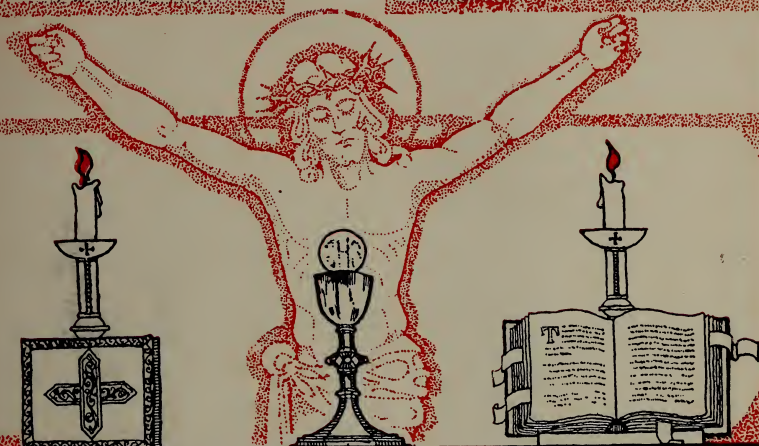


A FATHER SCOTT PAMPHLET 15¢

Scott, Martin Jerome
This is my body -
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THIS IS MY BODY



THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

MARTIN J. SCOTT, S.J.

AMERICA PRESS

QUIZ

(For study clubs and discussion groups)

1. What is the Blessed Eucharist?
2. Why is the Blessed Eucharist called Mystery of Faith?
3. What is meant by a change of substance?
4. How is a change of substance ordinarily perceived?
5. The Doctrine of the Eucharist is a contradiction.
6. The Apostles did not believe in the Eucharist.
7. Christ did not really mean that the Eucharist was His Body and Blood.
8. Show that at the Last Supper Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the Mass, the Priesthood.
9. Why is the Mass essentially the same sacrifice as that of Calvary?
10. Why do some Christians reject the Mass?
11. Why is attendance at Mass obligatory?
12. In what way is the Mass an act of worship?
13. Why is the Mass said in Latin?
14. What is meant by Holy Communion?
15. No one is worthy to receive Holy Communion.
16. Why is Holy Communion not received under both forms.
17. Why does the priest at Mass receive under both forms?
18. What is meant by the Reservation of the Sacrament?
19. What is the significance of the Last Blessing at Mass?

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THIS IS MY BODY

The Sacrifice of the Mass

Martin J. Scott, S.J.

You say that you have looked carefully into the various Christian denominations, and that you would become a Catholic if you could believe in the Eucharist?

Yes, that is the one thing which holds me back. I have read the Bible studiously, but it doesn't seem rational to believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should be changed into a particle of bread called the host.

But that's not the meaning of the Eucharist. There is no question of God being changed into something else.

Isn't it Catholic doctrine that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Very true, but not in the sense that Jesus is changed, but that the *substance* of bread becomes Jesus. As this is vital to the understanding of the Eucharist, let me explain what is meant by *substance*. In every material thing, there is an internal something called substance, which is not perceptible by the senses, and an external something called accidents perceptible by the senses. For instance, an imitation diamond

has the appearance of a real diamond, but is not really a diamond. The thing that makes a diamond truly such is not its appearance only, but its internal something we call its substance. It is the internal imperceptible element of bread which becomes the Body of Christ. It is a change possible to Divine power alone. In every other change of substance, the accidents or externals change, but not so in the case of the Eucharist. That is why it is called the Mystery of Faith. When Jesus instituted the Eucharist, He said of the bread which He held in His hands: "This is My Body." As Jesus was then a living being, the substance of bread by becoming His Body became His living self.

That's too much for me. I don't think God ever intended us to believe such an astounding doctrine.

