

Mooney, Denis

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THE MASS IN MY LIFE

by Denis Mooney, O.F.M.

A GRAIL PUBLICATION

St. Meinrad

Indiana

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by

Father Denis Mooney,

O.F.M.



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St. Meinrad

Indiana

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THE MASS IN MY LIFE

INTRODUCTION

I am told that I must *live* the Mass. Now, whatever "life" may mean to the scientist or to the philosopher, to me it is something very real and practical. It is the summary of my daily round of activity. On the one hand, it includes all the cares and pains that seem at times almost unbearable, and all those exasperating trifles that arise so often in my work or from contact with other people. On the other hand, it embraces all the joys, pleasures and friendships that seem to make it worth while to carry on.

If I am to live the Mass, therefore, some real relationship must exist between the profound theology of the Sacrifice of the Altar and the very practical business of my everyday life—the life that I spend in the office or the factory, in the classroom or the kitchen, and in places of recreation. That is really where I live, and so it is there that I must live the Mass. The sorrows and joys of every day are to be

directed to God and offered as sanctified moments, through union with the sacrifice of Christ upon the altar.

The purpose of the following meditation on the Mass is to see and to emphasize the manner in which the Holy Sacrifice should spiritualize my life. First, however, I must have a valid understanding of the Mass itself. It is undoubtedly true that ignorance of the substantial principles underlying Christian practices is responsible in great part for the lack of zeal and spiritual fervor that is evident even among good Christians. To see the relationship between the Mass and my life, therefore, and to embrace with enthusiasm the tremendous implications of the simple exhortation to *live the Mass*, I must know what the Mass means.

To appreciate the Holy Sacrifice fully I would need to consider it in its threefold relationship to my Christian life. First, on the part of the Blessed Trinity, union with Whom is the END of my Christian life, for it was God's love for me that prompted this sacrificial manner of redemption: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." (John 3, 16) Secondly, on the part of Christ, who is the MEANS of my sanctification and the door of my entry in to the Trinity, since it is by Him alone that I may be saved: "No man comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14, 6) Thirdly, on the part of

my own free will, which gives DIRECTION to the activity of my Christian life: "Whatever you do, work at it from the heart as for the Lord." (Col. 3, 23)

Grace is God's Part

When I think of the relationship between the Mass and my life, I may tend to place all the stress on the first two aspects, that is, on God's part in applying to my soul the merits of Christ's Redemption. While I must ever seek a deeper appreciation of this marvel of God's goodness to me, I need to analyze, emphasize and repeat—not overlook or minimize—the third aspect, which is my own aptitude to profit by God's goodness; for over and above any efficacious effect which the Sacrifice of Christ may produce independently of the dispositions of the soul, I shall be enriched through the fruit of the Mass in Holy Communion according to the measure of my love for God, that is, in the proportion that my will is united to the will of Christ. All grace is a pure gift of God and is the principal agent of sanctification, but it does not sanctify without cooperation.

Cooperation is My Part

Because of the self-love that is innate in me, there is very good reason to call into question the wholeheartedness of my desire to cooperate with the sancti-

fyng work of Christ. My part is the only doubtful factor in the personal value of the Mass, and therefore I must regard and cherish the Mass as the very heart of my spiritual life, the vital center towards which all my affections and actions should converge, in order to be gathered together into the Sacred Heart of Christ and offered by Him as an acceptable gift to the Blessed Trinity. Then, in return, the Heart of Christ will be a fountain of grace bringing life and love from the Trinity to me, for the Mass is the trysting-place of divine love; the uniting of God's love and my love, in the person of Jesus, God and Man.

PART ONE

THE MASS AS A SACRIFICE

To see the practical, everyday meaning of living the sacrifice of the Mass, certain preliminary notions must be clearly understood. I must first know what is meant by the word "sacrifice" and then consider its application to the Sacrifice of Calvary, to our Lord's eternal Sacrifice in Heaven, and finally to the Sacrifice of the Altar.

WHAT IS A SACRIFICE?

The word sacrifice, as used in everyday language, contains two ideas, namely, giving and loving. *Giving* is depriving myself by an act of self-denial of something esteemed and valued. (To give away something I do not want is not a sacrifice. For example, to give my discarded coat to a poor man is no sacrifice for me). Regarded as an act of giving, sacrifice is something momentary, for the object is given once and the act is over, although the thing

given remains given. *Loving* refers to the motive or reason which prompts the act of giving. This is an interior preference for something or someone more esteemed than what is given up; a permanent disposition which perseveres before, during and after the act which expresses it. For example, if I have real love for my neighbor I shall prefer to assist a poor man in his need rather than provide for my own comfort, and I shall be ready to give up something that I could use myself.

Hence, the notion of sacrifice embraces the *gift*, or the thing itself that is esteemed but given up, and the *love*, or abiding disposition of preference, which resides in the human will.

The thing given up is interior when I renounce my ideas, my desires, my will; or exterior, when I give up possessions, pleasure or life.

God Sees the Heart

We have a natural tendency to measure a sacrifice simply by the gift. But that is not the important factor; for it is not what is given that endows a sacrifice with its real value, but the love that prompts the giving. If I give up one thing in order to obtain something more self-gratifying, I am seeking only my own interest; I am not prompted by love. That is a bargain, not a sacrifice. Most of the sacrifices of the pagans are of this kind for they are offered to

obtain favors from the deity. If I make a present to show affection when in reality there is no love in my heart, there is but a pretense of sacrifice; the thing is given up but it cannot signify a love that does not exist. These hollow pretenses of love, far from expressing homage, become an offense when their emptiness is discovered. Such too often were the sacrifices of the Jews, and this is the reason why they were an abomination to God. Our Lord, quoting Isaias, reprehended such superficial sacrifice among the Jews: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matt. 15, 8)

I should understand clearly, therefore, that the essential quality of sacrifice is in the motive, that is, in the interior and abiding disposition of preference for God. God is honored not by mere activity, not by the mere giving of something; but by the affections of the heart, the interior self-offering on the altar of the will. Our Lord reminds me of this with the words: "For the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4, 23)

RELIGIOUS SACRIFICE

A sacrifice may be either profane or religious. If, for example, I donate some money to an orphanage out of love for humanity, this is a profane sacrifice. Sacrifice is religious when the thing is given up for

the love of God; when God is preferred to something.

The Heart of Religious Sacrifice

To what can I prefer God? To everything outside Himself, that is, to every created thing. From a practical point of view creatures are divided into two parts, myself and the world. I shall prefer God to myself when I use my natural powers in a supernatural way, thereby allowing the life principle of divine grace to become operative in me; exercising the virtue of faith by preferring God's word to my own ideas; the virtue of hope by trusting in His promises of supernatural help and reward rather than in the natural desires of my heart; the virtue of charity by preferring His will to my own. I shall prefer God to the world, when I renounce its riches, pleasures and honors, using them only for the love of God.

When the notion of sacrifice is regarded from the viewpoint of love expressed by a gift, then it is clear that love for God is the heart of religious sacrifice. This is the precise point on which the following explanation of my part in the Mass is based.

The Four Ends of Sacrifice

While the gifts of religious sacrifice are to be the flowering of love, they are at the same time the

means of rendering the homage of adoration to God, which is the primary *purpose* or end of sacrifice. Indeed there is no better way of acknowledging supremacy and excellence than by the gift of something esteemed. Besides this primary purpose of adoration, religious sacrifice serves other purposes, namely, thanksgiving for graces received; petition for things needful and expiation for sin. These four ends of sacrifice should be noted in passing, but the following analysis of my practical cooperation in the sacrifice of the Mass is concerned with the essential *meaning* of sacrifice which, as already explained, comprises the two ideas of *loving* and *giving*.

Sacrifice as a Social Act

Personal religious sacrifice gives true homage to God and may incline God to hear my prayer even on behalf of others. In its full meaning, however, religious sacrifice is more than the act of an individual. It must be a social act offered in the name of society by one who is appointed to represent it: a priest. The supreme sacrifice of a martyr, therefore, or the mortification practiced by a good Christian is not a sacrifice in the complete religious sense since it is individual and the one who offers does not officially represent the Church. For no one may speak to God or offer gifts to Him in the name of others unless he has received from Him authority over them;

as the Apostle says, "No man takes the honor to himself; he takes it who is called by God, as Aaron was." (Heb. 5, 4)

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

Christ's Preference

Applying the foregoing ideas to the sacrifice of Christ, which is the perfect religious sacrifice, we observe that from the first moment of His human existence He had a complete love for His Father; a disposition of unrestricted preference which He expressed by a total gift of Himself in the renouncement of His human nature to the divine. In the exercise of His intellect He surrendered His human judgment and considered all things in the light of heaven: "I speak what I have seen with the Father." (John 8, 38) In the desires of His heart God was the sole object of His affections: "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." (John 8, 29) By the activity of His will He gave unqualified submission: "Not My will, but Thine be done." (Luke 22, 42) With respect to the exercise of His senses He referred all things to His Father, so that He never used creatures merely for the sake of enjoyment. "My food," He exclaimed, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me." (John 4, 34) During His life on earth, as our model, our Lord seized every opportunity to express in act

this interior spirit of loving surrender. He was indifferent even to things needful to nature, for He said "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." (Matt. 8, 20) He was found among the poor and the sick, in circumstances which offered no gratification to the senses. His whole life was at His Father's disposal with a selflessness that found its full expression in the final act of Calvary.

Christ's Supreme Gift

The crucifixion was the *supreme* gift of Christ's sacrifice, summing up in one act all that His love could give, namely, Himself and the whole world. He could not possibly give more. "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15, 13) Yet the value of this complete sacrifice came not from the gift but from love. It was not the act of crucifixion, not the annihilation itself that was pleasing to the Father, but the inner self-immolation of love, the disposition of obedience or preference for his Father's will. This was the source of His glory and of our salvation, as St. Paul says, "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Therefore God has exalted Him" (Phil. 2, 8-9) And again, "He was heard because of His reverent submission." (Heb. 5, 7) Nevertheless it is quite true to say that we have been

saved by the death of the cross, because death was the gift required of Christ's obedience.

Now, our Lord being the chief member of the human race, Head of the Mystical Body, His Church, He had the power to represent all men and to sacrifice for them all, and therefore His own immolation was a social act, the act of a priest—a sacrifice in the complete religious sense. He submitted to the will of the Father, not only in His own name, but also in the name of all His members.

THE HEAVENLY SACRIFICE

Eternal Priest and Victim

In Our Lord's supreme act of sacrifice, the gift was made once: "Christ was offered once," says the Great Apostle. (Heb. 9, 28) But what Jesus gave on Calvary, His very life, remains eternally given in heaven; for the effect of death is to eternalize the disposition that it finds. Hence St. John saw Him in his visions as "a lamb standing as if slain." (Apoc. 5, 6)

Thus the Victim of Calvary remains the same Victim in heaven; the priest of Calvary also remains the same priest, as St. Paul says, "But He because He continues forever has an everlasting priesthood. Therefore, He is able at all times to save those who

come to God through Him, since He lives always to make intercession for them." (Heb, 7, 24-25)

The heavenly sacrifice of Christ, therefore, is not a new act; the inner oblation is ever alive in His Heart. It is the same sacrifice that was offered on the cross without the outward expression of suffering. "Jesus, having offered one sacrifice for sins, has taken His seat forever at the right hand of God." (Heb. 10, 12)

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

At the words of consecration spoken by the priest, Jesus becomes present on the altar. He comes there as He is in heaven, as the victim and priest of Calvary. He is there on the altar, given as He was given on the cross and as He remains given forever in Heaven. There, too, is the same act of obedience and love through which He surrendered Himself to the will of the Father.

Calvary Continued

We may now understand why the Council of Trent affirms that the Mass is a true and visible sacrifice; that Christ Himself is offered under visible signs in an unbloody manner by the priest. In other words, the Mass is the same act of love as the crucifixion, though not with the bloody form of

physical death, for, as St. Paul says: Christ . . . dies no more." (Rom. 6, 9)

Because of His divine Sonship, which makes Him the only member of the human race who is sinless by nature, our Lord is the only one fully acceptable to the Father. Only His pure love is a worthy return for the infinite love of God, and, therefore, He alone can render due honor to God and plead in the name of all sinners. And because of this perfect love, the single act of sacrifice on Calvary was superabundant for the redemption of all men. Thus St. Paul says of Him: "He entered once for all . . . into the Holies . . . having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9, 12)

WHY THE MASS?

Now God acts primarily with a view to obtaining His glory; and since nothing can be added to the unique act of crucifixion and the continuous sacrifice of Christ in Heaven, the question arises: Why is the act renewed upon the altar *as a sacrifice*? What new contribution to God's glory is to be found in the sacrifice of the Mass which gives reason for the continuation of Calvary upon the altar? The answer to this question is of very practical importance, for it reveals clearly my relationship to the Mass and the nature of my participation in the Holy Sacrifice.

On Calvary our Lord was sacrificed alone. True, He had me in mind and died for me, accepting in my name the will of the Father for my sanctification. But I was not actually present to accept it myself. My will was not there to be sacrificed, nor was the will of other Christians. So now I must offer myself in union with Christ together with all the members of the Mystical Body. This is necessary since the Church as a social body has no interior life except the sum of the individual lives of the members, so that each one must contribute his own offering. The more the members offer, the greater the glory God receives.¹ The priest as representative of the Church has the power to group all the sacrifices of individual members into a social homage and to unite them with the Head.

Calvary being continued upon the altar as the sacrifice of the whole Body, the Church gives me and every other member of the Mystical Body the opportunity to offer my will in union with the will of Jesus. The immolation of the Son is the only sacrifice that is pleasing to the Father, and, therefore, the offering of the members must be merged into and immolated with the Head.

¹ The amazing progress in the Church during its first years was due in great part, according to many theologians, to the extraordinary merits of the Blessed Virgin on earth.

God's Glory and My Sanctification

The answer to the question, "Why the Mass?" then, is this: the sacrifice of Calvary is perpetuated on the altar so that God may receive new glory from the ever-changing and ever-increasing union of my offering and that of all the members of the Church with the sacrifice of His divine Son, while the merits of Christ are applied through the Mass to the individual soul.

