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THIS WE BELIEVE SERIES

of Discussion Club Texts

*The
Holy Spirit
and
His Work*

by REV. LEO J. TRESE



CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

N. C. W. C.

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of
Discussion Club Texts

Series 2

**THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND HIS WORK**



By REV. LEO J. TRESE

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
N. C. W. C.

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THE DISCUSSION CLUB

1. A religious discussion club is a group of six to twelve persons who meet weekly to discuss the teachings and practices of the Church, to clarify and correlate religious information in order to put religious truths into practice in daily living.
2. Religious discussion clubs are promoted under the guidance of the parish director, a priest who provides for the preparation of lay leaders and to whom questions that arise are submitted for decision.
3. The leader names a secretary whose duty it is to record questions on content or procedure that cannot be answered within the group. Before the next meeting these questions are referred by the secretary to the priest director.
4. The leader asks members of the group to read in turn passages of the text. One member reads aloud while the rest follow silently.
5. Discussion questions are answered in the text. They test accuracy of knowledge and clarity of statement. Members should be encouraged to ask additional questions. After each section is read, the leader asks the group as a whole, or members in turn, the questions listed under **Discussion**. If one member is unable to answer, another may volunteer information. Finally, the group considers the truths under discussion in their application to local or personal circumstances.
6. Questions raised should be submitted to the group before the leader attempts an answer. Unless all members agree that they have been answered satisfactorily, questions are to be submitted to the priest director.
7. Do not permit the group to spend too much time on a small portion of the text or to go off on a tangent into unrelated conversation. Avoid becoming absorbed in a controversy over a question of minor importance. Discussion is not debate or controversy. It is analysis expressed in one's own words.
8. Note that the suggestions under **My Apostolate** at the end of the chapter emphasize putting into immediate practice the truths presented in the text.

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**THIS WE BELIEVE
BY THIS WE LIVE**

The Revised Edition of the Baltimore Catechism No. 3 (1954) adds to the standard revised text a wealth of detailed explanation and numerous exactly chosen Scriptural citations. Designed for adult study and guidance, it is an invaluable reference work for discussion club members using the THIS WE BELIEVE SERIES.

CHAPTER I

THE UNKNOWN PERSON

IN THE Bible, in the Acts of the Apostles (19:2), we read that St. Paul came to the city of Ephesus, in Asia. There he found a small group of people who already believed in the teachings of Jesus. Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" Their answer was, "We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

Certainly none of us today is ignorant of the Holy Spirit — or if we prefer the Old English, the Holy "Ghost." We know well that He is one of the three divine Persons who, with the Father and the Son, constitute the Blessed Trinity. We also know that He is called the Paraclete (the Greek word for "Comforter"), the Advocate (pleading God's cause with mankind), the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Love. We also know that He "comes to us" when we are baptized, and that He continues to dwell within us as long as we do not shut Him out by mortal sin.

That, for many Catholics, is just about the sum of their knowledge of the Holy Spirit. And yet we can have but little understanding of the work of sanctification that goes on within our souls unless we know the place of the Holy Spirit in the divine scheme of things.

The existence of the Holy Spirit — indeed the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity — was all but unknown until Christ unveiled the truth to us. In Old Testament times the Jews were surrounded by idolatrous nations. More than once the Jews turned from the worship of the one God who had made them His chosen people, to the worship of many gods as practiced by their neighbors. As a consequence, God, through His prophets, hammered away at the idea of the *oneness* of God, the *unity* of God. He did not complicate things by revealing to

pre-Christian man that there are three Persons in God. It remained for Jesus Christ to give us this marvelous insight into the inner nature of the Deity.

It might be well to recall here, briefly, the essence of the divine nature so far as we can understand it. God's knowledge of Himself, we know, is an infinitely perfect knowledge. That is, the "picture" that God has of Himself in His own divine mind is an absolutely perfect representation of Himself. But it would not be a *perfect* representation unless it were a *living* representation. To live, to exist, belongs to the very nature of God. A mental image of God that was not a living image would not be a perfect representation.

This living image of Himself which God has in His mind, this idea of Himself which God has been generating (or "giving birth to") in His divine mind from all eternity, we call God the Son. God the Father we might say is God in the eternal act of "thinking about" Himself. God the Son is the living (and eternal) "thought" which results from that thinking. Both the Thinker and the Thought are of course within one and the same divine nature; there is only one God, but these are two Persons.

Discussion: 1. In what way was the religious knowledge of the first Ephesian converts lacking? 2. What basic knowledge of the Holy Ghost do most Catholics have? 3. Why is a fuller knowledge of the Holy Ghost important for us? 4. Why did God not reveal the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity in Old Testament times? 5. Why must God's image of Himself be a "living" image? 6. What is God the Son?

And it does not stop there. God the Father and God the Son behold, each of them, the infinite loveliness of the other. And so there flows between these two divine Persons a divine Love. It is a love so perfect, of such infinite ardor, as to be a *living* love, and we call this Love the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Like two volcanoes exchanging a single stream of fire, Father and Son eternally reciprocate this

Living Flame of Love. That is why we say, in the Nicene Creed, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son.

This, then, is the internal life of the Most Blessed Trinity — God knowing, God known, and God loving-and-loved. Three divine Persons, each distinct from the other two in his relationship to each of the others and yet possessing one and the same divine nature, possessing that nature, too, in absolute unity. Since they possess the divine nature equally, there is no subordination of one to the other. God the Father is not wiser than God the Son. God the Son is not more powerful than God the Holy Spirit.

We must guard too against thinking of the Blessed Trinity in terms of time. God the Father did not "come first," and then God the Son a little later, with God the Holy Ghost "coming" last of all. This process of knowing-loving that constitutes the inner life of the Blessed Trinity has been going on from all eternity; it had no beginning.

There is one other point of interest before we go on to discuss the Holy Spirit in particular. That is the fact that the three divine Persons are not only united in one divine nature; they also are united in *each other*. Each one of them is in each of the others in an inseparable unity — somewhat as the three primary colors of the spectrum are (by nature) inseparably united in the one colorless radiation which we call light. It is of course possible to break up a ray of light by artificial means, such as a prism, to make a rainbow. But if the ray of light is left to itself, the red is in the blue and the blue is in the yellow and the red is in them both; just one ray of light.

No example, of course, is perfect when applied to God. But by analogy we might say that just as the three colors of the spectrum are inseparably present, each in the other, so also in the Blessed Trinity the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, and the Holy Spirit in both. Where one is, all are. This inseparable unity of the three divine Persons — in case you are interested in theological terms — is called "circumincession."

Discussion: 1. What do we mean when we say that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son? 2. Why

is there no subordination of one divine Person to the other? 3. Why must we guard against thinking of the Blessed Trinity in terms of time? 4. In what way is light an image of the Blessed Trinity? 5. What does the word "circumcession" mean?

Most of us, when we were in school, studied physiology or biology. As a consequence we have a pretty good idea of what goes on inside our bodies. But not so many of us have a clear idea as to what goes on inside our souls. We talk rather easily of grace—actual grace and sanctifying grace—and of supernatural life and of growth in holiness. The question is, what do these words *mean*?

To answer that question adequately, we need first to understand the part which the Holy Spirit plays in the sanctification of the human soul. We know that the Holy Spirit is the infinite Love flowing eternally between God the Father and God the Son. He is Love in person, a *living* love. Since it is God's love for us that has led Him to make us sharers in His own divine life, it is quite natural for us to ascribe to the Spirit of Love—the Holy Ghost—the operations of grace in our souls.

However, we have to keep in mind that the three divine Persons are inseparable. In terms that are human (but not theologically exact) we might say that none of the three divine Persons does anything separately or alone, outside the divine nature. Within that divine nature, within the Godhead, each Person has His own particular activity, His own particular *relationship*, one to the other. God the Father is God knowing Himself, God "seeing" Himself; God the Son is God's living image of Himself; and God the Holy Ghost is God's love for Himself.

But "outside Himself" (if we may speak so loosely), God acts only in His perfect unity; no divine Person does anything by Himself. What one divine Person does, all three do. Outside the divine nature, it is the Blessed Trinity always who acts. To use a very homely and inadequate example, I might say that the only place my brain and heart and lungs do anything by themselves is inside me; each of them doing its own proper

job for the good of the other. But *outside* me, brain and heart and lungs work inseparably together. Wherever I may go, whatever I may be doing, brain and heart and lungs are in on it as a unit. None of the three goes off on a separate activity of its own.

But we often speak as though they did. We say that a man is "long-winded," as if it were only his lungs which did all the talking. We say that a man is "stout-hearted," as though courage were entirely a matter of the heart. We say that a man is "brainy," as though a brain could think without blood and oxygen. We ascribe to one particular organ a job that all of them are working on together.

Discussion: 1. To answer adequately the question, "What is grace?" what do we first need to understand? 2. Why is it natural to ascribe the operations of grace to the Holy Spirit? 3. Within the Godhead, what is each divine Person's special activity? 4. What do we mean when we say that "outside Himself" God acts only in His perfect unity? 5. What human example can we give to illustrate that the three divine Persons always act as one outside the Godhead?

Now let us make the tremendous jump from our own lowly physical organs to the three living Persons who constitute the Blessed Trinity. Then perhaps we can understand a little better why it is that the work of sanctifying souls is assigned to the Holy Spirit.

Since God the Father is the source or principle of the divine activity which goes on within the Blessed Trinity (the knowing-and-loving activity), He is considered to be the beginning of everything. That is why we assign to the Father the work of creation. Actually, of course, it is the Blessed Trinity who creates — whether it be the universe or an individual soul. What one divine Person does, all Three do. But we *appropriate* to the Father the act of creation. Because of His relationship to the other two Persons, the role of Creator fits the Father best.

Then, since it was through the second Person, God the Son, that God united a human nature to Himself in the Person of

Jesus Christ, we attribute the work of redemption to God the Son, the living Wisdom of God the Father. Infinite Power (the Father) decrees redemption; Infinite Wisdom (the Son) puts the decree into execution. However, when we refer to God the Son as the Redeemer, we remain conscious of the fact that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were also inseparably present in Jesus Christ. Absolutely speaking it was the Blessed Trinity who redeemed us. But we *appropriate* to the Son the act of redemption.

Finally, since the work of sanctifying souls is pre-eminently a work of divine love (as distinguished from a work of power or a work of wisdom) we refer this work of sanctification to the Holy Spirit. He is, after all, divine Love personified. Basically it is the Blessed Trinity who sanctifies us. It is God the Blessed Trinity who dwells within the sin-free soul. But we *appropriate* the action of grace to the Holy Spirit.

In the preceding paragraphs I have italicized the word "appropriate." I have done so because it is the exact word used in the science of theology. It is the word used to describe this way of "dividing up" the work of the Blessed Trinity among the three divine Persons. What one Person does, all do. And yet certain activities seem more *appropriate* to one Person than to another. As a consequence theologians say that God the Father is the Creator, by appropriation; God the Son is the Redeemer, by appropriation; and God the Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier, by appropriation.

All this may seem unnecessarily technical to the average reader. And yet it may help us to understand what is meant when the catechism, for example, says, "The Holy Ghost dwells in the Church as the source of its life and sanctifies souls through the gift of grace." God's Love is at work, but His wisdom and power also are there.

Discussion: 1. Why do we assign the work of creation to God the Father? 2. Why do we assign the work of redemption to the Son? 3. Why do we assign the work of sanctification to the Holy Spirit? 4. What is the word used in theology to describe this way of "dividing up" the work of

the Blessed Trinity? 5. What does the catechism say about the work of the Holy Spirit?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. In the hope that increased understanding may bring increased love and growth in goodness, I shall embark seriously upon this study of the Holy Spirit and His work.
2. As I make the Sign of the Cross or recite the "Glory be to the Father . . .," I shall offer it as a prayer for better understanding of the truths of my religion.
3. As I recite the Apostles' Creed in my daily prayers, or the Nicene Creed at Mass, I shall make it an act of thanksgiving to the three divine Persons for their wonderful activity in my behalf.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS GRACE?

