

Treacy, Gerald C.
The Word made flesh
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OUR BLESSED LADY
OUR REDEEMER

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THE
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Rev. Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.

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in the Series
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMA

The Word Made Flesh

Our Blessed Lady—Our Redeemer

By
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMA is a simplified and abbreviated translation of Aquinas' work. It is intended for classroom, discussion clubs or private study. Only one chapter should be taken at a time. For St. Thomas packs a great deal of thought into a few sentences.

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THE WORD MADE FLESH, OUR BLESSED LADY, OUR REDEEMER

CHAPTER II

SUBORDINATE HEADS OF THE CHURCH

MEN likewise carry out Christ's powers of teaching and ruling His Church. The Pope and bishops have authority to teach and govern Christ's members. They are subordinate heads of the Church. The Pope as Christ's Vicar teaches and rules the whole Church. Each bishop functions in the same way as teacher and legislator in his diocese. This is why the faithful gladly show them respect, obedience and love. Christ speaks through them, and so in questions of faith and morals they speak infallibly. They are reminded of all that Christ taught them by the Holy Spirit.

The Meaning of the Body

Now as He is Head, His Church is His Body. Head and Body are figurative terms. The Church is not a physical body but rather a moral body, like the body politic. The political body is a group of men banded together to work under authority to obtain the common good in temporal needs. The Church is a group of men bound together under Christ's authority for the good of the whole Church, namely the securing of the Beatific Vision.

But the Church is more than a moral body, for the only bond of unity in a moral body is the free decision of the members to co-operate for the common good. But it is the supernatural bond of grace and charity that forges the unity of the members of Christ's Body. Not the natural union of wills but divine grace and charity are accountable for the union of the

members of Christ's Mystical Body. We call this union mystical or mysterious because grace and charity cannot be fully understood here on earth. Hence the title, Mystical Body of Christ.

The Soul of the Body

As the soul vitalizes the body so the Holy Spirit vitalizes the Mystical Body. He is the Soul of the Mystical Body. From Heaven Christ sends His Spirit to give supernatural life to His Church. This is the life of truth, holiness and discipline. The Pope and bishops are given infallibility by the Holy Spirit in their function of teaching Christ's truth. The faithful receive from the Holy Spirit the gift of faith, enabling them to accept Christ's truth. Men gain a share in the divine life, which is holiness, by the infusion of grace through the action of the Holy Spirit. Church discipline is due to the Holy Spirit for the rulers of the Church are chosen by Him in an invisible manner. All vocations are due to Him. It is plain then that the Holy Spirit is the Soul of Christ's Mystical Body. From Him flows its life, the charity that links all members together.

Members of the Body

As a living body has many different members so has Christ's Mystical Body. There are rulers who are given graces necessary for teaching, ruling and sanctifying. And the members are given the necessary graces for obeying and giving service to the Church. And to all God gives a great variety of graces in which consists the beauty of the Church.

All Christ's members labor for the upbuilding of Christ's Body, for men's salvation. Christ and His Mother with the heavenly court labor for the Church Suffering and the Church Militant. In the Beatific Vision they read all our needs and they pray for us and for the Holy Souls. The Church in Purgatory expiating its sins is praying for the Church Militant on earth, during its purgation period or after it has joined the Church Triumphant. The Church Militant prays for the Church Suffering and for its own members, while praising God

in Himself and in His saints. So Christ's grace in this wonderful fashion pours through the three divisions of the Church uniting them all in the Communion of Saints.

The Church Is Christ

The Supernatural life of the Church comes from Christ's headship. From Him that life flows into all His members. So from this angle we may say that the Church is Christ. He lives on in His Church, His life continues in His Church, teaching men His truths, governing them by His laws, and sanctifying them with His grace.

Unfortunately there are some over whom Christ is not Head. They are in Hell and Satan is their ruler. They have lost the blessing of Christ's headship.

Christ's human nature has all possible perfection in knowledge and power since it is the human nature of the Son of God, and in that nature Christ is Head of angels and men. The soul of Christ knows everything that is knowable, in the manner that is possible for a soul to know anything. From the start the soul of Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision. If He was to enable men to see God surely His intellect must have seen God. Since He is the Head of all creation in His vision of God He will see everything that has been, is and will be in creation. He will see everything that is possible to God.

Christ's Knowledge

Christ also possessed infused knowledge. By this knowledge He would know everything any created intellect could know. As this knowledge is in the angels and in the departed souls, it certainly belongs to the human intellect of Christ. Finally Christ's intellect could gain knowledge just as any intellect gains knowledge. And this knowledge unlike the infused knowledge and the Beatific Vision, could develop and increase. He "grew in wisdom." This acquired knowledge of Christ is superior to that of all other men. As God is the font of all knowledge, in His human nature Christ gained His knowledge without any teacher.

The perfection of God called for His human nature to have every possible perfection. As Head of men and angels His knowledge of men and angels must be perfect. As He was to bring men to the Beatific Vision He had to know that objective, so He had to know God and all creatures as perfectly as they could be known.

As Christ is God His human nature must possess all power that a creature could possess. As Head of angels and men He must have all power necessary for His office. This nature of course is not omnipotent. It can neither create nor annihilate for these powers belong to God alone. But through His human nature He had the power to perform miracles. His divinity used it as His instrument. Because His human nature had the fullness of grace and all-perfect knowledge it had the power to teach every creature.

The human nature of Christ shows us what God wants us to be. We must imitate that nature as closely as possible. We must strive to be other Christs. With all its perfection Christ's human nature had its imperfections, too. He had all those defects except the defects that sin only accounts for. He could hunger, and thirst, and grow tired, and suffer and die. "He was like us in all things sin alone excepted." He was sinless and went through suffering and death for our sins. In the perfection of His sanctity the least taint of sin could not reach Him.

