

LIFE VALUES OF THE MASS

Murphy, John L.
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By **REV. JOHN L. MURPHY**



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By

REV. JOHN L. MURPHY

ST. ANTHONY'S GUILD
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LIFE VALUES OF THE MASS

Part One:

LIFE to many people is a pretty drab affair. Hit hard by its trials, tormented by its worries, weakened by its sorrows, they have come to look upon it as a burden, and little else — a daily plugging and plodding to eke out a bare existence, a snatching at happiness when and where they may, a persevering to the end.

When we stop to reflect, is it any wonder that we find people reacting thus? The modern world has left so many of them handicapped. True, it has added dozens of conveniences to their humdrum lives, conveniences intended to bring a new era of happiness and freedom from want. But hasn't it also deprived them of something: the spiritual? Haven't they lost, in many instances, the concept of God, of an ideal, and with that, the consciousness of all idealism? Hasn't life become only too often nothing but dollars and cents, movies and hospitals and cars and telephone bills? Doesn't the practical, the material, weigh upon the average individual overmuch? Isn't it true that there is scant room in his life for any

soul-stirring idealism, for any element deeper than the surface realities — the practical things — which go to make up his life?

Surely we can admit that these things are true without danger of being charged with exaggeration. The modern world all too clearly lacks a wholesome idealism. Men have tried to set up love of country, love of fellow men, or love of accomplishment as the motivating power of their lives; but each of these fails in one regard or another for want of something deeper, something more basic. Often they amount to little more than flag-waving, or money-grabbing, or pretty words without a soul. That is to say, these very "idealisms" have themselves become in many cases mere external counters or tokens which no longer represent any intrinsic value: brotherly love, progress, accomplishment, are often words and no more.

VARIED ATTEMPTS

Realizing the necessity of ideals, however, of keeping something in view which will give worth and meaning to life, the modern world has felt forced to these attempts. It has tried everything — except, by a strange paradox, the only thing which will serve as

a motive power for the development of nature to its fullest, and truly aid in an active life: the spiritualizing of that life and its activity. As long as other plans ignore this entire field of reality—supernatural reality though it is—they are doomed to failure.

The purpose here, however, is not to lament the irreligiousness of the modern world, or to point out its defects. Indeed, the modern world is not all bad, and it is important to keep this in mind. There are many in it really and truly living what might be termed a full life, a Christian life. Through it they have come to learn of a new kind of happiness—a happiness that lasts. Although their next-door neighbor would undoubtedly deny it, yet these souls realize that he actually is missing something from life; rather, that he has not yet really begun to live. He does not know of the existence, even, of this force from which they draw their strength. He fails to realize that there is something deeper, something finer, to be found in living.

This "something finer" can be found, and has been found. And it is the Catholic Church which offers it to all. The whole idea of the Church is to bring men to God,

and by so doing, to raise up their lives. "With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought into the temple of the King" (Psalm 44). The Church not only promises this joy, but she actually gives it in her temples. Her whole liturgy is aimed at accomplishing this end; and at the center of the plan, as Pius XII tells us in his encyclical letter, *On the Liturgy*, we find the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

THE MASS IS CALVARY

The question which arises now is not unexpected: What is the Mass, and what has it to do with me?

The answer does not appear at once, but only gradually. We must seek the first part of it on a hilltop in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago — and even further back than that.

There is a plaintive Negro spiritual which is broadcast over and over again during the Lenten season: "Were you there when they crucified my Lord . . .?" Very few Christians can hear those words without thinking back to that great event, and its overpowering effect upon all the centuries which have followed it. Very few can listen to that wistful melody without wishing that they actually had been there, to show in some

way — in contrast to the howling mob which WAS there — their own love and devotion to Christ; to take their place beside Mary and John at the foot of the cross.