THE word "grace" has many meanings. It may mean "attractiveness," as when we say, "She moved with grace across the room." It may mean "benevolence," as when we say, "I sought his good graces in the matter." It may mean "thanksgiving," as when we speak of saying "grace after meals." Any one of us probably can think of half a dozen other ways in which the word "grace" is commonly used.

In the science of theology, however, *grace* has a very definite and restricted meaning. It means, first of all, a gift from God. Not just any kind of gift; on the contrary, a very special sort of gift. Life itself is a gift of God. God was under no compulsion to make the human race to begin with, much less to make you or me as individuals. All that accompanies human life is likewise a gift of God. The power of sight and of speech; physical health; such abilities as we may possess—to sing or draw or bake a cake; all of these are gifts of God. But such gifts as these we call *natural* gifts. They are a part of our nature as human beings. There are certain things that necessarily go with being a human creature, as God has designed human nature. These gifts of God we cannot accurately call *graces*.

The word "grace" is reserved in theology to describe those gifts to which man is not even remotely entitled, not even by virtue of his nature as a human being. The word "grace" is used to identify those gifts which are *above* human nature. And so we take the Latin word "super," which means "above," and we say that grace is a *supernatural* gift of God.

The definition, however, still is incomplete. There are gifts of God which are supernatural but which cannot, strictly speaking, be called graces. For example, a person with an incurable cancer might be miraculously cured at Lourdes. In such a case that person's health would be a supernatural gift, restored by a means which is above and beyond nature. If we want to be

precise, we do not call this cure a *grace*. There are other gifts, too, which are supernatural in their origin but which do not qualify to be called graces. The Bible, for example, is a supernatural gift of God; so is the Church, so are the sacraments.

Discussion: 1. What are some common meanings of the word "grace"? 2. In the science of theology, what restricted meaning does the word "grace" have? 3. What do we mean by "natural" gifts? 4. Why is grace called a "supernatural" gift? 5. Name some supernatural gifts that are not graces.

Such gifts as these, supernatural though they be, operate outside us. It would not be incorrect to call them "external graces." The word "grace," however, when it is used simply and by itself, refers to those *invisible* gifts which reside in the soul, or operate in the soul. So we build up our definition of grace a little more, by saying that it is an *interior* supernatural gift of God.

That immediately brings up another question. Sometimes God gives to chosen souls the power to foretell the future. This is an interior supernatural gift. Would we call it a grace, this power of prophecy? Or again, a priest has the power to change bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, and to forgive sins. These certainly are interior supernatural gifts. Are they graces? To both questions the answer is no. Powers such as these, although they are interior and supernatural gifts, are given for the benefit of other people, not for the benefit of the one who has the power. A priest's power to offer Mass is not for his own sake, but for the sake of Christ's Mystical Body. A priest might conceivably be in the state of mortal sin himself, and yet his Mass would be a true Mass and would gain grace for others. He might have sin on his own soul, and yet his words of absolution would forgive the sins of others. This brings us then to another point which must be added to our definition of grace: grace is an interior supernatural gift of God bestowed on us *for our own salvation*.

Finally we raise this question: If grace is a gift of God to which we have absolutely no shadow of right or claim, how

is it that we have been given grace? The first creatures (that we know of) to whom grace was given were the angels and Adam and Eve. It perhaps is not so surprising, in view of God's infinite goodness, that the angels and our first parents were given grace. They didn't *deserve* it, true enough; but, although they had no *right* to grace, at the same time they were not positively unworthy of the gift.

However, once Adam and Eve had sinned, they (and we their descendants) were not only undeserving of grace; they (and we) became actually *unworthy* of anything beyond the ordinary natural gifts pertaining to human nature. How could God's infinite justice, outraged by original sin, be satisfied so that His infinite goodness might operate once again to mankind's benefit?

The answer to that question rounds out for us the definition of grace. It was Jesus Christ, we know, whose life and death made satisfaction to the divine Justice for mankind's sin. It was Jesus Christ who merited for us, earned for us, the grace which Adam had so lightly tossed away. And so we complete our definition by saying: *Grace is an interior supernatural gift of God bestowed on us through the merits of Jesus Christ for our salvation.* Who would have thought that so few words could contain so much meaning!

Discussion: 1. When the word "grace" is used by itself, to what kind of supernatural gifts does it refer? 2. Why are the power to offer Mass and to forgive sin not called graces? 3. What is the difference between the angels and ourselves insofar as receiving grace is concerned? 4. How did Jesus Christ merit grace for us? 5. What, now, is the complete definition for "grace"?

When we were born our soul was, spiritually speaking, dark and empty — spiritually dead. There was no bond of union between our soul and God. There was no intercourse, no communication, between our soul and God. If, without Baptism, we had reached the use of reason and had died without committing a single personal sin (a purely imaginary hypothesis,

actually impossible), we still would not have gone to heaven. We would have entered into a state of natural happiness which, for want of a better name, we call limbo. But we never would have seen God, face to face, and as He really is.

This is a point that bears repeating — the fact that by our nature as human beings we have no *right* to that direct vision of God which constitutes the essential happiness of heaven. Not even Adam and Eve, before their fall, had any *right* to heaven. In fact, the human soul, in what we might call its purely natural state, simply has not got the power to see God; it has not got the capacity for intimate, personal union with God.

But God did not leave man in this purely natural state. When He created Adam, God gave Adam all that he was entitled to as a human being. But God went further; He gave to the soul of Adam a certain quality or power which would make it possible for Adam to live in close (although invisible) union with Him in this life. Because this special quality of soul — this power of union and intercommunication with God — was completely *above* the *natural* powers of the soul, we call it a *supernatural* quality of the soul, a supernatural gift.

The way that God imparted this special quality or power to the soul of Adam was by the indwelling of Himself in Adam's soul. In a wonderful manner that must remain a mystery to us until Judgment Day, God "took up residence" in Adam's soul. And much as the sun in the sky imparts light and warmth to the surrounding atmosphere, so also did God in Adam's soul impart this supernatural quality which is nothing less than a sharing, to a degree, in God's own life. Sunlight is not the sun; but it flows from the sun, it is the result of the sun's presence. So also this supernatural quality of soul that we speak of is distinct from God, yet flows from Him and is the result of His presence in the soul.

Discussion: 1. What was the state of our soul when we were born? 2. Why could we not go to heaven without Baptism, even if we lived a sinless life? 3. What power did God give to Adam, to which Adam as a human being was not entitled? 4. How did God impart this special power to Adam's soul?

5. In what way is the sun an example of this "sharing of God's own life" with Adam?

This supernatural quality of the soul has another effect. It not only enables us to live in close union and communication with God in this life; it also prepares the soul for another gift which God will add after death. That gift will be the gift of supernatural vision, the power to see God face to face, as He really is.

The reader will have recognized already that this "supernatural quality of soul" of which I have been talking, is that gift of God to which theologians have given the name "sanctifying grace." I have described it first, instead of naming it, in the hope that the name might mean more when we got to it. And the added gift of supernatural vision after death, is what theologians call (in Latin) the "Lumen Glorise." In English, it is the "Light of Glory." Sanctifying grace is a necessary preparation, a prerequisite to the Light of Glory. Much as an electric lamp is useless without a socket into which to fit, so also the Light of Glory could find no place in a soul that was not possessed of sanctifying grace.

I have talked of sanctifying grace in terms of Adam. In the very act of creating Adam, God raised him above a merely natural level, raised him to a supernatural destiny by conferring sanctifying grace upon him. By original sin, Adam lost that grace for himself and us. Jesus Christ healed the breach between man and God by His death on the cross. Man's supernatural destiny is restored. To each man individually sanctifying grace is imparted in the sacrament of Baptism.

When we are baptized we receive sanctifying grace for the first time. God (the Holy Ghost by "appropriation") takes up His abode within us. By His presence He imparts to our soul that supernatural quality which makes it possible for God, in a grand and mysterious manner, to see Himself in us and therefore to love us. And, because this supernatural quality of soul, this sanctifying grace, was purchased for us by Jesus Christ, we are bound by it to Christ, we share it with Christ — and God

consequently sees us as He sees His Son — and we become, each of us, a child of God.

Sanctifying grace is sometimes called habitual grace, because it is intended to be a habitual or permanent condition of the soul. Once we are united with God in Baptism, it is intended that we remain united with Him forever — invisibly here, visibly hereafter.

Discussion: 1. What other effect does this "sharing in God's own life" have upon the soul? 2. What is the name for this supernatural quality of the soul, of which we have been talking? 3. What is the Light of Glory? 4. How was sanctifying grace, lost by Adam, restored to us? 5. How does sanctifying grace make it possible for God to love us? 6. What is another name for sanctifying grace?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. At least once a day I shall offer to God a prayer of thanksgiving for *all* the gifts, natural and supernatural, which He has bestowed upon me.
2. I shall have a great horror of losing sanctifying grace myself; or of causing anyone else to lose sanctifying grace by my bad example.
3. If a parent, I shall teach my children from their earliest years that God is dwelling within their souls. I shall try to make them understand what it means to have a beautiful soul and to keep it beautiful.

THE GRACE THAT COMES AND GOES

GOD made us for the beatific vision — for the person-to-person union with Himself which is the happiness of heaven. In order that we may be capable of this direct vision of God, He will give us a supernatural power which we call the Light of Glory. The Light of Glory, however, can be bestowed only on a soul which already is united with God by means of that earlier gift which we call sanctifying grace. If we go into eternity deprived of sanctifying grace, then we have lost God forever.

Once we have received sanctifying grace in Baptism, it then becomes a matter of life-and-death importance that we preserve this supernatural gift to the very end. Or, if self-sought catastrophe does strike in the form of mortal sin, then it is of dreadful urgency that we recover the precious gift which our sin has lost, the spiritual life of sanctifying grace which we have extinguished in our soul.

It is important, too, that we increase sanctifying grace within our soul. And it *is* capable of increase. The more the soul is purified of self, the more responsive does it become to the action of God. As self diminishes, sanctifying grace increases. And it is the *degree* of sanctifying grace that will determine the degree of our happiness in heaven. Two men looking at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel will both find complete enjoyment in the sight of Michelangelo's masterpiece, but the man with the cultivated eye will find more enjoyment in it than the other man, whose artistic tastes are of a low order. The man with little artistic appreciation will be quite satisfied; he will not be aware that he is missing anything, but he will be missing a lot. Similarly, we all shall be perfectly happy in heaven. But the *degree* of our happiness will depend upon the spiritual sharpness of our vision. That in turn will depend upon the degree to which sanctifying grace has permeated our soul.

These, then, are our three needs with regard to sanctifying grace: first, that we preserve it permanently and until the end;

secondly, that we recover it immediately if we have lost it by mortal sin; thirdly, that we seek to grow in sanctifying grace with an eagerness that sees the sky as the limit.

Now none of these three things is easy to do. In fact, by our human wisdom and strength alone, none of these three things is even possible. Like a bombed victim wandering dazed and weakened from the ruins, so has human nature staggered down through the centuries from the explosive rebellion of original sin — judgment permanently warped, will permanently weakened. It is so hard to recognize danger in time; so hard to look honestly at the greater good that needs doing; so hard to turn our gaze from the hypnotic beckoning of sin.

Discussion: 1. Why is it of life-and-death importance that we preserve sanctifying grace in our soul? 2. Why is it important that we *increase* sanctifying grace in our soul? 3. How do we explain that all will be completely happy in heaven, yet some will be happier than others? 4. What are our three needs with regard to sanctifying grace? 5. Why are none of these three things easy to do?

That is why sanctifying grace, like a king surrounded by a retinue of servants, is preceded by and accompanied by a whole train of special helps from God. These special helps we call actual graces. An actual grace is a momentary, transient *impulse*, a spurt of spiritual energy with which God touches the soul — somewhat as the hand of a mechanic might touch a spinning wheel in order to keep the wheel in motion.