I suppose you say that, because you can't reconcile the words of Jesus instituting the Eucharist with the fact that there was no change apparent in the bread which He declared was His Body. As you know, however, directly after blessing the bread, He said to His Apostles: "Take ye and eat: This is My Body." (Saint Matthew, xxvi, 28) From that day to this, the Church which Christ founded has, as one of its fundamental beliefs, the doctrine that the Eucharist is just what Christ declared it to be, His Body and Blood. Christians believe in the Eucharist, not on the testimony of their senses, but on the sole word of Christ, eternal Truth. It is called the Mystery of Faith because the evidence for

its truth is faith in Christ as the Son of God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. By belief in this mystery, man sacrifices his noblest faculty, his judgment, on the altar of God's word.

But since there was no perceptible change in the bread after He blessed it, why then should we not believe that He meant what He said to be taken in some other sense than the words literally signified?

Because from the very beginning, the Apostles understood that Jesus meant what He said to be taken literally. If anyone knew what Jesus meant, it was they, His intimate associates. Moreover, they not only believed it to be true, but made the veneration of the Eucharist the basic act of worship of His religion. If the Church has been in error on this point, Jesus is responsible for it, because it was owing to faith in Him that she had proclaimed it from His day to the present.

Isn't it just possible that the Apostles were honestly mistaken?

In such a case, no. For it is not possible that the Divine Founder of the religion which He commanded them to teach and administer, should permit them to be mistaken on fundamental doctrine and worship.

Is there any evidence that the doctrine of the Eucharist was believed and practised in the early ages of the Church?

Evidence abounds. I content myself with presenting what Saint Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth: "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 show the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Cor. xi, 23-26)

A little later in the same epistle, Saint Paul shows plainly that he means to be understood literally when he speaks of the Body and Blood of the Lord: "Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord." It was because the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord was truly the showing of His death that it was such a sacred act of worship with the Christians. For it was doing the very same thing that Jesus did when He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. On that occasion He celebrated the first Mass, gave the first Holy Communion, and ordained the first priests.

Please explain that. In what way did Jesus at the Last Supper celebrate the first Mass, give the first Holy Communion and ordain the first priests?

At the Last Supper, Jesus, having instituted the

Eucharist, said: "This is My Body which is given for you." By that act, He offered up Himself in a real but unbloody manner, offering His Body, that is, His living self, for our salvation. That was the clean oblation foretold by the Prophet, the unbloody sacrifice essentially the same as that of Calvary. The next day, on the Cross, Jesus offered up His Body by the shedding of His Blood. At each Mass that is celebrated throughout the world, Jesus renews the sacrifice of Calvary in an unbloody or sacramental manner, essentially the same sacrifice as the clean oblation at the Last Supper and the bloody sacrifice on the Cross.

Besides offering the first Mass, Jesus gave the first Holy Communion on that occasion. After the consecration of the sacred species, He gave Holy Communion to the Apostles, saying: "Take ye and eat, this is My Body. . . . Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood."

Finally, He ordained the Apostles the first priests, commanding them to offer the very same oblation of Himself which He had just offered, saying: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." That is precisely what the Mass is, the offering of the Body and Blood of Jesus as a sacrifice for our eternal salvation. Jesus made that sacrifice in a bloody manner once and for all on Calvary, but it is renewed in an unbloody manner every time the Mass is celebrated. For in the Mass, it is the same Jesus Who is offered up Who offered up Himself on the Cross.

In what way is the Mass a renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross?

On the Cross, Jesus gave His Body to the executioners, freely putting Himself in their hands, thus offering Himself as a victim of atonement. At the Mass, Jesus puts Himself in the hands of the consecrating priest to be offered up as a sacrifice for mankind. This is termed the renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross, because the victim is the same, although the manner of the sacrifice is different, namely, a clean instead of a bloody oblation.

Of course, even with your explanation, it still remains a mystery, something absolutely incomprehensible.

Very true. That is why it is called the Mystery of Faith, a thing above human understanding and accepted solely on the word of Him Who is both Priest and Victim of the sacrifice.