Christ Is One Person

As Christ is but one Person whatever we say of His divine or human nature can be said of that one Person. Christ is God and He is man. The eternal God died on Calvary. So we call Mary God's Mother because she gave birth to God in His human nature.

But each nature always remains itself. We cannot call Christ's divinity human. Nor can we declare that the divine Nature died on the Cross or that Christ's human nature is omnipotent.

The oneness of Christ's personality means there is one

Christ and not two Christs, one human nature and one divine nature. In this One Person the human will and the divine Will in Christ must dwell in unity. His human will did not oppose the divine Will nor did it fail to obey the commands of that Will. The actions of His human will show it to be a perfect human will. His soul through the impact of His sense appetite feared suffering and death as any man would. He tells us so Himself: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," His will tending to good as does every human will backed away from suffering and death. But His will as a rational tendency, as a tendency to good guided by reason, welcomed suffering and death as God's Will. Even though subject to the urge of the passions Christ's will guided by His reason obeyed God unto the death of the Cross.

Christ Could Merit

Christ as man acted humanly. All His actions were controlled by His rational will. As He was a free agent He could merit grace for Himself and for others. The glory of His risen body He merited for Himself as well as all the perfections He gained in the passing of time. By His free acts He also merited all the graces given to the members of His Mystical Body, as well as the graces whereby He is assisted by the angels in upbuilding His Mystical Body. But He did not merit for Himself the personal union of His human nature with the Son of God, or sanctifying grace or the perfection of His knowledge. This is because Christ did not exist in His human nature until He, the Son of God assumed it.

As God the Son of God is equal to the Father, but He is subject to His Father in His human nature. The reason is that from the Father comes all the goodness of Christ's human nature. Again like all creatures Christ's human nature is subject to the Father's governance. Finally since grace perfected Christ's will, it was completely and freely subject to God the Father. Herein we are shown by Christ how we should be subject to God.

Christ's Prayer

Christ prayed to His Father because He was a man. He asked for those things which God wished Him to have through prayer, such as His Body's glory after the Resurrection. He also asked for His sense appetites' desires, when He prayed for the chalice to pass. In this case He teaches us that we may want what God does not want us to have. But He shows us that our wills should conform to the divine Will, ending His prayer with: "Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt." His prayers were always answered because they were conformed to God's Will.

Christ Our High Priest

Christ is the High Priest of God and the human family through the Incarnation. The priest is mediator between God and men, bringing God's gifts to men and men's offerings to God, and atoning for men's sins. As God and Man Christ is the perfect Mediator between God and men. As it is through Christ that grace is given to men He brings God's gifts to men. He made Himself an offering for men's sins on Calvary, and so brought men's offerings to God and atoned for their sins.

Christ's offering to God for men was His sacrifice on Calvary. Every visible sacrifice indicates an invisible sacrifice. Christ's death was the visible sign of the invisible act of His will by which He offered Himself to the Father for men's sins. So He was the Priest offering the Victim to God and the Victim. The three objectives of sacrifice were secured by Christ on the Cross, the forgiveness of sin, peace between God and men and a holocaust. Men were redeemed from sin and gained grace which formed peace between God and men, through Christ's death. He offered Himself completely to God for men, and so was a holocaust which means a victim wholly offered to God. The sacrifice is of infinite value since it is God Who offers it, and procures for men an eternal reward, the Beatific Vision in eternity. That is why Christ's priesthood is eternal. As Christ is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity He is God's natural Son. Other men through grace become God's adopted sons.

The Incarnation as a work of God was planned from all eternity. For God intended from all eternity that His Son would become Man. It was predestined that this should be.

Because Christ is Man men can approach Him easily and be inspired by His human life. As He is God men owe Him the adoration due to their Creator, the Supreme Being, that is called *latria*. Any other tribute, such as we give the saints, is called *dulia*. Men must acknowledge Him as Supreme Being and Creator. Men owe this adoration to Christ in His human nature since there is but one Person in Christ.

The Homage Due to Christ

And we give this homage likewise to the images of Christ. We do not so honor His human nature or His images as creatures. We give this homage to Christ through His human nature or images in as much as they represent Him to us. The Person of Christ calls for absolute adoration, while His human nature and images call for relative adoration.

Christ the Perfect Mediator

Christ is Emmanuel—God with us. In His human face we catch a glimpse of the Beatific Vision, which the members of the Mystical Body will inherit. They will inherit it because Christ is the Perfect Mediator, bringing God's gifts to men and men's offerings to God. He stands midway between God and men. As man He is not God but He is below God. But as man having the fullness of grace, knowledge and power He is above men. As Mediator He is constantly acting for men in and through His Mystical Body, the Church.

In the Incarnation God stoops to man to lift him up to Himself. Because of man's pride God has humbly reached down to him. Because of man's disobedience God has become perfectly obedient. Because of man's ignorance Christ comes to him as the perfect Teacher. What more could a loving God do for man?

CHAPTER III

OUR BLESSED LADY

When God the Father determined that His Son should become man and be born of a woman, He selected and formed this woman to be a worthy mother of an all-perfect Son. Mary is the perfect Mother of God because her Son and God has so made her. God did not cast about the world to find a perfect woman. She was made the perfect woman by God because she was to be the Mother of His Son.

As God Christ is infinitely holy and as Man completely sinless. He was free also from concupiscence which comes from original sin. It was only proper that the Mother of such a Son should be sinless. God preserved Mary from original and actual sin because she was to be the Mother of His Son.

Had not Mary been chosen to be God's Mother she, like every other child of Adam, would have been conceived in original sin. But on account of her sublime vocation God preserved her at the moment of conception from original sin, by pouring grace into her soul at that very instant. This was done by virtue of Christ's merits.