Actual grace may work upon the mind or upon the will; usually upon both. Actual grace is given by God always for one of the three purposes mentioned above: either to prepare the way for the first infusion of sanctifying grace (or to restore it when lost); to preserve sanctifying grace in the soul; and to increase it. The operation of actual grace may be clearer if we trace its work in an imaginary person who has lost sanctifying grace through mortal sin.

First God illumines the mind of the sinner so that he may see the evil of what he has done. If the sinner accepts this

grace, he admits to himself, "I have offended God in a serious matter; I have committed a mortal sin." The sinner can, of course, reject this first grace; he can say, "What I did wasn't so awfully bad; lots of people do worse things than that." If he does reject the first grace, there probably will be no second. In the normal course of God's providence, one grace begets another. This is the meaning of Christ's words when He says, "To everyone who has shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him who does not have, even that which he seems to have shall be taken away" (Matt. 25:29).

But supposing the sinner to have accepted the first grace, then the second grace follows. This time it is a strengthening of the will, which enables the sinner to make an act of contrition: "Dear God," he groans inwardly, "if I die like this, I'll lose heaven and go to hell, and it's a shabby way I've treated You, in return for all Your love. Dear God, I'll *not* do that again!" If the sinner's sorrow is perfect (stemming mainly from his love for God), then sanctifying grace is at once restored to his soul; God at once reunites the soul to Himself. If the sorrow is imperfect, based mainly on fear of God's justice, then there will be a further impulse of grace. His mind enlightened, the sinner will say, "I *must* go to confession." His will strengthened, he will resolve, "I *shall* go to confession." And, in the sacrament of Penance, sanctifying grace is restored to his soul. That is a concrete instance of how actual grace works.

Discussion: 1. What do we call those special helps which precede and follow sanctifying grace? 2. How would you describe actual grace? 3. For what three purposes is actual grace given? 4. What is the meaning of Christ's words, "To everyone who has shall be given"? 5. Can you give an example of how actual grace works?

Without God's help we cannot succeed in getting to heaven. The story of grace is as simple as that. Without sanctifying grace we are not *capable* of the beatific vision. Without actual grace we are not *capable* of receiving sanctifying grace in the first place (once we have reached the use of reason). Without

actual grace we are not capable of remaining for any long period in the state of sanctifying grace. Without actual grace we cannot recover sanctifying grace if we should lose it.

In view of the absolute necessity of grace, it is comforting to recall another truth which also is a matter of faith — something we must believe. That is the fact that God gives to every soul He creates sufficient grace to get to heaven. No one ever will lose heaven except through his own fault, through his own failure to *use* God's grace.

For it is possible, of course, to reject grace. God's grace works in and through our human will. God's grace does not destroy our freedom of choice. It is true that grace does most of the work, but God requires of us our co-operation. At the very least, our part is to place no obstacle to the operation of grace in our soul.

We are speaking mainly of actual graces, those divine impulses which move us to judge what is right and to do what is good. Perhaps an example will help to illustrate the operation of grace with respect to free will.

Let us suppose that I have been bedridden with a long illness. Now I am recuperating, but I have to learn to walk again. If I try to walk alone, I shall fall on my face. So a good friend undertakes to help me. He puts his arm around my waist, and I lean heavily on his shoulder. Gently he propels me across the floor; I am walking again! Actually, as I walk my friend is doing most of the work, but there is one thing my friend cannot do for me; he cannot pick up my feet. If I will not even try to put one foot in front of the other; if I just let myself hang, a dead weight, clinging to my friend, then my friend's help is wasted. In spite of him, I will not walk.

In much the same way we can let God's grace go unused. By our own indifference or sloth — and even worse, by our positive resistance — we can frustrate the operation of God's grace in our soul. Of course, God can, if He chooses, give us so much grace that our human will is carried along with almost no effort on our part. This is what theologians call *efficacious* grace, as distinguished from merely sufficient grace. Efficacious grace actually accomplishes its purpose. It not only is *sufficient* to our

spiritual needs, but in addition is strong enough to overcome the weakness or obduracy which might cause us to neglect or resist the grace.

Discussion: 1. Why can we not get to heaven without God's help? 2. Why will no one ever lose heaven except through his own fault? 3. With regard to grace, what does God require of us? 4. What is the difference between *efficacious* grace and *sufficient* grace?

All of us, I am sure, at one time or another have had experiences like this: We are faced with a strong temptation; perhaps we even know by past experience that this is a temptation which usually defeats us. We breathe a half-hearted prayer for help, not even sure in our own mind that we *want* to be helped. And lo and behold! the temptation disappears. Thinking about it afterwards, we can't honestly say that we *conquered* the temptation; rather, it just seemed to evaporate.

We have had the experience, too, of doing an action that is, for us, unexpectedly generous or self-sacrificing or compassionate. We feel a shock of pleased surprise. "Really," we admit secretly to ourselves, "that wasn't like me at all."

In both of these examples we have had graces that were not merely *sufficient*, but graces that were *efficacious*. These examples are of the more striking kind. But actually, any time that we do good or abstain from evil, our grace has been *efficacious*; it has accomplished its purpose. This is true even when we are conscious of some effort on our part, even when we feel that we have been through a struggle.

Indeed, I think that one of our biggest surprises on Judgment Day will be to discover how *little* we have had to do with our own salvation. We shall be amazed to learn how continually and completely God's grace has surrounded us and accompanied us all through life. During this life we do occasionally recognize God's hand. Once in a while we can say, "God's grace surely was with me," but on Judgment Day we shall see that for every grace which we have recognized, there have been a hundred

or ten thousand other, more hidden, graces of which we have been totally unconscious.

Our surprise too will be mixed with shame. We go through life, most of us, patting ourselves on the back for our little victories. We said no to that drink which would have been one too many; we changed our mind about going out with that person who might have meant sin for us. We held our tongue when we wanted to make a biting and angry reply. We rolled out of bed for weekday Mass when our body was crying in protest.

And then on Judgment Day we shall get our first square look at ourselves. We shall see the full picture of the workings of grace in our life. We shall see how little we ourselves had to do with our heroic decisions and our supposedly noble deeds. Almost, we can imagine God smiling at us in loving amusement as He sees our chagrin; as He hears us exclaim in confusion, "Why God! It was You all the time!"

Discussion: 1. Give an example, from your own experience, of a grace that has very plainly been an "efficacious" grace? 2. What big surprise shall we have on Judgment Day? 3. Are we aware of all the graces we receive? 4. Why will our surprise on Judgment Day be mixed with shame?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. After every temptation conquered or good deed done I shall remember to thank God for the grace that helped me.
2. I shall try to perform *more* good deeds, especially acts of kindness to those around me — even if it is no more than a pleasant smile.
3. I shall offer a special prayer daily for a non-Catholic friend or neighbor, to obtain for him (her) the actual grace which he needs in order to prepare the way for the gift of faith.

WELLSPRINGS OF LIFE

THERE are, as we well know, two sources of divine grace: prayer and the sacraments. Once we have received sanctifying grace through Baptism, then it is by means of prayer and the other six sacraments that sanctifying grace is increased in the soul. If we lose sanctifying grace through mortal sin, then it is by means of prayer (disposing us for forgiveness) and the sacrament of Penance that sanctifying grace is restored to the soul.

Prayer is defined as "the lifting of the mind and heart to God." We may lift our mind and heart to God through the use of words. We may say, "O my God, I am sorry for my sins," or "O my God, I love You," speaking to God quite naturally in our own words. Or we can raise our mind and heart to God by means of words which someone else has written, trying to *mean* the words which we speak.

These "set" prayers may be the privately composed (but officially approved) prayers which we find in many prayer books and devotional leaflets; or they may be liturgical prayers, the official prayers of the Church, of the Mystical Body of Christ. These are the prayers of the Mass, of the Breviary, and of various sacred functions. Most of these prayers, such as the Psalms and the Canticles, have been taken from the Holy Bible, and so are words inspired by God Himself.

We may pray, then, in our own words or in the words of another. We may use privately composed prayers or liturgical prayers. Whatever the sources of our words may be, so long as the use of words figures prominently in our prayer, then our prayer is classified as *vocal* prayer. This would be true even though the words are not spoken aloud, even though we say the words silently to ourselves. It is not the tone of voice, but the use of words that determines vocal prayer. This is a type of prayer that is universally used, by saint and not-so-saintly, alike.

But there is a higher type of prayer which is called *mental prayer*. In this kind of prayer, the mind and heart do *all* the work, without benefit of words. Almost everyone makes use of mental prayer at one time or another, oftentimes without realizing it. If you have ever looked at a crucifix and have thought to yourself of how much Jesus suffered for you, of how petty your own troubles are, and have resolved to be more patient hereafter — then you have practiced mental prayer. If you have ever (perhaps after Communion?) thought about how good God has been to you, of how little you have done for Him, and have resolved to be more generous with God in the future, then you have practiced mental prayer.

Discussion: 1. What are the two sources of divine grace? 2. What is prayer? 3. When do we call a prayer vocal? 4. What is the difference between vocal prayer and mental prayer? 5. When do many people make use of mental prayer?

This kind of mental prayer, in which the mind thinks about some divine truth — perhaps about some word or action of Christ — with the result that the heart (really the *will*) is moved to greater love and fidelity to God — this kind of prayer is commonly called meditation. While it is true that almost any practical Catholic will, at least intermittently, practice a certain amount of meditation, yet it needs pointing out that normally there will be no notable spiritual growth unless a person gives some of his prayer time regularly to mental prayer. That is why the Canon Law of the Church requires that every priest devote some time daily to mental prayer. Most religious orders prescribe a full hour of mental prayer daily for their members.

For the average person, a very simple and fruitful form of meditation would be to read a chapter of the Gospels each day. It should be at a time and in a place that is as free as possible from noise and distractions. It should be read thoughtfully and slowly. Then a few minutes should be given to turning over in one's mind what has been read; giving it a chance to sink in, applying it to one's own life; letting it lead, as it normally will, to a resolution of some kind.

Besides meditation, of which we have been speaking, there is another form of mental prayer—a still higher form of prayer—which we call contemplation. We are accustomed to thinking of the saints as “contemplatives.” We are likely to think that contemplation is something reserved to convents and monasteries. Actually, the prayer of contemplation is a form of prayer at which every sincere Christian ought to aim. It is a form of prayer to which, usually, our prayer of meditation will lead if we meditate *regularly*.

It is hard to describe the prayer of contemplation because there is so little to describe. We might say that it is that type of prayer in which the mind and heart are raised to God—period. The mind and heart are raised to God and rest there. The mind, at least, is inactive. What movement there is is of the heart (or *will*) only, towards God. Whatever “work” is done is done by God Himself. He can operate now quite freely in this heart which has fastened itself so firmly to Him.

Before anyone says, “Oh, I never could contemplate!” let me ask this: “Have you never knelt (or sat) in a quiet church, perhaps after Mass or on your way home from work; have you never remained there for a few minutes, without conscious thought, perhaps just looking at the tabernacle, not thinking, just sort of *yearning*; and left church finally, with a strange feeling of renewed strength and courage and peace? Then you *have* practiced the prayer of contemplation, whether you knew it or not. So let us not say that contemplation is beyond our reach. It is the kind of prayer that God wants *all* of us to reach for; it is the kind of prayer that all other prayer—vocal prayer (whether private or liturgical) and meditation—is designed to lead us to. It is the kind of prayer that will most richly contribute to growth in grace.

Discussion: 1. Why does the Church require daily mental prayer for priests and religious? 2. What is a very simple way in which the average person could practice mental prayer every day? 3. Besides meditation, what other kind of mental prayer is there? 4. How would you describe the prayer of con-

templation? 5. Why is contemplation a form of prayer for everybody? Discuss your statement.

