Church honors and treasures even the relics of their bodies, because their bodies were part of them on earth, and they will be part of them again in the glorious resurrection of the body.

So when you see the priest go up and kiss the Altar, you can remember the Saints, whose relics are here in *this* Altar. We don't even know who they are; but most of the relics that are put in Altar-stones come from the Roman catacombs, which are full of the graves of the early martyrs. So probably our relics belong to some man or woman, or perhaps a child even, who refused to give up Christ and was beheaded or thrown to the wild beasts in the big open-air theatre called the Coliseum at Rome. After the show was over and all the people gone, the friends of the martyrs would come and gather up the poor broken bodies that had gone through so much, and bury them safely in the catacombs, and that's how we come to have their relics in our Altar-stone to offer the sacrifice of the Mass on.

But as for their souls, of course, they've been safe and happy in heaven with Our Lord all these hundreds of years, and He can't say no when they

ask Him anything; so that's why we ask them to pray for us that we may hear Mass well.

4.—The Introit.

After the priest has kissed the middle of the Altar, where the Saints' relics are, and which I told you about last Sunday, he goes to the right side of the Altar where the Book is, and reads a short passage from it. The big Book is called the Missal, and this first thing the priest reads is called the Introit. In old days it was generally a whole Psalm; now it is a few verses from the Psalms, with sometimes a verse or two from some other part of Holy Scripture.

You remember, the Psalms are by the Holy King, David. David was one of the ancestors of Our Lady; that is why Our Lord is called "the Son of David." God revealed to David many things about Our Lord, and he wrote these down in a collection of wonderful songs and hymns called the Psalms.

The priest has already said a Psalm with the server, while he stood at the bottom of the sanctuary steps; and he says some more verses from the Psalms later on—just before the Gospel, and also while he washes his hands. So, you see, King David's beautiful words of prayer and praise come into the Mass quite a lot. Isn't it wonderful to remember that Our Lord Himself used to read these words when He lived on earth;

and that He loved them and prayed to His Father in them, and spoke of them to His disciples? Perhaps He learnt them by heart, when He was a little boy like you, and said them over to Our Lady. So we cannot think too highly of the Psalms or love them enough. And in all the world no one ever wrote songs so full of joy!

So while the priest reads the Introit, you can think how it is a little bit of the worship given to Our Lord by the great King David, though as yet Our Lord had not been born on earth and David only had the *promise* that He should be born. So it is right that now, as we kneel expecting that Our Lord will soon come on the Altar, we should pray in the words of King David.

5.—Kyrie Eleison.

What language is the Mass in?

Latin, you say. Yes, most of it. But there are some words of it in two other languages, Greek and Hebrew. If you listen carefully you will hear the priest say them, and if you listen now to what I am going to tell you, you will find out what they mean. Then you will be able to say you can understand words in three languages besides your own!

But first I want to tell you something about those three languages. They are called "dead languages," because no one talks them, now, in ordinary life, the same as we talk English, and

people in France talk French. But once, they were spoken by the people of the countries they belong to. They were all spoken in Palestine when our Lord lived there. And when Pilate wanted to write up, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" over our Lord, as He hung on the Cross, he wrote it in those very three languages—Latin, Greek and Hebrew. So, now, when the sacrifice of Calvary is renewed in the Mass, again those three languages are used. They have become holy languages, and God no longer allows ordinary people to put them to the common use of daily talk.

After the Introit the priest goes to the middle of the Altar and says "Kyrie Eleison," and the server answers the same words, and then the priest says it again, and the server answers "Christe eleison," and so they go on till they have said the words nine times. These words are in Greek. What do they mean? "Kyrie eleison" means, "Lord, have mercy," and "Christe eleison" means, "Christ, have mercy." They have been said in the Mass, like that, for nearly 1,500 years. We know that, because there is an account, in very ancient books, of a Council held by the bishops in France, 500 years after our Lord lived, and the holy bishop (Saint Cæsarius of Arles) who was at the head of it, explained how in Rome and in the Churches of the East, they said "Kyrie eleison" over several times, "with much love and

compunction," and so he wished his Churches to do the same. So when you hear those Greek words, try to say them in your hearts with "love and compunction" (that means real sorrow for your sins) and make "Lord, have mercy" a real prayer for mercy for yourselves, and for everybody else, because some people need mercy more than you do.

6.—Gloria In Excelsis.

After the priest has said the "Kyrie eleison," he stays in the middle of the altar and says the "Gloria in excelsis," that is, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will. You remember who it was that first said these joyful words.

It was the angels on the hills outside Bethlehem, as they appeared with a wonderful, shining light in the cold, grey dawn, and announced to the shepherds that our Lord had just been born. So the priest says that, and a lot more, too, for the Church's song of joy and praise to Christ our Lord. "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory," and so on. It's a very *joyful* hymn, and so it is missed out in Lent and Advent, when the priest wears the purple vestments, because those are times of penance. But the "Kyrie eleison" is always said.

