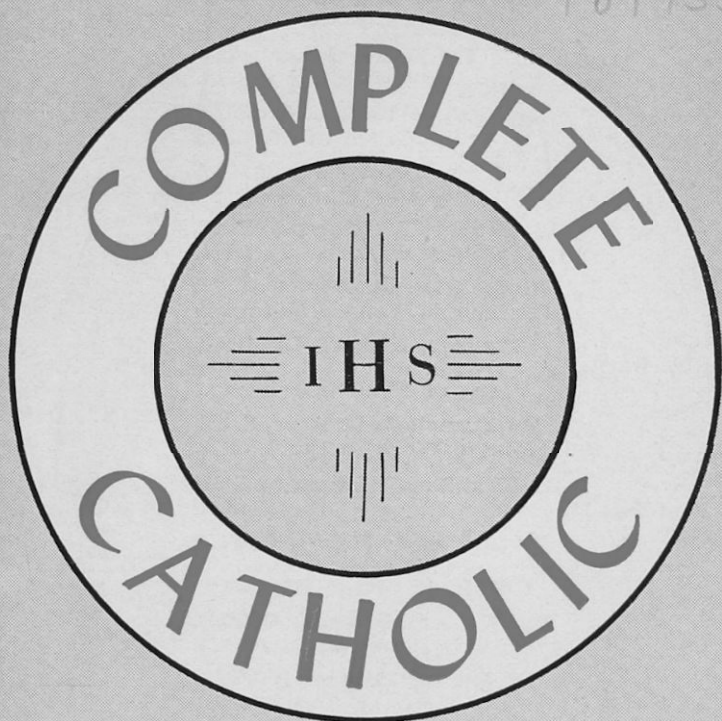


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THE
COMPLETE
CATHOLIC

Lenten Talks
to Laymen

By

Very Rev.

JOHN J. DOUGHERTY

S.T.L., S.S.D.

Immaculate Conception Seminary
Darlington, New Jersey

St. Anthony's Guild
Paterson, N. J.

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Nihil Obstat

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✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN

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I
DOGMATIC ABSOLUTES
AND THE CATHOLIC MIND

I COME to you as a commentator for Christ. The difference between the commentator for Christ and the news commentator is this: he brings you his analysis of events, I bring you Christ's analysis of life. The difference in value between the two is measured, not by the difference between him and me, but by the difference between him and Christ, the *infinite* difference. Christ was a Commentator on life, not on politics. He had only three years on earth to preach His commentary, and He had to stick to the most important things. He had so much to say about the Father, He had no time to talk about Caesar. There was so much to say on principles, He had little time to talk of policies. He knew they were secondary, and if men and nations got their principles straight, correct policies would follow. Catholics may differ in their views on government, labor, foreign policy and so on. They may argue hotly with one another on these issues; but about the issues Christ taught, there is no argument. These are truths that have made men Catholic for two thousand years. Christ's commentary on life does not change, it is not adjustable like the attitude of governments, not subject to compromise like the policies of nations; it does not take advantage of the short memory of men, but

is frozen in the shape of God's eternal mind. His truth is the same yesterday, today and forever.

All commentators have an ax to grind; they are for something and against something. They talk in order to make you think the way they do, or the way the men who pay them want you to think. They try to shape your thinking by a daily or weekly injection of indoctrination. They want to make you more American or less American, more leftist or rightist, pro labor or pro capital. They want you on their side. The commentator for Christ has an ax to grind. He is for something and against something. He wants you to think the way he does — no! the way Christ does. He wants "that mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus," to quote Christ's outstanding commentator, St. Paul. That is my objective in these commentaries for Christ, to form the mind of Christ in you. If there is any more urgent need, I don't know it. A commentary on the atom bomb may be education for *survival*, but a commentary on Christ is education for *resurrection* — in case we don't survive, and really none of us do very long.

My present topic is *Dogmatic Religion and the Catholic Mind*. I shall explain the topic. The Catholic faith is dogmatic by nature. That is to say, it *demand*s an *unconditional acceptance of certain fixed ideas*.

These ideas or facts were fixed by Jesus Christ. They are viewed as unchangeable for the reason that Christ is believed to be divine, and divine facts are of their nature unchangeable. For example, if there are three Persons in God once, there are three Persons in God always. If Christ makes known to us this fact, it stands forever. To be a Catholic means to accept these fixed truths by reason of the *authority* of the divine Christ who made them known. A Catholic does not accept them because he likes them, or because he finds them pretty or consoling; on such a basis, he would select only what he liked, only what looked nice to him, and he would have every right to, as a housewife has to select her oranges. When you accept them on the authority of a divine Christ, you accept them *all*, for the reason you accept them is His authority. The Catholic faith is dogmatic, therefore, in the sense that it does not feel it can change one iota of what Christ said. No matter how great the pressure from below, there is always the divine pressure from above. It does not consider itself competent to tamper with Christ's fixed ideas, for the reason that it believes Him to be divine, and you can't change what God says any more than you can change God.