This wonderful inner life which is ours — this sharing in God's own life which we call sanctifying grace — is increased through prayer. It is increased also by means of the sacraments, the sacraments which follow after Baptism. The life of an infant increases with every breath he draws, with every ounce of food he takes, with every movement of his unformed muscles. So too do the other six sacraments build upon the life-beginning, the first accession of sanctifying grace which Baptism gives.

That is true even of the sacrament of Penance. We usually think of Penance as the sacrament of forgiveness. We think of it as the sacrament which restores life when sanctifying grace has been lost through mortal sin. That is, indeed, the primary purpose of the sacrament of Penance. But the sacrament is a life-building medicine as well as a life-restoring medicine. It would be a most unfortunate ignorance to suppose that the sacrament of Penance is to be reserved only for the forgiveness of mortal sin. It has a secondary purpose. For the soul which already is in the state of sanctifying grace, Penance is just as truly an increaser of life as is the Holy Eucharist. That is why those who aim at more than mediocrity in their spiritual lives love to receive the sacrament of Penance frequently.

It is the Holy Eucharist, however, which is pre-eminently the sacrament of life. It is the Holy Eucharist which above all other sacraments, enriches and intensifies the life of grace within us. The very form of the sacrament would tell us that. In the Holy Eucharist God comes to us, not through the cleansing washing with water, not through the strengthening anointing with oil, not through the power-giving imposition of hands, but as the very food and drink of our souls, under the appearances of bread and wine.

The dynamic upward-thirsting life which we call sanctifying grace is the result of the soul's union with God, the result of God's personal indwelling in the soul. There is no other sacrament which unites us so directly and so intimately with God as does the Holy Eucharist. This is true whether we think of the

Holy Eucharist in terms of the Mass or in terms of Holy Communion. In the Mass our soul reaches up, like an infant seeking the breast of his mother, to the very bosom of the Most Blessed Trinity. As we unite ourselves with Christ in the Mass, Christ integrates our love with His own infinite love for God. We become a part of the gift of Himself which He is offering, in this endless Calvary, to the Triune God. He carries us, we might say, along with Himself and introduces us into that mysterious depth which is the eternal life of the Godhead. In such immediate contact with God it is no wonder that the Mass is for us such an abounding source of life, such a multiplier of sanctifying grace.

But the flow of life does not end as, at the Consecration of the Mass, we touch divinity. Now the process reverses itself. As we, with and through Christ, have reached up to God, so God in turn, in and through Christ reaches down to us. In a mystery of union which must leave even the angels gasping, God comes to us. This time God does not use water or oil or gesture or spoken word as the carrier of His grace. This time it is Jesus Christ Himself, God's own Son, really and personally present under the appearances of bread, who skyrockets the level of sanctifying grace within us. *

Discussion: 1. Besides prayer, by what other means may we increase sanctifying grace? 2. What mistake do many people make in thinking about the sacrament of Penance? 3. What reason is there for receiving the sacrament of Penance even when there is no sin on the soul? 4. Which of the sacraments is the richest source of spiritual life? 5. Can you describe what happens between the soul and God at Mass?

The Mass itself, even without Holy Communion, is a limitless source of grace for every member of Christ's Mystical Body who is already spiritually alive. For each of us individually the graces of the Mass increase to the degree in which we consciously and actively unite ourselves with Christ in His offering of Himself. When circumstances make quite impossible the actual reception of Holy Communion, a sincere and fervent

spiritual communion will still more increase the grace we receive from Mass. Christ is quite capable of bridging a gap that is not of our own making.

But it should be quite evident that any Catholic genuinely interested in his own spiritual growth will want to complete the cycle of grace with actual Holy Communion. "Every Mass a Communion Mass" should be the aim of all of us. There is a sad waste of grace in any Mass for one who fails through lethargy or indifference to open his heart to the gift of Himself which God offers. And it is a misunderstanding that is close to stupidity to look upon Holy Communion as a periodic "duty" to be fulfilled once a month or once a year.

There is a point that bears noting here with regard to the life-giving power of prayer and the sacraments alike. It has been emphasized that grace, in all its forms, is a free gift of God. Whether it be the beginning of holiness in Baptism or growth in holiness through prayer and the other sacraments — every bit of it is the work of God. No matter what heroic acts I might perform, without God's grace I never could save myself.

However, this must not lead me to think that prayer and the sacraments are magic formulas which will save me and sanctify me in spite of myself. If I think that, then I shall be guilty of that religious "formalism" of which Catholics often are accused. Religious formalism results when a person thinks that he becomes "good" simply by going through certain motions, speaking certain prayers and taking part in certain ceremonies. Against Catholics in general the accusation is most unjust, but the charge would rightly be leveled against an individual Catholic whose spiritual life was limited to the automatic and unthinking recitation of certain fixed prayers — with no lifting of the mind and heart to God; and to the force-of-habit or sense-of-duty reception of the sacraments, with no conscious striving for closer union with God. In short, God can penetrate the soul only insofar as *self* will let Him.

Discussion: 1. What determines the degree of grace we receive from the Mass? 2. If we cannot receive Holy Communion at the Mass we attend, what should we do as a substitute?

3. Why should "every Mass a Communion Mass" be the aim of all of us?
4. What do we mean by "religious formalism"?
5. What kind of Catholic would be guilty of religious formalism?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. If my prayer-life has been a skimpy one, I shall resolve to do *more* and *better* praying — especially when I get up in the morning and before I go to bed.
2. Using the New Testament or a good spiritual book, I shall try to spend fifteen minutes each day in the type of mental prayer called meditation.
3. I shall try to take a more conscious and active part in each Mass at which I assist, and will guard against being merely a passive onlooker.

WHAT IS MERIT?

IN THE news dispatches I once read of a man who built a new house for his family. He did most of the work himself and put all his savings into the materials. When the house was completed after many months of labor, the man found to his horror that he had built it on the wrong lot, another man's lot. The owner of the lot calmly took possession of the house, while the builder could only weep for his wasted time and money.

Pitiable as was that poor man's loss, it is as nothing compared to the pitiableness of the man — or woman — who lives without sanctifying grace. No matter what grand or noble deeds such a person may perform, not one of his actions has any value in the eyes of God. Whether it be through lack of Baptism or because of subsequent mortal sin, the soul which is cut off from God lives his days in vain. His sorrows and his pains, his sacrifices and his goodnesses — all are without eternal value, all are wasted so far as God is concerned. There is no *merit* in anything he does. What, then, *is* merit?

Merit has been defined as that property of a good work which entitles the doer to a reward. All of us, I am sure, will agree that generally speaking it requires an effort to do what is right, what is good. Whether it is feeding the poor, or giving aid to the sick, or doing a kind turn for a neighbor, it is easy to see that there is some sacrifice of *self* involved. It is easy to see that such actions have a *value*, that they can lay claim, at least potentially, to a reward. But they can lay no claim to a reward from God if God has had no part in the doing of the deeds. They can lay no claim to a reward from God if there is no communication between God and the doer. No matter how hard a workman might labor, he cannot claim compensation for his work if he has neglected to put his name on the payroll.

That is why it is only the soul that is in the state of sanctifying grace which can gain merit for its actions. Indeed, it is *being* in the state of sanctifying grace that *gives* eternal value to an

action. Human deeds, so long as they are purely human, have no supernatural significance at all. It is only when these deeds become the work of God Himself that they have a divine worth. And our deeds *are* in a sense the work of God Himself present in the soul when the soul is living the supernatural life which we call sanctifying grace.

This is so true that even the *least* of our actions has a supernatural value when it is performed in union with God. Whatever God does, even when He does it through us as His free and willing instruments, has a divine worth. That is why even the least of our actions, provided it be a morally good action, is meritorious so long as we have the intention, at least habitual, of doing all for God.

Discussion: 1. Why is the person who lives without sanctifying grace an especially pitiable person? 2. What is merit? 3. When is it that a good action can claim no reward from God? 4. When is it that our actions have an eternal value? 5. For an action to be meritorious, what intention must we have?

It is no surprise to anyone that helping the needy, practicing penances, or giving to the missions, are meritorious actions when performed in the state of sanctifying grace. But many persons are surprised to learn that beating a rug, getting a haircut, or weeding a garden are meritorious actions too when performed by one who is living his life on a supernatural level—in the state of sanctifying grace. Any free and conscious action which is not sinful is a morally good action, no matter how simple and unpretentious it may be. Therefore, *everything* which we freely do which is not sinful, and which we do in the state of sanctifying grace, is a source of merit, with the further proviso that there must be at least a virtual intention of doing all for love of God.

Since merit is "that property of a good work which entitles the doer to a reward," we next ask, logically, what our reward is to be? Our supernaturally good actions will merit, but *what* will they merit? They will merit a triple reward: an increase

in sanctifying grace, eternal life, and an increase of glory in heaven. With regard to the second phase of this reward — eternal life — it might be of interest to note this point: for the baptized infant, heaven is a heritage by virtue of the infant's being an adopted child of God incorporated in Christ, but for the adult Christian, heaven is a recompense as well as a heritage, a reward we can earn, because God has promised it to those who serve Him.

With regard to the third item of reward — increase of heavenly glory — we can see that it flows from the first. Our degree of glory in heaven will be proportionate to the degree of our union with God, the extent to which sanctifying grace has permeated our soul. As grace increases, so does our prospective glory in heaven also increase.

However, to achieve the eternal life and the increased glory that we have merited, we must, of course, die in the state of sanctifying grace. Mortal sin wipes out all merit, just as a bank crash can wipe out one's life savings. And there is no merit to be gained beyond the grave. There is no merit that we can gain in hell or in purgatory — not even in heaven. This life and this life only is the time of testing, the time of merit.

It is consoling, however, to know that merits which have been lost by mortal sin are restored as soon as the soul turns back to God by an act of perfect contrition or the sacrament of Penance. Merits revive the moment that sanctifying grace returns to the soul. The repentant sinner, in other words, does not have to begin all over again; his former treasure of merits is not wholly lost.

Discussion: 1. To be a source of merit, why need an action not be something big or something "pious"? 2. What is the triple reward that is merited by good actions? 3. Why do we say that for the adult heaven is a recompense? 4. How may our merits be lost? 5. Can we regain merit that has been lost?

For you and for me, and in practical everyday terms, what does it mean to live in the state of sanctifying grace? To answer that question, let us take two men who work side by

side in the same office (or it could be a factory, a store, a farm). To the casual observer, the two men are very much alike. Both do the same kind of work, both are married, both have families; both of them lead what might be called "respectable" lives. One of the men, however, is what we would term a "secularist." He practices no religion, he gives little, if any, thought to God. His philosophy is that it is up to him to make his own happiness, to get all that he can out of life. "If you don't get it yourself," he will say, "no one else is going to get it for you."

He is not a *bad* man. On the contrary, he is admirable in many ways. He is a bear for work, both because he wants to get ahead in the world and because he wants to give his family the best of everything. He is genuinely devoted to his family, proud of his pretty wife, who is such a capable helpmate, and wrapped up in his children, whom he sees as an extension of himself. "They are the only immortality I ask for," he tells his friends. He is a friendly fellow, well liked by those who know him, reasonably generous, and active in civic affairs. His industry, truthfulness, honesty, thoughtfulness are not based on any religious principles. "It's the *decent* thing to do," he will explain. "I owe it to myself as a civilized human being."

There, very much condensed, is a picture of the "naturally" good man. All of us have met him, at one time or another. Outwardly at least, he puts many a professing Christian to shame. And yet we know that he is failing in the biggest thing of all. He is *not* doing the decent thing, he is *not* being a credit to himself as a human being so long as he ignores the one big thing for which he was made: to love God, and to prove that love by doing God's will, doing God's will for God's *sake*. Precisely because he is so good in all the lesser things, our pity is the greater, our prayers for him the more agonized.