7.—Dominus Vobiscum.

Last time we got to the *Kyrie eleison* and *Gloria*, which the priest says to our Lord; and then he kisses the altar and turns right round, and opening his hands out, he says something to you. It is right that he should turn from speaking to our Lord and speak to you, because our Lord is the Head, and you are His Body. The words the priest says are "Dominus vobiscum," and they mean, "the Lord be with you." He says them to you seven times during Mass. Do you answer anything? Yes—at least, the server answers for you, aloud, and you answer in your hearts. The answer is, "And with thy spirit." So don't forget to answer every time you hear "Dominus vobiscum." Think, if someone said "good-bye" to you, you wouldn't keep silent and answer nothing: that would seem very rude and ungracious. Well, "good-bye" means "God be with you" (almost the same as "Dominus vobiscum") and just as you would answer "good-bye" to your friend, so, now, answer the priest, and really wish him the joy that the Lord may be "with his spirit."

You remember I told you that the Altar-stone stands for Our Lord. That's why the priest kisses it before he turns round and says *Dominus vobiscum* to you. It's like passing on Our Lord's spirit to you. "May the Lord be with you," he says, because so long as you are in a state of grace,

really you are part of Our Lord—one body in Jesus Christ, as the catechism says. That's why it's so easy for a Catholic to be good, if he wants to be; because he's part of Our Lord and has Our Lord's life in him. Think of that when you hear the priest say *Dominus vobiscum*—the Lord be with you.

8.—Collect and Lesson.

The priest stands at the right hand side of the altar, and reads for some time out of the Missal. Do you know what he is reading? First, two or three prayers, called "collects," and then the Lesson, and then a Psalm. While he says the collects he holds his hands up like this, but for the other things he rests his hands on the book.

"Collect" means a prayer for everybody. That is why, before he begins the prayer, the priest says "*Oremus*," which means, "let us pray." So don't forget to obey, by lifting up your hearts in prayer.

All those collects are said to *God* (the great God, the one God in three Persons), and they always end "Through our Lord Jesus Christ," because He told us to pray in His name.

At the end of each collect the server says "Amen," and he says it for you. In old days all the people said "Amen."

Do you remember I told you there were three languages used in the Mass? Well, this is the

third—Hebrew. “Amen” is a Hebrew word which means “Really and truly,” “So let it be,” “I agree.” So when you say “Amen,” it means you are making the prayer yours, and asking God to count it as if you had said it.

After these collects, and without moving from that side of the altar, the priest reads the Lesson. It may be a bit of the Old Testament, or some words from St. Paul or St. Peter or one of the other Apostles who wrote, inspired by God. There is a lot about our Lord in the Old Testament, though He had not been born yet. It is called prophecy, and the men who wrote it knew it because God revealed it to them. Our Lord used to read the Old Testament and find all the bits about Himself, and how He should be crucified. One day, after He was risen, He saw two of His disciples walking sadly along the road, and talking about how He, their Master, had been killed. So He joined them, without letting them know it was He, and beginning at Moses and the prophets He showed them in all the Scriptures, the things about Himself. That made them understand how it was really God’s purpose that Our Lord should be crucified to save us, and that He should rise again from the dead.

Before Our Lord left those two disciples, He sat down at the table with them, and broke bread and blessed it, and then they knew Him. So, now, in the Mass we hear first the Scriptures

about Our Lord, and then He is known to us in the breaking of bread, Holy Communion.

9.—The Changing of the Missal.

After all the things I was telling you last time, we come next to the Gospel. Up to now the Missal has been on the right side of the Altar, but when it is time for the Gospel you see the server take the book and carry it across to the left-hand side. That is meant to remind us of the difference that Our Lord's coming made. You see, all the things that happened before Our Lord came—especially the things that happened amongst God's chosen people, the Jews—were simply a preparation for His coming. We call that the Old Law; and when Christ Our Lord came the Old Law came to an end, and He made a fresh start. That is why the Missal is changed across when we come to the Gospel, because the Gospel tells us about Our Lord's life on earth.

Still, the Old Law was the true religion in those days; and Our Lord did not do away with it altogether, but He kept what He wanted to keep and used it in His own Kingdom. For instance, the old Jewish sacrifices, the oxen and lambs that were killed and offered up—we don't have those any more; the sacrifice of Our Lord on the cross did away with all those; but we *do* have our own sacrifice of the Mass, which is one and the same sacrifice with that of the cross.

Well, in a way, all this first part of the Mass up to the gospel comes down from those times before Our Lord. You know the first Christians were mostly Jews. Before they were Christians they used to meet together on the Sabbath day for their service in the synagogue or chapel, where they sang the Psalms and read the Holy Scriptures. And when they became Christians they didn't stop doing that. They didn't go to the synagogue, indeed, because the other Jews wouldn't have them; but they met together on Sunday and had their own service, like they had in the synagogue, the Psalms and Scriptures; and then they ended up with Mass and communion, and did what Our Lord did at the Last Supper. So the first part of our Mass now, when the book is on the right side of the Altar, corresponds to the Jewish service before Our Lord's time; and when we come to the Gospel, the book is changed across to mark the difference.