If any two words are hostile to modern ears, they are *dogmatic* and *authority*. This is understandable enough, at present, for

men have put themselves up as absolute powers; men have proclaimed dogmas like racial purity, collectivism; men have assumed authority like gods. But to hate *all* dogma and *all* authority because it has been abused is, if understandable emotion, poor logic. We must always ask by whose authority and whence the dogma. It is a human *right* to deny any *man* the power to tyrannize and dogmatize; it is the highest human *wisdom* to accept the dogmas and the authority of God. The significance of a divine Christ is then seen; that is the basis of acceptance.

Next, I would like to present the *problem* for the Catholic mind as I see it. By *mind* I mean viewpoint, the way you think, your sense of values. There is a certain fixity to viewpoint; it develops slowly over years, but it is never an absolute thing. It is in a continual process of growth; the roots of viewpoint dig deeper into the mind. It is the result of many influences and causes; radio, newspapers, people you associate with, books, stage, screen, competition, experience of all sorts. Now the world that is made up of these things is not a Catholic world; there may be some Catholic influence in it, like a "Bells of St. Mary's" or a "World, Flesh and Father Smith," but it is anything but an out-and-out Catholic world. Rather, if you were going to characterize the American scene, you could safely call it attractively pagan. Its attitude and sense of values are

tied down to earth, whether you poll the universities, the theaters, the book-marts, or the boys on shore leave. Men who work in the coal mines inhale coal dust. The minds that live in the world I describe, inhale its attitudes and values. The miners can wash coal grime from their faces; it's hard to get it out of their lungs. It is hard to get the dust of the world you live in out of your mind. The dust of a pagan world carries the seeds of a pagan philosophy. How do we prevent those seeds from sinking roots into our minds?

That brings me to my third point: You use a counterirritant, you set up an opposing force, the philosophy of Christ. This pulpit, this altar, these confessionals, are signs of the opposing force. These are signs of Christ's values. The Eucharistic Presence, the power to forgive, and the word of God — these are counterirritants to the mind of the modern. *The eternally fixed ideas of Jesus Christ are the opposing force.* The reality of these truths must be recognized by the mind.

The Catholic takes hold of these truths by *faith*. Faith is not merely a mumbled, vague assent to mysterious propositions about three Persons in one God, or two natures in one Man. It is a highly personal operation. It begins in and centers in Christ. As the early Christians put it: Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the first letter and the last,

the beginning and the end. The faith of the Catholic is not merely believing *things*; it is above all, belief *in Someone*. The complete Catholic not only believes Christ; he believes *in* Christ. Christ becomes the center of his life. He accepts Christ's interpretation of life as his own; the values of Christ become his values in practical living; the conviction rules him that the only sensible meaning of life is found in the teaching of Jesus.

The Catholic mind, then, is one that assents to the fact that Christ is divine. This assent is an act of faith in Christ and consequently in what He taught and in the Church He founded. It does not resent the absolute character of Catholic doctrines any more than it resents the absolute character of the multiplication table.

II

MORAL ABSOLUTES AND THE CATHOLIC MIND

WE LIVE in a day of crisis. It is a day of crisis for the Church. The crisis is a global one — it embraces America. The Church's greatest need is Catholics, complete Catholics, Catholics through and through; men who are Catholic in mind, heart and action, men who think Catholic, love Catholic and live Catholic. That is why I am talking on the "complete Catholic."

I have explained what I mean by the Catholic mind. It is a viewpoint shaped by the principles of the Catholic faith; it is an attitude of mind, a sense of values, a philosophy of life, cut according to the Catholic pattern. I said that the first step in getting it is the act of faith whereby you accept the whole doctrine of Christ on His authority. You believe *in* Him as the Son of God, and because of this you make an unconditional surrender of your human mind to the divine mind and embrace His doctrine. Some of the basic doctrines of Christ are: that the soul is immortal; that heaven and hell are eternal; that the way God treats us hereafter depends on how we treat our fellow man here. These doctrines shape your mind and determine your values, dictate your behavior. They are absolutes, unchangeable, fixed eternally by Christ; therefore they are described as dogmatic.

In addition to matters of faith, there are matters of morals. The topic of my second commentary for Christ is *Moral Absolutes and the Catholic Mind*. I shall explain the meaning of my topic. The Catholic Church has a fixed moral code, a set of standards of moral behavior. These standards are *absolute*: there is no time out from them and there are no exceptions to them. Adultery was sinful in the day of Moses, and it will be sinful on the Last Day. These standards are not physical but *moral*. A man can

shatter them totally in his personal life; his house does not fall down upon his head, but his character begins to crumble. The terrifying thing about these moral absolutes is that they do not fall apart because men deny them; they are as *fixed* as the stars; the fact that a man says "I do not believe" does not free him from them. They are part of human existence. You can obey them or disobey them, but you cannot make them not exist. These moral absolutes are made known to us by Revelation and the natural law. You cannot change them any more than you can change God. When a man makes this admission he has the Catholic mind. He accepts the complete moral code of the Church because of the authority of Jesus Christ. In addition to the *doctrines* of the Church, he accepts the *morals* of the Church.