Now we turn our attention to the other man, who works at the next desk or machine or counter. The second man seems almost the identical twin of the first: in family status, home, work, personality. But there is an incalculable difference which the casual eye will not easily spot. The difference lies first of all in *intention*. The second man's life is not based on a philosophy of "common decency" or "owe it to myself." At least not

mainly. The natural loves and human urges which he shares in common with all mankind have been transformed in him by a higher love and a higher urge: the love of God, and the desire to do God's will.

His wife is not merely his companion of the fireside. She also is his companion of the altar. He and she are partners with God, helping one another on to holiness, co-operating with God in the creation of new human beings destined for eternal life. His love for his children is not a mere extension of himself; he sees his children as a solemn trust from God; he sees himself as a steward who one day will have to answer for their souls. His love for them, as for his wife, is part of his love for God.

His job is not merely a chance for advancement and for material gain. It is a part of his priestly fatherhood, the means of providing for the material needs of his family, a part of the pattern of God's plan for him. He gives his job the best he has got because he understands that he is an instrument in God's hands for the completion of God's creative work in the world. For God, only the best will do. And so it goes through his day. His natural friendliness is imbued with a spirit of charity. His generosity is perfected by detachment. His thoughtfulness partakes of the compassion of Christ. Not perhaps that he thinks of such things often; certainly not that he goes through his day in self-conscious righteousness. But he has begun his day by pointing it where it should be pointed — towards God and away from self. "O my God," he has said, "I offer up to Thee all my thoughts, words, actions and sufferings of this day. . . ." He has perhaps made the best beginning of all by starting his day with Mass.

But there is one other thing necessary to make this man a truly *supernatural* man. His right intention is necessary, but alone it is not enough. His day must not only be directed to God, it also must be lived in union with God if it is to have any everlasting value. In other words, he must be in the state of sanctifying grace.

In Christ, even His most insignificant action was of infinite value, because His human nature was united with His divine nature. Whatever Jesus did, God was doing. It is somewhat

(only somewhat) the same with us. When we are in the state of sanctifying grace we do not *possess* the divine nature, but we do *participate* in God's own nature, we do share in a special way in God's own life. As a consequence, whatever we do — sin excepted — God is doing in and through us. God-in-us gives an eternal value to all that we do. Even our homeliest actions, such as wiping the baby's nose or scouring the sink, merit an increase in sanctifying grace and a higher degree of glory in heaven, if our life is centered on God. This is what it means to live in the state of sanctifying grace. This is what it means to be a *supernatural* man.

Discussion: 1. Why is the "naturally good" man not really good? 2. What is the difference in *intention* between the naturally good man and the supernaturally good man? 3. Besides the right intention, what else is necessary for the truly supernatural man? 4. Why was even the most insignificant of Christ's actions of infinite value? 5. Why is it that our actions performed in the state of sanctifying grace have an eternal value?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Each morning I shall make an offering of my day to God and shall try determinedly to keep myself in the state of sanctifying grace so that none of my actions may be wasted.
2. Conscious that all my actions are directed ultimately to God, I shall try to do my very best in whatever I am doing.
3. If I have a friend or neighbor who is a "good" person but seemingly without religion, I shall watch for an opportunity to talk to that person in a friendly way about our need to direct our lives to God.

WHAT IS VIRTUE?

ARE you a virtuous person? Modesty probably would move you to answer, "No, not particularly so," to that question. Yet, if you are baptized and are in the state of sanctifying grace, you do possess the three greatest virtues of all — the divine virtues of faith and hope and charity. If you were to commit a mortal sin you would lose the virtue of charity (or love for God), but you still would retain the virtues of faith and hope.

Before going any further, perhaps we should recall what the word "virtue" means. In religion virtue is defined as a "habit or permanent disposition which inclines a person to do good and to avoid evil." For example, if you have the habit of always telling the truth, then you have the virtue of veracity or truthfulness. If you have the habit of being strictly honest with regard to the rights of others, then you have the virtue of justice.

If we acquire a virtue by our own efforts, by consciously developing a certain good habit, then we call that virtue a *natural* virtue. Suppose that we decide to develop the virtue of veracity. We become watchful of our speech, careful not to say anything which we know is at variance with the truth. In the beginning perhaps we find it difficult, especially when telling the truth causes us embarrassment or inconvenience. A habit, however (good or bad), is strengthened by repeated acts. Little by little we find it easier to tell the truth, even when the results are painful. It becomes almost second nature for us to tell the truth; it "goes against the grain" for us to tell a lie. At that point, we definitely have acquired the virtue of veracity. Because we have accomplished it by our own efforts, we term it a *natural* virtue.

God may, however, directly infuse a virtue into our soul without any effort on our part. By His almighty power God may confer upon the soul the power and the inclination to perform

certain actions that are supernaturally good. A virtue of this kind, a habit bestowed upon the soul directly by God, is called a *supernatural* virtue. Chief among the supernatural virtues are those three which we call the *theological* virtues: faith, hope, and charity. They are called theological (or divine) virtues because they pertain directly to God: it is in God that we believe, in God that we hope; it is God that we love.

Discussion: 1. Why may anyone who is in the state of sanctifying grace call himself a virtuous person? 2. In religion, what does the word "virtue" mean? 3. What is meant by a *natural* virtue? 4. How do we acquire a *supernatural* virtue? 5. Why are faith, hope, and charity called "theological" virtues?

These three virtues are infused into our soul along with sanctifying grace, in the sacrament of Baptism. Even the baptized infant possesses these three virtues, although he will not be able to exercise them until he reaches the age of reason. Once we receive these three virtues they are not easily lost. The virtue of charity, the ability to love God with a supernatural love, will be lost only if, by mortal sin, we deliberately separate ourselves from God. When sanctifying grace goes, charity goes also.

But even with charity gone, faith and hope may still remain. We lose the virtue of hope only by a sin against hope — by the sin of despair, in which we no longer trust in God's goodness and mercy. Hope also would be lost, of course, if faith were lost. We certainly will not trust in a God in whom we do not believe. And faith itself will be lost only by a grievous sin directly against faith, by a refusal to believe what God has revealed.

Besides the three great virtues which we call the theological or divine virtues, there are four other supernatural virtues which are infused into the soul at Baptism along with sanctifying grace. Because these virtues do not pertain directly to God but rather concern our attitude towards persons and things in relation to God, they are called moral virtues. Aside from faith,

hope and charity, all other virtues are moral virtues. The four of which we speak, the four supernatural moral virtues which are infused into the soul with sanctifying grace, are prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

These four virtues have a special name of their own; they are called the four cardinal virtues. The word "cardinal" comes from the Latin word "cardo," which means "a hinge." Prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance are called cardinal virtues because they are the "hinge" virtues, the key virtues upon which all the other moral virtues depend. If a man is truly prudent, just, spiritually strong and temperate, then he will possess all the other moral virtues too. We might say that these four contain within themselves the seeds of all the other virtues. For example the virtue of religion, which disposes us to offer to God the worship which is His due, stems from the cardinal virtue of justice. Religion, incidentally, is the highest of all the moral virtues.

It may be of interest to point out two notable differences between natural and supernatural virtues. A natural virtue, because it has been acquired by repeated practice and by repeated self-discipline, makes it *easy* for us to perform an act of that particular virtue. We reach the point, for an illustration, where it is more pleasurable to be truthful than to be untruthful. On the other hand, a supernatural virtue, since it is directly infused and not acquired by repeated acts, does not necessarily make it *easy* for us to practice the virtue. I can imagine a person who might possess the virtue of faith to a very high degree and yet be tempted by doubts against faith his whole life long.

Another difference between natural and supernatural virtue is the manner in which each increases. A natural virtue, such as an acquired patience, is increased by repeated and persevering practice. A supernatural virtue, however, receives its increase only from God—an increase which God gives in proportion to the moral goodness of our actions. In other words, whatever increases sanctifying grace, also will increase the infused virtues. We grow in virtue as we grow in grace.

Discussion: 1. When do we acquire the three theological virtues? 2. How may we lose the virtue of charity? of hope? of faith? 3. What is the name given to virtues which do not pertain directly to God? 4. What four moral virtues are infused into the soul with sanctifying grace? 5. Why are these four virtues called "cardinal" virtues? 6. If we possess a supernatural virtue, is it not always easy for us to practice that virtue? Discuss. 7. Why can we not increase our supernatural virtues by our own efforts?

What do we mean, exactly, when we say, "I believe in God," "I hope in God," "I love God"? In our everyday conversation we are likely to use words rather loosely; it is good occasionally to recall the strict and original meaning of the words we use.

"Faith" is a good word to start with. Of the three divine virtues which are infused into our soul at the time of our Baptism, faith is the most basic. It is obvious that we cannot hope in nor love a God in whom we do not believe.

Divine faith is defined as "the virtue by which we firmly believe all the truths God has revealed, on the word of God revealing them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived." There are two key phrases there: "firmly believe," and "word of God." They will merit examination.

To believe means to accept as true. We believe something when we give it our definite and unquestioning assent. We can see how loosely we are using the word when we say, "I believe it will rain tomorrow," or "I believe this is the nicest summer we ever had." In both these cases we merely are expressing an opinion; we *surmise* that it may rain tomorrow; we *have an impression* that this is the nicest summer we've had. This is one point to bear in mind — an opinion is not really a belief. Faith means certainty.

But not all certainty is faith. I do not say that I believe something if it is something I can plainly see and understand. I do not say that I believe that two plus two equals four. I *know* that two plus two equals four. It is something which I can understand and prove to my own satisfaction. Knowledge of this

kind, concerning facts which I can perceive and grasp, is called *understanding* rather than belief.

Belief then — or faith — is the acceptance of something as true *on the authority of someone else*. Personally I have never been in China, but many persons who have been there assure me that there is such a country as China. Because I have confidence in those people, I believe that China exists. Similarly, I know little about the science of physics and absolutely nothing about nuclear fission. Yet, despite the fact that I never saw an atom, I believe that the atom can be split, because I trust the competency of the men who say it can be and has been done.

Discussion: 1. Why is faith the most basic virtue? 2. What is the definition of "divine faith"? 3. What is the difference between faith and opinion? 4. What kind of knowledge is *not* faith? 5. What kind of knowledge is called faith?

This kind of knowledge is the knowledge of faith: facts accepted on the authority of others in whom we have confidence. Since there is so much that we do not understand in life, and so little time for investigating things for ourselves, we can see that most of our knowledge is based upon faith. If we did not have confidence in our fellow human beings, life would stand still. If the man who says, "I only believe what I can see," or "I don't believe it unless I can understand it," really lives up to his words, he will accomplish very little.

This kind of faith of which we have been talking — the acceptance of a truth on the say-so of another human being — is termed *human* faith. The adjective "human" distinguishes it from the faith which accepts a truth on the authority of God. When our mind gives adherence to a truth simply because God has said that it is so, our faith is called *divine* faith. It is plain that divine faith is a much more certain knowledge than merely human faith. It is not likely, but it is possible, for all human witnesses to be mistaken about some fact — as, for instance, all scholars once taught that the world was flat. It is not likely but it is possible for all available human witnesses to be deceivers — as, for instance, the Communist dictators have deceived

the Russian people. But God cannot be mistaken, He cannot deceive; He is infinite Wisdom and infinite Truth. Concerning the truths that God has made known to us, there never can be the faintest shadow of a doubt. That is why true faith is always a firm faith. To entertain doubts about a truth of faith willingly is to question either God's infinite knowledge or His infinite truthfulness. To speculate, "I wonder whether there really are three Persons in God," or "I wonder whether Jesus really is present in the Holy Eucharist," is to question the credibility of God and to deny His authority. It is, in effect, to reject divine faith.

For the same reason, true faith must be *complete*. It would be folly to suppose that we can pick and choose among the truths God has revealed, according to our taste. To say, "I believe in heaven, but not in hell"; or "I believe in Baptism but not in confession," is to say, in effect, "God can be wrong." The logical conclusion then is, why believe God at all?