Is it not unreasonable to believe what one does not understand? I have often heard people who do not believe in the Mass ask that question.

It is one thing for a matter to be beyond one's understanding and quite another thing for it to be unreasonable to believe it. For instance we do not understand how the milk which the infant receives from its mother's breast becomes the flesh of the child. Nor do we understand how the grass which cattle feed upon becomes milk.

But we experience those things, we have the evidence of them before our eyes.

Well, how about our belief in other things for which our senses have no evidence? For instance the generality of mankind believe that the earth which seems to be stationary is in constant motion both rotary and forward in space.

Yes, but they believe that on the testimony of astronomers who know by experiment what they affirm.

Precisely. They believe it not on evidence of their own senses, nor on their own demonstration but on the authority of astronomers. Hardly one person in a million, however, understands the sublime mathematics required in order to establish the fact of the earth's motion.

That is true. Nevertheless they know that what the astronomers declare is reasonable to believe because their claims are supported by evidence. The fulfilment of the predictions of astronomers shows that what they teach is reasonable to believe.

Very true. And it is because the claims of Christ are confirmed by Divine evidence that we believe what He proclaims. Before Christ asked us to believe His teachings He gave evidence that He was truly what He claimed to be, the Son of God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. If we accept the word of man because we have faith in his knowledge

and integrity, we should much more readily accept the word of God. He Who gave us our reason will not ask us to believe what is unreasonable. It is a great error to affirm that they who believe on the sole word of Christ are acting unreasonably. Christians employ their reason to the utmost to find out if Christ's claims are true, and having established that fact, they know that it is the highest use of reason to accept what He declares, simply because he declares it.

I must admit that there is no reply to what you so clearly and logically state. And now may we continue with the main subject of our discussion. Why do you say that in the sacrifice of the Mass Jesus is both priest and victim of the sacrifice?

Because in the Mass, Jesus the Victim is also the One Who freely offers Himself in sacrifice. The celebrant of the Mass is only the minister employed to effect the offering. On the Cross, Jesus was both Victim and Priest, the soldiers being the ministers employed to effect the sacrifice. In the consecration of the host during the sacrifice of the Mass the celebrant does not use the words: "This is the Body of Christ," but speaking for Christ, the priest says: "This is My Body," thus constituting Christ both Victim and Priest.

Now that you have explained the essential feature of the Mass, I should like to ask you about certain things pertaining to it, for I am often ques-

tioned about it, sometimes reverently, sometimes mockingly.

Yes, I know. The Mass is regarded by some Christians as an act of idolatry. Such persons accuse the Catholic Church of betraying Christ. But the fact remains that nowhere in the world has Jesus so many and such ardent and such loyal adherents as in the Catholic Church. Jesus Himself is the Author of the Mass, and if it be idolatry, He is responsible for it. There are others who deeply reverence the Mass as the most sublime act of worship on this earth, but who desire to be informed on various aspects of it. For that reason I am glad to hear and to reply to whatever question you put to me.

My first question is why are some Christians opposed to the Mass? Christians are supposed to believe in the Gospels, which, as you have shown, distinctly state the doctrine of the Eucharist.

All Christendom believed in the Mass up to the time of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. In order to discredit the Catholic Church and to justify withdrawal from her, they accused her, among other things, of idolatry, because of the Mass. In order to maintain their accusation, they had recourse to the doctrine of private judgment in the interpretation of the Bible. By their private judgment, they opposed the belief and practice of the Church founded by our Divine Lord and guaranteed

by Him never to teach error in matters of Christian belief.

But why, if they were Christians, did they oppose their judgment to that of the Divinely authorized Church?

Because they maintained that the Catholic Church was no longer the Church of Christ.

Well, where was the Church of Christ if it was not the one which was at the time the only Church in the world which, from Christ's day, was acknowledged universally as His Church?