The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius XI, in the Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, appeals to the priest and to the faithful to join themselves to the Eucharistic sacrifice by the immolation of themselves: "So that they, too, may offer themselves up 'as a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God.' Therefore, St. Cyprian dared to affirm that, 'the sacrifice of our Lord is not complete as far as our sanctification is concerned unless our offerings and sacrifices correspond to His Passion.' "

The exterior form which the sacrifice takes in the Mass differs, of course, from the form of Calvary. Now there are no pains nor groans, no blood nor physical suffering; instead of the external acts of death there is a sacramental sign—the consecration. The Mass is called a sacrament-sacrifice² for Calvary

² A sacrament is a visible sign which brings about the sacred effect which it signifies. In Baptism, for ex-

is now present on the altar under a sign which, like like a sacrament, brings about what it signifies. The sign is the separation of the Body and Blood under the two species by virtue of the words of double consecration. While Jesus becomes present, living and entire, under each species, yet the words *in themselves* signify and produce the presence of the Body alone under the appearance of bread and the Blood alone under the appearance of wine. At the same time the changing of our sacrifice into Christ's is both signified and actually brought about by the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Victim of Calvary.

Just as the sacraments, therefore, are symbols and causes of the sanctification of man, so the Mass symbolizes and actually achieves the adoration of God through the offering of the whole Mystical Body of Christ.

MY SACRIFICE

With these preliminary ideas in mind, the practical implications of my personal participation in the Mass should readily become evident. As a member of the Church, I shall enter into the sacrifice of the Mystical Body and give new glory to God, not simply by being

ample the visible sign of pouring water together with the recital of the baptismal form causes in the soul the purification which this element signifies.

an observer, nor even by a most precise recitation of the liturgical prayers, but only in proportion as I offer myself as a co-victim with the Head, that is, in so far as I prefer God to myself and the world by whole-hearted love, striving to express this preference by gifts of renunciation when opportunities present themselves.

The sacrifice that our Lord made in my behalf on Calvary may now become personal and actual on the altar, but—I must make it so. The priest assures me that it IS my sacrifice when he turns to me at the *Orate Fratres* and says: "Pray brethren that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty."

PART TWO

THE OFFERTORY

OFFERING IN LOVE

Since an offering is essential to sacrifice, if the Mass is to be *my* sacrifice together with Christ's, then I must bring *my* offering. What is it to be? The obligation of making a total offering of my will to God is beyond question, for the Great Commandment, which obliges all to the wholehearted love of God, is the fundamental law of my complete incorporation into the Mystical Body.

The Precept of Love

The motive of my sacrifice, therefore, requires a permanent disposition of complete love or preference for God by the unrestricted surrender of my will to His. This is not a matter of choice, but of precept, even though progress in the achievement of the goal may be very slow. Notwithstanding the unmistakable words of our Lord: "You therefore are to be per-

fect even as your heavenly Father is perfect," (Matt. 5, 48) there is a lamentable but common misunderstanding in this regard. The obligation of striving to love God with the whole heart applies to every Christian of whatever state of life. It obliges the housewife equally with the Carmelite nun, even though God has called the latter to a higher state of religious life where the way is more secure. St. Augustine, St. Thomas, other saints and spiritual writers as well as the Vicars of Christ have reiterated this universal command to strive for the perfection of our love for God, not, of course, as something to be instantly realized (that is practically impossible), but as the end to which we are summoned and at which all Christian life must aim.

The Intention is Total

In my intention and my desire, therefore, I may not set limits to my love for God by wilfully giving my affections to any created thing merely for the pleasure that I find in it. This is an all-important principle of the Christian life, although it seems to receive little attention in our day. St. John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church, says plainly that while the soul entertains for a creature any affection that is not supernaturalized by love for God "there is no possibility that it will make progress in perfection." (*Ascent*, Bk. 1; Chap. 11; para. 4)

"A Christian's duty," writes Father Augustine Baker, "and much more the duty of a soul that aspires to perfection, is to love God alone, and other things only in relation to Him as instruments for increasing His love in our souls. All affection for creatures as such is more or less imperfect, not merely when the affection is excessive, but because its object is something apart from God." (*Custodia Cordis*)

Since I must desire and strive for the perfection of love for God, I must not place obstacles in the way by allowing a natural love of creatures to be the primary motive of my actions; on the contrary, I must strive for the total elimination of merely selfish motives of conduct in order to conform to and be united with the offering of our Lord on the altar.

The Achievement is Gradual

Due to the weakness inherent in my fallen nature, to surprise temptations, or to some habit that I am trying to overcome, I shall undoubtedly fail, in practice, to achieve this preference for God on many occasions that present themselves. Such failures, however, should not have their cause in any wilful, self-indulgent attachment to creatures. Otherwise, my motive is deficient; there is not the aim of whole-hearted love. My protestations of love and of sacrifice are lacking either in knowledge or in sincerity, and there will be little or no progress towards the

ideal goal commanded by our Lord. It means that I have substituted a goal of my own—something that *seems* more accommodated to my own weakness; I have abandoned the Christian rule of striving to do all things to please God, and have adopted to some extent the negative and impractical rule of trying to *please myself without offending God*.

Failure to distinguish between the intention, which is immediate and total, and the execution or fulfillment, which is a gradual growth or development, is frequently the reason why progress towards perfection is neglected. Because the commandment of wholehearted love seems difficult, and its achievement remote, it is regarded as impossible except for a few chosen souls. All others, it is wrongly presumed, may rest content in the dwarfdom of spiritual mediocrity, satisfied to love the world, to try to avoid mortal sin and to hope for purification in Purgatory—as though the pains of Purgatory are something to be preferred to the practice of love for God upon earth.

A Trick of the Devil

In order to keep me from fulfilling the will of God, who asks for my *wholehearted* love, the devil is satisfied if he can induce me to make the slightest reservation in my motive by even a single attachment. This is his “bridgehead” into the land of my affections. And so he uses the spirit of the world as his

mouthpiece to insist that there is no harm in this or that trifling natural attachment—some *habit* of self-indulgence or vanity. For he is aware of something that fallen man seems not to know or at least is unwilling to admit, namely, that natural motives pamper fallen nature and cultivate the germs of self-love which cause the disease of sin.

God, on the other hand, is watching for the motive of wholehearted love for Him. He is not so much concerned with the action as He is with the reason that prompts it, for love's interest is always in the *reason why*. Therefore, I must be supernaturally alert and not allow myself to be deceived by the tricks of the devil and lose much of my offering and undermine my spiritual life. I must practice making the love of God the primary motive of what I do, and not seek pleasure solely for enjoyment's sake either because I have formed a habit of it or because everybody else does it and I lack the courage to be different from worldly people. Surely I am to take as my model not the man in the street, but Jesus, the Victim of Love. Indeed, concern about what others think or say will be a blight on my spiritual life and will tend to destroy its fruit of Christ-like virtue.

The Need of a Christian Mentality

In fine, my intention to love God perfectly, which is the *motive* of my co-offering, is commanded here

and now, not as something to be immediately attained in its complete expression of *giving*, but as something to which my will must be dedicated and towards which I must tend in my activity. The gradual accomplishment of this preference for God will depend on the purification and supernatural direction of my intention in the everyday round of doings and endureings.

The development through constant practice of what our Lord calls a "single heart," or what St. Paul refers to as the "mind of Christ," is the all-important aspect of self-offering, and, therefore, Christian training should be directed to the forming of this habit.

The training of a child consists in his being taught to form good habits of mind and body by constant practice. Surely, then, a Christian child should be taught with the utmost care to learn the fundamental spiritual habit of doing all things to please God. From this habit the moral virtues will stem like flowers from a root, as St. Paul affirms in these words, "*Charity*³ is patient, is kind, does not envy . . ." (I Cor. 13, 4) And again, "Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, a *heart* of mercy,

³ By *Charity*, in this instance, St. Paul does not mean the infused theological virtue, but the subjective disposition of love for God which is the will's choice of God based on the knowledge of God.

kindness, humility, patience." (Col. 3, 12) This disposition of the will, this habit of mind or heart, or as it may well be called, this "Christian mentality," is not infused when sanctifying grace is given to the soul; it has to be acquired by the effort of cooperating with grace. Instruction in Christian doctrine, the reception of the Sacraments, and recitation of prayers will prompt and assist the practical effort, but they will not substitute for it.

Concerning the need of this early training Father Plus remarks, "From the time a child has the use of reason, God who sleeps in the child's soul must be pointed out. He must be taught to develop the grace received at Baptism and to live by it. Later he will have too many things to do! . . . He may be like all the rest: the essential will be of no interest to him."
(Vivre avec Dieu)

Practice in the Art of Love

If methods and assiduous practice are deemed necessary to learn every other science and art, they surely cannot be dispensed with in the supreme science of supernatural living, the art of loving God.

A child needs to be constantly trained in acting to please God in order to dislodge the natural habit of pleasing himself. Recognizing the need of such a spiritual transformation, the well-known Catholic

educator, Father George Johnson, had this to say of religious instruction: "The Catholic ideal of character training is founded on the Doctrine of the Cross . . . Our lower nature does not respond to our higher ideals automatically; the body must be chastised if it is to be brought into subjection . . . True asceticism is a positive thing. Its negative aspects are preparatory—we die to self that Christ may live in us." (*Notes on the Teaching of Religion*, Cath. Educ. Rev., V. 26, Jan. 1928)

A child should be reminded and encouraged over and over again to perform its actions to please God; to project this intention over actions about to be performed, mentally accepting in advance the holy will of God as it is manifested in the circumstances of duties and enjoyments. Gradually, then—for any habit can be formed only by degrees—the desire of pleasing God will be developed into a kind of "second nature" and so interwoven with the child's thoughts and actions as to manifest itself more and more spontaneously in contact with the pains and joys of daily life.

If a child has not first been nourished on this "milk" of the spiritual life, the habit of love, it will scarcely digest the "meat of the strong," the real Christian practice of self-denial and suffering for the love of God. In other words, a child left with his "natural" mentality will see nothing wrong with lov-

ing the world, and nothing profitable in bearing the cross.

THREE REASONS FOR TRANSFORMATION

I—My Supernatural Destiny

The very fact that the gift of divine grace raises the soul with its faculties to the supernatural plane and gives it a supernatural destiny is the primary reason why I must abandon the merely natural mode of life and strive to make the exercise of my faculties conform to my supernatural condition. The grace of Baptism does not supernaturalize my intention. It raises me to the supernatural plane and leaves me free. It remains for me, with the help of grace, to adjust myself psychologically and morally to this state by forming the habit of seeing things from God's point of view and of directing my will to Him. Archbishop Ireland, the great apostle of the northwest, stressed this point in forceful terms. Speaking to his seminarians he said: "There is not much practical Christianity in the world today. The danger of today is that of living a purely natural life as the good old pagans did. Naturalism, materialism and worldliness possess the earth . . . We should lead a supernatural life. Our works are dead and have no merit unless we are in a state of sanctifying grace and do them for a supernatural motive . . . On the super-

natural plane, elevated above the mere natural life, the just man lives by faith. We should have a supernatural motive in all that we do . . . The true happiness of the Christian soul lies in the heavenly regions on a supernatural plane above the merely natural life." (Quoted by Rev. John F. Duggan, *Eccles. Review*, Dec. 1939)

To live a supernatural life is to live in the presence of God as all the saints and spiritual writers explain, but an habitual subconsciousness of God cannot be acquired unless the heart, by being emptied of all *selfish* love of created things, leaves room for God and hungers for Him.

God made all things primarily for His glory, so that even if original sin had never entered the scheme of things, I should be obliged to surrender my selfish mode of acting and to live for the love of God in order to give God the glory due to Him. It was precisely the failure of our first parents to sacrifice their own sense-desire, judgment and will to the Divine plan, and to act out of faith, hope and charity, that constituted their sin with its woeful consequences.

II—My Fallen Nature

A second reason why I must abandon my natural mentality is the fact of sin. After original sin entered the world it became very difficult for man to conform himself to the supernatural plane even though re-

stored to grace by Baptism. A much greater effort was then required in order to cooperate with grace.

God, in creating the world, did not create a man with disordered faculties but one in whom the intellect was clear and the passions under the control of the will. As a result of the Fall man lost his spiritual perspective and the proper sense of values, so that he no longer clearly perceives God as the end of the chain of creatures. His vision now is clouded and only with difficulty does he see beyond the immediate links of the chain which are the creatures around him. The desires of his heart are disordered, so that the pleasure which comes from contact with created things exerts a strong influence on his will. The will, having lost its proper direction, is inclined to be captivated by the inordinate concupiscences. St. Paul describes this weakness of fallen nature in these words: "For I do not the good that I wish, but the evil that I do not wish, that I perform . . . For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that is in my members." (Rom. 7, 19-23)

The remedy for these disorders in the faculties of the soul is given in the infused virtues of faith, hope and charity. To use creatures aright, therefore, I must recognize my present fallen state and, with the assistance of grace, clarify my vision by forming a Chris-

tian mentality in order to see by the light of a practical *faith* that God made all things primarily for His glory and not for mine. I must gather up the scattered affections of my heart and turn them to God by a lively *hope* in eternal things and I must make a determined effort, through acts of self-denial, to detach my will from creatures, free it from captivity and unite it to the will of God by *charity*.

III—The Example of Christ

A third reason why I must act out of love for God and disengage myself from all merely natural affections and human motives of conduct is the example of Christ. Our Lord's life was not spent in the enjoyment of creatures and a mere avoidance of sin, but in a loving surrender of all His faculties and senses to His Father's good pleasure. "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him," He said. (John 8, 29) It was His complete preference for His Father that prompted the self-denial which He practiced and which He requires of all who would follow Him. He is the model for my imitation, as St. Peter says, "leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps." (1 Peter, 2, 21)

If it were not necessary for the Christian to lead a sacrificial and detached life, in whatever vocation God chooses to call him, then our Lord need not have done so. A Christian claiming the right to use crea-

tures merely for pleasure's sake because it is no sin, will find no support for such a claim in the teaching and example of Christ.

Blessed Henry Suso says in this regard "The man who expects to conquer his rebellious body and feel it under the law of the spirit, while he is living in the midst of pleasures and sensual satisfactions, is a madman without any kind of judgment. To enjoy the world and to serve God simultaneously is an impossibility for if this could be attained it would destroy the moral teaching and the word of Jesus Christ. 'If you would serve Me, you must do so with courage and begin your task by renouncing the world and yourself.' " (*L'Exemplaire*, Bk. 1, c. 2)

St. Augustine in the same vein remarks that "Christ having become man, despised all earthly things in order to teach us that they must be despised." (*De Catech. Rud.*, c. 22) Such significant utterances of the Saints are to be explained—not "explained away." They are not to be dismissed as exaggerations simply because they are not in accord with my own views or practices.