The faith of which we have been speaking is *supernatural* faith, the act of faith which springs from the infused virtue of divine faith. It would be possible to have a purely *natural* faith in God and in many of His truths. Such a faith might result from the evidence of nature, which witnesses to a Supreme Being of infinite power and wisdom. Such a faith might result from acceptance of the testimony of countless wise and great men, or from evidence of divine Providence in one's own life. A *natural* faith of this kind is a preparation for the genuinely supernatural faith which will be infused, with sanctifying grace, at the baptismal font. But it is only this supernatural faith, this virtue of divine faith which is infused at Baptism, that makes it possible for us to believe firmly and completely *all* the truths, even the most ineffable and mysterious truths, which God has revealed. Without such a faith we who have reached the use of reason cannot be saved. The *virtue* of faith alone will save the baptized infant, but with the age of reason there must be the *act* of faith as well.

Discussion: 1. Why is it that we could accomplish very little in life without faith? 2. What is the difference between *human*

faith and *divine* faith? 3. Why is divine faith a much more certain knowledge than human faith? 4. Why must a true faith always be a *firm* faith? 5. When is it possible for true faith to be incomplete? 6. When might a person have a merely *natural* faith?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. I shall try to deepen and intensify my *virtue* of faith by meriting an increase through frequent *acts* of faith — particularly in my morning and night prayers.
2. Realizing that faith is my basic virtue, I shall guard it carefully, avoiding any kind of reading or associations which might weaken my faith.
3. Knowing that without faith there is no salvation, I shall decide upon some friend, relative or neighbor who is in need of faith, and make that person the special object of my prayers.

CHAPTER VII

HOPE AND LOVE

IT IS a doctrine of our Christian faith that God gives to every soul He creates sufficient grace to get to heaven. It is upon this teaching of Christ's Church that the divine virtue of hope, infused into our soul at Baptism, feeds and grows with the passing years.

Hope is defined as "the virtue by which we firmly trust that God, who is all-powerful and faithful to His promises, will in His mercy give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it." In other words, no one loses heaven except by his own fault. So far as God's part is concerned, our salvation is certain. It is only our part — our co-operation or non-co-operation with God's grace — that is uncertain.

It is this confidence that we have in God's goodness and power and fidelity that sweetens and makes bearable the hardships of life. If the practice of virtue at times demands of us self-discipline and self-renunciation, perhaps even the self-immolation of martyrdom, we find the needed strength and courage in the assurance of our final victory.

The virtue of hope is implanted in the soul at Baptism, along with sanctifying grace. Even the infant, once baptized, has the virtue of hope. But the virtue must not be allowed to lie dormant. With the advent of reason, the virtue must find expression in the *act* of hope. This is the inner conviction and the conscious expression of trust in God and reliance upon His promises. The act of hope should figure prominently in our daily prayers. It is a form of prayer particularly pleasing to God since it expresses simultaneously our admission of complete dependence upon God and our absolute confidence in His love for us.

It is evident that the act of hope is absolutely necessary for salvation. To entertain doubts as to God's fidelity in keeping His promises, or as to the effectiveness of His grace in overcoming our human weakness, would be to offer blasphemous

insult to God. Nor would it be possible to weather the rigors of temptation, to practice self-forgetful charity towards others, in short to lead a truly Christian life, if we had no confidence in the eventual outcome. How few of us would have the fortitude to persevere in good if we thought we had only one chance in a million of getting to heaven!

Discussion: 1. Upon which teaching of Christ's Church is the virtue of divine hope based? 2. What is the definition of hope? 3. How does the virtue of hope make bearable the burdens of life? 4. When must the virtue of hope become the act of hope? 5. Why is hope absolutely necessary for salvation?

It follows, too, that our hope must be a *firm* hope. Hope that is weak belittles God, either His almighty power or His infinite goodness. This does not mean that we should not have a wholesome fear of losing our soul. But the fear should stem from lack of confidence in ourselves, not from lack of confidence in God. If even a Lucifer could reject grace, then we also have within us the capacity for failure—but the failure will not be God's. It is only a stupid person who will say, in repenting of sin, "O God, I am so ashamed of being so weak!" The hopeful person would say, "O my God, I am so ashamed of forgetting how weak I am!" A saint might be described as one who has the utmost distrust of his own strength, and the utmost confidence in God.

It is well to bear in mind also that the basis of Christian hope applies to others as well as to ourselves. God wills the salvation, not just of *me*, but of all men. That is why we never should weary in our prayers for sinners and unbelievers, especially for those who may be close to us by blood or friendship. It is the teaching of Catholic theologians that God never entirely withdraws His grace even from the most obdurate sinners. When the Bible speaks of God hardening His heart against a sinner (for example, Pharaoh who resisted Moses), it is really only a poetic way of describing the sinner's own reaction. It is the sinner who hardens his own heart by resisting God's grace.

And if someone dear to us has died, apparently unrepentant to the end, we still should not lose heart and "grieve as those who have no hope." What thunderbolts of grace God may have unleashed upon that stubborn soul in the last split-second of consciousness — graces gained by our own hopeful prayers — we shall not know until we meet in heaven.

Although trust in God's providence is not exactly the same thing as the divine virtue of hope, yet it is enough allied to hope to merit attention here. Trust in God's providence simply means that we do believe that God loves each of us with an infinite love — a love that could not be more direct and personal even if we were the only soul on the face of the earth. To that faith is added our belief that God wills only what is best for us — that in His infinite wisdom He knows best what *is* best for us — and that in His infinite power He can bring about what is best for us.

On that solid foundation of God's love and care and wisdom and power, we stand secure. We do not fall into a black mood of despondency when "things go wrong." When our plans are upset, our expectations thwarted and failure seems to dog our every step, we know that in some way God is working this all out to our ultimate good. Even the terror of the hydrogen bomb and the shadow of Communist threats will leave us unshaken, because we know that the very evils which men fashion God will somehow work into His plan.

It is this same trust in God's providence that comes to our aid when we are tempted (as who is not, sometimes?) to think that we are smarter than God; that we know better than He, under these circumstances, what is best for us. "Maybe it is a sin, but we just can't afford another baby"; "Maybe it isn't quite honest, but I've got to stay in business"; "I know it seems a bit crooked, but politics is like that." It is when alibis like these start to rise to our lips that we beat them down with our trust in God's providence. "It looks as if doing the right thing is going to be rough on me," we say, "but God knows all the circumstances. He's smarter than I am. And He cares. I'll string along with Him."

Discussion: 1. Even though our hope is firm, why should we still have fear of losing heaven? 2. How might we describe a saint? 3. Why should we never weary in our prayers for sinners and unbelievers? 4. What does it mean to have trust in God's providence? 5. How does trust in God's providence often come to our aid when we are tempted to sin?

The only one of the three divine virtues which will remain with us forever is the virtue of charity. In heaven faith will give way to knowledge; there is no longer any need to "believe in" the God whom we actually see. Hope also will disappear, as we actually possess the happiness for which we hoped. But charity will not disappear. On the contrary, only in that breathless ecstatic moment when we see God face to face will the virtue of charity which was infused into our soul at Baptism reach the fullness of its capabilities. It is then that our love for God, so muted and so weak in this life, will blaze up like an exploding rocket. Finding ourselves united with the infinitely lovable God who alone can fulfill the human heart's capacity for love, our charity will express itself forever in an act of love.

Divine charity, the virtue which is implanted in our soul at Baptism, along with faith and hope, is defined as "the virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God." It is called the Queen of virtues. Other virtues, both divine and moral, carry us *towards* God, but it is charity which fastens us *to* God. Where there is charity, the other virtues *must* be. "Love God and do as you please!" one of the saints has said. It is evident that if we truly love God, it will please us only to do what will please Him.

It is, of course, the *virtue* of charity which is infused into our soul in the sacrament of Baptism. It still remains for us, when we have reached the use of reason, to exercise that virtue, to make acts of love. It is the power to make such acts of love, easily and in a supernatural manner, that is given us in Baptism.

A person could have a natural love for God. Contemplating God's goodness and mercy and His endless benefits to us, we could be moved to love Him as we love any other lovable person. Indeed, a person who had no opportunity to be baptized (or a

person in mortal sin with no chance for confession) could not save his soul unless he did make an act of perfect love for God. That means a selfless love, loving God just because He is so infinitely lovable, loving God for Himself alone. Even for such an act of love as this, we would need God's help, in the form of actual grace, but it still would be a *natural* love.

Discussion: 1. Why is charity the only one of the divine virtues which will remain with us forever? 2. Why will our charity reach its fullness only in heaven? 3. How is divine charity defined? 4. Why is charity called the Queen of virtues? 5. When does a soul first receive the virtue of charity? 6. When is a *natural* love for God absolutely necessary for a person in order to save his soul?

It is only through the indwelling of God in the soul, with the accompanying supernatural life called sanctifying grace, that we become capable of an act of supernatural love for God. The reason that our love then is a supernatural love is because *it really is God Himself loving Himself through us*. To clarify that, we might use the example of a son who buys a birthday present for his father, using (with the father's permission) the father's own charge account to buy the present. Or, like a child writing a letter to his mother, with the mother herself guiding the child's inexperienced hand. Similarly, it is by the divine life within us that we are able to love God adequately, proportionately, with a love that is worthy of God. With a love also that is *pleasing* to God, in spite of the fact that it is God, in a sense, who is doing the loving.

It is this same virtue of charity (which always accompanies sanctifying grace) which makes it possible to love our neighbor with a supernatural love. We love our neighbor then not with a merely natural love because he is a likable person, because he is congenial to us, because we get along well with him, because he in some way appeals to us. Such natural love is not bad, but there is no supernatural merit in it. By means of the divine virtue of charity, we make ourselves a vehicle, an instrument, by means of which God, *through us*, can love our neighbor. Our

part is simply to lend ourselves to God, to put no obstacle to the flow of God's love. Our part is to have a good will towards our neighbor because of our own love for God, because we know that is what God wants. "Our neighbor," incidentally, includes everyone whom God has made: the angels and saints in heaven (easy), the souls in purgatory (easy), and all living human beings, *even our enemies* (ouch!).

It is right here that we touch the very heart of Christianity. It is right here that we come up against the cross. It is right here that we prove or disprove the reality of our love for God. It is easy to love our family and friends. It is not hard to love "everybody" in a vague and general sort of way, but to wish well to (and to pray for, and to be ready to help) that fellow at the next desk who stole your girl, or that woman across the street who told lies about you, or that double-crossing relative who got all of Aunt Minnie's money, or that criminal in the newspaper who raped and killed the six-year-old child — well, it's hard enough to forgive them, let alone love them. In fact, *we just couldn't do it* naturally speaking. But with the divine virtue of charity we can do it; in fact we *must* do it, or our love for God is a fake and a sham.

Let us remember, though, that supernatural love, whether for God or for neighbor, need not be an *emotional* love. Supernatural love resides primarily in the *will*, not in the emotions. We might have a very deep love for God, as proved by our fidelity to Him, without particularly *feeling* that love. To love God simply means that we are willing to give up *anything* rather than offend God by mortal sin. Similarly we may have a genuine supernatural love for our neighbor, even though on the natural level we feel a strong distaste for him. Do I forgive him, for God's sake, the wrong he has done? Do I pray for him, and hope that he will get the grace he needs and save his soul? Do I stand ready to help him if he should be in need, in spite of my own natural repugnance? Then I do have a supernatural love for my neighbor. The divine virtue of charity is functioning within me. I can pray an act of love (as I ought frequently to do) without hypocrisy or sham.

Discussion: 1. Why is it that we become capable of a supernatural love for God only through the indwelling of God in the soul? 2. What is the difference between a natural love for our neighbor and a supernatural love for him? 3. Who is our neighbor? 4. Why do we say that love of neighbor is the very heart of Christianity? 5. Why is it not necessary to *feel* our supernatural love for God or neighbor?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. In moments of temptation, I shall make an act of hope, remembering that at that moment God is pouring out His graces upon me in order to help me.
2. I shall try to stop feeling sorry for myself and complaining when the going gets hard, remembering that God is watching over me with love, and that He knows what is best for me.
3. Knowing that there is little merit in loving those who are easy to love, I shall go out of my way to be kind and pleasant to those whom I find hard to get along with.