That was for them to answer. And as they were not able to do so, they said that Christ's Church was not a visible organization, but consisted of all the believers in Christ.

But how about the words of Jesus establishing the Church, and appointing Peter as its head, and promising to be with it to the end of the world?

By their doctrine of private judgment, they treated that solemn statement the same as that on the Eucharist — they simply made it mean what suited them.

How about what Saint Paul said, that if an angel from Heaven should teach a doctrine different from that of the Church, it should be rejected?

That, like everything else which opposed their views, they ignored or interpreted to suit themselves.

Well, I suppose that is all that can be said to explain the attitude of those Christians who regard the Mass as superstition or idolatry.

However, the sad state of various denominations at present is proof that, by rejecting the Mass, the Reformers separated from the only Church which has Christ as its Founder and Upholder.

Why does the Catholic Church oblige her subjects to assist at Mass every Sunday?

There are several reasons for this. First of all, God Himself in the Ten Commandments obliges us to keep holy the Sabbath Day. The Church prescribes how we shall keep it holy, namely, by attendance at Mass.

But the Sabbath is Saturday, not Sunday.

Very true. And that reminds us that the Church, and not the Bible only, is the authority for Christian belief and practice. The Church, by Divine authority, changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday to honor the Resurrection of Jesus. But there is no word of this in the Bible.

For what other reason does the Church oblige her members to hear Mass on Sunday?

When Jesus instituted the Mass, He commanded the Apostles to celebrate it to commemorate His sacrifice on the Cross. They and their successors celebrated Mass every day, and the faithful attended in considerable numbers out of devotion. In order that

the faithful might have a perpetual reminder of the Crucifixion and manifest their gratitude for what Christ suffered for their redemption, the Church ordained that the faithful should assist at Mass at least once a week, and on Sunday.

Was it because the Mass was essentially the same sacrifice as that of the Cross that Jesus said of it: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (Saint Luke, xxii, 19)

Exactly. And Saint Paul, with that command in mind, said: "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi, 26)

From that I infer that the Mass, since it shows the death of the Lord, is really a renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross, but as a clean oblation.

Yes. Those who are present at Mass stand, as it were, with Mary the Mother of Jesus and Magdalen and Saint John at the foot of the Cross. It is only proper and grateful that we for whom Jesus sacrificed His life should, at its renewal on the altar, sacrifice time and convenience at stated periods in order, by our presence, to show appreciation for what our Blessed Redeemer had suffered for us. Regular attendance at Mass is, besides, a most efficacious means of benefiting by the sacrifice of the Cross. For the Mass reminds us of the importance of salvation, since it shows that Jesus sacrificed His life for our salvation. Those who attend Mass in

the right spirit are not apt to undervalue the soul, as so many do who seldom reflect on the price Jesus paid for its redemption.

I perceive, accordingly, that the Church obliges her members to assist at Mass on Sunday not only as an act of worship, but also to keep them from forgetting their main purpose in life, which is to attain eternal life with God.

Yes. There can hardly be a doubt that the present religious indifference in the world is owing to the fact that many people lose sight of the main end for which they were created. That was why the Prophet Jeremias, beholding the iniquity of his day, exclaimed: "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart." (Jeremias, xii, 11) Attendance at Mass keeps the final end of man in view, shows the importance of salvation, and gives a powerful incentive to live in such a way that this passing life will lead to a life of everlasting blessedness. The Mass is a constant reminder that "we have not here a lasting city, but seek one which is to come." (Hebrews, xiii, 14)

You referred to the Mass as an act of worship. May I ask you in what way is the Mass an act of worship?

In order to understand how and why the Mass is an act of worship, it is necessary to consider the nature of worship, and why it is obligatory on mankind.