But Catholics, when they hear that hushed query, "Were you there . . .?" can answer in a very real sense: "Yes, I was there." They were there, perhaps that very morning, in communion with "Mary ever-virgin, Mother of Jesus Christ, . . . and the blessed Apostles and martyrs . . . and all the saints." They too stood, in a very real sense, on the hill of Calvary, when they stood in the early light of morning about the altar of their parish church while the priest offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For the Sacrifice of the Mass is the Sacrifice of Calvary repeated in an unbloody manner. To be allowed to attend even one single Mass in a lifetime would be an overpowering favor to us on the part of God. How fortunate, then, are those who may stand about the altar of Christ's sacrifice again and again throughout their lives, even every day when circumstances permit.

ADAM'S SIN

Once Adam and Eve had sinned in the garden of paradise, all mankind was affected.

God had given men a completely free gift; He had called them to an eternal reward which was far above any claims of their nature; He had given them the means — sanctifying grace — to attain this goal, and receive this reward. He gave His gifts, however, in a special way — and who can deny a benefactor the right to give in the way he desires? He gave them to Adam and Eve on the condition that, if they were faithful, their children and their children's children to the end of time would also receive them. But Adam failed. And so our race found itself in the unhappy state of what theologians call "fallen nature." Men had lost the means to attain the supernatural goal — the means which we call sanctifying grace; they were turned from God. We have a special name for this state in the descendants of Adam: we call it Original Sin.

But God is a God of Love. Hardly had the sin been committed when He promised to do something about it, to help men get back on the road to their final goal. He promised to send a Redeemer: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed; He shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for His

heel" (Genesis 3:15). That was the first promise, even before Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of paradise.

And this Redeemer was Christ, the Son of God. For centuries God sent prophets to the Jewish race, telling them more and more about this promised Redeemer, the Messiah as He was called. Some of the most specific details were revealed by God: the Messiah would be born of a Virgin, at Bethlehem; He would be of the tribe of Juda and the family of David; He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and slain unjustly; and over His garments they would cast lots.

Centuries before these things actually took place, the prophets of God told the Jewish people that they would take place; and the Jewish race kept alive the hope of the Promised One, and waited and prayed for His coming. And at last, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod. . . ." At last Christ came. The promise made to Adam and Eve and to their children was fulfilled; the Son of God was made man, and came to earth to draw men back to God.

THE CROSS

It became evident at once, however, that there was more to this than merely the birth of Christ. Scarcely had He been born when the shadow of the cross fell upon Him: "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted" (Luke 2:34). Throughout His public life, Christ continued to point toward the cross, telling His disciples that "they will . . . put Him to death; and on the third day He will rise again" (Mark 10:34).

Thus we see that not alone the coming of Christ, but more explicitly, His death on Calvary, was the central point. That was indeed the most far-reaching event in history. It was toward those three hours of agony on the cross that the Prophets had pointed during all the long centuries before Christ; it is back toward those hours that all of Christianity has looked ever since. It was the very climax of the life of Christ, of His redemptive work. It is the very
CENTER OF HISTORY.

If that is true, then it is not surprising that in a recent encyclical letter Pius XII should have reminded us that the Sacrifice of the

Mass is also the center of the Christian religion. If the Sacrifice of Christ was the point of climax in the ACQUIRING of salvation for men, it is to be expected that it would also be so for the APPLICATION of that salvation. Those three hours were too great, too important, to be limited to a certain place, a certain time; and so God — though He by no means had to — willed to extend them, as it were, for all time, in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The death of Christ upon the cross was an act great enough to save all mankind (provided, of course, that each individual would freely accept the great gift offered him, provided that he would live a good life). That one act, accomplished once in time, was all-sufficient; nothing more could be added to it. But the truth comes upon us: Christ did not wish to leave it at that. He wished to gather all men to Himself about the cross in another way; He chose that as the center, the "meeting-place" we might say, of the Christian religion, from which would flow the graces destined for men. Calvary was to play its role not only in the redemption of men, but also in the application of that redemption to the individual man. Thus, as St. Thomas Aquinas

tells us, the effect which was once wrought in the WORLD by the Passion of Christ is now wrought in the HEARTS OF MEN by the Sacrifice of the Altar: the unbloody Sacrifice of Calvary.