WONDERS WITHIN US

A YOUNG man whom I had just baptized said to me afterwards, "You know, Father, all those wonderful things you told me would happen when I got baptized? I don't seem to feel any of them. I do feel relieved to know that my sins are forgiven, and happy at the thought that I am a child of God and a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, but as for the indwelling of God in my soul and sanctifying grace and the virtues of faith and hope and charity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost — well, I just don't *feel* any of that."

And, of course, we *don't* feel any of that, at least not usually. The awesome transformation that takes place in us in Baptism does not take place in our body — in our brain or nervous system or emotions. It takes place in the inner core of our being, in our soul. It is beyond the reach of intellectual analysis or emotional reaction. But what if by some miracle we could be fitted with a pair of glasses that would enable us to see our soul as it really is in the state of sanctifying grace, adorned with all its supernatural gifts? Then I am sure that we would walk about in a daze of perpetual wonderment at the lavishness with which God has equipped us to deal with life here and to prepare for life hereafter.

Included in the rich dowry which accompanies sanctifying grace, are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. These gifts — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord — are qualities imparted to the soul which make the soul responsive to the movements of grace and give facility in the practice of virtue. They make the soul alert to the silent voice of God within, docile to His gently guiding hand. We might say that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are the "lubricant" of the soul, as grace is the power of the soul.

Taking them one by one, there is first the gift of wisdom. Wisdom gives us a right sense of proportion so that we esteem

the things of God; we value goodness and virtue at their true worth and see the goods of the world as steppingstones to sanctity, not as ends in themselves. The man, for example, who misses his weekly bowling night in order to attend the parish mission is being guided by the gift of wisdom, whether he realizes it or not.

Next is the gift of understanding. This gift gives us a spiritual perception which enables us to understand the truths of faith in accordance with our needs. All things else being equal, a priest would much prefer to explain a point of doctrine to a person who is in the state of sanctifying grace rather than to one who is not. The former, having the gift of understanding, will be much quicker in grasping the point at issue.

Discussion: 1. Why is it that we usually do not *feel* the operations of grace within us? 2. Which are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost which accompany sanctifying grace? 3. What is the purpose of these seven gifts? 4. What does the gift of wisdom do for us? 5. How does the gift of understanding help us?

The third gift, that of counsel, sharpens our judgment. By its aid we perceive — and choose — the course of action that will be most conducive to God's honor and our own spiritual good. It is a dangerous step he takes who makes a major decision in the state of mortal sin, whether it be a decision as to vocation, job, family problem, or any of the other choices that constantly face us. Without the gift of counsel, human judgment is all too fallible.

The gift of fortitude almost explains itself. Every good life must be to some degree a heroic life. There always is the hidden heroism required for the conquest of self. Sometimes a still higher heroism is called for, when the doing of God's will means the risk of losing friends or money or health. And there is the highest heroism of the martyrs, when life itself is sacrificed for love of God. It is not without purpose that God strengthens our human weakness with His gift of fortitude.

The gift of knowledge gives us spiritual "know-how." It disposes us to recognize, under the impulse of God's grace, what ever will be helpful or hurtful to us spiritually. It is closely allied with the gift of counsel. Counsel moves us to *choose* what is helpful and to reject what is harmful. But before we can choose we must *know*. As an example, by the gift of knowledge I might perceive that too much secular reading is dulling my taste for things spiritual. Then the gift of counsel might guide me to stop buying so many slick periodicals, and inspire me to begin doing some regular spiritual reading.

The gift of piety is one that may easily be misunderstood by anyone who thinks of piety in terms of folded hands and downcast eyes and lengthy prayers. The word "piety" in its original meaning describes the attitude of a child towards his parents: a mixture of love, confidence, and reverence. When we habitually manifest this attitude towards our Father, God, we are practicing the virtue of piety. It is the *gift* of piety which impels us to practice the *virtue* — to maintain this attitude of childlike intimacy with God.

Finally there is the gift of fear of the Lord. This balances the gift of piety. It is right that we look to God with eyes in which there is love and trust and tender reverence. But it equally is right that we should never forget that God is our all-just Judge to whom we shall one day have to answer for the graces that He has given us. Remembering that, we shall have a wholesome fear of offending Him by sin.

Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These are the "lubricants," the auxiliaries to graces. These are the predispositions to holiness which, with sanctifying grace, are infused into the soul in Baptism.

Discussion: 1. What do we mean when we say that the gift of counsel sharpens our judgment? 2. Why do we have need for the gift of fortitude? 3. How is the gift of knowledge related to the gift of counsel? 4. Why may the gift of piety be misunderstood? 5. How does the gift of fear of the Lord balance the gift of piety?

Every catechism that I have ever seen lists the "twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost" — charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency and chastity. But, so far as I have been able to observe, it is seldom that the twelve fruits get more than a passing mention in religious instruction classes. Even more rarely are they explained in sermons.

It seems unfortunate that it should be so. If a teacher of science undertook to explain an apple tree to his class, he would, of course, describe the roots and the trunk, and would tell how the sun and moisture made the tree grow. But he would not dream of ending his explanation with a brusque statement that, "on this tree apples grow." A description of the fruit of the tree would be considered a very important part of the learning experience. Similarly it would be illogical to talk about sanctifying grace and the virtues and gifts which accompany sanctifying grace without more than a casual mention of the *results*. The fruits of the Holy Ghost are just that: the outward fruits of the inner life, the external product of the indwelling Spirit.

Or, turning to another figure of speech, we might say that the twelve fruits are the broad brush-strokes which outline for us the portrait of a truly Christian man — or woman. Perhaps the simplest procedure would be to see what that portrait looks like. What kind of person is it who lives habitually in the state of sanctifying grace, and who tries perseveringly to subordinate self to the working of grace?

First of all he is an unselfish person. He sees Christ in his neighbor and is considerate of others and helpful to others, even at the cost of inconvenience and hardship to himself. This is charity.

Then he is a cheerful and pleasant sort of person. He seems to radiate an inner glow which makes itself felt in any group of which he is a part. When he is around, the sun seems to shine a little brighter. People smile more easily, speak more gently. This is joy.

He is a quiet and relaxed person. Psychologists would call him "well-adjusted." His brow may be puckered with thought,

but seldom with worry. He is a *steady* sort of person, a wonderful man to have around in an emergency. This is peace.

He is not easily angered, he is not resentful of slights. He is not upset or frustrated when things go wrong or people are stupid. He can fail six times and still start over the seventh time without grinding his teeth and cursing his luck. This is patience.

Discussion: 1. Which are the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost? 2. Why is it unfortunate that they are not more often explained? 3. How does the fruit of charity show itself in a person's conduct? 4. How will the fruit of joy manifest itself in our life? 5. What kind of person is he in whom is the fruit of peace? 6. How can we detect the fruit of patience in anyone?

He is a kind person. People come to him with their troubles, and find in him a sympathetic listener; they go away feeling better just for having talked with him. He is interested in the enthusiasms and the problems of others; he is especially considerate of children and the aged, of the unhappy and the unfortunate. This is benignity.

He stands solidly for what is right, even when it means standing alone. He is not self-righteous; he does not judge others; he is slow to criticize and still slower to condemn; he is forbearing with the ignorance and the weakness of others. But he will not compromise principle, he will not temporize with evil. In his own religious life he is invariably generous with God, never seeking the easiest way out. This is goodness.

He is uncomplaining under pain and disappointment, in sickness and in sorrow. Self-pity is unknown to him. He will raise his tear-stained eyes to heaven in prayer but never in rebellion. This is long-suffering.

He is a gentle person, a restful sort of person to have around. He gives of his best to whatever task comes to hand, but without any of the aggressiveness of the "go-getter." He does not seek to dominate others. He will reason persuasively, but he never is argumentative. This is mildness.

He is proud of his membership in Christ's Mystical Body. He does not try to ram his religion down anyone's throat, but neither is he apologetic for what he believes. He does not try to conceal his religion in public; he is quick to defend the truth when it is attacked in his presence; his religion is the most important thing in life to him. This is faith.

His love for Jesus Christ makes him recoil from the thought of being an ally of the devil, from the thought of occasioning sin to another. In dress and deportment and speech, there is a decency about him—or her—which fortifies rather than weakens others in their virtue. This is modesty.

He is a temperate person, with his passions firmly ruled by reason and by grace. He is not up in the clouds today and down in the depths tomorrow. Whether in eating or drinking, whether at work or at play, he manifests an admirable self-control in all that he does. This is continency.

He has a great reverence for the procreative power that God has given him, a holy awe that God should have so shared His creative power with humankind. He sees sex as something precious and sacred, a bond of union to be used only within the limits of wedlock and for the purpose established by God; never as a plaything, as a source of self-gratification. This is chastity.

And there we have the profile of the Christian man—or woman: charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency and chastity. We might try the profile on for size and see where the bulges are.

Discussion: 1. Why does the fruit of benignity make a person so lovable to others? 2. How does the fruit of goodness differ from self-righteousness? 3. When is the fruit of long-suffering in evidence? 4. How does the fruit of faith make itself apparent in a person's life? 5. Why do you think there is particular need today for the fruit of modesty? 6. What is the effect of the fruit of continency in promoting temperance? 7. Why is chastity not a virtue to be practiced only by unmarried people?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. I shall never make a serious decision without a quick prayer to the Holy Ghost, that His gifts of knowledge and counsel may help me in my choice.
2. I shall make a careful inventory of myself, to see which of the fruits of the Holy Ghost are least evident in my life, and I shall work on that.
3. Remembering that Christ must depend upon me to be a witness to the effectiveness of His grace — that His cause rises or falls with me, so far as my associates are concerned — I shall make a persevering effort to reflect the spirit of Christ, to be a truly Christian man or woman.

CHAPTER IX

THE MORAL VIRTUES

“GRACE builds upon nature.” That is an axiom of the spiritual life. It means simply that when God gives us His grace He does not first exterminate our human nature and then put grace in its place. God *adds* His grace to what we already are. The effect that grace will have upon us, and the use we make of it, will be conditioned to a great extent by our individual make-up — physical, mental, and emotional. Grace will not make a genius out of a moron any more than grace will straighten a bent back; nor will grace, normally, make a well-adjusted person out of a neurotic.

It becomes our responsibility, then, to do our best in removing obstacles to the operation of grace; to do our best to facilitate the effects of grace. We are not talking now of such moral obstacles as sin and self-love; their hindrance to grace is quite apparent. We are talking rather of what we might call *natural* obstacles; such obstacles as ignorance or faulty temperament or ill-formed habits. It is an obstacle to grace, certainly, if our intellectual fare is confined to the daily newspapers and popular magazines. It is an obstacle to grace if our over-aggressiveness provokes us to easy anger. It is an obstacle to grace if habits of untidiness or unpunctuality offend charity by inconveniencing others.

These considerations are particularly pertinent when we turn to an examination of the moral virtues. The moral virtues, as distinguished from the theological virtues, are those virtues which dispose us to lead moral or good lives by aiding us to treat persons and things in the right way — that is, according to the will of God. We possess these virtues, in their supernatural form, when we are in the state of sanctifying grace. That is, sanctifying grace gives us a certain predisposition, a certain *readiness* for the practice of these virtues — together

with a supernatural merit when we do practice them. This readiness is something like the readiness of a child, at a certain age, to learn to read and write. The child still has to acquire, by practice, the technique of reading and writing, but meanwhile the organism is ready, the power is there.