10.—The Gospel.

When the time comes the server takes the Missal to the other side of the Altar, for the Gospel and you all stand up. Why?

You stand up so as to do honor to the Gospel. The Gospel is the most precious part of the whole Bible, because it tells of the life, death and resurrection of Our Blessed Lord. He is our Divine King, so we stand to hear about Him just as people

would stand to hear a proclamation from the President of the United States read out, and also we stand to show we are all *ready* to do what He tells us.

But before the priest reads the Gospel, he *does* something, and so does the server, and so do you—or you *ought* to. He makes a little cross with his thumb on his forehead and one on his lips and one on his breast. (Do it, now, and then I will tell you what it means).

It is a prayer that the Holy words of the Gospel may be, first, *in your mind*. That is why you make the cross on your foreheads. That you may *know* about Our Lord, and understand all the Gospel teaches, and believe it, and do as it says, and never forget about Our Lord.

The cross on your lips means that you must be able to speak the words of the Gospel. “Gospel” means “good news”; and who ever heard of someone knowing a bit of good news and not *telling* it! When you get older you will have plenty of chances of telling people the good news about Our Lord and the Catholic Church; but even as children you can, too.

The cross on your breast means the life of Christ in your heart. If it is there it will mean that you love Him. If you love Him you will not be able to love anything wrong or mean or low or selfish. If you love Him you will keep His words and try to please Him. If you love

Him you will really want to receive Him in Holy Communion very often.

So when you see the Missal put on the Gospel side of the Altar stand up quick to do honor to the royal message and to show you are ready to carry it out and make those three little crosses, letting each be a *real prayer*.

11.—The Creed.

When the priest turns back to the Altar after reading out the notices and the Epistle and Gospel in English, he stands in the middle and recites something, while you stand, too. What he is saying is called the *Credo*. *Credo* is a Latin word which means, "I believe." Most of you can say the shorter creed, anyhow; and the one the priest says at Mass, is much the same. You know that the creed tells about all we believe, as Catholics. When the priest stands and says the creed, even if you do not say through the words to yourselves, too, you should say to Our Lord: "Lord, I believe all that, that the priest is saying. I'm quite, quite sure about it. Please give me grace always to believe it, and never to forget about it. I am glad I believe it. I would rather die than say I did not believe it. I know it is true, because the Catholic Church says it is and the Catholic Church is Your Own Church that you made."

You have all heard of Martyrs. Well, the

Martyrs all died simply because they *would* go on believing in the creed, and would not say they did not believe, when cruel men told them to. Some of them had to suffer awful tortures; and when they were in such pain that you would have thought no one could bear it, the cruel men used to say, "Now, if you will give up believing in your creed we will let you go and not hurt you any more." But the Martyrs would clench their teeth and think of Christ on the cross, and say "no, no—I *believe*." Then they would be tortured some more, and at last put to death. Of course, it meant they went straight to Heaven and Our Lord received them with joy, and said "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Doesn't it make you feel proud to think you can stand up and say you believe in the same creed, and would die for it, too, if you had to? There were lots of children martyrs, you know.

And when, in the middle, you bow your knee, that is because the Creed tells of Jesus being born, and you bow your knee to worship Him—for if He had not been born a little baby on earth, there would be no creed and no martyrs and no Catholic Church, and no hope of heaven in the life to come.

12.—The Offertory.

Last Sunday I talked to you about the creed. When the creed is finished you all sit down.

Perhaps some of you think this is a nice quiet time when you can sit comfortably back in your benches, and think of all sorts of things and not attend any more, until the ringing of the bell calls you back to attention, and you have to kneel down.

Now, of course, that is quite wrong. Really, the more important part of the Mass is just beginning, and you ought to have your eyes fixed on the altar to see what the priest is doing, and join with him, in your hearts.

If you look, you will see that he now uncovers the chalice, and takes up in his hands a kind of little plate, called the paten. On this is the host. But, of course, it is not Our Lord's body yet; it is still only bread because the consecration has not yet taken place.

Watch the priest. You will see he holds up the paten with the host on it. Presently that little white host is going to be changed into the Body of Our Lord, and become *a sacrifice*. So now the priest holds it up and offers it to God; and he prays a special little prayer in which he says he is offering it for his own sins and failings; for all those present; and for all faithful Christians, living and dead. So, you see, he is offering it *for you children*. Don't you think you ought to be attending, and joining your hearts in that offering?

The priest offers up that host asking that it

may be a way of getting health for life everlasting; that means, that you may have strong, happy souls for ever and ever, and live in Heaven full of joy. What a big thing to ask! *For ever and ever* is such a long time that no one can understand it. But it is not too big a thing for Jesus to ask for us, and it is He who is going to ask it, when He comes, Himself, on the altar, presently.