Mary Needed Redemption

No child of Adam receives grace except through Christ's merits. Like all of us Mary needed redemption by Christ. But she did not need to be cleansed from original sin for she had not been stained by it. By Christ's grace she was preserved from its defilement. This is the Immaculate Conception.

This is not the same as the Virgin Birth of Christ. The Virgin Birth means that Christ was conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit without the action of a human father. The Immaculate Conception means that from the very instant of her conception Mary was preserved from original sin.

Mary's Sinlessness

Because she was to be God's Mother God not only saved her from original sin but also from any personal sin, mortal or

venial. She was completely sinless through God's grace from the instant of her conception to the end of her life.

God gave Mary the fullness of grace. That accounts for her sinlessness. Grace comes to men through Christ and Mary is closer to Christ than any other individual, because His flesh came from her, He tabernacled in her womb and after that lived close to her for thirty years. The closer a person is to Christ the Font of grace, the greater degree of grace that person gets. From Christ Mary received a fullness of grace not given to anyone else. Her Immaculate Conception made her worthy to be God's Mother. God became Man in her womb, and dwelt with her through thirty years. By the constant presence of Christ Mary's confirmation in grace was perfected. Now after her death and Assumption, the fullness of grace and glory is hers in Heaven.

Mary's Virginity

One of Mary's great privileges is that not only is she the Mother of God but the Virgin Mother of God. Mary conceived Christ as a virgin, gave birth to Christ as a virgin, and all her life remained a virgin. A woman conceives a child by having carnal relations with a man. She loses her virginity by so doing. Without the male seed conception does not occur. In the conception of Christ, there was no male seed and no human father. It was the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who miraculously conceived Christ in Mary's womb.

Ordinarily a woman loses her physical virginity in childbirth. However, Christ's was a miraculous birth as He came from Mary's womb without taking away her virginity. Again while Mary and Joseph were married they kept a vow of virginity by Christ's grace, during their married lives. They abstained from the marital act. And so Mary remained always a virgin. This is a tribute to the power and holiness of God and to Mary's conformity to God's Will.

As Mary is God's Mother her perpetual virginity is not astounding. As Christ is the Son of God it was not proper for Him to have a human father; God's parenthood should not be

shared with a man. Again as the Word of God Christ proceeds without corruption from His Father. It was proper then that He should come from His Mother without corrupting her virginity. Now He came to free men from their sins. Had He been conceived by a human father He would have been subject to the debt of original sin, the sin He came to conquer.

Mary Is Virgin, Mother and Wife

His coming enabled men to be reborn of the Holy Spirit, and so it was proper that He should be conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was to restore the integrity of human nature, and so it was not proper for Him to destroy His Mother's physical integrity. Finally as He commands us to honor our fathers and mothers it was but right for Him to honor His Mother by keeping her virginity intact at His birth.

Mary consecrated her virginity to God by vow as soon as she knew that she was to be God's Mother. St. Joseph likewise vowed virginity. The generation of children was obligatory under the Old Law, so the vow of chastity was unknown among the Jews.

Mary was truly a wife even with her vow of virginity. It was necessary for her to be married. If she had not married public opinion would have branded her child as illegitimate. Besides the care and protection of a father were necessary for Christ. Again Mary might have been stoned as an adulteress had she not married. Finally Joseph as Mary's spouse witnesses to the miraculous conception and birth of our Lord.

Mary and Joseph were bound to each other in a real marriage by the bond of mutual spiritual love. They gave each other the conjugal rights that make a true marriage even though by vow they promised not to make use of them. And to their Child they gave parental care, love and upbringing.

At the moment of the Incarnation Mary became God's Mother. She was prepared by God for that moment, through the fullness of grace He had given her, which enabled her always to do God's Will. Her whole life had been one continuous act of charity. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to her at God's

chosen moment and told her what her vocation would be. He said: "Hail full of grace" and his words meant she was worthy of her destiny. At his next statement, "The Lord is with thee," Eternal God became man in her womb.

Human Nature Elevated

The marriage between God and human nature was complete when Mary said, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." God became man and in Mary's consent all the human family gave consent to its own elevation in the God-Man Christ. Eve had seduced Adam to the ruin of the human family. Mary conceived Christ for that human family's salvation.

The Son of God conceived in Mary's womb was a man like other men. He was from Adam and of the royal house of David. The Holy Spirit conceived Christ in Mary's womb. While all Three Persons conceived Christ, the action is attributed to the Holy Spirit by God Himself, because it is a work of divine love, and the Holy Spirit is the love of the Father and the Son.

But the Holy Spirit is not Christ's father. The Father begets God the Son Who is identical with Him in the divine nature. But the Holy Spirit in conceiving Christ did not beget a child like Himself in the divine nature. The Son of God is already divine, begotten only by God the Father. The Holy Spirit forms the human nature of the Son of God in Mary. It follows that the Holy Spirit is not the father of the Son of God.

Christ's Perfections

The Child in Mary's womb was the most perfect Child ever conceived. Because God the Holy Spirit conceived the Child, Christ's body was perfectly formed from the first moment of conception. As soon as the rational soul permeated the Body, God assumed that Body. Mary is God's Mother from that instant. If it were otherwise, Mary would be the mother of a human person whom God later assumed, but she would not be God's Mother.

Besides Christ was spiritually perfect. He had the fullness of grace from the moment He was conceived. He enjoyed the Beatific Vision. He had infused knowledge and His will could make free choices. As a result from the beginning of his existence as man, He could merit grace and redemption for men.