In the use of my own powers and the things of this world, therefore, I must observe three guiding principles: first, by reason of my elevation to the supernatural order of grace, I must renounce my natural mode of life and live a supernatural life of love for God, by seeking to make whatever I do contri-

bute to my supernatural destiny; second, I must take into account the effects of original and actual sin, whereby I tend to a wrong use of creatures; third, I must realize that the sole guide for my moral life is Christ Crucified. What habits of self-will, what luxury or worldly self-indulgence could survive the test of these three Christian principles?

Unless I understand my obligation of renouncing all selfish interest in things, I shall fail to see the significance of the Mass as *my* sacrifice and as a way of life, and I shall assist at it rather as a witness than as a participant and co-offerer.

The measure of my sacrifice is not enthusiasm for liturgical forms, nor a mere knowledge of what God has done for me, but an unreserved personal love for God expressed in my conduct. It is not an external formality, but an inner vitality that will make contact with the meaning and life of the liturgy. Unless I realize this, the Mass and the activity of my daily life will be two distinct and unrelated events.

THE GIFTS OF MY OFFERING

No matter what my state of life or occupation, the routine of my daily existence is encompassed by God's will for my sanctification. God mobilizes, so to speak, all the creatures and the detailed events around me in order to purify and sanctify me. The will of

God is manifest, as we read in the *Imitation of Christ* (Book III, Chap. 3), in every successive circumstance of tribulation and consolation. The practical way, therefore, of discovering the sincerity of my love for God is to measure the generosity of my gifts by my reactions to the crosses and pleasures which surround me.

Crosses Are Opportunities

It is a simple matter to *say* I love God, but it is when I come to grips with the reality of God's will that my interior disposition of love is tested. When, for example, God's ordaining or permitting will crosses my will through some contradiction, annoyance or criticism from people around me, what is my reaction? When I meet with some difficult duty, some unkindness, hatred or injustice; some pain or discomfort from interior or exterior causes; do I at least show a *recognition* of the purifying will of God, in spite of any natural repugnance and difficulty in accepting it? In such circumstances do I really want to give up my own will out of preference for the will of God?

Self-love instinctively regards all trials as obstacles to its own pleasure; love for God welcomes them as opportunities to offer a gift. If I reject such daily crosses by acts of impatience, unkindness, disobedience, complaint or criticism, then I am throwing away

the very gifts that divine Providence has placed at my disposal for proving the sincerity of my prayers and fulfilling my obligation of loving and preferring God. Only the crosses I have accepted can I place in spirit on the altar as the gifts that prove my love.

If, instead of a growing generosity, my offertory shows habitual poverty, it suggests a lack of spiritual progress and proves that I must develop a Christian mentality. The same or similar disagreeable circumstances will cross my path tomorrow, for trials are God's way of revealing to me the self-love that He sees in my heart, as St. Paul explains when urging Christians to press on towards the goal of perfect love: "If in any point you are minded otherwise, this also God will reveal to you." (Phil. 3, 15) Divine Providence will pursue me until death in order to effect my purification during this time of merit on earth rather than in the meritless pains of Purgatory. How important it is, then, that I learn to recognize with a certain spontaneity, that the innumerable events that cross my will are a constant means of my sanctification, a treasury of gifts of love, and, with the help of grace, gather them up as the spiritual offerings of my sacrifice of the Mass.

Pleasures May be Obstacles

So much for the tribulations and trials of my life. What of its consolations and joys? What is my atti-

tude towards the things that are pleasing to mind and body? Have I any attachments to pleasure for pleasure's sake? It is quite necessary for me to know this if I intend to fulfill my Christian obligation of living the Mass; because whatever I consume for no other reason than mere self-gratification, even though its use is lawful, I cannot bring as an offering to God, any more than one gift can be given to two different people. If I allow my affection for any creature of God to be merely a natural craving for the pleasure which the creature affords, then I am showing preference for a rival of God; I am trying to serve two masters. "Thy Beloved is of such a nature," says the author of the *Imitation*, "that He will admit of no rival, but will have thy heart alone and sit on His throne as King." As a Christian I must love people and things in God and for God, and I may love nothing except as a means to God. "Do not love the world," says the beloved disciple, "or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." (I John, 2, 15)

His Holiness, Pius XI, in his famous social Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. attributes the disorder of the modern world and the ruin of souls to man's preference for creatures. He says, "By original sin the marvellous harmony of man's faculties has been so deranged that now he is easily led astray by low desires, and strongly tempted to prefer the transient

goods of this world to the lasting goods of heaven." Then he goes on to say that the remedy is "the perfect order . . . which places God as the first and supreme end of all created activity, and regards all created goods as mere instruments under God, to be used only insofar as they help towards the attainment of our supreme end."

Love is the Measure of Giving

Plainly, then, I may not adopt the pagan principle that one is free to enjoy any worldly pleasure as long as it is not sinful. If the use of some creature is not for God and the attainment of heaven, the Holy Father says I should give it up. Yet I hear on every side the justification of all manner of self-indulgence on the plea that it is no sin, and this is asserted with an air of finality as though sin were the sole criterion of Christian conduct.

The rule of the Christian life is the great commandment of love, but the aim of love is always to please the beloved, not merely to avoid killing or insulting one's lover. A wife, for example, is not convinced of her husband's love just because he promises to try not to kill or injure her. The only proof that he really loves her is that he tries to do all he can to please her. Anything less is not worthy of the name of love in human affairs. How, then, may I expect God to accept my words of love, if my practical rule

of conduct is simply an effort to avoid killing His divine life in the soul by mortal sin, or at best hoping not to insult God by venial sin?

Avoidance of Sin a Negative Rule

Such a principle of action is not only loveless, it is moreover quite impractical. For if I claim the right to indulge in any form of pleasure as long as I stop short of sin, as for example, the sin of gluttony, or of vanity, or of intemperance, or of excess in anything whatever, I must know at what precise point my indulgence passes from what is permitted to what is sinful, so that I shall know when to stop; and yet to determine such a dividing line is manifestly impossible.

It is this negative rule of conduct which leads to two common spiritual ailments—scrupulosity and tepidity. A scrupulous person is usually one who, tending to judge things by the rule of sin, instead of by the precept of love, and being conscientious, is in constant dread of passing the limit of what is lawful. The remedy for such a condition is a change of mentality, the introduction of the sunlight of supernatural motivation. The anxious mind needs a habit of thinking in terms of pleasing a loving Father in order to dispel the dark, dread notion of sin.

A tepid person on the other hand, is one who, inclined to be carefree, has no hesitation in going blithe-

ly to the limit of the law. Since, however, the boundary is not determined in practice, such a person becomes callous and indifferent about sin. Our Lord did not teach His followers how far they might go without losing sight of Him, but to find happiness and security by approaching to union with Him.

Natural Motives and their Consequences

I shall be very unrealistic, moreover, if I ignore the fact that the use of lawful pleasure, when it becomes a habit of mere self-gratification, nourishes the innate selfishness of fallen nature and therefore disposes the soul to sin. St. Bonaventure, quoting St. Jerome says: "If somebody thinks he may indulge in pleasures and not be entangled in the sins of pleasures, he deceives himself." (*Apologia Pauperum*, c. 5, n. 4)

God understands my natural weakness and readily forgives my faults when I am trying to love Him wholeheartedly; but how must He regard my repeated failures if I wilfully and habitually weaken my supernatural vitality by a selfish love of pleasure?

If I cannot sincerely say that some legitimate pleasure I use habitually for recreation or relaxation is to promote my physical and mental well-being for the glory of God, and that I do not crave such a particular form of sense gratification, then such an at-

tachment or mere *natural* affection for a creature, although not sinful, is *inordinate* since it is not ordered or directed to its proper end.

Actions proceeding from such inordinate affections are called by the theologians "imperfections." Father Garrigou-Lagrange, an eminent theologian of our day, has this to say of imperfections: "To this category may also be linked natural acts that are not forbidden, but that are not in accord with spiritual progress, and that would surprise us in a mortified person and especially in the saints, unless a special reason motivated them: for example, the use of certain needless things, such as tobacco; certain ways of amusing oneself or of taking pleasure in scientific or artistic things, in study, any activity that has been branded as "natural" because it is not sufficiently supernaturalized by the motive prompting it . . . We should not stigmatize as evil what is only less good. But we should keep in mind this imperfection in the order of good, remembering that, as venial sin disposes to mortal sin, imperfection disposes to venial sin." (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*)

Natural Motives Dispose to Sin

If I wish to avoid a result I must remove the cause. It is useless to attack only the result and leave untouched what causes it. Since sin is only the final result of a natural and selfish love for creatures, I can

expect to overcome sin only by substituting a supernatural love for things. To think that it is trifling and petty to attack natural motives when I might give my attention to the more important problems of mortal sin, would be equivalent to saying that a gardener should not worry that he nourishes the roots of weeds so long as he cuts off the tops when they appear; or that a doctor should not concern himself with the germs that cause disease, but only take measures to alleviate the poison and pain that result. As David of Augsburg says on the same subject: "Floods are drops of water multiplied, yet strong walls have been known to crumble before them." (*Spiritual Life and Progress*, V. 2)

This is clearly not a question of occasional or isolated acts of lawful pleasure, for these are not indicative of habits or attachments, and may have little or no significance in relation to the permanent disposition of preference for God. It is a matter of *repeated* acts which manifest a selfish attraction towards some particular form of pleasure for which an affection has been, or is being, cultivated.

St. Teresa of Avila asks this simple question: "Do you think it possible that anyone who loves God, cares, or can care for vanities or riches, or worldly things, or pleasures and honors?" (*The Way of Perfection*, XL, 2) Yet, how much of my time, interest and conversation is given to pleasures and worldly

concerns far beyond any need or usefulness! Am I to be included among those spoken of by St. John: "They are of the world; therefore of the world they speak and the world listens to them"? (I John 4, 5) How little of my time, on the other hand, is given to meditation, spiritual reading and the things of God! What attention do I give to the corporal works of mercy, which I learned to recite by memory in school—to helping the poor, visiting the sick, etc.? Our Lord consigned to everlasting fire those who ignore these works of charity, (Matt. 25, 41-46) because a *lack of giving shows a lack of loving*, and only love is worthy of heaven.

Man acts as he thinks, and, therefore, the cause of this misdirection is wrong thinking. It is that natural mentality, which judges Christian life by the pagan principle of enjoying the world and hoping to avoid sin, instead of viewing all things in the light of love for God.

The Open Secret of the Saints

"Where thy treasure is there thy heart also will be." (Matt. 6, 21) If my treasure is really in God, then I shall find true joy and peace, not in pursuing worldly pleasures but in renouncing them for the love of God. This is the secret of the saints, though it should be no secret when it is plainly written for

all to read from the beginning to the end of the Gospel.

For St. Francis of Assisi the love of God was the "pearl of great price" over which he rejoiced exceedingly and to purchase which he despised all earthly things. "He constantly recommended spiritual joy, the joy of the soul . . . there is no question of sensual pleasure" says his biographer. (*The Ideals of St. Francis*, XI, 2) He lost all selfish interest in created things and used them with a holy indifference to pleasure and a wholehearted love for God. He soon discovered how few are the needs of those who desire only God. What he needed to use he sacramentalized by the motive of love, and what he did not need he sacrificed as a gift of love. So I should use things needful or profitable to my state of life for the love of God and then seek eagerly to increase the gifts of my sacrifice.

Just as I cannot include in my offering the crosses that I have thrown away, neither can I bring to it the pleasures that I have consumed for pleasure's sake. "An act is inexpedient," says the Franciscan, David of Augsburg, "which is void of utility or determined by no reasonable necessity. He comes empty-handed before God whose actions like withered boughs or barren wood in vine or orchard have served no useful purpose." (*Op. Cit.*, V. 2)

SYMBOLS OF SELF-IMMOLATION

On the altar for the offertory are the visible materials for the sacrifice—the bread and wine. These two elements are very eloquent symbols of the complete change that must be effected in the Christian heart and mind.

Wheat and Grapes to Bread and Wine

What is now bread was formerly wheat, having an entirely different form or nature. To be made suitable for the sacrifice of the Mass, the wheat had to be ground in the millstone and transformed into pure white flour for bread. Each wheat kernel was stripped of its old form, thereby surrendering its own proper qualities in order to assume a new nature and be taken and offered in the sacrifice. In a similar way, the wine that is in the chalice was formerly a cluster of grapes; but to be made ready for the offering every grape had to be despoiled of its own nature. The old form was crushed out in the wine-press, so that in its new form of wine it would be capable of becoming the Blood of the Lamb. It is by the grinding and crushing of these substances that the best is brought out of them, while the husks are discarded.

The Natural to the Supernatural

Here, then, are perfect images of the Christian life. Our Lord tells us that we must be "reborn" (John

3, 5) and St. Paul insists that we must "strip off the old man and put on the new," (Col. 3, 9) that we must be "renewed in the spirit of the mind," (Eph. 4, 24), and that we must "die daily," (I Cor. 15, 31) to ourselves and be "crucified to the world" (Gal. 6, 14), if we are to rise with Christ and "walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6, 4) My selfish nature must surrender its own merely natural mode of existence and take on the supernatural form of charity. It must submit to the millstone and the press of a loving Divine Providence which employs every detail of circumstance and event around me to grind me into purity of heart and crush my self-love into the love of God and neighbor. By this activity God wishes to bring out what is best in me, that is, the exercise of my natural faculties under the influence of the divine life of grace. Egoism under all its forms, gross and subtle, must be rejected like the husks.

This self-annihilation is, of course, principally in the motive—the destruction of all selfish reasons of conduct, and the substitution of the motive of God's glory. When ascetical writers speak of self-annihilation or of "destroying the natural," they do not mean that we must destroy or impair our physical and mental faculties; these very faculties are the medium by which we are to express the new mode of life, the divine life of grace. Thus Abbot Marmion writes in his classic of the spiritual life, *Christ, the Life of*

the Soul, "It goes without saying, that the supernatural state tends to exclude all that is vitiated in nature through original sin; that which is called by ascetical authors the 'natural' life, as opposed to the 'supernatural' life. We have seen how mortification consists precisely in destroying the 'natural' life."

The Holy Spirit clearly expresses this "death to the natural" in the words of St. Paul: "We are always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame . . . even though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." (2 Cor. 4, 10-16)

SYMBOLS OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Besides being symbolic of my individual Christian life, the bread and wine are also very significant images of my life as a member of the Mystical Body, the Church. Since God established His Church as a society, His glory requires that He receive homage and adoration from that society as a group; and so the Mass is the social act of group-homage expressed as one exterior function while being the sum or union of all the acts of the faithful.