In the Mass we have a representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, but it is not merely the sort of representation we get in a picture or a movie; it is a REAL SACRIFICIAL ACT, by which the effects of Christ's death come to us. The Mass is dependent upon Calvary: without the Mass we could still have had Calvary, but without Calvary we could not have had the Mass.

THE SAME SACRIFICE

It is a difficult truth to understand completely, but it is a beautiful truth for the believer. At the Mass, by the consecrative words of the priest, Christ becomes present upon the altar, and offers Himself to His Father. In this way, on our altars, as the Council of Trent tells us, is the Sacrifice of Calvary offered once again through the priest. It is essentially the same. True, on Calvary it was a bloody Sacrifice, and at the Mass the shedding of Christ's blood is merely represented by the separation of the

Eucharistic species. The presence of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine is a figure, a symbol, of the actual separation of His body and blood in the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary. However, the main elements of the Sacrifice are present in both instances.

First, we have the **SAME MINISTER: CHRIST**. The priest is but the instrument Christ uses at Mass — much as we use a pen to write. The pen makes the marks, but it is still we who write; so Christ offers Himself through the priest, but it is still Christ who offers Himself. The words of Christ are true both on Calvary and at the Mass: "No one takes it [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John 10:18).

Secondly, we have the **SAME VICTIM: CHRIST**. It is only the manner of offering which differs; by the shedding of blood in one, and by a mere representation of the shedding of blood in the other. But the Victim in both cases is Christ our Redeemer offering Himself to the Father.

Thirdly, the **END AND PURPOSE** is the same: the glory of the Father, thanksgiving to the Father, the bringing about of expiation and reconciliation, the petition for help.

These, then, are the main elements; they are the important things on Calvary. It was

not the place — the upward path, the hill, the rocky soil — nor the soldiers, nor the great crowds, which made Good Friday important. It was rather Christ Himself willingly dying for mankind that made it important. And when we have the identical thing in the Mass, Christ the Priest offering Himself as Victim, for the same purpose, then our only conclusion can be that **THE MASS IS CALVARY.**

Each morning, we too are part of the crowd around the hill of Calvary, though the time is two thousand years later; we too witness Christ's great redemptive act, though it is performed in an unbloody manner. When we see the priest elevate the body and blood of Christ, we are actually at Calvary: we could not have been more truly present at the Sacrifice of Christ if we had been standing that afternoon on the summit of Golgotha — if we had seen the Roman soldiers rear the cross as He offered His life for the sins of men.

For the Catholic who realizes this awe-inspiring truth, those plaintive words "Were you there when they crucified my Lord . . .?" will not be a mere unanswered question. Their answer is verified every time he approaches the Altar of Salvation in his own

parish church or in any church throughout the world where this great moment of history is repeated daily "from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof."

Part Two:

IT IS natural for man to express his inward thoughts and sentiments in some external fashion. Since the beginning of the world, children have been presenting their mothers and fathers with sorry-looking gifts — gifts often enough shapeless from the pressure of stodgy little hands, yet meaning more to those parents than diamonds or pearls, because they symbolized the love burning in the heart of that child to whom they gave life.

Immemorially has the lover given to his beloved "the best that money" — his money, at least — "can buy"; intending, by the costliness or beauty of the gift, to symbolize something far beyond it.

And every nation privately and publicly has offered sacrifices to its gods — tokens, that is, of submission to them. The Jewish people, who worshiped the one true God, for centuries offered up to Him many sorts of ritual sacrifice. And all these offerings, these oblations and holocausts, were, as St. Augustine tells us, no more than "previews" of that which was to come. When Christ established His Church upon this earth and

endowed it with His rite of sacrifice, He was fulfilling that need in men's natures which these ancient sacrifices expressed, though often in a dim and distorted way. He was making it possible for His followers to show in a perfect manner their inner thoughts and sentiments toward God, who has created them, who has redeemed them, and who continues daily to sanctify them.

OUR SACRIFICE

This rite which Christ gave to His Church is the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the Mass, we have said, that enables us to reply, yes, we are there when they crucify our Lord. But we are not there as mere spectators. The Mass is OUR sacrifice as well.