Mary's Motherhood

When a mother brings forth a child she gives birth not only to a human nature but to the person possessing that human nature. In the Incarnation then, Mary is the Mother of the Person Who exists in that human nature which He received from her. As the Person is God, Mary is God's Mother. Mary's divine maternity is her greatest privilege and the font of all her other privileges.

As with all mothers Mary's life is intimately associated with her Son's life. She carried Him in her womb and at Bethlehem gave birth to Him. She went into Egypt with Him, and lived in Nazareth with Him until His public ministry began. At her request He worked His first miracle. She stood by His Cross and surrendered her motherly rights to His life, His love and His care. Her motherly suffering she gave to God for men's salvation. United to Him she also offered His life for men's redemption.

That is why she won the right to distribute God's graces to men. *All grace through Mary.* Because He loved her as no other son could love a mother, He assumed her into Heaven, after her death, where she now is Queen of angels and men.

The position God gave Mary is unique. And as God so highly honored her, so must we. Honoring her we honor Christ. We pay tribute to Him Who could form for Himself so great a Mother.

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER

Christ is Redeemer of mankind from the first moment of His conception in Mary's womb. To save men is the dominating motive of His life. As He could make rational, free acts from this first moment, He started then to render perfect

obedience to His Father. This is the soul of His sacrifice. By it He redeemed men.

As human nature was destroyed by the disobedience of Adam so was it restored by Christ's obedience. While the chief redeeming act was the shedding of His Blood on the Cross, still from His first living moment He pointed all His free acts to their climax on Calvary. Christ's will was at one with His Father's from His life's start.

Christ Revealed His Divinity Gradually

Christ revealed His divinity to men gradually. Had He made Himself known as God at once the need for faith would not have been so urgent. But in God's plan it is only by faith that men are saved. Again had Christ shown Himself as God at once by some striking miracle men might have doubted His real humanity. They would then have lost the lesson of the Incarnation, God's overwhelming love for man.

So God made sure that men could see both the divinity and humanity of Christ. All the acts and circumstances of His life from Bethlehem to Calvary showed how real His human nature was. In contrast the Star, the Angels' message, Simeon's prediction were all supernatural signs of His divinity. When the right moment arrived, Christ's miracles and prophecies would give clinching proof that He was God.

Christ Observed the Old Law

Obedying God's will Christ yielded obedience to the Old Law. In shedding His Blood at His circumcision He proved that His human nature was real, and also dedicated Himself to God for man's redemption. His action in this instance showed His approval of a ceremony that signified Jewish faith in a promised Redeemer. As the Jews set great store by this rite, had Christ not observed it they would have had nothing at all to do with Him.

The Name of Jesus was given to Him on this occasion, a name meaning Saviour, showing what was to be His life-task. God Himself gave Him that Name.

Mary's Example

As Christ taught humility and obedience in accepting circumcision, so did His Mother Mary teach the same lessons in submitting to purification after Christ's birth. She showed by obeying God's command that she approved the Old Law, even though she needed no purification.

Then at the prescribed time, Christ was offered and consecrated to God as Mary's first-born, and though sinless the usual sin-offering was made for Him.

Christ's Baptism

Before beginning His Public Ministry Christ was baptized by John the Baptist, thereby giving approval to the apostolate of His forerunner. John's baptism did not give grace but it prepared the way for the sacrament of baptism which Christ would establish. As Christ was sinless and had the fullness of grace it was not unfitting for Him to be baptized by John. Moreover, in this action Christ sanctified baptism.

This is why on that occasion, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit appeared, and the Father declared: "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii, 17).

Adam's sin closed Heaven's gates; at Christ's baptism the heavens opened. This meant that through baptism instituted by Christ Heaven's gates are swung open to man. From the Scripture account we know that the Holy Trinity was in attendance at Christ's baptism. This was most fitting as the sacrament of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit sanctifies men.

At the age of thirty, following His baptism Christ began His Public Ministry. He was in the prime of life when a man should be fit for his life-task. Christ in opening up His public ministry was to show men the way of salvation and to begin the New Law of grace.

Christ had lived under the Old Law for thirty years before His baptism which contains a divine symbolism. For just as Christ was baptized at the age which is manhood's perfect age, so does Christian baptism produce men perfect in grace.

Christ's Public Life Necessary

Christ's task was to save men by His teaching, example, Passion and death. He lived a life that His objective called for. As He first had to bring God's truth to men, He went out seeking them wherever He could find them. He was the Good Shepherd looking for the sheep that had been lost. That men might find it easier to reach God, He became man. So in His ministry He made Himself available to all.

As He was the perfect Man He needed no penance whereby to control His appetites, but He practiced penance in order to give men the secret of self-control. He acted ordinarily as other men in the matter of eating and drinking. This made Him easily approachable.

Christ and Poverty

Christ, however, is different from most men in His practice of poverty. For most men shun poverty, while He was poor by choice. He knew that wealth was no asset to the apostle. So he set an example to all His apostles in all ages, by designedly living in poverty that He might bring others God's riches. That His own self-sacrifice might make His message more appealing He threw aside worldly riches. In this way, too, He would make more evident His divine power. He would bring salvation to men without using any of the material things that were considered indispensable for success.

He also won men's hearts by allowing the devil to tempt Him. Men might have been discouraged by the spiritual perfection of Christ, thinking that there was no temptation in His life, and so perfection for Him was easy. But men learned that temptation did attack Him after His forty days' fast. He endured a threefold temptation, including sins of the flesh and of the spirit of man.

He conquered the temptations and routed the devil, teaching men that Satan can be vanquished by a will made strong by God's grace. Christ tempted shows us that good people are not exempt from temptation, and shows us, too, that He can understand our needs and aid us when we are tempted.