This mystical union of many members likewise is symbolized in the species of bread and wine, for many grains of wheat were ground and blended to form the

one substance of bread; many grapes were crushed and commingled into the one substance of wine. It is only through this selflessness of perfect blending that the grains of wheat and the grapes are made capable of being transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The formation of these two elements and their transubstantiation into Christ symbolize perfectly the fusion of Christian personalities according to the divine law of brotherly love; they signify the spirit of charity that I must have if I am to be transformed into Christ. "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. 3, 14)

The sacred liturgy refers to this symbolic union in the *Secret Prayer* of the Mass of Corpus Christi with these words, "To Thy Church, we beseech Thee, O Lord, do Thou mercifully grant the gifts of unity and peace, mystically signified in the gifts which we offer unto Thee."

One Body

Any grain or grape that remains aside and keep its own nature, unmixed with its fellows, is excluded from the sacrificial substance. The same is true of the individual members of the Mystical Body. The elements of bread and wine should be a constant reminder that I must surrender my own likes and dislikes and treat every person as I would treat Jesus—fusing my character with the welfare of my fellow-

man, melting away in the fire of charity any barrier occasioned by distinction of race, nationality, color, or condition. Let us return to St. Paul for the same imagery and the same unmitigated teaching: "And the bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread." (I Cor. 10, 16-17)

If I maintain an aversion for some person, or bear a grudge because of some real or fancied wrong done to me; if I regard or treat others of a different nationality, race or condition as inferior to me—then I have not understood at all that the Mass is the sacrifice of all the members of the Mystical Body; I have failed to realize that it can be truly *my* sacrifice only when universal charity has broken down the barriers of self-love and made me truly a member of one body. This is the injunction of our Lord: "If thou art offering thy gifts at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has anything against thee, leave thy gift before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5, 23-24)

We are Brothers in Christ

I shall do well to examine my conscience in regard to the love of my neighbor, for many Catholics nourish, and even defend, very un-Christlike prejudices

in this matter. By fostering a spirit of aversion or enmity towards another, they separate themselves from the offering and the influence of the one body. Or, by despising the less fortunate in order to preserve their own pagan refinement, they act as though it were possible to have divisions in the Mystical Body of Christ.

There are those who say that they love our Lord and yet they refuse to love Him in their neighbor. Because of some God-given difference of race or condition they treat their brothers in Christ with disdain; they refer to them by opprobrious names and insist that they "must be kept in their place." St. James warns Christians about "making distinctions" among themselves. "My brethren," he says, "do not join faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ to partiality towards persons. Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith? . . . But you have dishonored the poor man . . . 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' . . . If you show partiality towards persons you commit sin." (James, 2, 1-9) Perhaps there are some at the holy sacrifice of the Mass with such unholy prejudices. "He who is least among you," said our Lord, "He is the greatest." (Luke 9, 28) To be great in the eyes of God I must seek to be the least in the eyes of men.

Jesus, who is our Model, made no distinction of race or condition. The only one excluded from His

company was the hypocrite. His love led Him to the poor in order to raise their spirits above their poverty. His refined senses were no obstacle to the expression of His love and humility, and He left for us on the occasion of the Last Supper a supreme example of the spirit that should animate us. He, the King of Infinite Majesty, washed the feet of the poor Apostles, and said, "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also should do." (John 13, 15)

What is my attitude towards the poor; towards those whom the worldly look down upon? Perhaps I have contributed to the cause of their poverty with all its attendant "evils," for it may safely be said that wherever one enjoys luxury someone else is oppressed. Perhaps the social prestige I now enjoy was achieved by my forbears at the expense of justice; and shall I now exclude my afflicted brother from my company because Divine Providence chose to make us of a different race, color or condition?

The self-annihilation symbolized by the offering includes the mortification of the physical senses; but perhaps I regard the "atmosphere" of the poor as an abomination and gather up my skirts, close my eyes and turn up my nose in pharisaical righteousness in its presence. My personal participation in the Mass, however, is dependent on the genuine love I have for my poorest neighbor, for he is Christ to me: "Amen,

I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for Me." (Matt. 25, 40) To join in the offering I must strive for that universal charity which is "the bond of perfection."

My offertory, then, represented and symbolized on the altar in the elements of bread and wine, consists only in that activity which is motivated by love for God and the denial of myself. "I exhort you, therefore, brethren," says St. Paul, "by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God—your spiritual service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed in the newness of your mind, that you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12, 1-2)

THE OBLATION

The priest, as the Church's official minister of the sacrifice, takes in his hands the offering of the bread and wine and at the same time joins to it my spiritual sacrifice as well as the offerings of all the members of the Mystical Body, especially of those assisting by their presence at the Mass. "For every high priest taken from among men," says the Apostle, "is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb. 5, 1)

PART THREE

THE CONSECRATION

UNITED TO CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

With the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed, and under the veil of the species our Lord becomes present—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, with the same disposition of loving surrender that he had on earth and which was eternalized in the act of death on Calvary.

My offering, too, with that of all the members of the Mystical Body is changed. All the love expressed by my detachment from the world and self; all the gifts I have poured out in spirit upon the paten and into the chalice, Jesus makes His own. He gathers to himself the sufferings I have endured, the crosses of my daily "dying," and they are fused with *His* passion and death. He takes the joys that I have renounced and vivifies them with the virtue of His own self-sacrifice.

Divine Alchemy

My offering of itself was of no supernatural worth; only the God-Man could give spiritual value to it, and here at the consecration of the Mass I become a "living sacrifice" pleasing to God the Father through the Son.

The sacrifice of Jesus is like pure gold, whereas mine is like lead; but when a small piece of lead is cast into a molten mass of gold, the lead becomes gold, too. Or, to illustrate the marvellous transformation in another way, if a magician has the power to change lead into gold, one touch of his wand will change all that I place before him. The more lead I bring, the more precious gold there will be. So our Lord touches with the wand of His cross the lead of my poor offering and it is transformed into the gold of His loving sacrifice.

Therefore, the greater my offertory, in the form of crosses accepted and joys renounced, the greater my consecration into the gold of divine love for—*only what is offered can be changed.*

The sacrifice of Jesus, like the wand, undergoes no change itself, nor does it lose anything in giving, for it has unlimited value. God, however, receives new glory on the Calvary of the Mass by the consecrated offerings of the members of Christ's Mystical Body.

The Gateway to the Trinity

The crucified Humanity of Christ is my only entrance to the Blessed Trinity. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," said our Lord. "No one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14, 6) Therefore; I can pass to the Father only through my Calvary of the Mass which reforms me into the likeness of the Crucified. As St. Paul affirms: "Through Him we have access to the Father" (Eph. 2, 18); and again, "We have confidence to enter the Holies in virtue of the Blood of Christ, a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh)." (Heb. 10, 19-20)

In the sight of the heavenly Father, my life in the Mass is now pleasing and acceptable for it is the life of His beloved Son. In the consecration I "grow up in all things in Him who is the head, Christ," (Eph. 4, 15), but only in proportion as I have offered myself out of love for God in union with Jesus. Not only is sin excluded from such a union, but every trace of self-seeking, all merely natural motives; for only what is done to please God is fit to be united to the clean oblation, the Immaculate Lamb, whose sole purpose on earth was to do only such things as pleased His heavenly Father.

No Robbery in a Holocaust

That is why the devil wants me to keep my natural

mentality—that habit of pleasing myself and of thinking only about avoiding sin instead of loving God. He knows that by keeping my self-love I shall tend automatically to refuse my crosses and seek after pleasure. In that way he hinders me from developing in the divine life at the consecration, for he steals what should become the gifts of my offertory. And when life does not increase, it decreases. "I am the door," said our Lord. "If any man enter by Me he shall go in and out, and shall find pastures. The thief comes only to steal and slay and destroy. I came that you may have life, and have it more abundantly." (John 10, 9-10)

Therefore, I must place the guard of spiritual vigilance over the treasury of daily opportunities, for, in the words of the prophet Isaias, there must be no "robbery in a holocaust." (Is. 61, 8)

With this understanding of my participation in the Mass I shall see the implications of my co-victimhood with Christ.

THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH

To be a victim means that I must be offered completely to God and that I must die. St. Paul presupposes the necessity of my dying if I am to share in the glory of Christ when he says: "For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be so in the likeness of His resurrection also."

(Rom. 6, 5) Therefore, I must die to all that is not God, that is, to my own judgment, to my will and to the world.

A Fool for Christ

I must die to my judgment by accepting and practicing the *Folly of the Cross*. This means that I must submit my reason, which is the natural and limited use of my intellect, to the superior light of a practical faith. If I fail to be "renewed in the spirit of the mind" I shall find myself continually in conflict with the divine process of my personal sanctification, for "God's ways are not our ways"; His wisdom is diametrically opposed to the wisdom of the world. Intent on my natural judgment I shall wrongly presume that God wants His children to enjoy a smooth and pleasant life in His service. Consequently I shall resent the disagreeable qualities and contrary actions of other people which God makes use of precisely to "annihilate" my *common sense*.

As a co-victim with Christ I must expect to be crossed and contradicted, even to be treated with malice and injustice and to be looked upon as a fool, just as He was as soon as He began to preach His unworldly doctrine. St. Mark relates that "when His own people had heard of it, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He has gone mad.'" (Mark 3, 21) St. Paul, the other apostles and all those

devoted to the service of God, received similar treatment, for "the disciple is not above the Master."

Calling attention to the utter "folly" of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo XIII remarks that "amid widespread effeminacy and the extreme luxury of the age, he went about in mean and coarse apparel, begging his sustenance from door to door, and, what is commonly regarded as the bitterest of trials, not only putting up with the raillery of the misguided populace, but courting it with wondrous avidity. He had espoused the *folly of the Cross* of Christ and found in it absolute wisdom; and as he learned to penetrate its august mysteries, he realized that nowhere could he gain greater glory." (*Auspicato*)

"Particular devotion to God's service," explains Pere Grou, "infallibly entails contradiction, calumny, injustice, and various trials from creatures; and that not only from the wicked, but even from the virtuous or at least those reputed as such. Is this to be wondered at after Jesus Christ became the Victim of false devotees seated on the chair of Moses? All such trials are foreseen by God; permitted as regards their authors, willed as regards their object." (*The School of Jesus Christ*)

Father Faber remarks that the zeal of one converted in earnest to the following of Christ is at first a matter of surprise and amusement to worldly-mind-

ed Christians; but if the person perseveres in unworldliness, then they become irritated and disturbed, and finally they will be infuriated that anyone should dare to be different from the world.

“The worst trials of extraordinary sanctity,” says the biographer of St. Ignatius Loyola, “come not from the evil-minded, but from men of short-sighted and conservative character. Sanctity, like genius—and genius it is—frightens the large and well-meaning class which clings to trodden ways, and instinctively dreads the unhabitual in any form.” (*Life of St. Ignatius*—Francis Thompson)

So it is that well-meaning, but natural-minded friends, will do their utmost to persuade me to follow the vanities and fashions of the world and deter me from living according to the unworldly teaching of the holy Gospel. They will tell me not to be eccentric, old-fashioned and different, but to be normal and *like every one else*. But, it is impossible to resemble our Lord and be like the world at the same time. Normality for a Christian is measured by the teaching of Christ, as in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, not by popular opinion. I shall look in vain for a text in the Gospel which tells me to enjoy the pleasures of the world and simply try not to sin. Therefore, it is those Christians who act and think like good pagans who are really abnormal, even though their number be legion.

The World Loves Its Own

If I am unwilling to die to my own judgment and to put on the "mind of Christ"; if I prefer to adapt myself to the pagan mentality of the world, then the process of my purification will cease and many of my trials will disappear. My worldly manner of life, in spite of its few external acts of religion, will be no reproach to the pleasure-loving and selfish environment of ordinary pagans and, therefore, I shall not have to suffer for being different from them, as our Lord told me I should. The world will love what is its own.

The Popular Spirit is Pagan

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you!" our Lord says to His followers. (Luke 6, 26) Therefore, if I seem to get along amiably with worldly people in their society, their amusements, fashions and business, it suggests that the world and myself have come to terms. Either the world has reformed to the spirit of Christ, or else I have compromised and conformed to the world. Pope Pius XI, speaking of modern society, rules out the first alternative when he says, "we are confronted with a world which in large measure has almost fallen back into paganism" (*Quad. Anno*) and Pope Pius XII refers to the popular mode of life today as "a wave of black paganism."

As a real follower of Christ I should expect to be

despised by the world, just as He was. "If the world hates you," He said, "know that it has hated Me before you . . . because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15, 18-20)

I Must Die to my Own Will

To share in the victimhood of Jesus, I must also be crucified to my own will. Consequently I must determine to give unquestioning obedience to the holy will of God—both to his *Signified Will* as expressed by all the obligations of the Christian life, the duties of my state and the directions of my lawful superiors and to the *Will of God's Good Pleasure*, as manifested in all the changing circumstances of life which are outside my control.

To repair the disobedience of Adam, our Lord was obedient even to the death of the cross. Since obedience, therefore, is the medium of redemption, I must saturate myself with it. The spirit of the world is characterized by self-will and independence; the life of a Christian, a co-victim with Christ in the Mass, should be distinguished by generous and unflinching submission to all lawful authority.

Even though I *intend* to be obedient, unless I die to my own will, I shall follow my natural impulses and obey willingly only in those things which I consider just, profitable and agreeable to me, and my

natural mentality will leave me under the delusion that I am obedient.

I Must Be Crucified to the World

Finally I must be dead to the attractions of the world by a complete renunciation of its spirit and a total indifference to its pleasures, so that I can say with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6, 14)

Training for the Cross

The important aspect of my victimhood is not the self-imposed penance of giving up sense-pleasures, but the surrender of my will in bearing the crosses sent by God. In practice, however, unless I am trained by voluntary self-denial I shall not have the strength to submit my will and bear my crosses generously. It is the devil who tries to deceive me by insisting that it is sufficient and better to endure the crosses chosen for me by God than to choose penances for myself. The devil would have me conclude from this truth that self-imposed penance is unnecessary. This would be equivalent to an athletic trainer telling a boxer that to win the title he has only to defeat his opponent in the contest and that the self-discipline of preliminary

training is not necessary. Such ideas do not accord with the teaching of St. Paul who uses the same example to show the imperative need of first denying myself if I hope to pass the test of suffering and trial. He says: "Everyone in a contest abstains from all things—and they indeed to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable." (I Cor. 9, 25) Little wonder that my undisciplined nature complains and murmurs under even trifling crosses.