Now I state the problem concerning Catholic morality. There is a great misunderstanding about it among non-Catholics and also among Catholics. Non-Catholics consider the absolute morality of the Catholic Church as unreasonable; they label it dictatorship or totalitarianism. They say it is alien to the traditions of the American way of life. These views are sounded in high places and are paraphrased by the man in the street. They can easily infect the Catholic; they have done so. It is not the doctrines of the Church the Catholic finds hard;

it is the morals of the Church. This fact makes a man look for excuses to abandon the morality of the Church in whole or in part. He finds the excuses prepared by those who hate the Church or are frightened by its progress. For this reason, I think it will help to discuss the moral absolutes of the Church.

I approach the answer to the problem by observing a fact about ourselves. In us there are two lives, the *physical* life and the *spiritual* life, the life of the body and the life of the soul. The physical life is a passing thing, the soul-life immortal. Both these lives operate and grow according to certain laws. The life of the body needs food; it is absolutely subject to laws of nutrition, and if these are not observed the body grows ill and dies. The life of the soul needs nourishment; it is nourished by virtue and prayer and grace. It is subject to the laws of nourishment, and if it breaks these laws it dies.

Now if I want to know about the laws of physical nourishment, I go to a doctor. The mother feeds her infant by prescribed formulae. If she has any sense, she follows the laws of child nourishment. Now what about the laws of the soul, the inner life? Who will tell you the laws of the inner life? Who knows the soul? The One who knows the soul is the One who made it, God. God sent His Son to earth to make

known to us the laws of life. Christ said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." Of what life did He speak? The life of the soul. He said, "Keep the commandments and thou shalt live." Of what life did He speak? The life of the soul. The laws of life, therefore, are the laws revealed by Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made, especially the soul. Now in the matter of physical nourishment you must keep all the laws. If you omit an essential food element, a physical deficiency occurs. If you take too much of one, like alcohol, you become mentally or nervously ill. The code of morals, the laws of the soul, must all be obeyed. You cannot accept nine commandments and refuse one, and be spiritually sound.

Now for my second observation. It is not too hard to raise a child who is healthy. It is difficult to raise a child who is ill, or weak, whose physical life is marred or maimed. *Now this is the situation of every human soul, except Christ and His Mother.* Every human soul is spiritually weak. It has an inherited disease; we call it *original sin*. By the sin of Adam we were wounded in our nature. The intellect is darkened and the will weak. David said of old, "In sin my mother conceived me." This is the real diagnosis of the soul. If you know yourself, you have long since known that.

Therefore there is compensation necessary for this weakness. The soul cannot last without aid, and that aid God gives to all. He gives every living soul enough grace to be saved; the divine mercy supplies enough supernatural blood plasma to the sick soul. The supernatural aid is the grace Jesus Christ merited by His death on the cross. Jesus Christ came and gave us the laws of life, but more — He gave us the *means* of life, grace. He died that we might live, that our souls might be saved.

Now here are the real facts of the case for salvation: the bleeding Christ upon the mount of the Cross and the pleading Christ upon the mount of the Sermon; Christ preaching morals and winning grace. He said, "If anyone love Me, he will keep My word," and then He showed how much He loved them by His death on the cross. "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends." This is the whole picture. Christ asks us to carry the cross of His commandments; He has carried the cross of our sins.

This is the story behind the moral absolutes. They are the laws of life, they come from the lips of Christ. He said, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery." That is an absolute, His absolute. And in this day and age it is still an absolute of the Catholic Church; there is no time out, no exception to the law. "What

God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”

Therefore to reply to the problem: the Catholic Church is totalitarian, if by that you mean to be totally behind Jesus Christ; it is unreasonable, if it is unreasonable to believe in the Son of God; it is alien to the American way, if the American way means to betray the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*. Which is to say, it is none of these.

III

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR AND THE CATHOLIC WILL

IN THE two preceding talks I have tried to portray in words the basic Catholic mentality, the Catholic mind. In those talks I used hard, sharp words. I strove for precision of expression, for a clear-cut statement of what the Catholic mind is. The Catholic mind is a tough, sinewy thing. It has to be, for it must endure much strain and testing. We are not disembodied spirits. The mind lives in the flesh, and the flesh is weak. The mind must be strong enough to carry the weakness of the flesh, and not crumble under it. If it is a flabby, indecisive thing, it will soon be smothered by the weight of the flesh and die.

At this point I desire to express my mind toward you. I may express it in the words

of Christ's great commentator, St. Paul: "Not that we lord it over your faith, but rather we are fellow workers in your joy; for in faith you stand." It is the mark of fellow workers to encourage one another, and to be encouraged by one another. I speak a word of encouragement to you for the spirit of sacrifice that brings you here. I am encouraged by your coming and the way you listen. Your faith helps me; I pray that my faith will help you.