Christ's Message to the Jews

After His temptation Christ began His teaching apostolate. He carried the tidings of salvation first to the Jews, for God had promised that He would give His truths to them first, and through them to the rest of the world.

As the Jews had preserved the belief in one God and His worship, He rewarded them by making them the first recipients of His full Revelation. Then, too, we might naturally expect the Redeemer to begin His ministry among His own people. Christ won power and dominion over all men through His Passion and Death. While He confined His ministry to His own people, He showed His divine power by giving His Apostles grace to convert the world of paganism.

Christ's Technique in His Apostolate

In His apostolate Christ preached His doctrine openly and everywhere. He concealed nothing even though at times He taught in parables. The parable was a common device of Oriental teachers, and in most instances those who had interest enough to ponder its meaning, could understand it.

Under no circumstances do we find our Lord watering down His teaching because of enemy opposition. He was fearlessly outspoken in denouncing pharisaic hypocrisy. He did not take back a single item of His eucharistic teaching because the Jews rejected it, and on that occasion He offered His own Apostles the chance to abandon Him, if they would not abide by His statement that He would leave them His Body and Blood.

Teaching with divine authority He had no need to put His teaching down in writing. His truth could be passed on from generation to generation much better by the spoken word and the living example than by the written word. As men are taught by other men it was normal for Christ to train His Apostles to bear His truth to others.

The Meaning of Revelation

We call Christ's teaching a Revelation. For it was a revealing of divine mysteries, the Trinity, The Incarnation and other

sacred secrets of God's dealing with men. As it was God's message and beyond the grasp of man's intellect, Christ had to guarantee His teaching. His miracles were the guarantee. They were God's voice declaring Christ divine and His message true. God alone can work miracles so they testify to the truth of Christ's claim. An all-perfect God cannot sponsor a lie.

Christ then, claimed to be God and proved it by His miracles. They witness to His power over all the elements in creation. When He cured the possessed He demonstrated His power over the angels. In causing the sun to darken He proved His control over nature. In making water blush into wine He made inanimate things admit His power. In healing the sick and raising the dead He showed that He dominated men. In fact His miracles were so varied that they proclaimed Him Lord of all creation. Since He said He was God and backed up His statement with countless miracles, we too if we are reasonable, must admit that He is God.

The Lesson of the Transfiguration

Of all Christ's miracles His Transfiguration is most striking. He had just taught His disciples the value of the Cross. He wanted to make clear to them that if they wished to gain happiness in the vision of God they must imitate Him in enduring the Cross. To demonstrate this truth and to show them what it meant, He took Peter, James and John to the heights of Thabor and was transfigured before them. His body was brilliant with the light of glory which poured out of His divinity into His human soul and then to His body. This was a miracle, to allow the light of glory to gleam in His body.

Why this special miracle? To strengthen His Apostles' faith, and make clearer the words He had just spoken to them. If a man subdues his passions and shows His love for God by observing His Commandments he will gain heaven, enjoy the vision of God, his soul agleam with the light of glory, his body likewise reflecting that heavenly light.

When Christ let His Apostles see Him transfigured, He gave them a foretaste of the glory that would shine upon all good men in virtue of His Passion and Death. The Transfigu-

ration is a witness to the truth of Christ's teaching and a glimpse of eternal life for the lovers of Christ.

The Cost of Bodily Glory

But Christ's bodily glory and the glory in store for all good men at time's end, cost dearly. Its purchase price was the agony of Christ's Passion and Death.

God was not compelled to demand the sufferings and death of Christ for men's sins. He could have made repentance for sin suffice, and on man's repentance He could have forgiven him. Nor was Christ compelled to suffer and die for men's sins. He freely offered Himself for sacrifice because it was God's will. God decided that this divine sacrifice was to be for man's salvation.

That God actually demanded satisfaction for the sins committed against Him, shows His justice. It shows His mercy too, for an adequate satisfaction could only be given by a God-man. Christ could make infinite satisfaction for sin's infinite malice because He was God. He could make a man's satisfaction for the sins of men because He was man.

But Christ's suffering did more than win God's pardon for men. It gave overwhelming proof of God's love for man. What more could God do to show His love? Again man is taught by Christ's suffering and death the virtues that lead him to Heaven; obedience to God's will, humility, constancy, fortitude and justice. Besides men were enabled to gain true happiness by the grace Christ won for them by His sufferings and death. Finally men have been given a wonderful motive for avoiding sin, by the Passion and death of Christ. For that was what sin cost. Christ's sufferings and death have made man capable of conquering Satan who had ruined him. For through Christ man is restored to God's friendship. God too, has shown honor to man's dignity, for man can rightly say that he has been saved by his Brother Man.

Christ's Passion Meant the Extreme of Agony

Christ's Passion and death spelled agonizing torments. Both His soul and body were torn by torture. The whole world

of men, His Apostles, His friends, the Jews, the Romans, His enemies—all united in heaping suffering upon Him. And He felt every suffering keenly as He possessed a perfect soul and perfect body.

All through these sufferings Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision in His soul's higher part. But his ability to feel sensitive pain or joy, His soul's lower part, was flooded with agony. Christ really plunged His human nature into sufferings' deepest depths. The fullness of pain was His. That is why Isaias declared centuries before: "There was no beauty, nor comeliness, nor sightliness in Him, to make us desire Him; despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and knowing infirmity; and His look was hidden and despised. Whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows, and we have thought of Him as a leper, as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed." (Isaias liii, 2-5)

Christ did not have to suffer and die, and this shows the intensity of His love for mankind. He could have saved Himself from any bodily anguish because He was God and all-powerful. His wounds need not have pained since His soul had His body in perfect control. Obeying His Father's will He surrendered to His executioners. God and the Son of God did this because of love for men.