So now, while the priest offers up the host, ask God the Father to let you share in the wonderful thing it is going to get for all faithful Christians—"health for life everlasting."

13.—The Wine and Water.

If you are watching the altar, as I told you last Sunday that you ought to do, you will notice that after the priest has offered up the Host, he takes the chalice in his hands and goes to the side of the altar, where the server is waiting. Taking the little cruet containing wine, he pours some of it into the chalice. (Later, it will become Our Lord's Precious Blood). And then the priest takes the other little cruet, and there is only water in that, but he pours some of it into the chalice, too. Do you wonder why the priest mixes water with the wine?

We are told why in the prayer that he says while he is doing it. There are two reasons, and you must try to understand them.

1. "The mystical union of this water and

wine" teaches us something about Our Divine Lord Himself. You know that He was Man *and* God; that He had two natures, the human and the Divine, so closely joined into one that nothing could divide them. Well, the wine so closely mixed with the water is meant to show Our Lord's Divine Nature joined with His human nature. There were some heretics who didn't believe Our Lord had two natures. To show this they used to use only wine in their Mass.

2. Another thing we learn is about ourselves. The beautiful, rich-colored wine stands for Our Divine Lord. The pale, tasteless water stands for us. When the water is mixed with the wine it shows how we must be made one with Christ. They are so closely mingled that no one could possibly separate them. And this mingling means that you can't see the water any more.

That is how we must be joined to Christ. We can only be saved that way. If we love Him very much and try to be like Him; and, above all, if we receive Him in Holy Communion, He will hold us so close in His heart that when God the Father looks at us, He won't see poor, sinful us any more, but only His adorable Son. That is what is called (in the prayer the priest says) becoming "companions of the Godhead of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

So now, whenever you see the priest pouring water and wine into the chalice, think how closely

you are joined to Our Lord and how pleasing that makes you to God, His Father and yours. And let the thought make you fear to be separated from Christ by sin more than you would fear to suffer death.

14.—The Lavabo.

After the priest has offered up the chalice, in the same way as he did the host, he goes again to the side of the altar, where the server holds a little basin and a towel, and he washes his hands. What does that mean? Well, of course, he washes his hands to show how pure and clean we ought to be when we come to receive the Blessed Sacrament. And there's something else it reminds us of, too.

If you look over there at the first station of the cross you will see Pilate washing his hands. He has just condemned Jesus to be crucified, and he washes his hands saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man." We know that Pilate could not have put Jesus to death; that it was Our Lord himself who "*laid down his life*" as a sacrifice, and according to His Father's will; that is what Pilate's washing of his hands means to us.

Well, in the Mass it is Jesus who offers Himself; no one would have power to renew the sacrifice of Him, otherwise. So when the priest washes his hands it reminds us that the sacrifice

of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, now about to be made in the Mass, is not *his* doing. After this he acts *for* Christ and in His place.

So while the priest is washing his hands you can be thanking Our Lord in your hearts that He once offered Himself on the cross to save us, and now lets the same sacrifice take place before our eyes so that we may be there and may each get for our souls some of the great grace He pours out at this solemn moment.

Let the washing of the priest's hands fix in your minds how *freely* Christ offers Himself, how freely He pours out His Precious Blood. And, remember, only *love* could give so great a gift so freely. And if He loves you like that ought not you to love Him back in something the same way? I mean, a way that costs you something, and yet is freely given. Every time you are patient, and bear hardships willingly and cheerfully without grumbling, and offer it up to Our Lord, you are loving Him like that, and He is pleased.

15.—The Preface.

If you are listening carefully you will notice that a few moments after the priest has washed his hands, he says some short sentences, answered each time by the server, and then, with his hands stretched out, he begins a long prayer, called the *Preface*.

I want you to think carefully about those short sentences, because they mean something special, and are especially meant for you who are hearing Mass. In English they are this:

V. The Lord be with you. R. And with thy spirit.

V. Lift up your hearts. R. We have lifted them up unto the Lord.

V. Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God. R. It is meet and just.

Now, I am going to tell you what a holy bishop called St. Cyprian said about those words. He lived only three hundred years after Our Lord had gone back to Heaven.

He says that when we are about to begin the great prayer called "The Canon" that is, the most solemn part of the Mass, we must have no more thoughts of bodily things or of the present time, and that is why the Church says, "Lift up your hearts." He says the people answer, "We have lifted them up unto the Lord," because now we must think of *nothing* but Our Lord.

Try and remember what St. Cyprian said, because it is very true. From this moment in the Mass you must think only of Our Lord, for soon He will be there, on the altar.

The next words, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord Our God," are the proper ones for us to say, says another great man, St. Augustine. We must, he says, "give thanks that we have our

hearts lifted up, for, if it was not for the gift of God, we should have our hearts right down on the ground." So, remember, St. Augustine's words, and say *thank you*.