Now to my topic: *Christian Behavior and the Catholic Will*. Let me explain its meaning. By behavior we mean the conduct of a man, the way he acts, the things he talks about, his social and private life. When a man's behavior conforms to the standards set down by Christ, we call it Christian behavior. These standards can be expressed at great length or pithily in a rule called golden: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." You recognize Christian behavior readily. Christ Himself gave the principle of recognition. He said, "By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

In our society it is generally admitted that Christian behavior is a nice ideal. There are ten thousand pious platitudes proclaimed on it every year, and ten thousand sentimental hymns sung to it. We could do with less rhetoric and song about it, and more living of it. It is paradoxical that our society, that

sings so fervently about Christian ideals, thinks so smugly about the power to achieve them. I refer to the human will. A great segment of American intellectuals deny the freedom of the will in theory, and a bigger segment of our American Christians deny it in practice. Much of our theater, literature, press, and cocktail-party small talk reduce freedom of the will, or the power of the will, to nothing. It has become a dangerously popular notion that a fellow is what he is, and he can't do very much about it, come hell or high water. The old Christian viewpoint on the human will is that it has the *freedom* and the *power* to do good, and that it gets from God a real help to do good, namely grace. Grace is as real as electric power. It gets into the will as electric power gets into your toaster, and it makes the will do things it cannot do otherwise, just as the electricity makes the toaster do something it cannot do without that power. It is something absolutely necessary.

Now to my observations: In addition to the Catholic mind, the complete Catholic must have the Catholic will. There are two faculties in the human soul, the power to know and the power to seek. One of them is the eyes of the soul, the other the drive. The mind is a pale and passionless thing; we speak of it as cold. The heart burns red with fire, and white with passion. The mind of man points the way, the heart of

a man drives him. It is a man's loves and hates that drive him. It is not the idea in his head, but the love in his heart that drives him. The thought of Hamlet may leave me cold, but the thought of Peron burns me up. It is how a man's heart reacts to the idea in his head!

Do the Catholic beliefs in our mind burn into our hearts? St. Augustine said strikingly what I want to say here. He said, "If you ask me how good a certain man is, I'll ask you, not what he believes or what he hopes, but what he loves." There it is! What do you love? The same saint said what I want to say here, "Love God and do what you will." This is the *beginning* of the Catholic will, the tremendous and true love of God in Christ. If you hope — as you all do — to be converted to complete Christian behavior, this is the beginning: to love Christ more.

But it is only the beginning. I would not be fair to Christ, or to you, if I stopped there. What is the problem of Christian behavior? The first problem is the *world you live in*, the second problem is *you who live in it*. Take one aspect of the world you live in, the world you work in. It is a highly competitive world. The competition is so strong that some competitors become unfair competitors; they are not scheming merchants, but sinning merchants. How can you compete with cheating merchants,

except by cheating? But the Catholic will says no! Is that easy? You need a tough Catholic will to do it. Take yourself. Are you a disembodied spirit, or do you have eyes that see, ears that hear, a belly that hungers, passions that burn? These are the problems for the Catholic will. You have to love Christ despite these things and with these things. These things can muddle your thinking. These things tug at your will. You can't run away from them, no monastery walls are high enough to shut out yourself from you, to separate my body from me. It is a warfare until the end. We wrestle to win.

The principle that guides the Catholic will is this: *I am not free to do as I like. I am free to do as I ought.* That demands emphasis, because most Americans think they are free to do as they like. That is a selfish, small, sorry philosophy; it's shallow, and it's sinister; there's no sense, sanity or sanctity in it. Animals live by their likes, impulses, instincts. Is man no more than an animal? Is he merely a more highly specialized animal than a toad or tiger? Or does he have a spiritual nature, that makes him higher than the animals, much higher, in fact as the Psalmist says, "little less than the angels"? The Catholic mind admits this: it sees the purpose of man's will as the power to choose the good, to control the appetites, instincts and passions. It sees

that man finds a higher and nobler freedom when he masters desires, and a degradation when they master him. He sees the dilemma of life: to make them his slave or become their slave. Remembering what the Master said, "No man can serve" — that is, be a slave to — "two masters," he prefers to be a slave to God and do what he ought, rather than to be a slave to his passions and do what he likes.

But there is more to it than this: it is not an act but a *process*. This business of behavior is not a matter of quick decision, but a matter of prolonged effort. It is not done by a secretary; it is a purely personal operation. It is done by *my* doing it. It brings into question that nasty word, discipline. You can't train an army or you can't train yourself without it. Discipline always involves deprivation. You bring a horse under control by curbing it. You bring an appetite or passion under control by curbing it. A man does not control his sex appetite by controlling the number of his children. He controls it by sometimes denying it its pleasure. The Catholic discipline in regard to appetites and passions is this: *a sensible use of them, the use of them according to law.*

The third observation on the matter: What does all this lead to? The obvious answer is, heaven. But that is not a good selling point. The philosophy of most men

today is: Heaven can wait. There has to be a present dividend to impel men to make an investment in this morality. There *is* a dividend: it is called peace of mind, happiness, contentment. It is a harmony that results from bringing flesh and spirit into balance. We call it integrity, because something that was missing has been found. By the power of grace — the real divine thing that goes into a man's mind and will — the lost "divinity" is found and man is healed. Then comes a sense of rest, of spiritual well-being, of peace. That is the peace the world cannot give. It is made in heaven, and it is the way to get more heaven on earth. The ordinary door that lets heaven into earth is the soul in grace.