Christ was handed over to the Romans by His own people to be executed. The Romans put Him to death. Since His mission of salvation was not only to Jew but to Gentile, it was fitting that both should participate in His sufferings and death.

Knowledge Measured the Guilt

The knowledge possessed by the different groups that took part in Christ's tortures and death, measures their guilt. The least guilty were the Roman soldiers who crucified Him. They had no knowledge of the Person of Christ. Pilate was more guilty even though he was ignorant of the identity of his Prisoner. The simple people come next in the balance of

guilt. They had witnessed Christ's miracles and so had reason to believe in Him, but their leaders misled them into abandoning Christ. These leaders were the guiltiest of all. They shut their eyes to all the evidence Christ gave, that showed Him to be God. God was ready with His grace of faith but they would have none of it. Their sin cannot be excused. In handing over their Messiah to the Romans they were guilty of the most vicious sin.

As Christ hung dying on His Cross His enemies shouted: "If Thou be the Son of God come down from the Cross." This sounded like a cry of triumph over the Crucified, Who was, "a stumbling-block to Jews and to Gentiles foolishness." (1 Cor. 1, 23) Did Christ's life and death spell failure? Hear St. Paul's reply: "But unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks" Christ Crucified is "the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Cor. 1, 24-25) The seemingly helpless Christ hanging on His Cross was in reality most powerful for this sacrifice saved mens' souls.

Christ the New Adam

Christ's life and sufferings and death were all freely offered for men's salvation. In God's plan He was the New Adam, the new Head of the human family. His human will merited from God man's salvation because out of obedience and charity He freely offered up His life. In this Christ gave more than was necessary to God to atone for the sins of all men.

He satisfied for mankind's sins and honored and appeased God by sacrificing His life. This was the price paid for men's sins and the punishment due them. By the payment of this price all men were redeemed. All He did was done because God willed it. His human nature as the instrument of His Godhead enabled Him to carry out His life-work. God therefore was most pleased with His Passion, His Supreme Sacrifice.

The Effects of Christ's Passion

The first effects of the God-Man's Passion were to free men from sin and from Satan's power. They thereby escaped sin's

penalty and the loss of the Beatific Vision, and they became again God's friends for whom He reopened Heaven's gates. His Passion brought with it personal rewards. For Christ having suffered death unjustly was called from the tomb by His Father. As He endured burial He merited to ascend into Heaven. As He suffered from the mockery of men, He now reigns with His Father in Heaven. As He was handed over to the unjust judgment of men He has been given the power of Judge over all men. God's weakness in His Passion was so strong that it brought divine life to men.

Christ's death on the Cross was real for His soul and body were separated. Yet His divinity remained with both His body and soul. Because the Son of God was united to His dead body, any reverence paid it was valuable for man's salvation.

At the moment of His death Christ's soul descended into Limbo to deliver the souls imprisoned there and lead them to Heaven. His Passion enabled them to enjoy the vision of God. Three days after His death He arose from the tomb. This was the supreme proof that He was God, and confirms our faith. "If Christ be not risen then our preaching is vain and so is your faith," says St. Paul. By His Resurrection we may hope for our own resurrection. By His rising from the tomb Christ not only showed that He was God, but He won for men the new life of grace that makes them capable of sharing God's life.

Christ's Glorious Wounds

Christ's own body rose from death still bearing the wounds of His Passion. They proved His identity. They mark His glorious body in Heaven pleading with the Father for men's salvation and proclaiming His victory over, Satan, the world and sin. United to God in the Beatific Vision, His soul poured its glory over His body bathing it in the brilliance of eternal light.

He spent forty days after His resurrection with His Mother, His Apostles and disciples giving them constant and varied proofs of the reality of His resurrection. From His Apostles'

testimony we know that He has truly risen, and that we likewise will one day rise.

At time's end the Risen Christ will cause all men to rise from their graves. His resurrection God will make the efficient cause of men's resurrection, and His glorified human nature will be the instrument of the general resurrection.

Christ's resurrection is the model of men's resurrection at the world's end. For the just will rise as Christ has risen. Their bodies will be immortal and glorious as His is. As they had faith in Him and loved Him they will share His glory. This is His promise.

The unjust will rise too but only to be condemned, for as they gave Christ neither the tribute of faith nor of love, they cannot share in His glory.

Christ's Place in Heaven

Christ ascended into Heaven at the close of forty days. There He received His merited glory, there He begs His father for men's salvation. He is at His Father's right hand. He is the equal of the Father and the Holy Spirit as He is God. As the perfect man enjoying the fullness of grace, and as Head of the human family, and of the angelic hosts, He is at the Father's side with power to judge both angels and men.

The true meaning and character of human and angelic actions Christ will make known on the Last Day, and give the decision. And the decision will be final, everlasting joy for the just, unending suffering for the wicked. Heaven will show the mercy of God, Hell His justice.

The World Needs Christ the Redeemer

Men today as at all times need a Redeemer. And if it is not Christ it will be chaos. Man by his disobedience brought chaos to his world, Christ by His obedience has restored order and opened Heaven to mankind. Because of His death on the Cross in loving obedience to God's will, men can get God's grace into their souls. Because He humbled Himself unto death men can reach up to the dignity of sons of God. It is within

men's power to love God and one another because He loved both God and man.

While He has merited grace for all men, it is unavailing for salvation unless men freely accept and use it. To be saved in Christ we need to be united to Him in faith, hope and love. As a loving Redeemer He forces no man's will. Hanging on the Cross between Heaven and earth, between God and men, He is humble and loving, So must we be. The Cross is the way to happiness. "If any man will follow Me let him take up his cross." Man finds his life and happiness in the way of the Cross.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRAMENTS

Man needs grace if he is to be saved, and he needs a visible, sensible sign to show him that he can receive grace. God has given man this sign in the Sacraments. They are the ordinary channels of grace, Christ instituted the Sacraments, gave them to His Church, that through them men might get both sanctifying and actual grace.