In studying how to live the Mass it is well for me to give special attention and emphasis to the necessity of dying to the world, that is, of practicing exterior mortification and detachment of the senses from material things for then I shall be trained and prepared for the interior mortification of my judgment and will when God sends crosses for my sanctification. I must not be misled by those who excuse themselves from bodily mortification on the pretext that interior mortification is more important. In this regard Father Faber says, "Mortification is both interior and exterior; and of course, the superior excellence of the interior is beyond question. But if there is one doctrine more important than another on this subject, it is that there can be no interior mortification without exterior; and this last must come first. In a word, to be spiritual, bodily mortification is indispensable . . . I tremble when people speak of interior mortification, it sounds so like a confession that they are lead-

ing comfortable lives.” (*Growth in Holiness*, Chap. XI)

St. Leonard of Port Maurice gives four brief rules “for keeping oneself in that peace of heart without which we are of no use to ourselves nor to anyone else.” While the second and the third rules deal with the acceptance of the trials that God sends, the first rule is this: “Be dead to the world, to creatures, to oneself, to all that is not God. We must keep our hearts so disentangled from earthly things as to make no more account of what is not God or does not relate to Him than we would of a grain of sand.” (*St. Leonard of Port Maurice*, Devas)

A CO-VICTIM WITH CHRIST

If I am unwilling to abandon my human “common sense” for the Folly of the Cross; if I keep my own will and enter into conflict with the will of God in my daily circumstances; if I indulge in the pleasure of the senses with only specious arguments that it is not solely for pleasure’s sake, then what elements of co-victimhood are to be found in my life?

The Pope’s Warning

That very question was proposed to every Christian by Pope Pius XII in his address to the Eucharistic Congress held in the Twin Cities in 1941. These are

his words in speaking of the Blessed Eucharist: "St. Thomas tells us that we are transformed into Christ, and, venerable brothers and dearly beloved children, it is a victim we have received. Well may you ask what elements of victimhood are to be found in your lives . . . Sacrifice, especially self-sacrifice, is an essential element in the life of a victim.

"Early explorers record in their relations their utter amazement at the mighty current that sweeps down the Mississippi River. There is a stronger current of black paganism sweeping over peoples today, carrying along in its onward rush newspapers, magazines, moving pictures, breaking down the barriers of self-respect and decency, undermining the foundations of Christian culture and education.

"Only a young man and woman of self-sacrifice—we were almost going to add, heroic self-sacrifice—will escape the flood.

"Your chief enemy is within you—that natural drag of our fallen humanity to self-seeking and sin. Self-sacrifice must combat it."

Need of Heroic Self-Denial

This is a very solemn warning coming from my spiritual father, the Vicar of Christ. He sounds an alarm that there is a flood of worldliness, "black paganism" he calls it, surging around me, and that there is within me an enemy who seeks to let in the flood,

namely, my natural self-love. The Holy Father tells me that I must destroy that enemy by self-sacrifice,—even by heroic self-sacrifice—otherwise I shall be swept away with the tide. I must learn this victimhood from the Divine Victim Who speaks to me from the cross of sacrifice and not be deterred from it by cries of “extremism” from any false prophets of a comfortable Christianity.

Total Renunciation for All

A co-victim with Christ has only one guide for his use of this world and that is our Lord upon the Cross, crucified to the world for the glory of His Father. Therefore, I shall not use the good things of earth for God’s glory until I too am dead to the world by renouncing creatures out of complete preference for God, as our Lord explicitly declared: “Every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14, 33) Saint Bede the Venerable, quoted by St. Bonaventure, (*De Perf. Evang.*, q. 11 a. 1), commenting on these words, explains the difference between the renunciation of all things and the giving up of all things, in this way: “Renunciation of all things applies to everybody; to all who would make proper use of the things of this world which they possess, so that the mind be directed towards eternal things. Relinquishing (or giving up) all things pertains only to the perfect (to those called

to the state of perfection, that is, the religious life) who set aside all temporal things and aspire only to eternal things.”

This total renunciation is the key-note of genuine spirituality. In summarizing the marvellous tradition of the Franciscan School of spiritual authors, Father Boniface Maes remarks, “There is no beating about the bush when it is a question of abnegation; it is on the first page of all their treatises, just as it was the first action of St. Francis. They are unrepentant on this point, and this renunciation pushed to extremes is one of the characteristics of their spirituality; it is also one of the characteristics which make for the actuality of this doctrine, by erecting it boldly in the face of the softness of a sensual and covetous century which has forgotten to an incredible extent the virtue of penance . . . one cannot be sanctified in cotton wool.” (*Franciscan Mysticism*)

To say that God created the pleasures of the world for His children and that therefore they are good and should be used with moderation is, of course, correct—but only if rightly understood. When a pagan speaks of taking pleasures with moderation, he means: taking the pleasures of the world *for themselves*, because they constitute natural happiness, but observing the measure prescribed by reason, lest this natural happiness be destroyed. When a Christian speaks of taking pleasures with moderation he means:

taking the pleasures of the world, *not for themselves*, but only *as a means* to reach the supernatural happiness that God offers to those who love Him. For a pagan, happiness is in the knowledge, love and possession of things created; for a Christian, happiness is in the knowledge, love and possession of the Most Blessed Trinity.

Moderation—Christian or Pagan

The Christian virtue of moderation is to be exercised in the use of those things which are needful or useful in living for God. It does not apply to the habitual use of mere superfluities and extravagances which manifest a selfish love for creatures. Moderation applies to the use of things but not to the *motive* of their use. St. Catherine of Siena says in this regard "to attain perfection you must walk moderately and at the same time without moderation. We must love God without moderation . . . And the first thing that we must do is to flee from all communion with creatures only for the sake of pleasure, when love does not require it." (*St. Catherine of Siena*, Jorgensen)

The claim that it is all right to use things in moderation is often a pretext for mediocrity and is used to sanction a moderate "worldliness" and even a moderate indulgence in the seven-fold passions: a moderate vanity; a moderate covetousness; a moderate

gluttony; a moderate sloth; and so on down the line.

Only when I become truly mortified or dead to self are all things mine; only then can I use them even moderately without danger. I shall not even have real joy in them until I have renounced the pleasure in them for the love of God; until I have died to them and they have died to me. Only after that can I use them again without feeling anxiety lest I misuse them.

Unless I distinguish clearly between natural and supernatural temperance I shall simply play into the hands of Satan. "By moderation," wrote Andre Gide, "I thought I could master evil and precisely through this moderation the evil one has taken possession of me." (Pfleger, *Wrestlers with Christ*)

The measure for my use of God's creatures, therefore, is not the natural virtue of temperance, dictated by reason and promulgated by the pagan philosophy of Aristotle, but the supernatural, cardinal virtue which is derived from the divine life of grace. Regarding the perfection of this Christian virtue, St. Thomas says, "Temperance abandons, so far as nature allows, what the body demands." (Ia IIae, q. 61, a. 5) Such has always been the practice of the saints in every walk of life, and I have the obligation to strive for sanctity! I shall learn holiness from the saints; not from the pleasure-lovers of the world.

as St. Alphonsus remarks: "Worldlings say: 'God has created the goods of this life for our use and pleasure.' Such is not the language of the saints . . . To abandon, for God's sake, all worldly enjoyments has always been the practice of holy souls." (*The True Spouse of Christ*, c. 8, n. 3)

The Sacraments do not Substitute for Sacrifice

All this, of course, will be meaningless if I act as though the sacrament of Penance can serve as a substitute for my sacrifice of the Mass. If I ignore the causes of sin, and merely confess the serious effects which periodically and repeatedly issue from a self-indulgent disposition, I shall not even suspect the need of the restraint required by the supernatural virtue of moderation. I shall become like those who think that virtue consists in not sinning except when one is tempted.

With a practical realization of what it means to be a co-victim with Christ and to be crucified to the world on my Calvary of the Mass, my attitude towards the joys of the world should be greatly changed. Henceforth I should disregard the wants and cravings of my fallen nature and, gradually at least, reduce my pleasures to what is needful or useful, and this, not grudgingly, but willingly and generously out of love for God. I should give up pastimes that are worldly and useless and maintain a holy indif-

ference in using such pleasures as are needful or profitable, whether they consist in attending motion pictures and sport spectacles, in dancing, reading secular magazines or in listening to the radio—forms of recreation which could be helpful and inspiring, but which seem to serve, for the most part, only to promote the paganism condemned by the Holy Father. I should also reject the world's attitude towards *habits* of drinking, smoking, using cosmetics or in following the dictates of fashion. For even though these things may be indifferent in themselves, I am to use creatures for the love of God and not out of mere self-gratification or vanity.

All such things may easily become strong attachments and as such, unpleasant though it may be for human nature to be told so, they are detrimental to the soul, as the spiritual authors clearly affirm.

Hurtful and Dangerous Affections

St. Francis de Sales, the "gentle saint" and spiritual guide for the laity, writes plainly in this matter with these words: "Although it be lawful to play, dance, to dress, to feast, or to be present at innocent comedies, yet to have an affection to such things is not only contrary to devotion but is also extremely hurtful and dangerous. The evil does not consist in doing such things, but in a fond attachment to them . . . I do not say we can never use these dangerous

things, but I affirm that we can never set any affection on them without prejudice to devotion." (*Introduction to a Devout Life*, I, c. 23)

To a natural mentality, trained in the negative notion that the practice of Christianity consists in an effort to avoid sin, such teaching, even though it comes from the saints, is looked upon as either trifling, old-fashioned or rigorous. Only a mind instructed in the ideal of loving God with the whole heart will be disposed to understand why the saints oppose any attachment to lawful pleasure in such strong terms as to call it "extremely hurtful and dangerous."

Renounce All Worldly Frivolity

According to the clear teaching of the present Supreme Pontiff in his recent Encyclical on the Mystical Body, I should give up whatever does not promote my spiritual welfare. "Today," he says, "imposes with particular stress on everyone the duty to flee the vices and blandishments of the world and to renounce the unrestrained pleasures of the body and that worldly frivolity and vanity, which contribute nothing to the Christian formation of soul, nothing towards gaining heaven." The Holy Father's choice of words is unusually emphatic in saying that all Christians have the obligation to renounce not only sin, but whatever is of no value for heaven. There-

fore, if I would heed the words of Christ's representative I should ask myself whether I have any habits of self-indulgence which contribute nothing, directly or indirectly to my spiritual life.

I am willing, of course, to admit in theory that the Christian life is in direct opposition to the worldly life, but I tend to avoid any practical analysis of worldliness, lest some of my own habits should be found in that category. Yet if worldliness does not mean the spirit that pervades the habits just mentioned, then it must mean outright sin or nothing at all.

If Christians are to be won over from their sins, they must be drawn away from the worldliness that fosters sinfulness. Such is the message of our Lord and His saints. "According to St. Bonaventure," wrote Pope Pius X, "God commanded Francis to preach penance above all and to win people away from the love of the world to the love of Christ." (*Letter to the Three Ministers General*)

Recreation for the Love of God

Relaxation or recreation in some form or other is, of course, a necessary part of my life, and so it must have a relationship to my obligation of living the Mass. This necessity, however, does not release me from the Great Commandment of love, nor is it a

justification for any form of pleasure or any amount of indulgence provided it is not sinful.

Since to live the Mass means that I die to self and the world and act only out of love for God, any physical or mental relaxation I take should not hinder the life of love for God by fostering and flattering the sense-life of fallen nature.

Obviously, it is ordinary prudence to suspect that Satan, who is the "prince of this world" is not slow to exploit any invention of science capable of distracting the human mind from God and pre-occupying it with the things of the world. Hence, as a Christian, I should consider the popular forms of recreation in the light of love for God and of my sacrifice of the Mass, lest I be deceived by the spirit of the world and attracted by the lure of sensible pleasure in popular entertainment. The motion picture is a good example for consideration since it is the most attractive form of diversion and exerts an enormous influence on the public mind.

Motion Pictures and the Great Commandment

The late Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, aware of the tremendous power of the motion picture either for Christianity or for paganism, wrote an encyclical on the subject, in which he said, "the motion picture must be elevated to conformity with the aims of the Christian conscience." Now the Christian conscience

is formed in the love of the crucified Saviour, but what does the film industry, with its present worldly spirit, know about such love?

It would, indeed, be a great joy and inspiration if I could choose to see a film portraying the love story of the Holy Ghost for a soul; teaching me how God sanctified by the cross of suffering one of those real heroes and heroines whom I profess in my prayers to love and admire—the saints; saints of every walk of life, whose deeds of supernatural chivalry, inspired by the divine Hero of Calvary, surpass anything conceived in the pagan imagination! But there is little choice for the Christian, first, because Hollywood knows nothing of the "Christian conscience," or the Folly of the Cross, and secondly, because Christians approve and perpetuate a pagan film industry by patronizing it. Entertainment will not be elevated to conform to the supernatural mind until Christians in general cultivate a supernatural mentality in themselves, and refuse encouragement and support not only to what is sinful, but also to what is worldly.

His Holiness tells his children what the Christian norm is in this matter. He says, "Why, indeed, should there be a question of merely avoiding evil? Why should the motion picture simply be a means of diversion and light relaxation to occupy an idle hour? With its magnificent power it can and must be a light and positive guide to what is good." Now since

the motion picture industry as it exists today is steeped in civilized heathenism, the rule of avoiding evil is the very highest concept it could have of morality and sentimentalism its only interpretation of holiness. With a materialistic spirit it will produce very little above the natural order, for it neither knows nor cares to know about the supernatural rule of love for God.

False Beatitudes

What Hollywood usually produces at its best, not forgetting its worst, is a sense-stimulating dream-world that provides a momentary escape for the masses from the hardships and heartaches of real life. But, having no power of spiritual elevation, it only sends its votaries back from a false paradise even more displeased with the very obligations and crosses which should be welcomed as the Calvary of a Christian's daily life.

The practical philosophy that underlies the generality of motion picture productions is in direct opposition to the foundation of the Christian life taught by our Lord. Hollywood features a happiness based on a contrary set of Beatitudes: Blessed are the rich; Blessed are the vain; Blessed are the merrymakers; Blessed are they who thirst after pleasure; Blessed are they who do not suffer. The evil of this subtle

teaching escapes notice because it is concealed in the half-truth that Christians must avoid sin; it is brought to light only by the whole truth that Christians must love God and "do always the things that are pleasing to Him." (John 8, 29) In any case, it is very difficult to stop short of sin when momentum towards it is gathered from the spirit of vanity and pleasure-seeking advocated by worldly pictures. It is not easy to prevent the disease of sin when the germs of worldliness are freely cultivated.