The long prayer the priest now says is just a long thank you; and it tells about the different things we must specially thank God for at the different seasons of the Church.

16.—The Sanctus.

At the end of the long prayer called the Preface, which I told you about last Sunday, come the words, "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus," and the bell rings three times, and you all kneel down in worship. What do those words mean?

They mean, "Holy, holy, holy," and that portion of the prayer is taken from the book of the Prophet Isaias, in which he describes the seraphim, wonderful angels with six wings, crying "Holy, holy, holy," in Heaven.

While you are bowing your head in worship, the priest is finishing this glad cry of praise, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory."

Notice the word, "Sabaoth"—it is another word in Hebrew, like I told you about before. It means "army," for Jesus Christ is the Chief of the Heavenly Hosts and of the Church Militant—or Church fighting, here on earth.

Then the priest goes on: "Hosanna in the

highest. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!"

Those words were first said by the children of Jerusalem, as Our Lord rode in on an ass, and people strewed palm branches in the way. Now, He is coming to us, in our Church, so you children must join in your hearts in those words of joyful welcome. That word, Hosanna, that the Jewish children shouted so gladly as they ran along with their branches, is another Hebrew word. It was their way of saying "hooray!" Don't you wish you could have been among them, to join in those cheers? Well, our Lord gives you the chance every Sunday. Only, of course, you can't shout out loud, at Mass—only in your hearts.

17.—The Consecration and Elevation of the Host.

When the bell has rung three times, and you have knelt down at the *Sanctus*, you know that before long will come the most solemn moment of the Mass. But so as to remind you to have your whole mind and attention fixed on the altar and the wonderful thing that is happening there, presently the bell is rung again just *once*.

Keep your eyes fixed on the altar, now; and your thoughts on Our Lord. You should have love in your hearts for Him, and joy to think He is coming, and a desire to get grace for yourselves and others in this great moment, and a

real will to please Him. He is going to give Himself up wholly for you, by coming here, as a little white Host in the priest's hands. So give yourselves up wholly to Him, holding nothing back. Make yourselves offerings in the hands of Our Lord to be offered up to God the Father.

By the time you have thought all this you will see that the priest is bending over the altar, and then it is time for you to bow your heads in reverence. He has taken the Host in his hands, as Our Lord took the bread in His holy hands at the Last Supper; and now he says the very same words Our Lord said that night, and he says them speaking *for* Our Lord: "This is My Body."

At that moment Our Lord Himself comes on the altar, by changing the bread into Himself, and the priest bends his knee at once to adore Him.

As he holds up the white Host high for you to see, it is the Body of Christ he holds up. You should look at it with great love and wonder, and say, "My Lord and my God," and then bow your head again in worship, and keep very still and quiet, with your eyes shut, and remember that what is happening here, in the stillness of the Church, is what happened first on Calvary. That just as Our Lord's Body was lifted up high on the cross, and offered, a sacrifice, to God, so now the same Body is lifted up in the priest's hands. You should kneel as quiet and as full of

love and awe, as if you were kneeling at Our Lady's side, on Calvary.

18.—The Consecration of the Chalice.

When the priest consecrated the sacred Host and held it up for you to see, the bell rang three times. Now, he uncovers the chalice, and holds it in his hands. You should kneel very quiet waiting for the bell to ring again.

You remember that when Our Lord hung on the cross *He shed His Blood* willingly for us, and so showed that He was a Sacrifice. Of course, Our Lord can't *really* die any more, but, in a way, the words that the priest is now saying over the chalice are like the thrust of the lance into the Savior's side. By them His Blood is shed anew, in the chalice that is upon the altar. In this way the shedding of His Precious Blood is renewed in the Mass, and He shows again that He is truly sacrificed.

The bell rings again three times, and as you reverently raise your eyes to the altar, you will see the chalice held up high, and you will know that in it is the very Blood that Our Lord shed to win our pardon.

Bow your head in adoration and thank Him. Remember it was your sins that shed His Blood just as much as those of the most wicked people who ever lived.

Try and understand about its being a sacri-

fice. Join yourself to Our Lord in this sacrifice, asking Him to offer you with Himself, to the Father. Ask God the Father to accept you and your little sacrifice, because it is joined to the great Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Finally, thank Our Lord for coming; thank Him for shedding His blood; thank Him for letting you be there.

19.—Genuflection.

After the Consecration and elevation of the Host and Chalice you remain on your knees, because people always remain kneeling when the Blessed Sacrament is on the Altar or the Tabernacle door open.

The priest is now saying many prayers, only so softly that you cannot hear. If you keep your eyes on the altar, however, you will notice something. Every now and then he genuflects—bows his knee. He did not do that in the first part of the Mass, and he does not do it in the later part, after communion. Do you know why he does it?