A Sacrament is a sign indicating something holy, God's grace. Men are made holy, sanctified by grace. Now we must remember that Christ's Passion is the cause of our sanctification. And our sanctification means grace and the supernatural virtues which lead us to eternal life, the vision of God. Every Sacrament is a sign of Christ's Passion, of grace within us, and a pledge of the future, the Beatific Vision which completes grace.

As a Sacrament is a sign it must be something recognizable by the senses, a thing that can be seen or heard or touched. It is a sensible thing or action symbolizing a spiritual reality, grace.

Now a Sacrament must be something recognizable as pointing out the spiritual reality which it symbolizes. If it is a good sign it must be specific. God determined what signs are used in the Sacraments, because the grace which they symbolize comes from God only.

Matter and Form of the Sacraments

Sometimes it is necessary to add a word to make the meaning of a sign clear. So in the Sacraments which Christ has given us we have actions and words. We call the actions the matter of the Sacraments and the words the form of the Sacraments. In Baptism for instance water is poured over the head of the child and the words "I baptize thee etc." are said as the water is poured. So we have water, the action of pouring it, and the saying of the words.

Baptism's purpose is very clear when the words are added to the action. To baptize signifies to cleanse, and to do this in the name of the Triune God is to do it by God's power, that is to drive sin out of the soul by pouring in grace. Since God is the Author of the Sacraments, the things, actions and words cannot be changed by any human power. As He alone can give grace, He alone decides on the signs that shall be the channels of the grace He gives.

These Signs Are Helpful to Man

These sacramental signs are helpful to man's nature. For since Adam's sin man's mind does not find the thinking on spiritual things easy. It needs to be led to the spiritual by the contemplation of the material. The way to the spiritual is through the senses; seeing, hearing, feeling are the channels. It is fitting too that man who deserts God by gratifying the senses, should be brought back to God through his senses.

The Sacraments, as signs are different from human signs for they effect what they signify. A danger signal does not bring on the danger or prevent the danger; it merely warns of the danger. Whereas baptism actually drives sin out of the soul and pours grace into the soul. As grace is a share in God's life only He can give it. But He can use instruments to convey grace. Water and words cannot combine to banish sin and give grace. But God using them as instruments can produce those effects. The Sacraments then are God's instruments.

The Sacraments Give the Supernatural Virtues

The Sacraments signify sanctifying grace which is a share in God's life. As the infusion of grace in the soul is accompanied by the supernatural virtues, the Sacraments give these virtues. Each Sacrament however achieves a special effect. Baptism for instance achieves man's rebirth in grace and his incorporation into Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. It will then both signify and confer the divine help to enable a man to be reborn as a member of Christ's Mystical Body and live accordingly. The Sacraments contain and confer grace by the power of Christ's Passion.

The Purpose of the Sacraments

The purpose of the Sacraments is two-fold. They cure the sickness of sin and condition man's soul for the proper worship of God. Besides this, the Sacraments give marks or characters to make a man capable of participating in the worship of God. The worship of God means either receiving divine gifts or giving them to others. In either instance a man needs the power to receive or to bestow divine gifts. Christ gives all these divine gifts and so the sacramental characters give men a share in Christ's priesthood. The sacramental character deals with action as it is directed to divine worship, and so stamps the intellectual power of the soul. As the intellect is a spiritual power it cannot corrupt and so the character can never be dissociated from the soul. It is irremovable.

Not all the Sacraments however imprint characters. Baptism and Confirmation confer a character on the soul for they empower a man to receive the other Sacraments. Holy Orders stamps a character on the soul since it confers power to administer the Sacraments to others. The other Sacraments do not leave a character on the soul since they do not give power to receive or give the Sacraments.

God is the principal Agent in producing grace and the Sacramental characters in souls. God uses the signs and the men who give the Sacraments as His instruments. Both the ministers and the signs of the sacraments are instrumental causes.

Christ Produces Grace as God and Man

As God and man Christ produces grace by the Sacraments. He has the power and authority to produce grace in souls as God for as God He is all-powerful. As man He produces grace by employing His human nature as an efficient instrument. He won the grace which the Sacraments give by His Passion. His therefore was the power to institute the Sacraments. All ministers of the Sacraments act by virtue of His power. They have no power of their own.

It follows from this that the efficacy of the Sacraments does not depend on the virtue of the ministers. Even if they are in sin the power of Christ can flow through them to sanctify souls. As long as the evil minister acts as Christ's minister, His instrument, the Sacrament will give grace. His sin may be anything; he may not even have faith in Christ's power or that of the Sacrament to sanctify. It does not matter. As long as the minister possesses the power to give the Sacrament and intends to do what Christ's Church wants done, then the Sacrament he handles, however unworthily, will give grace.

The Sacraments Are Life-Giving

Seven Sacraments were instituted by Christ; Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, Matrimony. These Sacraments give the life of grace. This supernatural life resembles natural life. A man must be born before he can live his natural life and he must be reborn in Baptism before he can lead the supernatural life of grace. Baptism is supernatural birth.

All the Sacraments are necessary for men in different ways and degrees. Baptism is necessary if men are to be saved. If men fall into mortal sin they need the Sacrament of Penance. To continue its mission the Church needs Holy Orders. Matrimony supplies children for Christ's Kingdom. Through the Sacraments Christ's Passion reaches men, making them God's children with a title to Heaven. . . . The Sacraments show God's love for men.