Worship is the recognition by some external act of one's dependence on or submission to a higher power. The subjects of a worldly monarch acknowledge their submission by certain formalities of word and deed. The worship of God by man is the acknowledgment by a rational creature that the Creator is his sovereign Lord and Ruler. All material creation, in a certain sense, worships the Creator by exactly and necessarily carrying out the laws of nature, which are the expression of His will in their regard. Hence, Holy Scripture gives, as it were, a voice to material creation, saying: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands." (Ps. xviii, 1) This is, as it were, compulsory worship, for it is given necessarily. Since man is not controlled by fixed laws his worship, if given, must be freely given. No earthly ruler is entitled to respect and submission on such good grounds as God is entitled to man's reverence and worship. God is more than ruler or commander. Man would still be nothing except for the fact that the Creator, by His almighty power, gave him existence. Man, a creature, owes everything to God, the Creator. It is only proper, therefore, that man should manifest in some way his obligation to his Maker and Ruler.

I readily see the duty of man to acknowledge his dependence on, and his submission to, his Creator, but how does the Mass serve this purpose?

In the Mass, the basic element is sacrifice. The

Body and Blood of Jesus is offered to God, the Creator and Ruler of the world. This oblation is freely made by Jesus Himself Who, in His human nature, acts for all mankind. In the Old Law, the Israelites worshiped God by sacrificing the finest of their flocks to Jehovah, in acknowledgment of His supreme dominion over all things. This does not signify that God delights in destruction, but was to indicate to the Israelites, who thus deprived themselves of what was their own, that all things belong primarily to God.

The significance of the Mass is that it offers to Almighty God an object of infinite value, none other than Jesus Christ Himself, Who freely offers Himself as an oblation for the glory of God and for the salvation and welfare of mankind. Those who are present at Mass are privileged to offer, in their own name, the sacrifice which the officiating priest at the altar offers to Almighty God. This is the sacrifice, the clean oblation of the New Law, the Mystery of Faith, replacing the sacrifices of the Old Law which prefigured it.

Since the people as well as the priest join in this act of worship, why is it that the Mass is conducted in the Latin language, which only the priest understands?

The Mass is essentially and primarily an oblation offered to God. Really, the Mass would be the Mass if no words were spoken except those employed by our Divine Lord when He made the oblation of

Himself at the Last Supper. The Mass consists essentially of two things, namely, Transubstantiation and Oblation. By Transubstantiation, the substance of bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. By the Oblation, the Body and Blood of Jesus are offered as a sacrifice. The words which Christ used were: "This is My Body, which is *given* for you"; "This is My Blood which shall be *shed* for you." That act constitutes the Sacrifice of the Mass. Everything else, the prayers, actions, etc., etc., lead up to, or follow after the act of Consecration and the act of Oblation, and are intended as a setting for the sublime central Act.

But why is all that done in Latin? Why not in the language of the people?

I am coming to that. The Sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God. He understands the language. The people understand that Jesus is the Victim of the oblation, and that the priest speaks not only in Christ's name, but also in the name of the people who are present. The people know that by their presence they participate in offering the sacrifice, and that is the main purpose of their presence. The prayers and other things connected with the sacrifice are secondary.

But even if they are secondary, would it not be better if the prayers were in the language of the people?

Well, suppose the prayers of the Missal, as said by the priest at Mass, were in the language of the

people, only a very few who were close to the altar could hear and follow them. The people know in a general way the meaning of every action of the Mass. Now, since prayer-books are in general use, the congregation may follow every word of the priest who celebrates the Mass. For over a thousand years after the institution of the Mass, there were no prayer-books among the people, because previous to the invention of printing, books were few and readers fewer. Now, however, those who wish may follow the Mass closely with their prayer-books. But the Mass is essentially an act, and mere presence at it constitutes participation in that act.

Still, I don't see why it could not all be done in the language of the people.