The Mass and Calvary, we have seen, are identical in their essential, their fundamental points. They differ, however, on these points:

First, the manner of offering. Though the internal oblation, the intention of Christ, is the same in both, namely, the offering of Himself to the Father for men, yet the oblation at Mass is accomplished without the shedding of blood.

Second, on the cross, Christ was the sole Priest. At the Mass, Christ is the principal Priest, and the ordained minister is the

secondary, the visible, priest who actually offers the Sacrifice himself in the name of Christ.

Third, at the Mass, not Christ alone is offered, but the Church as well, and all her members. Our Holy Father reminds us of this in his encyclical, *On the Liturgy*; the faithful, he says, do offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, and they must offer themselves as victims. He goes on to explain very clearly in just what manner this is to be understood.

In order to comprehend his reasons, one must have some appreciation of the relation between Christ and the members of His Church. The Catholic Church is so closely united to Christ, in a way so very special and intimate, that it is clearly marked off from every other religious group on earth. That close union has been described by St. Paul and St. Augustine and others after them, in these terms: Christ is the Head, and the Church is His Mystical Body. The two are considered to form *one person*, as it were: the Whole Christ or the Mystic Christ.

HOW WE OFFER

The liturgical act at Mass is performed only by the priest. His words alone, at the

Consecration, make Christ present upon the altar as a Victim; and by this same act, the ordained minister *offers* the divine Victim of Calvary to God the Father for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity and the good of the entire Church. In this act, insofar as it is an oblation or *offering*, however, the faithful may be said to participate, in a twofold way:

(1) The faithful offer the Sacrifice THROUGH THE HANDS OF THE PRIEST. When Christ offers, because of the union between Him and the members of His Mystical Body, it is the entire Church that offers. It is an action of the "Whole Christ." But the priest, as Pius XII reminds us, is "another Christ." He bears the person of that Christ, who is the Head of all the members of His Mystical Body. Thus, when the priest offers the Sacrifice of the Mass, he also acts as Christ; and since Christ acts as the Head of all the members of the Church, they are rightly said to be offering the Sacrifice which is actually being offered through the hands of the priest.

(2) There is a second manner, perhaps more easily understood, in which the faithful may be said to participate in this oblation of the Victim: they join their INDIVIDUAL

ACTS of praise and petition, of expiation and thanksgiving, with the prayers and acts of the priest, and thus of Christ the High Priest Himself. In addition, this way the faithful have something very special of their own to bring to the Mass: their own personal lives, the dedication and labor of those lives. They must offer themselves as victims. And thus their personal offerings are joined to the intention of the priest so that they may be united with the offering of the divine Victim; may be made manifest, as it were, to God the Father by being incorporated in the rite performed at the altar.

WE BECOME VICTIMS

This second manner is of special importance for the life of the Catholic, for it is something involving active, conscious contact. The first manner of offering will be true even when the individual is not aware of it — though he should ever strive to deepen his realization of the union between Christ the High Priest and himself. But the second demands a giving from himself. In order that this oblation by which the faithful offer the divine Victim to the Heavenly Father may attain its full effect, it is

necessary to add something else, as Pius XII tells us: it is necessary that the individual offer himself, IMMOLATE HIMSELF as a spiritual victim.

Though this offering of self will be made by formal rite at Mass, it is not limited to that time. Rather, it must flow over into the whole of one's life. It must gradually pervade one's entire day, so that one will ardently desire to join himself to Christ in procuring the greater glory of God, in suffering with Him as a spiritual victim. Then at Mass those solemn words of the priest will take on new meaning: "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee who art God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory, world without end..."; and the response of the people to these words — "Amen" — will indicate their actual intention of joining themselves with Christ.

In this way, Calvary becomes something in our lives; not only in the sense that we are actually there, actually present at that great Act in the Mass; but even more so in the sense that it becomes a part of our own lives. We offer ourselves together with Christ. The Mass is our sacrifice in two ways: (1) because we are rightly said to

offer it through the hands of the priest, acting in the person of Christ our Mystic Head; and (2) because we have joined the offering of ourselves to the external rite of the priest so as to make our inward offering manifest in an outward way to the Eternal Father.