All the screen-promised happiness in creatures is a seductive illusion and too often the very lives of those who play the parts bear most eloquent testimony to this fact.

Because of the tremendous power and influence of the motion picture, the ideals of the Gospel of Christ Crucified are becoming more and more obscure, and thoughtless Christians, consumed with interest and admiration through an overwhelming appeal to the senses, are inevitably led to imitate the self-will and worldliness that they see and hear.

A Power-House of Paganism

Furthermore, I cannot overlook the fact that the very name of "Hollywood" is a symbol of worldliness. The center of the film industry is the power-house of modern paganism. Before the whole world

it parades and glorifies the life of luxury and sin and promotes the idolatry of body-worship. It sets the pace and tone for all the other avenues of worldly propaganda such as popular magazines, the fashions, radio programs and others.

The irony of it is that this unholy institution is thriving on Christian money even as it mocks at Christian virtue; even as most of its idolized "stars" flout the law of God before the whole world. What does Jesus on the Calvary of the Mass think of it and of me? Meanwhile, the missions receive *in comparison* a trifling response to their pleading on behalf of the souls for whom Jesus died. The cry goes out for more and more laborers, for the fields are white to the harvest, but the hearts of Christian youth which could be drawn to love and imitate the glorious heroism of Christ lifted up on the cross are captivated by the emotional stimulus of a fictional love—which is often sinful in itself, or would be a preamble to sin in real life—or fascinated by a make-believe heroism based on motives of egoism, nationalism or even hatred.

The devil, who is the master-mind in the traffic of worldliness, knows all the tricks of his trade. He knows how to keep my interest, to arouse my enthusiasm and to get my money. He throws out the bait of a few "religious" films. True, they are clean and

entertaining, but he knows they will teach me nothing about the personal practice of the Sermon on the Mount, nor encourage me in my sacrifice of the Mass.

Misleading Maxims

The spirit of the world has become so much a part of modern life that without spiritual vigilance I can hardly escape being seriously influenced by it in some form or other. In consequence, I may unwittingly have adopted an attitude or formed habits inconsistent with the unworldly teaching of the Gospel, and of my part in the sacrifice of Christ. Misled by such worldly maxims as "everybody does it"; "there's no harm in it"; "enjoy yourself but don't sin"; I may have developed habits of conduct which do not answer to any natural need or utility, but only cater to an acquired craving or love for pleasure, something perhaps that is injurious rather than helpful to nature. To defend such habits or practices on the ground that I am free to use any pleasure that is not sinful is to set aside the Christian rule of doing all things out of love for God, and to forget the Calvary of the Mass.

St. John Chrysostom, an eminent doctor of the Church, tells me plainly what my attitude should be towards the comforts and pleasures of this world. "Nothing," he says, "is so incongruous in a Chris-

tian and foreign to his character, as to seek ease and rest; and to be engrossed with the present life is foreign to our profession and enlistment. Thy Master was crucified, and dost thou seek ease? Thy Master was pierced with nails and dost thou live delicately? Do these things become a noble soldier? Wherefore Paul saith, 'Many walk, of whom I told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.' For the cross belongs to a soul at its post for the fight, longing to die, seeking nothing like ease, whilst their conduct is of the contrary sort. So that even if they say they are Christ's, still they are as it were enemies of the cross. For did they love the cross they would strive to live the crucified life. Was not the Master hung upon a tree? Do thou otherwise imitate Him? Crucify thyself, though no one crucify thee. Crucify thyself, not that thou mayest slay thyself, God forbid, for that is a wicked thing, but as St. Paul said, 'The world has been crucified to me and I to the world.' (Gal. 6, 14) If thou lovest thy Master die His death. Learn how great is the power of the cross; how many good things it hath achieved, and doth still: how it is the safety of our life . . . Everyone who is a friend of luxury and of present safety is an enemy of that cross in which Paul makes his boast: which he embraces, with which he desires to be incorporated. As when he

saith, 'I am crucified to the world and the world to me.' " (*Hom. XIII on Phil. 3, 18-21*)

That the Christian life is intended to be a Calvary of love; a crucifixion of complete detachment and patient suffering, has been the constant teaching of the Church through its Doctors, Saints and Supreme Authority. As Chrysostom wrote in the third century, so Pope Leo wrote in the nineteenth century: "The mainspring of Christian virtue is a self-sacrificing disposition, ready to bear with what is hard and trying, the cast of which is outlined by the cross, which those who seek to follow Christ must be content to shoulder. It is peculiar to this disposition to remain detached from perishable things, to keep oneself severely in check, and to bear misfortune with ease and moderation." (*Auspicato*) How does the life of modern, merry-making Christians, cushioned like that of their pagan neighbors in the comforts and gratifications of modern society with its fashions, attachments and worldly amusements, square with this clear and authoritative teaching of the Church?

* * *

My co-victimhood with Christ means that I earnestly desire and effectually strive to be as completely changed in mind and heart as the Sacred Species are in substance. Therefore, I ought not to keep back

anything by attachment to my own judgment, my own will, or to any created thing merely for self-gratification. I must strive to make the offering of myself complete, for—*only what is offered can be changed.*

THE MOTHER OF THE CRUCIFIED

A proper understanding of the Mass as *my* sacrifice brings into relief the doctrinal basis for devotion to our Lady, without which the love I profess for our Blessed Mother might be little more than mere sentiment or emotion.

The life that I receive from my union with the Head of the Mystical Body in the Mass is the same life that came into the world at Bethlehem: "I came that they may have life," said Our Lord. (John 10, 10) The life of grace is a continuation or prolongation of the Incarnation.

Woman, Behold Thy Son

Since Mary was the necessary channel or instrument in God's plan for the birth and growth of the Redeemer in the world, she must be equally necessary for the birth and growth of that same life in my soul. In other words, when my offering is transformed into Christ at the consecration of the Mass, Mary must be present. There is no other way for me to "put on the new man," (Col. 3, 9) and to

"grow up in all things in Him who is the Head, Christ," (Eph. 4, 15) except through Mary. When I am mystically present on the altar as a victim, through a sincere desire of total self-renouncement, then Jesus may say of me from the altar what He said of John from the Cross: "Woman, behold thy son!" (John 19, 27)

True devotion to Mary as my Mother supposes an earnest desire and effort to acquire her spiritual features; her patience, obedience and modesty. It is most practical, therefore, to ask myself whether I strive to resemble Mary, or compromise with the principles and practices of the world.

Son, Behold Thy Mother

When I reflect on Mary's part in the Folly of the Cross is it conceivable that she would claim it as a "right," as I sometimes do, to be harsh or resentful, unkind or impatient, merely because the conduct of other people is unreasonable, unfair or annoying?

Witnessing Mary's graceful obedience to the will of God's good pleasure, manifested through the cruel and unjust superiors responsible for the torture and death of her divine and only Child, can I refuse to die to my own will and still claim to be a true child of such a Mother?

To be worthy of Mary's Motherhood I must be

ready to be cast aside; discriminated against, misjudged, scorned, or trampled by the feet of the ambitious or jealous; I must accept all as my Mother did on Calvary without protest, without resentment.

At Mass I take my place beside Mary at the Calvary of the altar, and, therefore, to be practical I must ask myself whether Mary would approve, as most Christians now seem to do, of the vanity and worldliness that are so widespread, especially in the matter of dress and personal modesty. The subject of personal attire is of very grave importance and cannot be dissociated from my obligation to live the Mass. The Church has repeatedly and emphatically condemned the infamous tendency of woman's fashions. Individual reformers might be labeled by the moderns as old-fashioned and prudish. But the same cannot be alleged of the authoritative teaching of the Church.

Pope Benedict XV

"There are two evils," wrote Pope Benedict XV, "which predominate in the great subversion of today: a boundless craze for possessions and an insatiable thirst for pleasure. . . In this connection We cannot deplore enough the blindness of so many women of every age and rank who, seized with a mad desire to please, do not realize how greatly their insane fashions not only displease every decent person, but

offend God as well. Not content with appearing in public in such apparel, from which most of them once would have shrunk with horror as being too repugnant to Christian decency, they are not abashed to enter Church in it and attend divine services; yes, they bear with them to the very Eucharistic Table, where the divine Author of purity is received, the trappings of shameful passions. We refrain from mentioning the forms of dancing, one worse than the other, recently fetched in from barbarism to be the fashion with cultured people, than which nothing could be more apt to banish all modesty." (*Sacra Propedium*)

Pope Pius XI

His Holiness, Pope Pius XI draws an alarming conclusion from external evidence when he says: "We lament the destruction of purity among women and young girls as is evidenced by the increasing immodesty of their dress and conversation and by the participation in shameful dances." (*Ubi Arcano*)

In his discourse to the Lenten preachers of Rome in 1929 the same Holy Father declares, "The first and most painful thing that afflicts us . . . is the immodesty of so many disgraceful women and girls, who, nevertheless, call themselves and wish to be considered Christians. Do you try, my beloved sons . . . to convince them of the wrong they are doing, for

so many of them are slaves to fashions which are unworthy not only of Christian countries but of any civilized people. Very many know that they are slaves to fashion and are ashamed of it, but do not have the strength to rebel against the tyranny which exploits their modesty in this new form of white-slave-traffic, just as a slave-trader does the blood of the slaves. Brand with the fire of your apostolic words so many shameless people, who not only do not feel the shamelessness of their dress, but, as it were, glory in it and boast of it."

Pope Pius XII

To those women who say they see no harm in the abbreviated styles of today, Pope Pius XII gives a reminder of their serious responsibility to others; in these words, "If no one is entitled, for his own selfish pleasure, to imperil the bodily wellbeing of others, still less is it lawful to harm the wellbeing of their souls. If—as certain women allege—a daring fashion makes no bad impression on them, what do they know about the impression which they make on others? It has been very rightly said that if certain Christian women had any inkling of the temptations and moral falls which they cause other people by their dress and by familiarities which they look on as of no importance, they would be horrified by their responsibility for them."

Instructions of the Holy See

Because the fashions continue to foster immodesty, the Sacred Congregation of the Council in 1930 published instructions, admonishing both clergy and people to direct their efforts toward protecting Catholic womanhood against the evil influence of shameful attire. It is the Church speaking, solemnly and with authority, and because of the importance of this pronouncement all her children should know what She says:

“By virtue of the supreme apostolate which he wields over the Universal Church by divine will, our Most Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, has never ceased to inculcate, both verbally and by his writings, the words of St. Paul (I Tim. 11, 9-10), namely: ‘Women . . . adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety . . . and professing godliness with good works.’

“Very often, when occasion arose, the same Supreme Pontiff condemned emphatically the immodest fashion of dress adopted by Catholic women and girls, which fashion not only offends the dignity of women, but conduces to the temporal ruin of women and girls, and, what is still worse, to their eternal ruin, miserably dragging down others in their fall. It is not surprising, therefore, that all bishops and other ordinaries, as is the duty of ministers of Christ, should in their own dioceses have unanimously opposed this

depraved licentiousness and promiscuity of manners, often bearing with fortitude the derision of mockery leveled against them for this cause.

"Therefore, this Sacred Council, which watches over the discipline of clergy and people, while cordially commending the action of the Venerable Bishops, most emphatically exhorts them to persevere in their attitude and increase their activities insofar as their strength permits, in order that this unwholesome disease be definitely uprooted from human society.

"In order to facilitate the desired effect, this Sacred Congregation, by the mandate of the Most Holy Father, has decreed as follows:

Exhortation to Those in Authority

"1. The parish priest, and especially the preacher, when occasion arises, should, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, (2 Tim. 4, 2), insist, argue, exhort and command that feminine garb be based on modesty and womanly ornament be a defense of virtue. Let them likewise admonish parents to cause their daughters to cease wearing indecorous dress.

"2. Parents, conscious of their grave obligations toward the education, especially religious and moral, of their offspring, should see to it that their daughters are solidly instructed from earliest childhood, in Christian doctrine; and they themselves should as-

siduously inculcate in their souls, by word and example, love for the virtues of modesty and chastity; and since their family should follow the example of the Holy Family, they must rule in such a manner that all its members, reared within the walls of the home, should find reason and incentive to love and preserve modesty.

“3. Let parents keep their daughters away from public gymnastic games and contests; but if their daughters are compelled to attend such exhibitions, let them see that they are fully and modestly dressed. Let them never permit their daughters to don immodest garb.

“4. The Superioresses and teachers in schools for girls must do their utmost to instil love of modesty in the hearts of maidens confided to their care and urge them to dress modestly.

“5. Said Superioresses and teachers must not receive in their colleges and schools immodestly dressed girls, and should not even make exception in the case of mothers of pupils. If, after being admitted, girls persist in dressing immodestly, such pupils should be dismissed.

“6. Nuns, in compliance with the Letter dated August 23, 1928, by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, must not receive in their colleges, schools, oratories or recreation grounds, or, if once admitted,

tolerate girls who are not dressed with Christian modesty; said nuns, in addition, should do their utmost so that love for holy chastity and Christian modesty may become deeply rooted in the hearts of their pupils.

Further Provisions

"7. It is desirable that pious organizations of women be founded, which, by their counsel, example and propaganda, should combat the wearing of apparel unsuited to Christian modesty, and should promote purity of customs and modesty of dress.

"8. In the pious associations of women those who dress immodestly should not be admitted to membership: but if, perchance, they are received, and after having been admitted, fall again into their error, they should be dismissed forthwith.

"9. Maidens and women dressed immodestly are to be debarred from Holy Communion and from acting as sponsors at the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; further, if the offense be extreme, they may even be forbidden to enter the church."

Paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 instruct priests to preach on Christian modesty repeatedly during the year, specifically on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to exhort members of "pious unions and associations

of women to adopt a Christian mode of dress." Moreover, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception prayers are to be offered, and, if possible, sermons preached in all cathedrals and parish churches for the promotion of modesty. Further instructions concern the functions of the "Diocesan Councils of Vigilance," and reports by Bishops on "conditions in regard to dress." The Letter is dated at Rome on the Feast of the Holy Family, January 12, 1930 and is signed: Donato, Cardinal Sbaretta, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council.

It is evident from these instructions that Holy Mother Church takes a very serious view of the scandalous fashions of today. Yet how many Catholic women, young and old, in their manner of dressing contradict the teaching of the Supreme Authority of the Church. The spirit of liberty in its exaggerated form, and the lack of delicacy of Christian modesty, lost through contact with life in the midst of an overwhelmingly large neo-pagan population that is mostly Christian in name only, have made even ordinarily good Catholic women and girls unconscious of the indecency of modern dress and its offence against public Christian morality. It requires a concerted effort on the part of all Catholics to bring back the Christian sense of modesty upheld by the Church. The responsibility for this reform rests with each individual.