QUESTIONS

LESSON I

(Pages 3-5)

- What is the relationship of the Pope and the Bishops to Christ?
Is the Church a physical or a moral body?
How are the members of Christ's Body united with Him and among themselves?
Why is the Body of Christ called Mystical?
Name the Soul of the Mystical Body.
Who communicates supernatural life to the Church and in what order?
There are many diverse members in Christ's Body. Explain.
All Christ's members work together for the upbuilding of Christ's Body. Explain.
How does Christ's grace circulate through the three sections of His Church?
Why may we say that the Church is Christ?
What perfections has the human nature of Christ?

LESSON II

(Pages 5-6)

- What will Christ see in His vision of God in respect to creatures?
Why does the human soul of Christ have infused knowledge?
Could Christ's acquired knowledge increase?
Why does the acquired knowledge of Christ surpass that of all other men?
To what is the great perfection of the human knowledge of Christ due?
Why does Christ's position demand perfect knowledge?
What power does the human nature of Christ enjoy?
Did Christ's human nature have the power to create?
What instrument did Christ use in performing miracles?
How is the perfection of Christ's human nature an inspiration to all men?

LESSON III

(Pages 6-7)

- What were the imperfections in Christ's human nature?
Were His imperfections a penalty for sin?
Whatever we say of either the human or divine nature may be said of the Person. Explain.
May we say that the divinity of Christ is human?
Why must there have been conformity of the human will of

Christ with the divine?

What did Christ mean in saying "My soul is sorrowful unto death."

What example did Christ show us in the action of His human will during the Passion?

Did Christ merit grace?

Enumerate the blessings that Christ merited for Himself.

In His human nature was Christ equal to His Father?

LESSON IV

(Pages 7-9)

How does Christ teach the proper subjection of men to God?

What has Christ shown us in His prayer life?

Through the Incarnation Christ is the High Priest of God and the human race. Explain.

How was Christ both victim and priest on the Cross?

What three objectives did Christ's sacrifice accomplish?

How is Christ's sacrifice infinite?

What type of adoration is due Christ?

How is Christ the Perfect Mediator?

What does Christ do unceasingly in and through His Mystical Body?

How does the Incarnation show God's love for man?

LESSON V

(Pages 10-11)

Why is Mary the perfect Mother of God?

Did God find Mary to be the most perfect of women?

Why did God preserve Mary from original and actual sin?

How did God preserve Mary from original sin at her conception?

State the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception?

What is the meaning of Christ's virgin birth?

To what is Mary's sinlessness due?

How was Mary confirmed in the state of grace?

Mary is the Virgin Mother of Christ. Explain.

To what is Mary's perpetual virginity a tribute?

LESSON VI

(Pages 11-13)

Why did not Christ have a human father?

State the different reasons for Christ's virgin birth.

Were Mary and Joseph really married?

Why was it necessary for Mary to marry?

What could Joseph bear witness to?

Did Mary and Joseph give to each other conjugal rights?
When did Mary become God's Mother?
What followed when Mary gave her consent to God's plan?
Name the active principle of Christ's conception.
What part did the Holy Trinity have in the Incarnation?

LESSON VII
(Pages 13-14)

Why is the conception of Christ attributed to the Holy Spirit?
Is the Holy Spirit Christ's father?
What did the action of the Holy Spirit form in Mary?
What did Christ's body possess in the first moment of existence?
What would follow if Mary were not God's Mother from the first instant of Christ's conception?
Christ was spiritually perfect from the first moment of His existence. Explain.
Does a mother give birth only to the human nature of the child?
What is the greatest of Mary's privileges?
Explain how Mary's life was closely interwoven with Christ's life?
How did Mary merit the right to dispense all graces to men?
How did Christ show His love for Mary after her death?
We should give Mary all honor and this does not detract from the honor we give Christ. Explain.

LESSON VIII
(Pages 14-16)

When did Christ begin His role as Redeemer of mankind?
Why did Christ reveal His divinity gradually?
What showed the reality of Christ's human nature?
What does Christ's circumcision teach us?
State the significance of the Holy Name.
What did Mary's example prove?
What effect had John the Baptist's baptism?
Why did Christ submit to baptism?
Why was the Trinity present at Christ's baptism?
The age of Christ at the beginning of His ministry meant something. Explain.

LESSON IX
(Pages 16-18)

What symbolism does Christ's baptism contain?
What was Christ's life-work?
Why did He live so active a life?

As Christ had no need for penance why did He practice it?
Explain His practice of poverty.
Why did He allow the devil to tempt Him?
What was Christ's temptation?
What bearing has Christ's temptation on our temptations?
With what nation did Christ begin His apostolate?
In preaching His doctrine what was our Lord's policy?

LESSON X

(Pages 18-20)

Why did not Christ put His doctrine down in writing?
Explain the meaning of Revelation.
What were the guarantees of Christ's teaching?
What do Christ's miracles prove?
Christ's miracles showed His power over all the elements in creation. Explain.
What was the lesson of Christ's Transfiguration?
What were the Apostles given a foretaste of on Mount Thabor?
What was the cost of Christ's bodily glory?
Were Christ's sufferings and death necessary for the forgiveness of men's sins?
The sacrifice demanded by God shows His justice and mercy. Explain.

LESSON XI

(Pages 20-22)

Why could Christ alone make adequate satisfaction for sin?
What was Christ's suffering proof of?
What virtues does Christ's suffering teach?
What benefits did these sufferings bring to men?
Why did Christ suffer such extreme torments?
Did Christ have the beatific vision during His Passion?
What was Christ's motive in suffering since He did not have to suffer?
What measured the guilt of Christ's torturers?
Who were the guiltiest of all Christ's torturers?
Did the crucifixion prove Christ's life a failure?

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