IV

THE CATHOLIC QUEST:

SATISFACTION OR CONTENTMENT

I COME to you this fourth time as a commentator for Christ. In my first commentary I said that Christ was *the* Commentator on life. He gave us an interpretation of human existence, a diagnosis of personal destiny. It is of the utmost importance for you to arrive at a decision on the meaning of life before it ends. What you want out of life hinges upon your viewpoint of its meaning, and your happiness is bound up with what you want out of life. Most people

interpret life as they go; they really never interpret *life*, but only the phase of it they are in at the time, childhood, youth, old age. Many are prone to accept others' interpretation of life, a Hollywood or best-seller interpretation. Christ's idea was to *stop* and interpret life, "to go apart and rest a while," to think and/or pray. He knew that if a person wants to insulate his soul from corruption, he must isolate his body; that solitude is kindred to salvation. Each week we come here for a brief retreat, to stop and try to interpret life.

In my talks thus far I have sketched the blueprint of Christ's commentary on life. Man moves by motives. If you are to be moved to live the blueprint of Christ, we must give you motives. The most powerful human motives are love and fear; hate and courage are only these motives in reverse. The drive arising from the fear motivation can be seen on a large scale in the present anxiety for success of the United Nations. To many, the solitary alternative appears to be annihilation by atomic energy. They want one world badly because they are *afraid* the alternative is none. The motivation arising from love can be seen by watching a mother with her sick child.

I come, then, to consider the motives for living the Catholic pattern. First I call attention to a fact, an observable reality, which I may state in an equation: *human ex-*

istence equals restlessness. I do not try to demonstrate this; I appeal to your experience of yourself and your observation of others. To be is to be restless. How shall we interpret this restlessness? I think we are restless because of incompleteness; whatever we are, we are not what we can be; *something must be added.* I think everyone will agree with me thus far. They may disagree as to what must be added. Their judgment may differ from mine as to what they need for completion. The truly unfortunate fellow is the one who never has given thought to this, but wandered through life with an Alice in Wonderland attitude, being surprised at nothing.

However, the judgment as to the something to be added is at least limited by the possibilities. They are: people, things, self. I attempt to appraise these from the viewpoint of their power to complete men.

As for the first, *people*: it is true, for example, that a man needs a woman; in her he finds a *degree* of completion as a masculine and as a social being. But does his restlessness end with marriage? In rare instances, a high degree of repose and completion is found in marriage, but the specter always lurks behind; it is *temporary*. It is dissolved by death.

As to the second possibility, *things*: an apt example of things at the moment is the liquid thing, alcohol. What possibilities of

completion lie in that? If anything, it is a will-o'-the-wisp whose pursuit leads only to further restlessness and incompleteness. Of this and of all things, wealth, power, fame, and so on to the end of the list, we can say, you can't take it with you. Things afford *temporary escape*; they do not quiet the restlessness.

Much less, even, does *self*. The food that self feeds on makes it hunger again, and more. Of restless men the selfish man is most restless.

What is the Catholic interpretation of our restlessness? A great Catholic of the fourth century who had run the gamut described above, said it well. St. Augustine said, "Thou has made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are *restless* until they find rest in Thee." There you have the Catholic interpretation. The restlessness *cannot* end until we have God, and hell is the eternal restlessness of those who lose God. God, then, is the Something that must be added. He has made us incomplete, that He may be our completion.

What I have said thus far has been put in sneering rhyme: *Pie in the sky by and by*. It is a protest against my case. But is it? Is the only motive Christ preached that of a future Paradise? Or did He promise something here and now? Christ promised present blessings. In the great opening sermon

of His mission He said, "Blessed" — fortunate — "are the poor in spirit, for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." He proclaimed, "The kingdom of heaven *is* within you." This is Christ's realism. Faith has its present dividends. The great truth consequently appears. The motive that Christ supplies is the possession of the kingdom of God *on earth* and in heaven.

The logic of this appears upon reflection. The Catholic believes that it is the possession of God that makes him happy completely and eternally. Now I am the same person on earth and in heaven; my mode of existence is changed, but it is I that am happy forever. Does it not follow that what makes me happy completely and eternally then must also make me happy now? If God is to be my absolute rest forever, does it not follow that He will give me a taste of that rest here? Is not this behind Christ's words when He speaks of the Father *abiding* in us, of sending the Holy Spirit to *remain* with us forever?