The prayers of the liturgy remind us of this over and over again. When the priest turns toward the people after the Offertory, for example, he says: "Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice AND YOURS may be made acceptable to God the Father Almighty." So also in the orations by which the divine Victim is offered to the Father, the plural number is always used: OURS, WE. The Offertory prayer, for example: "Humbled in mind and contrite of heart, may WE find favor with Thee, O Lord; and may the Sacrifice WE this day offer up, be pleasing to Thee"; and in the Canon of the Mass: "This oblation of OUR service and that of THY WHOLE FAMILY, we beseech Thee, O Lord, do Thou graciously accept."

IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

The Mass is our Sacrifice as well. It is the great means given us by Christ to give

depth and worth to our lives. When life is viewed in relation to the Mass in this manner, it is seen to be something infinitely greater than a daily plodding to eke out an existence. It has supernatural worth, no matter what it might seem to the non-believer. True, it remains hard; suffering does not vanish—but it is transformed. True, we see it as a sacrifice—but as a sacrifice of love. Indeed, there is one quality which may be found eternally connected with all acceptable sacrifice. It is the quality of LOVE. It is love that is the basis for understanding Calvary, it is love that explains the Mass.

The mother who willingly suffers the weariness of a long day caring for her children, does not do so because she likes to work herself to the breaking point. The father who stands hours on end in a hot, sweaty foundry, does not get an innate thrill out of an aching back or a swimming head. The youth who saves his earnings bit by bit that he may one day present the ring to the girl he hopes to marry, does not enjoy passing up a weekly movie or a glass of beer. They all act from the high motive of love and devotion.

So is it with us. The Mass is not just rising from bed on a Sunday morning, spending forty-five minutes in church, and going home again. It is so much more! It is serving God, not only for forty-five minutes on one morning of the week, nor even on every morning of the week, but throughout the *whole* week: keeping His commandments; doing good to our neighbors; bearing patiently the wrongs done to us, the sufferings we must undergo. It is love which gives meaning to the lives we dedicate to God in the Mass—just as it does to the work of the busy mother, the weary father, the enraptured youth. Our gifts at Mass are but symbols of ourselves. Our whole life must make those symbols a reality.

Part Three:

SACRIFICE is a hard word to the modern ear. It implies suffering, and men today are in endless flight from suffering. Unmindful of our Saviour's words, "In the world you will have affliction," they begin to strive after the unattainable: a heaven on earth. As a consequence of original sin, God has Himself set limits to the earthly happiness which can actually be achieved by man. No matter how much social legislation may be enacted, the truth is that there will always be some suffering remaining.

A man, then, may choose for his manner of acting one of two alternatives. He may close his eyes to the reality of original sin, and foolishly expend all his energy in the pursuit of a phantom which he can never grasp; or he may face the reality of suffering, and — while doing what he can to alleviate it — learn at the same time to accept it and to live under it, knowing that despite his best efforts suffering will never wholly vanish. The first is the choice of the godless modern world of pseudo-science. The second is the choice of the man who has a complete realization of the truths of Chris-

tianity. And in between we have the compromisers, who neither believe nor disbelieve, but just "live on."

The Sacrifice of the Mass, then, can have profound meaning for the man who understands the role of suffering in life. It will lead him on to a happiness which is not even thought of by the unbeliever. It will transform his life for him, even with all its sufferings. He will see the concept of sacrifice not merely as something that entails suffering and harshness, and nothing more, as do so many in our day. He will not look upon it as the mere giving up of something. Rather, he will realize ever more clearly the meaning of the Latin words composing the term "Sacrifice": *sacrum* and *facio* — "to make holy," "to dedicate." The Mass will be for him a true "making holy" of his entire life — not merely an obligation bearing upon him once a week, nor the quarter dropped casually into the collection box, nor the sermon which he catches half asleep. It will mean much more than mere physical presence at the Sacrifice on Sunday mornings, or even daily throughout the week. Our sacrifice is the true giving of ourselves to God, the dedication of our service to Him; and it is complete in proportion to

how well we live according to His wishes, not only during Mass, but before and after it as well.