It is to honor Our Lord, who is present on the altar. At different places in the Mass the priest has to touch the Sacred Host, and each time before he touches it he bends his knee, and again after he has touched it. You will notice, too, when he opens the door of the Tabernacle, to take out the Blessed Sacrament to give com-

munion, he genuflects before taking out the Ciborium (or silver vessel containing the Hosts). The same at Benediction—he always genuflects before touching the Monstrance in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

When you come into Church do you always remember to genuflect very reverently? Here are a few things to remember :

1. It is to Our Lord Himself you are bending your knee. Think of Him while you are doing it, and keep your eyes on the Tabernacle where He is. Remember, it is an act of reverence, so don't ever do it thoughtlessly.

2. Do it *correctly*. That is, bend your *right* knee and touch the ground with it. (Don't make a sign of the Cross at the same time. It is unnecessary, and upsets your balance.)

3. If the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, or Communion is being given, or the door of the Tabernacle is open, kneel down on both knees, and bow your head.

20.—The Silence and Seven Words.

You will notice that after the Offertory, and all through the more solemn part of the Mass that follows, the priest says most of the prayers so softly that you cannot hear them. In fact, there is a long silence.

Just as Holy Mass is the same sacrifice as Cal-

vary, this silence is the same silence that reigned while Our Lord hung upon the Cross. That silence was broken seven times by the Seven Words of Christ. And this silence at Mass is broken seven times, too.

The first time it is only by two words—*orate fratres*: pray brethren. The second time by the Preface. It is the third I want to talk to you about now, for it comes soon after the Consecration, and it might be the good thief speaking. Only the first few words of the prayer are said aloud—the priest finishes it silently, and unless you listen carefully you will not hear them. In Latin they are: “nobis quoque peccatoribus,” and they mean, “To us sinners, also.” They are the beginning of a beautiful prayer that asks that we may have some part and fellowship with the Holy Apostles and other Saints of God, and at the end it asks that we may be allowed into their company, not because we deserve it, but through God’s “free pardon.”

If you have ever heard any stories of the Saints you must feel that you can never be fit to be in their company. But you must have *hope*, which is one of the three great virtues. You must hope that God will give you His free pardon for the sake of Our Lord; and having hope means *you are sure He will*, because He is God; remember, Our Lord said to the thief: “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” That was indeed “free

pardon," for the thief had done nothing to merit heaven.

Have you each a special friend among the Saints? Try and find one, if you haven't: either your name Saint, or one whose life you especially admire. If you do him honor and ask his help, and try and copy him, he will help you in this life and welcome you into Heaven.

I will tell you, further on, what are the other four words in the silent part of the Mass, which make up the sacred number seven.

21.—The Pater Noster.

While the Body and Blood of Our Lord are still on the Altar, and you are still kneeling as if you were on Mount Calvary, the priest says aloud the "Our Father." You remember, the Our Father is the prayer Our Lord Himself taught the Apostles to use. While the priest says it in Latin, you should say it quietly to yourselves in English. *Say it in union with the Church.* What does that mean? Well, it means say it together with all Catholics, *because* you are a Catholic, and a member of Our Lord's Church. Supposing a great man was to come to your school, and the school wanted to do him honor, someone would say: "Let us give three cheers. Hip, hip, hip . . ." and then, altogether, in union, you would shout "hooray!" It wouldn't be just *you*, each one singly, doing it; it would be *the school* giving the cheers, and you would cheer

because you were part of the school. In the same way, you ought sometimes to pray because you are part of the Church, and there is no better time than when the "Our Father" comes, in the Mass.

Remember, the first words are "*Our* Father," not "My Father": that reminds you that you are one of many children.

You will know when the "Our Father" comes because it is the first time the priest says any long prayer out loud after the Consecration and the holding up of the Host and Chalice. It is the fourth of the seven words of the silent part of the Mass.

But if you are to take part in this prayer, and in the other things I have told you about, it means you must attend, all through, to the altar and what is being done there. There is no time for wandering thoughts, at Mass.

Besides, how foolish it would be to think of other things when you have this wonderful chance of asking Our Lord for all kinds of things for yourself and those you love. Besides praying for your father and mother and brothers and sisters and friends, you ought sometimes to pray for anyone who may die today; and for the dead; for the Protestants, that they may become Catholics; for all the Catholic children, that they may grow up good Catholics, and not forget our Lord as they grow up.

22.—Fractio Panis.

A minute or two after the priest has said the *Pater Noster*, you will notice that he genuflects, which means he is going to take the Sacred Host in his hands. What is he going to do with it?

If you watch carefully, you will see that he breaks it in half, and lays one half down on the paten. If you listen you can sometimes hear the sound of the breaking.

Why does he do that?

Because Our Lord did it. In the account of the Last Supper it says He took bread and blessed and broke it, giving it to His disciples and saying, "Take and eat ye all of this, for this is My Body." Again, the time He gave Communion to the two disciples after His Resurrection, He was known to them "in the *breaking* of bread."