Therefore the vision of God makes us happy here and hereafter. On earth we see God dimly as in a mirror, but in heaven face to face. Here we walk by faith with its doubts and questionings, there we rest in beholding. The rest does not come here, but hereafter. *Contentment*, cousin to rest, comes here. It comes from the assurance of the

future rest and from the indwelling of God within us. That is the Catholic's quest: contentment. He knows there is only one way to get it. He gets it here and hereafter by seeing God, and he knows how he can see God. Christ said, "Blessed are the *pure of heart* for they shall see God."

Thus do we interpret our restlessness, and in the strength of this interpretation we *endure* it, until we find rest in Him. This is beautifully expressed in the prayer of the Church for the dead. "Eternal *rest* grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual *light* shine upon them. May they *rest* in *peace*. Amen." No one knows better than the Church, Mother of restless souls, the meaning of that prayer. Rest, light and peace are the things the soul hungers for, as it wanders restlessly through the darkness of this valley of tears, torn by the battles of the flesh against the spirit. The same Church that teaches the meaning of the rest in God understands the need of it in men. For two thousand years she has brought it to men; and because she brings *contentment* to men here, hers is a going business. The Church that holds up heaven as a motive to men, puts some heaven in the heart of men. That is the real reason why she is doing the biggest business in the world Sunday through Saturday.

V

CATHOLIC EXTERNALS:
SIGNS OF LIFE OR LIFELESS SIGNS

IT IS an interesting fact of human behavior that the mind often does not go beyond what the eye sees. This can be observed in many things. Adults as well as children come to associate the music with the radio before their eyes rather than with the unseen orchestra in the studio. We ordinarily think of the light as in the bulb, not in the power generated by distant unseen dynamos. We are touched more by people's tears than by the deep inward pain we should know is there. I think the same thing happens in religion with far greater frequency. The mind is apt to stop at what the eye sees, and for this reason: *the visible things in religion stand for things you could not see if you wanted to.* You see the bread, you cannot see the Body of Christ. A person who has *seen* a broadcast is more apt to think of the music in the studio than in the loud speaker. But in the things of faith the only pass to the power house is death, and that is a one-way pass; no one returns. Religion is a matter of *believing* the unseen. We must *force* our minds beyond the visible things of religion to the invisible, for the true *realities* of religion are unseen.

The Catholic religion is a fascinating pattern of seen and unseen, visible and invisible. As with every religion, its purpose is to

contact the invisible God. As with no other religion, by it the invisible God also purposes to contact us. The very heart of the Christian religion is the *Incarnation*, which means the invisible God becoming visible; the Son of God unseen becomes the Son of Mary seen, the Word becomes flesh. This Incarnation-motif runs through the whole structure of our faith. The Church is a thing visible and invisible. It has a visible structure of government and laws, it has a ritual and worship; they are its flesh and bone. *But it is also a spiritual kingdom whose soul is the invisible Spirit of God, whose life energy is unseen grace.* The individual unit of the Church, the Catholic, has the note of Incarnation; in him there is the visible and the invisible. He knows deep within himself that he will never save his soul by an external allegiance to the Church; he knows there must be the internal link of grace, otherwise he is a dead branch; and he remembers that Christ said dead branches go into the fire.

It is this last point I wish to discuss today: the individual Catholic. It is his incarnation I shall speak of, if I may speak of it thus. By the Catholic's incarnation I must mean the opposite of the Incarnation of Christ. In Christ, divinity put on humanity, the Son of the invisible God became the Son of Mary. In us, humanity puts on divinity, the son of a man and a woman becomes an

adopted son of God. We say a prayer daily in the Mass for this incarnation. When the priest pours the water into the wine he prays, "Grant that we may become partakers of His divinity, as He became partaker of our humanity."

The problem giving rise to my discussion I have indicated. Our minds are very apt to stop at the things seen. We are very apt to think of our faith as a matter of going to a place and doing something, of saying prayers, or eating fish. These things are part of our religion; they are not all of it. These things have meaning and worth only when they are signs of life. For too many Catholics they are acts of habit, lifeless signs, like the twitching of a corpse. I want to take your minds beyond the *signs* to the *source* of the power. I hope your heart will follow your head.

The most significant externals of the Catholic faith are seven, the seven Sacraments. I must limit my remarks here to three of them, the three basic Sacraments, Baptism, Eucharist and Penance. I shall endeavor to show how they are the visible signs of invisible life, and what that involves for Catholics. *Through the sacred signs established by Christ, the life of the Catholic is an incarnation in reverse; through them, our humanity is welded to divinity.*

The first of these is Baptism. Baptism is the *birth* sign: by it a man is born again.

As in his physical birth there were two factors, man and woman, in his spiritual birth there is a twofold element, water and the Holy Spirit. By the visible sign and the invisible Agent, grace adorns the grace-less child. By grace the soul lives, and Baptism is the condition of its life. Jesus said, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By this new life the Spirit dwells in the soul, and the soul throbs to the very life of God. This was all made possible by the Incarnation of the Son of God; by clothing Himself with humanity, Christ made it possible for us to clothe ourselves with divinity. St. Paul says, "All you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." For that reason the great Apostle could glory, as he wrote to the Galatians, "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me."