For our Lord to be able to say to me, "Behold thy Mother," He must recognize in me the spiritual features of Mary, her humility and modesty—the qualities which attracted Jesus to the womb of Mary for His Incarnation, "For the Lord has regarded the humility of His handmaid." (Luke 1, 48) To invite the Christ-life into my soul at the Consecration of the Mass, I must provide the same environment. I must imitate, not merely admire, the otherworldliness of Mary.

The World Still Crucifies Mary's Child

It was the vain, self-willed and pleasure-loving spirit of the world that despised and crucified Mary's Child; therefore she had no part with it. That same spirit is ever trying to stifle and destroy the Christ-life in me, and insofar as I am selfish and worldly it is succeeding in its purpose and is substituting the vain, deceptive and often destructive pleasure of created things for the true interior, supernatural joy which the world cannot give.

As a Christian and child of Mary I should have nothing to do with the spirit of the world, but should live among men as Mary did, for the purpose of giving them Jesus by the good example of a patient, obedient and modest life: "So let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good

works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
(Matt. 5, 16) If I allow the light of grace in me to be “hidden under the measure” of self-will and worldliness, then others will not discover in me that resemblance to Mary which would attract them to her Son.

PART FOUR

THE COMMUNION

THE DIVINE EXCHANGE

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the harvest of the sacrifice of the Mass which follows from the *sowing* at the offertory and the *dying* at the consecration. By the sacrifice I offer myself with Christ to God; in the sacrament, God gives Christ to me. Here, then, is the *beatum commercium*—the blessed exchange. All the spiritual gifts of my love which were gathered into the offering and transformed at the consecration are now given back in divine Love at the communion. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides in Me and I in him." (John 6, 57) My poor offering, spiritually worthless in itself, comes back transmuted into the life and love of Jesus.

Dispositions Required for the Reception of the Sacrament

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist differs from the sacrifice of the Mass with regard to the effect that it produces. The sacrifice of the Mass obtains grace through the merits of Christ and His Church independently of the soul, so that even those who, because of their bad dispositions, do not participate in the offering of the sacrifice, may receive benefit from it and be moved to repentance. Nevertheless, it is true that the more I share in the sacrifice, the more I shall share in its benefits.

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, on the other hand, requires for its fruitful reception certain dispositions of the soul. These dispositions, as expressed by the Holy See in the *Decree on Daily Communion*, are: the state of grace and a right and devout intention. "This devout intention is, of course, always supposed; but it should not be merely passive, for the Fathers who framed the decree add that those who come daily to the Holy Table should have the desire of a closer union with Christ and should manifest this desire by seeking in Him the remedy for their faults and defects." (Eccles. Rev., V. 35)

Now, the disposition of seeking union with Christ is increased in proportion as the heart is rid of what is not God, that is, of merely natural affections.

Therefore, I shall profit by the gift of divine grace in Holy Communion in the measure that I have directed the activity of my will to God by a practical preference for Him in my daily round of sorrows and joys.

Since my will is free, God does not force it into submission; He only moves and encourages it by actual grace to the self-surrender of love. According as I have proved my love by the generosity of my offertory, I shall be united to Christ at the consecration and enriched by the gift of divine life at the communion.

To be able to say wholeheartedly with St. Paul at my communion: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me," (Gal. 2, 19), I must also have said with him at my consecration, "I die daily" (I Cor. 15, 31), and "with Christ I am nailed to the cross." (Gal. 2, 20)

With this realization that my communion is a mutual transaction I shall not fall into the too common error of regarding the *reception* of the Holy Eucharist as a substitute for personal sacrifice.

Hunger for the Divine

Holy Communion is a participation in the immolated Victim of the sacrifice; therefore I shall benefit by this sacrificial meal according to my soul's appetite

for God, that is, insofar as my heart is empty of creatures.

It is not easy for nature, so accustomed to the pleasure of satisfying the natural appetites, to reconcile hunger with happiness; that is why I need a practical spirit of faith and hope to accept our Lord's promise to give me something incomparably better than sense-pleasure if only I am willing to make the exchange.

True Joy is not Sought for

"There are spiritual delights and joys of interior sweetness," writes David of Augsburg, "so far excelling the delights of the world as honey excels mud, and yet scarcely ever is any mention made of them or interest shown in them or strong desire formed to win them; and this is often true even of religious who are held in high esteem. On the contrary, the whole matter is looked down upon as entirely beneath a sensible person's interest and such as think and act otherwise are exposed to much petty persecution and are looked on as unbalanced in mind or unsound in doctrine (*daemoniaci reputantur et haeretici dicuntur*). Yet St. Paul leaves us in no doubt as to what is his estimate of those who actively contemn the grace of devotion. Animal is the word he uses to describe the inner life of such people, of those who do not understand the 'things of the spirit of

God,' because to them they are foolishness.' " (I Cor. 2, 14) (*Op. Cit.* V. 2)

If I seek to satisfy my soul with created things, I shall have no hunger or desire for divine things, just as a child by eating sweets has no appetite for the substantial food that his body really needs.

To hunger for God the soul must empty itself of whatever is not God, which means that it must become detached from all exterior goods of the world and from the interior goods of body and mind. Therefore, when our Lord began to teach, the very first words of His Sermon on the Mount explained the three steps necessary to bring about this state of inner separation and of hunger and thirst for God.

The Beatitudes Empty the Soul

The first beatitude is the initial step. It tells me to strip myself of all attachment to exterior goods. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Our Lord sets no limit to this divine bargain. He simply promises to give me the happiness of His Kingdom in the proportion that I give up affection for the kingdom of the world. Therefore, to increase my capacity for the true joy of the spirit, I should dispense with any material superfluities, any useless or worldly luxuries which manifest a love for the world, and serve only to spoil my appetite for the divine in Holy Commun-

ion. And I should beware of convincing myself that superfluous things are necessary; rather I should fear lest "necessary" things be superfluous.

In the *blessed exchange* of the Mass, created pleasures are like money with which I can "purchase" real blessedness. The merchants of God's Kingdom of happiness are, of course, the poor, for as St. James says, "Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which God has promised to those who love Him?" (James 2, 5)

If all Christians, told by our Lord to be poor in spirit, would deny themselves whatever is clearly superfluous to their state of life and give the equivalent in alms to the poor or to the missions, how much greater commerce in divine love there would be at the market-place of the altar!

Detachment from the Goods of the Body

The second beatitude reaches into nature to empty it of all *anxiety* about the goods of the body, the health and well-being of the corporal faculties. Only when I am detached from my physical welfare can I receive the blessedness and joy of the meek by being patient in suffering and discomfort. By the fruit of the beatitude of meekness; by holy indifference to his physical condition, St. Paul could glory in his in-

firmities and cry out, "I overflow with joy in all our troubles." (2 Cor. 7, 4)

Detachment from the Goods of the Mind

The third beatitude completes the process of dispossessing me of all that is not supernatural. Only when my intellect is despoiled of merely natural operation shall I mourn for God in the darkness of faith; only when my will is deprived of all human and created consolation shall I mourn in the death of total abandonment to the divine Will.

The more I realize the necessity of this process of interior purification the more readily shall I cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in His constant desire to divest me of all my faults and failings in order to clothe me in grace. It is not enough that I know the doctrines of faith and the forms of external practice. I must reflect and concentrate on the growth of the inner life. "We meet with good men," wrote John Tauler, "well versed in excellent religious exercises, who yet know nothing whatever of the interior life. Yet these are bound to search out all that may interfere with God's reign in their souls and instantly cut it off. This much detachment everyone must certainly have; otherwise he cannot receive the Holy Ghost and His divine gifts." (*Sermons and Conferences*)

Dom Aelred Graham, in his excellent book on the Love of God, says that "detachment from the things of this world is a condition *sine qua non*, (that is, indispensable and essential) of advancement in the love of God."

The joy of communion with Christ is therefore the reward of being detached or empty of creatures, so as to come to the Eucharistic Sacrifice like a hungry man to a banquet.

God is not Outdone in Generosity

The Gospel speaks of giving good measure: "Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they shall pour into your lap. For with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you." (Luke 6, 38) The measure is my own soul. But it must be void of creatures to receive the Creator. If I were carrying a pail filled with sand and I met a generous friend who offered to fill it with gold, I would not hesitate to empty out the sand to the last grain. Therefore, I should not allow any attachment to occupy a place in my heart which was made by God for Himself. "Rid yourself of all binding attachments without," says St. Bonaventure in his *Injunctions*, "that you may be able to be bound in spirit wholly to the Lord."

Attachments Enslave the Soul

Whatever occupies the soul brings it into subjection to itself. "The soul," says St. Catherine of Siena, "cannot live without loving. We must love either God or the world. And the soul always unites itself with that which it loves and is transformed by it." (*Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, Jorgensen) But God intends that He alone should possess and rule over the human heart, and that man, while subject to the Creator, should have full dominion over the rest of creation with, as the Apostle says, "the freedom of the glory of the sons of God." (Rom. 8, 21) When, however, I attach myself to some created thing by a selfish craving for it, then I surrender to that extent the dignity of my God-given freedom and place myself in bondage. The very difficulty experienced in breaking from some acquired habit or attachment to some pleasure betrays the ignoble slavery. How often one hears it said about some lawful indulgence, without, however, any apparent concern or even knowledge of the spiritual implications: "I suppose I ought to give up this habit, but I have not the will-power."

Undoubtedly there are young people, who, not having been instructed in the attractiveness of the *divine exchange* and the harmfulness of attachments, refuse the inner call of God—a vocation to the re-

ligious life—because of the difficulty of breaking away from an acquired taste for creature-pleasures, unless, perhaps, owing to the infiltration of worldliness into religious life, they are allowed to take their cravings in with them.

If I mean what I say in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Will be done on earth," I must keep myself free to follow whatever path God intends in His divine plan; I must not bind myself to the world. St. John Chrysostom says in this regard, "He who needs many things, although he seems to be their master, is the slave of many things . . . Are not the necessities of life sufficient bondage for you? Then why weave so many different chains to bind you to this world? Let us put away superfluities and keep to what is necessary. Thus shall we lay hold on eternal life." (*Hom. LXXX on St. John*, c. 17)

The Paradox of Gain Through Loss

Our Lord summarized His teaching in these simple words: "If any man wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me. For he who would save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matt. 16, 24-25) Therefore, I shall find life in Christ through Holy Communion in the degree that I deny myself and take up my daily cross, which is precisely

the meaning of the *giving* of the offertory and the *dying* of the consecration.

Self-denial and suffering are not attractive words and it is useless to try to make them appeal to nature. It is only by the exercise of faith and hope, says St. Paul, that "the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts," (Rom. 5, 5) What is most attractive is the wondrous exchange of love; it is irresistible, but it is experienced and understood only after self has paid the price, as the author of *The Imitation of Christ* clearly points out when he says, "Take this short and perfect word: Forsake all and thou shalt find all, leave thy desires and thou shalt find rest. Consider this well, and *when thou shalt put it into practice thou shalt understand all things.*" (Book III, c. 32. Italics mine)

The effort to make religion attractive to nature usually results in destroying the meaning of the *doctrine of the cross*, and it produces an emotional and superficial piety that is Christian in name only—a piety without groundwork or fortitude, that cannot stand the test of misfortune or suffering. Like imitation gold it shines in the sun, but cannot stand the fire, and evaporates in the crucible.

Christ Saves on the Cross

Our Blessed Lord in His example and teaching is the model and pattern for methods of instruction. His

call for heroic death to self and crucifixion to the world is not dressed up to please nature; He saves on the cross: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." (John 12, 32) Therefore, He should be preached and taught *on the cross*—a cross that is not merely to be gazed upon and admired, but to be set up in the individual soul.

The modern effort to "make religion attractive" has pressed into service all the sciences and pedagogical methods, yet who would say that the results bear any comparison with the numbers converted by the straightforward doctrines of St. Paul, who preached "Christ crucified" and gloried in nothing save in the cross of Christ.

St. Francis of Assisi won thousands of souls, not by an appeal to the senses, but by a direct appeal to the spirit. He called his little band "the brothers of penance" and they went about in poor and ragged apparel, begging from door to door, "bearing in their bodies the mortification of Christ and stirring up on every hand marvellous disgust with the world and love of the cross." (*Letter to the Three Ministers General*—Pius X)

Efforts to "popularize religion" often succeed in producing the contrary effect and stir up a marvellous love for the world and corresponding disgust with the cross. They create great interest and fasten great attention on the educational, social, recreational or

even liturgical "attractions," and nature is quite content that the necessity of inner crucifixion is then forgotten.

Spiritual authors give warning of the great danger of externalism. David of Augsburg says that some people "by an unconscious process of self-delusion sometimes fancy themselves, and would have others fancy them, to be very observant on account of the great interest they display in exterior matters." (*Op. Cit.*, V. 1.)

The doctrine of the cross can make its appeal only to the spirit—the spirit determined to renounce all other attractions out of preference for the attractiveness of God, which all other joys can only reflect. Therefore, I must view self-denial from the two-fold aspect of *giving* and *loving* and then I shall find my offertory and my consecration attractive in virtue of the divine exchange of love in Holy Communion.

The Natural Mentality Leads to Rigorism or Laxity

Unless I look upon sacrifice from the spiritual aspect of love, I am likely to fall into one of two errors—rigorism or laxity.

If I regard sacrifice only as *giving* I may tend to identify holiness with austerity and be preoccupied with the negative process of denying myself every

creature-pleasure as far as is humanly possible. Such a cold, uninspired insistence on the negative aspect of sacrifice is called rigorism. It was an error of the Jansenists, who tended to regard mortification as the essence of Christian perfection and a sure sign of predestination. Their mistake was not in their austerity, since the saints were austere, and the Man who said, "Deny thyself and take up thy cross" certainly lived an austere life and taught an austere doctrine. They erred in their attitude towards creatures and their conception of the place of mortification in the Christian life. It was an error of their natural mentality. In other words, they were preoccupied with the *giving* instead of the *loving*.

In the foregoing explanation of the Mass it is clear that the *giving* of the offertory and the consecration takes its supernatural significance from *loving* preference for God and hunger for His love in Holy Communion.

The error of rigorism or puritanism or Jansenism is scarcely a danger today. Few people in this materialistic age are likely to engage in mortification *for its own sake*. It is a ghost of the past conjured up by the devil and associated with the teaching of self-denial, in order to confuse the mind, to dissuade or excuse it from fulfilling the sacrifices of love enjoined by the Gospel.