In the beginning the Mass was said in the language of the people, whether that of the Jews, Greeks or Romans. Gradually the Latin language became more or less universal in the Roman Empire, and thus became the language of the people. With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the language of the people gradually became confused and mixed with that of the Barbarians, and as a result was in danger of becoming rather indefinite in its meaning. During this process of change, the Latin language in its purity was limited mainly to scholars and the specialized professions. Meanwhile, as it ceased to be a living language, and was consequently fixed forever in its meaning, not subject to change by time or people, the Church adopted it for her

liturgical services, especially for the Mass, as a safeguard against any possible misunderstanding of this Divine rite. That is the main reason for the use of a dead or fixed language for the liturgy of the Mass. No matter how much living languages may change, and they change a good deal, the language of the Mass is, as it were, petrified into unchangeable meaning. By the use of this dead language, there is no danger of the true meaning of the Sacrifice of the Mass ever being questioned.

How about those other rites, such as the Armenian and the Greek? Are they not living languages?

No. The language of the various Oriental rites is no longer the same as the spoken language of those people. As an example of how language changes, consider that the present language of Italy is quite different from the Latin, which was the language of that people when the Mass was celebrated there in earlier ages. Now, just as the Latin of the former people of Italy has gradually become the modern Italian language, so the Greek of the former people of Greece has become the modern Greek language, quite different from the liturgical Greek of the Mass, which was the language of the people in earlier times. The Oriental rites hold to a former dead and fixed language just as the Roman rite does, and for the same reason, namely, in order that the unchangeable dogmas of the Church may be enshrined and perpetuated in unchangeable language.

All that is news to me. I often wondered why the Church was so old-fashioned or so unprogressive as to hold to antiquated rites and language. I see now, however, that she has very good and wise reasons for her procedure. This has taught me a good lesson, namely, to give her credit for knowing her own business.

Yes, the Church is an old institution, the oldest in the world. She has not only the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but also the wisdom of experience. For twenty centuries she has been intimately associated with mankind under all circumstances and conditions. This has given her the wisdom of the ages, and she knows how to use it, especially since her Invisible Head is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, eternal Wisdom.

You said previously that at the Last Supper, when Jesus instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass, He also gave Holy Communion to the Apostles. Do I understand, therefore, that the Eucharist, besides being a Sacrifice, is also a Sacrament?

Yes. The Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a Sacrament. As a sacrifice, it is an act of worship to Almighty God, an oblation offered to acknowledge the Creator as Ruler of the world, to thank Him for His benefits, and to appease Him for the transgression of His rational creatures. As a Sacrament, the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus imparted to His followers in Holy Communion. Saint

Augustine said that the two greatest wonders of creation are the Incarnation and the Eucharist. For by the Incarnation, the Son of God united Himself with humanity, and by the Eucharist He unites Himself with each one of us who receives Him in Holy Communion.

That's a most overwhelming and overpowering reflection. It's almost terrifying. How can any one presume to receive such a guest! How can anyone be worthy of such a favor!

No one receives Holy Communion because he is worthy, but because of God's goodness and condescension. Just before the priest receives the Body and Blood of Jesus at the Communion of the Mass, he repeats three times aloud: *Domine, non sum dignus* ("O Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee."). The greatest saint that ever lived is not worthy to receive Holy Communion. But Jesus invites, and even commands us, to receive Him, even though we be not worthy, in order that by receiving Him, we may become a little less unworthy of so great a favor.

Why is it that the priest receives Communion under both forms, namely, of the host and of the chalice, while the people receive the host only?

In the early ages of the Church, the people as well as the priest partook of the Eucharist under both forms, but since whoever receives the Body of Jesus receives His Blood also, the Church for various

reasons decreed that the Eucharist should be imparted to the people under the form of the host only.

You say that whoever receives the Body of Jesus receives His Blood also. May I ask you to explain that?

When Jesus gave His Body to the Apostles at the Last Supper, it was His living self, both Body and Blood inseparable. Hence, whenever anyone receives the Body of Jesus, he also receives His Blood.

Why then does the priest receive the Eucharist under both forms?