And do you remember the story of how He fed the 5,000 hungry people as they sat on the grass? That was not Communion, of course; but it was a type of it, a kind of picture, beforehand, of how later on thousands of people could eat the same bread, without it failing till all had had as much as they wanted. And in that story we read that Jesus broke the bread, and as He broke it in His holy hands, there was always more and more.

In the Mass the priest does again all that Jesus did in the first giving of His Body, and so he breaks the Host.

Then, holding one half in his hand, he breaks

off a little bit of it, and after laying down the bigger part, he makes the sign of the Cross three times over the Chalice with the little bit, saying, "The peace of the Lord be always with you," and drops it into the Chalice. Those words are the fifth time the silence is broken.

Why does the priest drop a little bit of the Host into the Chalice containing the Precious Blood?

Because Our Lord did.

And if you remember how it was Our Lord broke a little piece of bread and dipped it in the chalice, it will make you feel rather sad. For that bit He gave to Judas Iscariot, and it says, "When Judas had received the morsel he went out to betray Jesus."

So that putting of the consecrated Bread in the Chalice is a little silent reminder that even in the inner circle of Our Lord's friends there may be a traitor. Everyone who receives Holy Communion has to ask, like the disciples did, "Lord, is it I?"

Judas was Our Lord's enemy. All traitors are His enemies. Between a man and his enemy there is war. But listen to what Jesus says, as this reminder of Judas, the enemy, is being made. He says: "The peace of the Lord be always with you" (and at High Mass the kiss of peace is given soon after).

So when you hear the Host being broken, remember Judas, and ask Our Lord to keep you

from ever being a traitor; and ask that your kiss (Holy Communion) may be always *the kiss of peace*, and never *the traitor's kiss*.

23.—Agnus Dei.

The sixth time the priest breaks the silence it is to say, "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us," and he repeats it three times.

Do you know who it was said that first? It was St. John the Baptist, as he saw Our Lord walk past, one day, on the banks of the Jordan. He pointed Him out to those who stood by, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world."

That was long before Our Lord was crucified, of course; and it must have puzzled the men who heard it; they didn't know, as you do, about Our Lord taking away the sins of the world. And yet they would have understood about the *lamb* better than you do, perhaps.

You see, before Our Lord founded the Catholic Church, God was worshiped by the Jewish religion. And the way people were forgiven their sins was not by each going to Confession. What happened was this: A beautiful white lamb was killed by the priests and offered to God as a sin offering. (That is why St. John called Our Lord a *lamb*.) And then the High Priest took a goat, and tied some wool, soaked in the blood of the

lamb, between its horns. And over this goat he confessed the sins of the people. Then the goat was driven out, and went wandering away through the desert, carrying the sins of the people, and they were left pure and holy. That was why St. John spoke of Our Lord "taking away the sins of the world."

So now in the Mass—the *sacrifice* of the Catholic Church—Our Lord is offered like a pure lamb, innocent, and holy. And He takes all our sins on Himself and bears them away out of God's sight. Think of this when you hear the priest say, "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis."

24.—The Priest's Communion.

When the priest says "Domine, non sum dignus," so breaking the silence for the seventh time, and the bell rings three times, the people get up and begin going up to the altar rails. But don't think of the people; Mass is not done, yet.

We have been thinking, the last few Sundays, how the Mass is a *sacrifice*. I told you last Sunday that Our Lord is the Lamb, the Victim, offered up on the altar, for our sins. The end of the sacrifice is when the priest receives the Body and Blood of the Lamb of God in Holy Communion.

In the old days the lamb or the goat could only *take away* sins. In our sacrifice the Lamb of God not only *takes away sins*, but *brings holiness*. He,

Himself, *is* all goodness, all holiness, so the end of the sacrifice is for the priest, who stands there for the people, to be as closely as possible joined to the Lamb, to receive Him, in all His power, and be made one with Him. So, while the priest receives the Host and Chalice (just after the bell is rung) remain on your knees, and think what a solemn moment it is—the end of the great sacrifice; the wonderful moment when God is joined to His Church, and makes it holy by His Own holiness.

But though the priest receives the Sacrificial Lamb on behalf of the whole Church, each of you children may come up and receive Him for yourselves. He is ready to be given to each of you, to make you strong and holy and pure. He *wants* to come to you; He is full of joy when He sees a good crowd of you come up to the altar-rails. I think He likes coming to you even better than to grown-up people. So don't disappoint Him. And come up very reverently and quietly, with just one thought in your minds—love for Our Lord, and a strong wish to please Him by receiving Him in Holy Communion, and a real wish to have Him each for yourselves, that you may tell Him all the secrets of your hearts that no one else knows; all your sorrows and difficulties; all your hopes, and about the things you want: for He understands like no one else can. Let these be your thoughts as you walk up; and keep your eyes down so as to

see nothing distracting, and your hands folded together.

25.—People's Communion.