THE MASS PRAYERS

Perhaps it would help us to see this were we to examine a bit more in detail the action and prayers of the Mass as related to this dedication of our life to God through love.

We begin at Mass with our prayers to God — our way of telling God that we love Him. In our first prayers we can find each of the four acts to be included in any good prayer. In the prayers at the foot of the altar — the *Judica me, Deus* and *Confiteor* — and in the *Kyrie*, we find the first: CONTRITION. It is a practical type of sorrow, however, not one of mere emotion. Simply we bow our heads and “confess to God and all the saints that we have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed.” But yet, filled with hope and confidence, we turn and say, “Lord, have mercy on us. Send out Thy truth and Thy light,” since we do “hope in God, who will forgive our sins and bring us to life everlasting.”

In the *Gloria*, called by the Fathers the Greater Doxology, we give our pledge of

ADORATION and GRATEFUL THANKS to God for all His mercies. Having then completed the first three obligations of our prayer, we turn as God's ever-needful children to fulfill the remaining duty, PETITION. In the *Collects* we pray for all the needs of our life, for eternal happiness, for the welfare of the Church. These are things which we may confidently hope for in return for our own sacrifices. God in His bounty always returns a hundredfold. We ask these things, too, not only on our own merits, but on the merits of Christ and His saints. We seek to join our prayers with those who have already won the crown of glory in the heavenly kingdom.

In the next part of the Mass, God speaks to us, and tells us that He loved us so much as to send His only Son to redeem us on the cross of Calvary. Our mind is turned backward again to Jerusalem twenty centuries ago; and back even farther, into the ages of waiting; back to the garden of paradise; back into eternity, where this all began. We hear of Christ first through the inspired words of Sacred Scripture in the *Epistles*, chosen chiefly from St. Paul, but also at times from the prophets of the Old Testament. God continues then to speak in the

glorious words of the Psalms, and climaxes in the story of the *Gospel*, in which we receive the words of Christ Himself. We see now the effects of love, the lengths to which God has gone to show His love for us, and are encouraged to a greater giving of ourselves. We close this first part of the great interchange of love with the *Creed*, by which we proclaim our belief in Christ's Incarnation and redemptive death, and accept Him as our God — a God of love.

In answer to this infinitely great gift of God, we now have an opportunity to give Him something of our own in return. That something is symbolized in the bread and wine; that something is ourselves, the trials, needs, difficulties, of our life. Thus when we pray: "Receive, O holy Father, Almighty and Eternal God, this spotless host," and "We offer Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation," we have in mind, too, all our inescapable troubles: the headache that is just beginning, the long hours in office or school or factory, the death or sickness of some near relative, the numberless times we may be ridiculed or misjudged or even despised by those about us in the week which lies ahead. It is very easy to speak about "total giving of self" to God, but no one

knows just how much he is offering up with that little white host. This week, this day, may bring the one great trial of life. It is entirely fitting that we pray anew that "this sacrifice which we offer this day may be pleasing unto God," and beg the Holy Spirit to "come and bless this sacrifice," giving us the grace to complete our share in it in a truly Christian manner. "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty," admonishes the priest. Conscious of our own weakness we pray lest we fail.

CHRIST COMES TO US

Yet we have a greater reason to feel assured we will not fail. Christ is coming — coming to give Himself again in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass. He unites His giving with ours; we unite our sacrifices with His. "Lift up your hearts and give thanks." The Lord is coming. "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Immediately before the *Consecration* we again place our gifts upon the altar. "We beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to accept THIS OBLATION OF OUR SERVICE." Our sufferings, then, all contained within the spotless

host and pure wine, are united with Christ when these forms are changed into His body and blood. We go on to offer our sacrifice, our gifts united one to another, "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him." We pause along the way to pray for the Church, for the living and the dead, for ourselves, that, our sacrifice being acceptable, we may all be "delivered from eternal damnation and numbered among the flock of the elect."