If this is true of Paul and true of you and me, then we share the Christ-life together. If Christ lives in all of us, then, though we differ in all things else, we have that in common. There is a community of life among us. We do not grow alone like blades of grass, but we grow as twigs on a branch. Did not Christ say, "I am the vine, you are the branches"? If this be true, then we do not stand together like bricks in a building, or even like soldiers in an

army; we live together like organs of a body. For this reason Paul said to the Corinthians, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, member for member."

Thus did Christ and Paul think of Baptism. By Baptism we become adopted sons of God, we are clothed with Christ, we possess the Spirit of God, and we all form one body, the Mystical Body of Christ. You were baptized as a baby, you must learn this as an adult. Parents must learn it for themselves and for their children. For it is almost as important to know it as to be baptized.

The second sign I wish to speak of is the *nourishment* sign. In order to grow, life must be nourished, and it must be nourished by the right food. The life that Baptism brings is spiritual life, divine life. It must be nourished by divine food. Christ has given us the divine food. He has given us His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink, and He is the Son of God. This divine food is the nourishment of the divine life. It is as necessary for the soul as food is for the body. Jesus said, "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." When the body takes food, the food changes into the body, but when the soul takes the Eucharist, the food changes the soul into itself; reborn humanity *grows* more God-like.

The bread is made the Body of Christ at the Consecration of the Mass. This act reproduces the act of Christ at the Last Supper and the act of Christ upon the cross. The death of Christ is mystically renewed daily upon our altars that the bread of life may rest day and night within our tabernacles, food for the weary traveler.

The Mass is also the central act of worship of the community of Christ. Those who have become one in Christ by Baptism grow in their oneness by the Mass and Communion. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread." We have lost something precious if we *attend* Mass. It was not viewed by Jesus or Paul as a thing you attend. At the First Mass, the Last Supper, everyone received the Body of Christ — everyone except Judas.

The third sign I shall call the *therapy* sign. The Sacrament of Penance is a therapy that not only heals the wounded and strengthens the weak, but raises the spiritually dead. It is a medicine for those who are beset with the illness that is chronic but not fatal, the chronic spiritual sickness of petty sins, venial faults, that do not kill the life of the soul, but make pale its ruddy health. The sign of Penance is also therapy to the spiritually dead, as Christ was to the dead Lazarus. By the power of the sacra-

ment the soul rises out of the foul tomb of sin, and beholds Christ in the sweet sun. The therapy of the sacrament is not one in which the soul is purely passive; the active exercise of the soul in the healing process is found in the acts of sorrow and the purpose of amendment. The complete Catholic does not dare look upon confession as a license to sin again and again, to return to the loathsome grave of mortal sin. For he fears lest, returning deliberately to that grave, his soul rot in it and rise no more.

Long ago men saw Christ in the flesh; they saw the Son of God in Him only by faith. So with the sacraments; we see with the eyes the sacred signs, and behold by faith the invisible reality. We see the bread and believe the Presence of Christ; we hear the words of absolution and believe in forgiveness. The Incarnation of the Son of God began at Nazareth; it did not end on Ascension Thursday. It is eternal. Mary's Son is forever glorified in His humanity at the right hand of God. On earth there is a sort of continuation of the Incarnation in the Eucharist, the visible sign of the invisible Christ. Because of the One who descended from heaven, many ascend to heaven through the sacraments. By the vision that comes from faith we see Christ in His sacred signs: spiritual rebirth in Baptism, heavenly food in the Eucharist, forgiveness in Penance, and in all the sacraments the divine

grace whereby we live the complete Catholic life in the eyes of God and of men.

VI

PAIN: IN GETHSEMANI

AND ON MAIN STREET

MEN understand each other when they talk about a thing they have in common. I am going to talk to you today of a thing we have in common, pain. The size, shape and color of your pain may be different from mine, but everyone has had the experience of pain. It goes with human existence. Part of the problem of the thing is that it is never a desired guest; it comes uninvited, and stays unwanted.

Holy Week is dedicated to the memory of pain, the staggering pain of one Man. The *time* of His pain can be counted; the night hours in Gethsemani and the burning anguish of the day hours upon Calvary. The *measure* of His pain cannot be limited by days or years or time, it was a bottomless pit of pain. These days we recall the pain of the sinless Christ, the pain of God's Son. We do not recall it because it is pain — it is not human to remember pain, it is human to forget it; we recall it because it was the pain of Him whose human life was a selfless story of doing good, and whose divine life was an endless story of being good, divinely good. We remember the pain of Christ because only in Him do we see it in intimate company with goodness

and divinity, and only in that association does pain take on meaning.