The Error of Pious Naturalism

The danger of the other extreme is far more common today—the error of laxity, of mediocrity, or what might be called *pious naturalism*. This error, too, arises from regarding self-denial from the external, negative viewpoint of giving. Considered by the natural mentality, which lacks the inspiration of the interior motive of love and preference, giving is a painful act of separation.

If my will is confronted only with the pain of giving, I might naturally conclude that a merciful God and loving Father does not expect His children to impose on themselves any painful practices other than those required under pain of sin. Without the motive of love I shall see no reason for giving up any pleasure that is not forbidden, no matter how worldly the pleasure may be. I shall have the same reluctance as a young man who is expected to give an expensive present to a girl *whom he does not love*.

With a *sin-mentality*, which takes no account of the "law of the members," I shall consider it useless to give up legitimate joys, no matter how much they may foster the inner concupiscence which is the cause of sin. Then the practice of voluntary mortification in my life will be reduced to that vague and almost imperceptible minimum which, viewed theoretically, I consider sufficient to keep me from falling from

grace, but which, nevertheless, I know from practical and personal experience is quite inadequate.

It is this impractical reasoning of *pious naturalism* that is allowing the spirit of worldliness to pervade the Christian life.

Fear not Little Flock

Our Lord gives the forthright injunction to do penance or to perish, but He gently removes any fear or apprehension I might have in abandoning the spirit of the world with its pleasures and interests, by the promise of the *divine exchange* of love. He tells me not to be solicitous or anxious about food, dress, reputation or even about my life, for after all these things the heathens seek. Then He continues: "Fear not little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms." (Luke 12, 32-33). *Pious naturalism* would interpret this to mean that as long as I have confidence in My Father I have nothing to fear and penance is not important, but the whole content expresses the opposite, namely, that I must not be afraid to despise the world and its pleasures and do penance.

LIVING PROOFS OF THE DIVINE EXCHANGE

With a natural mind or sin-mentality, I shall explain away the mortified and detached lives of holy

people by saying that they are privileged souls and that it is extremism to teach that all Christians, no matter what their state of life, are obliged to strive for detachment from the world and the highest degree of holiness. The following words of the late Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, clearly disclose the error of such a notion, common though it may be. In his Encyclical on *The Third Centenary of the Death of St. Francis de Sales* he says: "Christ has constituted the Church holy and the source of sanctity, and all those who take her for guide and teacher must by the Divine Will tend to holiness of life. 'This is the will of God, your sanctification' says St. Paul. What kind of sanctity? The Lord Himself declared it when He said: 'You, therefore, are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Let no one think that this is addressed to a select few and that others are permitted to remain in an inferior degree of virtue. The law obliges, as is clear, absolutely everyone in the world without exception." (*Acta Stae. Sed.*, vol. XV)

The Saints and Self-Denial

It is only when I regard self-denial from the two fold aspect of giving for love, that I can understand the lives of the saints and the writings of spiritual authors. The saints were not canonized because of their mortifications, but because of their hunger for

God, yet the fact is undeniable that they did lead mortified and detached lives, whether in the world or in the cloister. In renouncing earthly pleasures, even though they used them according to the needs of their state, it was not because they considered created things as evil, for certainly it would give no honor to God to prefer Him to something bad. Nor did they consider the enjoyment of any thing above strict necessity as a sin. Their minds were not occupied with merely avoiding evil, but with loving God.

The saints recognized the God-given things of this world as reflections of God's lovable perfections, or "samples" (*exemplata*) as St. Bonaventure, St. Francis de Sales and others call them. Seeing God manifested in His creation they developed an insatiable desire for Him and they were inspired and moved by grace to sacrifice the samples in order to show their preference and hunger for the Reality. In thus emptying themselves of earthly affections, they invited into their hearts in Holy Communion the supernatural gift of divine Love in which alone is holiness and true joy.

The saints were preoccupied with *loving* and the *giving* became a spontaneous expression of their love. Mortification for them was not an end in itself, but simply a way of proving with joy and generosity the interior preference of love for God. At the same time, they know that self-denial is necessary to restrain the

life of the senses, which tends to sin, and to strengthen the life of the spirit which is the source of virtue. If the saints felt the need of penance, how much more reason have I, a sinner, to practice it!

All the saints understood the relationship between love for God and the use of created things. In fact, the saints are the only ones who really loved creatures, because they saw and loved the Creator in them and used them only in view of the purpose for which they were made, that is, the glory of God. Because creatures brought them closer to God, they loved them on that account. Worldly people, on the other hand, do not really love creatures as they claim to do. They love themselves, and they use pleasure for the gratifying of their self-love; so that when they have exhausted the pleasure in a creature they cast it away.

The Imitation of the Saints

With a natural mind I shall be inclined to admire the saints as extraordinary individuals who had holiness thrust upon them by God. I shall not suspect that they were ordinary persons like myself, who, nevertheless, made extraordinary supernatural efforts of self-sacrifice to cooperate with grace. I shall admire the evident good they accomplished, but make little or no attempt to imitate their self-renunciation.

Pope Pius XI in this Encyclical on *The Seventh Centenary of the Death of St. Francis*, after giving

a detailed description of the outstanding virtues of the saint—poverty, humility, mortification and love of God, continues with this pertinent observation: "We have purposely, Venerable Brothers, lingered at some length in the contemplation, so to say, of these virtues, because in our times not a few men who are infected with laicism are accustomed to divest our heroes of the true fame and glory of their sanctity, in an effort to set them down as men of eminence in the natural order and champions of certain religious theories, acclaiming and extolling them merely insofar as they have deserved well of the progress of the arts and sciences, or of charitable enterprises, or of their country, or of mankind generally. We cannot help but wonder how this kind of admiration for what might be called the half of Francis, or his counterfeit, is going to benefit these modern enthusiasts while they are hankering after wealth and luxury, or flitting about in public or in dance halls and theatres in their effeminate toilet and finery, or wallowing in the cess-pool of their passions, or flouting and rejecting the law of Christ and the Church.

"The words are very much to the point," concludes the Holy Father, quoting from the Roman Breviary, "'Whoever is charmed by the virtue of a saint, let him be no less charmed by his studied service of God, and therefore, let him either imitate the saint if he wishes to praise him, or cease praising what he is

unwilling to imitate. Whosoever admires the virtue of the saints, let him render himself admirable for the holiness of his life.' ”

St. Francis and Creatures

St. Francis of Assisi had a most wholesome love of creatures, but he did not express it by indulging in the pleasures of sense. It is difficult to understand on what grounds some Christians appeal to St. Francis' love of creatures as an excuse for self-indulgence and worldliness, for St. Francis' own words are a clear condemnation of such an attitude: "My brethren," he says, "that necessity which reason does not demand, but which pleasure points out, is a manifest sign of an extinguished spirit. A lukewarm spirit—one that is growing cold and falling by degrees from grace—needs that flesh and blood should look after the things which belong to them. When the soul is devoid of spiritual enjoyment, what remains but that the flesh should return to its own? And then the animal appetite will plead necessity, and the conscience conform to the carnal sense." (*Opusc. S. Fran.*, Tom. 3, Collat. 10, Wadding)

St. Francis' love of creatures was supernatural, not natural. He loved God and seeing the perfections of God in creatures he called them by the affectionate names of brothers and sisters. He had restored in himself the proper relationship intended by God be-

tween man and the rest of creation. He had disengaged himself from all attachment to created things so that even death could find no human ties to sever, and he welcomed it as "Sister Death" come to conduct him to his Father in heaven.

Death is Hard for the Worldly

Death will be unwelcome and difficult for me insofar as I am still alive to the world by attachment to its pleasures, for separation is always hard. "A man is necessarily in a state of dread," says David of Augsburg, "as long as he retains an affection for anything, for his fear of losing what he values will inevitably lead to its becoming for him a source of anxiety." (*Op. Cit.*, V. 2)

Whatever natural affection I do not supernaturalize or offer to God freely in life will be torn away by force at death. Then I shall no longer be free to give up my judgment, my will and my love for pleasure. The things that enslaved me will give me up, and will mock my folly in not giving them up while I could, and the enforced separation will make it hard to die even though I am in the state of grace.

On the other hand, if, like the saints, I have been a co-victim with Christ on my Calvary of the Mass, I shall no more die at death, for my communion will be the guarantee of eternal life according to the prom-

ise of our Lord, "He who eats this Bread shall live forever." (John 6, 59)

* * *

From the Mass I must learn to die now in order to live; die to all merely natural desires so as to live the new life of the supernatural. "If any man is in Christ," says St. Paul, "he is a new creature; the former things have passed away; behold they are made new." (2 Cor., 5, 17)

My communion is to be an anticipation of heaven where I shall be united to God for all eternity in the degree that I have achieved resemblance to the victimhood of His Son. May each fervent Communion prepare and strengthen me for a more sacrificial life, that when I return to my sacrifice, my offering will be richer—*for all that is offered is changed, and all that is changed is given back in divine grace.*

CONCLUSION

Now that I have a clearer picture of my part in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and of what it means to be a co-victim with Christ, the liturgical prayers of the Mass begin to reveal their life and deep personal significance. Prayers which I had thought rather meaningless now declare the tremendous truths and practices of my Catholic faith.

Despise the World

I did not realize before that to love God necessarily implies that I despise the world. Yet those two ideas are as inseparable as the concave and convex sides of the paten and chalice which contain the Sacred Species. Regarded from beneath, the convex side of the sacred vessels discloses nothing but a curving away from the earth; but seen from above, the concave side turns upward and inward to enclose the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus. So here below, I must occupy myself in turning my affections away from the world by a preference for

God, so that God looking from above may behold my heart turned upward towards Him and enfolding His beloved Son. "Do not love the world, or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." (I John 2, 15) St. Augustine, commenting on this text of Sacred Scripture, says: "When it is said, 'love not these things' it does not mean, do not eat, do not drink, do not beget children, but only that these things may not bind you by your loving them; lest you love that for ENJOYMENT which you ought to have for USE." (*Homily 2 on I John 2, 15*)

Because lawful pleasures are good in themselves I thought that I might enjoy them at will and love God at the same time; but now I understand that sacrifice is the language of love, and the source of true joy. "Love . . . presupposes self-denial, as perfect and absolute as possible, for love, by its very nature includes the gift of self, forgetfulness of self, the emptying out of the heart, and a break with all egoism." (*Franciscan Mysticism, Maes*)

St. Teresa of Avila expressed great sorrow for having been misled and kept from an earlier discovery of the truth that to love God is also to despise the world. She says, "I am now grieved when I consider how much my soul suffered and what little help it received from anyone but God, and how many oppor-

tunities I had for pleasure and pastimes by being told they were lawful." (*Life*, VIII, 16)

St. Francis of Assisi far from seeking comfort and joy in the pleasures afforded by creatures insisted that true joy is a spiritual quality and is to be found in being poor, despised and persecuted, as our Lord explained in the Sermon on the Mount. Why is it that so many people are unhappy? They fear that by renouncing themselves they will be miserable, whereas their failure to do so is precisely the reason why they are miserable.

Sow in Order to Reap

In order to teach me how to spurn the pleasures which attract my senses, St. Paul gives me the example of the farmer who reaps a harvest in the same proportion as he sacrifices the seed. The seed-grain, although very good in itself, is only a sample of the harvest; and it is the farmer's love for the harvest that inspires him to treat the seed as though he despises it—to sacrifice the pleasure of using it, and to throw it into the ground.

In the spiritual life, all the goods of this world—the natural use of my faculties and all the good pleasures found in God's creatures—are mere seeds or created samples of the spiritual harvest of joy to be had in the possession of God. My spiritual harvest is to be *eternal* (that word should be given much thought);

but I shall reap only in proportion to my love of the harvest. This love will be expressed by the sacrifice I make during life of the seed-grains of pleasure, the samples of joy. "He who sows sparingly," says St. Paul, "will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Cor. 9, 6)

I did not realize that to be a good Christian I must be an industrious spiritual farmer walking through the fields of daily life in this earthly springtime of eternity, joyfully and generously casting away the seeds of profitless pleasure and treating with disdain the mere satisfaction of using them; so that I might say with St. Paul: "For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as dung that I may gain Christ." (Phil. 3, 8) I should have known it, for the Church time and again in the *collects* and other prayers of the Mass tells me to spurn and trample underfoot the pleasures of this life, in order to attain to the things of heaven.

I did not realize that the Holy Sacrifice is really *my* sacrifice and that I ought, therefore, to bring an offering. Yet, almost every day in the Mass, the *secret* prayer reminds me that the Mass is the Sacrifice of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, of which I am a member, for the oblation is usually designated as *our* offering.

I did not understand that the Mass is a blessed exchange in which the gift of my will is transformed

into the life of Christ and comes back to me through the divine gift of grace in Holy Communion. Yet, the *post-communion* prayer so often reminds me of it.

The Mass for the Feast of St. Francis

By way of illustration, if I take the Mass for the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, (October 4), and read the prayers in the light of these truths, I find there some very practical and far-reaching implications for my personal Christian life. The *collect* says: "O God . . . make us, like him, despise the goods of earth and ever rejoice to partake of the gifts of heaven." It does not say that I should despise only evil things, but the "goods" of earth. The *epistle* tells me, in the words of St. Paul, to be crucified to the world, and to become a new creature. In the *Gospel*, our Lord says that His doctrine of the cross, whereby He calls upon His followers to take up His yoke, is "folly" to worldly people, because His truth is hidden from the wise and prudent of this world. The secret prayer says: "Sanctify, O Lord, the offerings we dedicate to Thee . . ." and what offering can it mean, as far as I am concerned, except the oblation of my will, expressed by the crosses I have endured and the pleasures I have despised as the "species" for my offertory? Finally, the *post-communion* is the prayer of the Mystical Body for the return gift of God's grace:

"Pour forth, O Lord, Thy grace from heaven to magnify Thy Church . . ."

Life in the Liturgy

Hence, I shall discover the life of the liturgy in proportion as I bring life to it, by a real desire to love God with my whole heart and a willingness to pay the sweet price of that love, which is the immolation of myself in union with Christ by seeking God's good pleasure in everything and desiring nothing else for its own sake.

As a fitting conclusion to these thoughts, and as an expression of my sincere intention to become a zealous and true Christian, I recite this prayer from the *secret* of the Mass for the last Sunday after Pentecost: "Be Thou gracious, O Lord, to our humble appeals, and, after receiving the prayers and offerings of Thy people, convert the hearts of all to Thyself, so that, having been set free from the greed of earthly pleasures, we may pass on to the desire of heavenly treasures. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen."

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