The priest who celebrates Mass not only receives Holy Communion, but also offers up a sacrifice. This sacrifice is signified by the separation of the Body and Blood which actually took place on the Cross when Jesus shed His Blood, as He foretold at the Last Supper. The separation of the Body and Blood is indicated by the consecration and by the reception of the Eucharist under both forms when the priest communicates.

Another matter I'd like to have explained is what is called by some persons Reservation of the Blessed Eucharist.

That means the presence of Jesus Christ in the tabernacle of the altar. You see, Jesus as God is everywhere, but as the God-Man He is only where He actually is as man. He actually is as man wherever His Body is. That is why we speak of Jesus in

the tabernacle of the altar, and that accounts for the reverence of His worshipers in Church. It is also the reason why there is always a light in the sanctuary before the tabernacle of the altar.

The Eucharist is the heart of Catholic dogma and devotion. Everything that pertains to Divine worship refers to this sacred reminder of man's Redemption. The church is built in order to have a suitable edifice for the altar. The altar is erected as the hill of sacrifice, and the priest is ordained in order to be the minister of the sacrifice. You see, therefore, that when Jesus said in instituting the Mass: "Do this in memory of Me," His Church has faithfully followed out His command, as is evident by the fact that wherever His Church exists throughout the world, there is an altar and a priest who performs the very same act which He Himself performed when He celebrated the first Mass.

I suppose the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle also explains the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which occurs at stated times in the Church?

Yes. Just as a king sometimes leaves the private apartments of his palace to hold audience in the throne-room, so does Jesus at times leave the tabernacle in order to be enthroned in the monstrance and there to receive the homage of His worshipers and to give them His benediction.

Let me thank you for your patience, and your gracious replies to my various questions. If you

don't mind, I have just one more inquiry to make with regard to the Eucharist. What is meant by the Viaticum?

Viaticum is a Latin word which means *going with you*. When a person is seriously ill, and it seems that he is about to make the last stage of the journey from time to eternity, Jesus consents to leave the tabernacle and come to the infirm person to comfort him and to accompany him in his final pilgrimage. Very often, however, the Viaticum restores the individual to health, and that is why so many Catholics rejoice to receive what are called the Last Sacraments or Rites of the Church, not only when they think the end is near, but whenever their ailment seems to be serious.

It occurs to me to ask one more question about the Mass before taking my leave of you. What is the significance of the blessing which the priest pronounces over the congregation just before the last Gospel?

That blessing brings to our mind the one which Jesus pronounced upon His disciples and followers on Mount Olivet as He ascended into Heaven. The Mass, which begins at the foot of the altar, recalling the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, ends with the blessing which calls to mind the glorious Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven after His victory over sin and the grave. The last blessing reminds the faithful that where Jesus is in glory, there also will be all those who, in their own way of the cross, go

forward in the true Christian spirit of patience and hope. The Mass, therefore, besides being the most acceptable sacrifice that can be offered to Almighty God, is also a powerful incentive to face the battle of life as a true soldier of Christ.

The Mass teaches us that we have it in our power to become members of the Divine family in that blessed abode prepared for those who, during the brief period of this life, strive to be true followers of Him Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. "To as many as received Him, He gave them the power to be made the sons of God." (Saint John, i, 12) Thus the Mass not only shows the death of the Lord, but also proclaims His victory over the forces of evil, and His assurance of victory to all those who with trust in Him fight the good fight of faith.

But above all, the Mass affords us the means of offering to God worship truly worthy of Him. This is why it is a privilege as well as a duty to assist at Mass. If, besides assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, we also partake of the sacrificial oblation by receiving Holy Communion, the Mass will indeed be rich in God's blessing upon us. Fidelity to Mass, especially if attended in the right spirit, is a marvelous aid to Christian living, and a pledge of companionship with Jesus in that blessed abode He has prepared for those who serve and love Him.

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