God never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity. What a consoling thought that can be, especially when the going has been rough, when to complete the "oblation of our service" we have been forced to surrender to Him things we had thought it all but impossible to give up. We look upon the past, and know that it is not all loss. We can be sure that God has something in store for us a thousand times more wonderful than the things we have offered up to Him.

Now, having accepted our sacrifice of self, He turns again to show the inexhaustible depth of His love, and gives us back His Son in Holy Communion: as a Pledge of eternal happiness, and as strengthening Food to help us live out our offering of self during the days which follow.

To prepare for this awe-inspiring Gift, we say again the words which Christ Himself taught us: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. . . . Thy will be done" — no longer will we cry out the hateful "We will not serve!" "Give us this day our daily bread" — not only material substances such as the birds and beasts have need of, but also this supernatural, spiritual preservative of the life of grace. "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

With nothing held against our neighbors, we are free to approach the divine banquet table, and to receive into our hearts the Prince of Peace. We have promised to forgive all; we can hope for forgiveness from God. "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. . . . Grant us peace." Finally, striking our breasts in simple humility while we acknowledge to God in the words of the centurion that we are not "worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof," and confessing our guilt before the heavenly court, we receive Him, knowing that He shall "say but the word, and our souls shall be healed."

LIVE THE MASS

Our service is complete. We have pledged our love to God: He has returned proof of His. We have made our offerings to the divine Majesty; He has sent us His Gift of love in return.

“May Thy body, O Lord, which I have received, and Thy blood which I have drunk cleave to my inmost parts; and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me whom these pure and holy Sacraments have refreshed.” We are now ready to go out and LIVE THE MASS. We are ready to complete our Morning Offering in its fullest signification. We ask God for this help once again through the intercession of His saints, and then with the blessing of His appointed servant fresh upon our souls, and the words of St. John the Evangelist ringing in our ears — “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” — we go out to bring Christ to the world, and to see Him there; not only as we have here in Church but also in His visible creation around us, and in our fellow creatures, whether high or low, rich or poor.

Life to many people is a pretty drab affair, we have said before. But it needn't be! Here we have the whole idea of a worthwhile

life wrapped up in the brief time spent in prayer at the start of each week, or each day. The long hours in the office, the home, the school, can really take on a meaning — an eternal meaning. We can say to ourselves at the end of the day, not, "I'm glad that's over; I wish the whole blamed week were done," but something a little higher. We may still be glad the day is over, or wish the week were over; but we need not stop there. We can face the reality of suffering, and learn to accept it and even to value it because it is a unique gift we can make to God.

DAILY DRAMA

Only God and the individual know what a daily drama — different for each man — goes on behind the sealed doorways of the heart. Others can but guess. For one it will be "the kids at home, nearly driving me crazy"; for another, "the death of my husband . . . mother . . . child"; or perhaps "a serious illness in the family . . . an operation." Some will offer "a whole day of terrible temptations against purity," "the insults, the dirty remarks directed at me in the office or in the factory," or maybe "one particular

temptation — an especially tough one — that almost got me.” It may have been “the restlessness of the children in my classroom” that constituted the sacrifice; or “betrayal by a friend,” “gossip,” “a headache,” “financial worries.” It will be whatever each day has brought forth, whatever the “oblation, the total giving of self,” in the Sacrifice of the Mass has included. Some perhaps will even have to come empty-handed, able only to bow their heads and say: “I did not try . . . I failed . . . I sinned.” But, listening to the callings of grace, they will add: “I’ll clear this up in confession at once, and then I’ll try to do better tomorrow.”

A life lived by the Mass is one which will sweep fast along the path of virtue; it is one which, should it fail in much or little, will turn quickly to gain readmittance into the family of Christ. Such a life has a formative ideal that will give real direction to our days. It will not eliminate trials, nor will it clothe the skies in never-fading blue; but it will help us to triumph over trials, and to see the eternal joys waiting behind the clouds.

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