As you kneel at the altar-rails, the server says the Confiteor for you, and you, in the secret of your hearts, tell Our Lord, again, how sorry you are for your sins, and ask Our Lady and the Saints to help you make a good communion.

Then the priest gives the Absolution, and you make the sign of the Cross very reverently, so applying the Absolution to yourselves, and being by it made as pure as possible before Our Lord comes to you.

Then the priest takes up one of the Hosts and holds it high, saying, "Ecce Agnus Dei"—"Behold the Lamb of God." That reminds you again of the Sacrifice, and that you are now going to be joined to the Sacrificed Lamb, and become part of Him, and so a victim, too; and you know that all your sufferings and sorrows will be part of Christ's sufferings, if you bear them bravely for Him, and by His strength.

Then the priest goes on, "Domine non sum dignus"—"Lord, I am not worthy that thou should enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed," and you strike your breast each time the priest repeats the words, and you feel with all your heart how *unworthy* you are, and how wonderful it is that Our Lord can love

you enough to want to come to you. Remember, those words were said by the Centurion, whose servant was dying. Our Lord didn't go into his house, but cured the servant from afar. You are more lucky than the Centurion, for though you tell Our Lord that the little house of your heart is not worthy of Him, still, He smiles and says, 'Never mind; I know it isn't; but I love you so much that I shan't notice. All I will notice is how pleased you are to see Me, and how big a welcome you give Me.'

26.—*Corpus Domini Nostri*.

And so, at last, the wonderful moment comes when the priest stands in front of you, and holds up the Body of Our Lord. Listen to the words he says—for he says them separately to each one of you, and not, now, to all the people in general.

"*Corpus Domini Nostri*—May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ keep thy soul unto life everlasting, Amen."

That holy Body, so full of grace and power and purity and strength and all healing, will keep your soul in all the difficulties and dangers of this life. And then, the last time you receive it, it will be as food for your journey, as a Divine Companion on the journey which you will take into Eternity, the great land of Life Everlasting. You will not be frightened, will you, when that day comes? for Jesus will be with you. You will not be

frightened of death, and no more must you be frightened of life, however many dangers it may seem to hold for your body and soul. If ever you are frightened, think of the last time you received Holy Communion, and remember Our Lord is *still* with you, unless you have forced Him to leave you, by committing a mortal sin.

Receive Him, then, with great love and gratitude, and go very quietly back to your place, with eyes down and folded hands. Never mind, now, about prayer-books and prayers you have learned. Surely you have enough to say to this best of friends. Now is your chance to ask for things, and to get comfort and sympathy in all your little worries and sorrows. But above all, don't forget to thank Him for having come, and for not minding your little house being so unworthy.

And when you go into your ordinary life, practice using the new strength He has brought you.

27.—The Blessing.

After you have received Holy Communion and the priest has said a few prayers, he kisses the altar, stretches out, lifts up and joins his hands, and then, bowing his head, he says :

“May God Almighty bless you,” and turning around, he blesses the people, by making a big Sign of the Cross over them, saying, “Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”

The priest is giving you the Church's blessing,

so you should kneel down to receive it (if you are not already on your knees), and as he makes the Sign of the Cross, you should cross yourself, in that way each taking the blessing to yourselves.

You should not think lightly of this blessing; it is the Church's blessing, and the Church is Our Lord's Mystical Body, so it is as much Our Lord's own blessing as when He took the children in His arms and laid His hands upon them. I expect you wish you were one of those happy children. Well, you *are* happy children to have this chance of receiving His blessing at the end of Mass. You should make the most of all these things. They bring you much grace. Don't throw away your privileges by being careless and inattentive. When Our Lord is blessing you, wouldn't it be ungrateful to be sitting up staring about, or hunting for your cap, or fidgeting with your prayer book?

28.—The Last Gospel.

When you stand up for the last Gospel, you make again the three little Signs of the Cross on your forehead, lips and breast, like I told you about before. You remember what they mean—a prayer that the Word of God may be in your mind, on your lips, and in your heart. And you *stand* so as to show honor to the Gospel, because it tells of Christ Our Lord, and to show you are ready to do what He says. Do you know what it is the priest is reading? It is the first Chapter of St.

John's Gospel, and it tells how Our Lord, who had always been, from the beginning, the Son of God, was born on earth, the Son of Mary, Our Blessed Lady; how He came unto His Own—His "chosen people"—and His Own received Him not; but how to those who *did* receive Him he gave power to become the sons of God—as each of you became at your baptism. So while the priest reads the last Gospel, you should be thinking especially of Our Lord. And when the priest genuflects, you also should bend your knee, for that is when he comes to the words, "And the Word" (that is, Our Lord) "was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

The more you think of Our Lord at such times, the more He will show Himself to the eyes of your mind. And the more you see Him, the more you will become like Him. And to be like Our Lord is the thing that matters most in life. For, first, it makes us pleasing to Him; second, it makes us pleasing to other people; third, it makes us happy, ourselves.

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