There are countless varieties of human suffering, from birth to death. "For we are born in other's pain and perish in our own." The house we live in, this body, grows in pain, and the spirit that lives in it is sensitive to pain. There is the great, stupefying pain of sudden dramatic loss, when trucks crush little boys beneath their wheels, or when a Sunday picnic ends in the morgue. There is the slow, agonizing pain of cancerous dying with loved ones wasting away before our eyes. There is the sharp pain of loss of children bursting with life and loveliness, and the still pain of loss of a companion of the long years of marriage. Greatest of human pain is perhaps the pain of loss. And in all its fearful panorama, it is only a feeble shadow of that loss that is eternal, the loss of God. How infinite the loss I am afraid to say — I am not able to say! — only that it is as infinite as God.

But not all pain is dramatic. Some of it is never seen or known. There is the dull thud of pain that is the constant companion of those whose dreams have never come true: the women who have longed for motherhood and only embraced dream-children, the men who have yearned for the priesthood and only ascended dream-altars, workers whose days are dull with monotony, never gilded with success, artists whose

talent is strong and whose applause is feeble, the long files of little people whose days are made of crumbs of happiness and a diet of frustration. Such there are on Main Street in every American town; of this undramatic pain, indeed, the whole world has its share. It is the greatest pain by the fact that it passes unnoticed. It does not call out crowds in sympathy. It is the unseen pain of widows at night, of orphans on Mother's Day, the countless cases of unknown pain that pass you on the street, kneel beside you in church, or work beside you in the office.

Then there is the inflicted pain, the pain of man's inhumanity to man. There are too many horrible examples of this in today's newspapers and yesterday's newsreels, the pain of men burning in ovens, gasping for breath in boxcars, starving to death in concentration camps, beaten to death with whips, slowly tortured to death in the name of "ideas." There is the inflicted pain of those who break bread together, those who lie together at night, or work together by day; the pricks of pain that come from thoughtlessness — husbands thoughtless of wives, forgetting that they are women; mothers thoughtless of children, forgetting that they are young; bosses thoughtless of employees, forgetting that they are people. In addition, there is the inflicted pain of selfishness, the comfort we take from another's discomfort,

the pleasure we derive from another's humiliation, the satisfaction we feel at another's misfortune.

We come now to interpret the fact of pain in light of the Catholic faith. First, in regard to the inflicted pain, the hurt that man inflicts upon his fellow man. By the principle of Catholic behavior, we can *lessen* that pain. We can lessen the pain we inflict upon others by growing in thoughtfulness and selflessness, the expression of supernatural love, or Christian charity. To grow in love of Christ, to grow in holiness, means to grow in thoughtfulness and selflessness. This *I* can do: I can lessen by one — myself — the number of people who inflict pain.

Secondly, about the pain of the world itself. Catholic theology gives an answer to the cause of pain: it exists in the world because of sins. Man in the original state of his creation was immune to death and pain. By his sin Adam lost these preternatural gifts of God. Pain therefore came, not from the hand of God, but from the sin of Adam.

Catholic theology gives an answer to the attitude regarding pain: the attitude of *acceptance*. It does not ask us to like pain, or to prefer pain. It asks us to accept it. It sees the model of acceptance in the prayer of Christ in Gethsemani, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will but Thine be done."

The greatness of Catholic theology is seen in the Person of Christ and the ideas that surround Him in relation to the pain of the world. These ideas give power and drive to the Catholic attitude toward pain, they are the deep roots of motives that nourish the Catholic heart with the divine example. It is Christ in Gethsemani and on Golgotha who gives meaning to pain here and now; and for the following reasons:

1. This world has its divine Redeemer because it had its human sin. This world has its sinless Christ because it had its sinning Adam. The Son of God came down from heaven because man's pride rose up against heaven. *We have the sinless Christ for our Brother because we had the sinful Adam for our father.* St. John said, "You know that He appeared to take our sins away." St. Paul said, "This saying is true and worthy of entire acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." We can understand, then, the enthusiasm of Mother Church on Holy Saturday as she sings in the liturgy, "O happy fault that merited such a Redeemer!" You begin to understand this enthusiasm when your faith is like the faith of the Church, belief in the divine and the human in Christ.

2. This divine Redeemer emptied the chalice of suffering to the bitter dregs — the dregs of physical pain, thorns in the head, the lash upon the back, nails in the hands

and feet, burning thirst; the dregs of soul anguish: taunts from the foot of His cross, abandonment by His countrymen, by His Apostles, by His heavenly Father: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The divine Redeemer shares our pain. He is Companion to our suffering in body and soul. He walks with us in our loneliness, dies with us in our death. *We have the divine companionship in pain.* There is no pain so black that you cannot see Christ in the shadows. The God who made us capable of suffering, shares it with us. In that faith, then, we accept suffering.

3. The divine Redeemer rose from the dead. The black cross of Christ on Good Friday was tinged with the gold of Easter morning. Christ died upon the cross by the humanity He took of Mary; He rose from the tomb by the divinity He took of the Father from all eternity. St. Paul calls Christ the First-born from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. There will be other empty tombs, we will be the other fruits; we who go down in pain to death, *by our share in His divinity shall live.*

These are the ideas that power the Catholic drive. They make it possible to live in a world of pain. They make it possible, yes, they make it a joy. Paul says, "We exult in tribulations." He says, "The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come."

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