This may be plainer if we make an individual examination of some of the moral virtues. The four chief moral virtues, we know, are those which we call the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Prudence is the power to make right judgments. A person who is temperamentally impulsive, given to rash and unthinking action and snap judgments, will have a job to do in removing those obstacles before the virtue of prudence can operate in him effectively. It is obvious, too, that in any particular circumstance one's knowledge and experience will facilitate the exercise of prudence. A child has the virtue of prudence in root form, but in matters that pertain to the adult world a child could not be expected to make prudent judgments with knowledge and experience lacking.

Discussion: 1. What do we mean when we say that "grace builds upon nature"? 2. What are some of the obstacles we need to remove if grace is to do its best work within us? 3. How do the moral virtues dispose us to lead good lives? 4. Which are the four cardinal virtues? 5. Why are not all persons equally prudent who are in the state of sanctifying grace?

The second cardinal virtue is justice, which perfects our will (as prudence perfects our intelligence) and safeguards the rights of our fellow man: his right to life and freedom, to the sanctity of the home, to his good name and honor, and to his material possessions. An obstacle to justice that readily comes to mind is prejudice. Prejudice denies a man his human rights, or hampers him in the achievement of those rights because of his color or race or nationality or religion. Another obstacle might be a natural stinginess, close-fistedness — a temperamental defect that might be the result of childhood deprivation. It would be our duty to labor at the removal of such barriers as

these, if the supernatural virtue of justice were to have full play within us.

Fortitude, the third cardinal virtue, disposes us to do what is good in spite of every difficulty. The perfection of fortitude is exemplified in the martyrs, who have accepted death rather than sin. Few of us are likely to be called upon for such an extreme degree of fortitude. But the virtue will never be able to operate, even in the small demands made upon our courage, unless we chop away at the barriers. Such barriers as an exaggerated desire to conform, to belong, to be "one of the crowd." Such barriers as an unreasonable fear of public opinion (we call it human respect); the fear of being criticized or belittled; or, worst of all, ridiculed.

The fourth of the cardinal virtues is temperance, which disposes us to control our desires and especially to use rightly the things which appeal to our senses. Temperance is especially necessary in moderating the use of food and drink, and in regulating the enjoyment of sex in the married state. The virtue of temperance will not remove an allergy to alcohol. With some, the only true temperance will be abstinence, just as the only true temperance in matters of sex for the unmarried lies in abstinence. Temperance does not eliminate, it *regulates* desire. In this case, the removal of obstacles consists mainly in the avoidance of circumstances which would excite desires which may not, in conscience, be gratified.

There are other moral virtues besides the four cardinal ones. Here we shall mention but a few, and each of us, if he be honest with himself, can discover his own obstacles. There is filial piety (and its extension, patriotism), which disposes us to honor, love and respect our parents and our country. There is obedience, which disposes us to do the will of our superiors as a manifestation of God's will. There are veracity and liberality and patience and humility and chastity and others besides. But on the whole, if we are prudent and just and courageous and temperate, the other virtues will pretty well follow, like children behind Mother and Dad.

Discussion: 1. What is the virtue of justice? 2. What are some obstacles to the operation of the virtue of justice? 3. Do all of us need the virtue of fortitude at times? Why? 4. When is the virtue of temperance especially necessary? 5. Why do we say that if we are prudent and just and courageous and temperate the other moral virtues will follow?

What, then, does it mean to have a "Christian spirit"? It is not an easy term to define. It means, of course, having the spirit of Christ. That in turn means viewing the world as Christ views it; reaching to the circumstances of life as Christ would react. The truly Christian spirit is nowhere summarized for us better than in the eight beatitudes with which Jesus began His surpassingly beautiful Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount, incidentally, is a passage of the Bible which everyone ought to read occasionally in its entirety. It is contained in chapters five, six and seven of St. Matthew's Gospel, and is the very distillation of our Saviour's teaching.

But to return to the beatitudes: they get their name from the Latin word "beatus," which means "blessed," the word with which each of the beatitudes begins. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Christ tells us, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is the first of the eight beatitudes, and it reminds us that heaven is for the humble. The poor in spirit are those who never forget that all that they are and all that they have is from God. Whether it be talents or health or possessions, whether it be even a child of their own flesh, they have nothing, in the absolute sense, which they can rightly call their own. Because of this poverty of spirit, this willingness to surrender back to God whatever of His gifts He may choose to take, their very adversity, when it comes, is a claim upon God for grace and merit. It is a pledge that the God whom they value above all things else, will indeed be their everlasting reward. With Job they say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD!" (1:21).

Jesus emphasizes this point by repeating the same thought in the second and third beatitudes. "Blessed are the meek,"

He says, "for they shall possess the earth." "The earth" to which Jesus refers is, of course, simply poetic imagery for heaven. This is true of all the beatitudes; heaven is the reward which is promised, under figurative language, in each of them. "The meek" of whom Jesus speaks in the second beatitude are not the spineless milk-and-water characters whom the world would describe as meek. The truly meek are anything but weaklings. It takes great inner strength to accept disappointment, misfortune and even disaster, and to keep one's face turned all the while in undimmed hope to God.

"Blessed are they who mourn," Jesus continues in the third beatitude, "for they shall be comforted." Here again, as in the first and second beatitudes, we are impressed with the infinite compassion of Christ towards the poor, the unfortunate, the sorrowful and the suffering. These, who see their pain as the rightful lot of sinful humanity, and accept it without repining and without complaint, in union with the cross of Christ Himself; it is these who hold first place in the mind and the heart of Jesus. They are the ones who say with St. Paul, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Discussion: 1. Where do we find the "Christian spirit" well defined for us? 2. From what famous discourse of Christ are the beatitudes taken? 3. Describe what it means to be poor in spirit. 4. What does "to possess the earth" mean? 5. Why do we say that the meek of whom Jesus speaks are not weak characters? 6. How does St. Paul express the sentiments of those "who mourn"?

But, right as it is that we should bear our own burdens in courage and in hope, it is not right that we should acquiesce complacently in the injustices done to others. However willing we may be to surrender our own material happiness, we are nevertheless bound, by a divine paradox, to labor for the happiness of others. Injustice not only destroys the temporal happiness of the one who suffers it; it imperils his eternal happiness

too. This is true whether it be an economic injustice which oppresses the poor (the hapless migrant, agricultural laborer, the city slum-dweller are cases in point); or whether it be the racial injustice which degrades our brother (and how do *you* feel about the Negro and segregation?); or whether it be a moral injustice which stymies the workings of grace (are you disturbed by some of the literature on your neighborhood newsstand?). We must have a zeal for justice, whether it be the justice of a square deal for our fellow man or the higher justice towards God which is sinlessness, in others as well as in ourselves. These are some of the implications of the fourth beatitude: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied." Satisfied in heaven, but never satisfied here.

"Blessed are the merciful," Christ continues, "for they shall obtain mercy." It is so hard to forgive those who have hurt us; so hard to be patient with the weak and the ignorant and the disagreeable. But the very essence of the Christian spirit is here. There can be no forgiveness for him who will not forgive.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." The sixth beatitude does not primarily refer, as many think, to chastity. It refers to selflessness; everything viewed first of all from God's viewpoint, rather than my own. It means singleness of purpose; God first, without self-deceit or compromise.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." As I listen to Christ saying that, I must ask myself whether I am a center of peace and harmony in my own home, an island of good will in my neighborhood, a mender of discord in the place where I work. It is a sure path to heaven.

"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And with the eighth beatitude we hang our head in shame as we recall the small inconveniences our own religion costs us — and think of (and pray for) the tortured souls of our brethren behind the Iron and the Bamboo Curtains.

Discussion: 1. Why is it not right for us to excuse ourselves from helping others by saying that "suffering is good for them"?

2. How does the fifth beatitude express the essence of the Christian spirit? 3. When can a person be said to be "clean of heart"? 4. With regard to which beatitude do quarrelsome and argumentative people fail? 5. Why should the eighth beatitude make most of us a bit ashamed? 6. Try to give the eight beatitudes from memory.

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Tonight on my knees before retiring, I shall try to determine what in me is the greatest obstacle to the operation of God's grace. I shall plan for myself a campaign to remove that obstacle, working at it day after day.
2. Mindful that my Christian spirit must prove itself by my attitude towards my neighbor, I shall be on the watch every day for ways in which I can make life a little pleasanter for those around me.
3. I shall try to think less about myself and more about others.

THE HOLY GHOST AND THE CHURCH

WHEN he is instructing a prospective convert, the priest usually explains, very early in the course of the instruction, the meaning of perfect love for God. He explains what it means to make a perfect act of contrition. Just because the convert must wait for several months before he receives the sacrament of Baptism, there is no reason why he should live those weeks or months in the state of sin. An act of perfect love for God, which includes a desire for Baptism, will cleanse the soul from sin even before Baptism is received.

The prospective convert is happy to know this, of course, and I am sure that I have poured the water of Baptism on the heads of many adults whose souls already were in the state of sanctifying grace. They had already made acts of perfect love for God; they had already received baptism of desire. And yet in every such case, the convert has expressed his relief and joy at receiving, actually, the sacrament of Baptism. Because, up to that moment he could not be *sure* that his sins were gone. No matter how hard he might try to make an act of perfect love, he never could be sure that he had succeeded. But when the saving water had flowed upon his head, he knew then with certainty that God had come to him.

St. Paul tells us, of course, that not even the best of us can ever be *absolutely* sure that we are in the state of sanctifying grace. But moral certitude is all we ask for; the kind of certitude we have when we have been baptized or (in the sacrament of Penance) absolved. The peace of mind, the happy confidence which such assurance brings indicate to us one of the reasons why Jesus Christ established a visible Church. The graces which He purchased for us on Calvary Jesus could have dispensed to each individual soul directly and invisibly, without need of outward sign or ceremony. However, being mindful of our human need for visible assurance, Jesus chose to channel His graces through visible symbols. He instituted the sacraments so that

we might know when and how and what kind of grace we were receiving. Visible sacraments necessitated a visible agency in the world to be the custodian and the dispenser of the sacraments — and that visible agency is the Church which Jesus established.

The need for a Church was not, obviously, limited to a need for a keeper of the sacraments. No one could be expected to *want* the sacraments unless he first *knew* about them. No one could be expected to *believe* in Christ, even, unless he *knew* about Christ. Unless Christ's whole life — and death — were to be in vain, there had to be a living voice in the world which would proclaim Christ's teachings down through the centuries. It would have to be an audible voice, it would have to be a visible speaker whom all men of good will could recognize as one having authority. Consequently Jesus founded His Church not merely to sanctify mankind by means of the sacraments but first of all to *teach* mankind the truths which Jesus taught, the truths necessary for salvation. A moment's reflection will bring home to us the fact that if Jesus had not founded a Church even the name of Jesus Christ would be unknown to us today.

Discussion: 1. Why is it not necessary for a convert to wait for Baptism in order to be in the state of sanctifying grace? 2. Even though he may have made an act of perfect love long before, why is a convert still joyful at receiving Baptism? 3. How sure can we be that we are in the state of sanctifying grace? Explain. 4. How does the peace of mind which the sacraments give indicate one of the reasons why Jesus founded a Church? 5. Is there any other need for a Church, aside from its being the keeper of the sacraments? Discuss.

But it is not enough for us to have grace available to us in the visible sacraments of the visible Church. It is not enough to have the truth proclaimed to us by the living voice of the teaching Church. We also want to know what we must *do* for God; we want a dependable guide to point out to us the path we must follow in accordance with the truth we know and the graces we receive. Just as it would be useless for us here in the United States to have a Constitution unless we had a govern-

ment to interpret and enforce the Constitution by appropriate laws, so also must the body of Christian revelation be implemented by pertinent laws. How one becomes a member of the Church and how one remains a member of the Church, who may receive this sacrament or that, and when and how; it is such questions as these that the Church answers when it promulgates its laws; when it fulfills, under Christ, its third duty: to *govern* as well as to teach and sanctify.

The Church, we know, is defined as "the congregation of all baptized persons united in the same true faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments, under the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him." A person becomes a member of the Church by receiving the sacrament of Baptism. A person remains a member of the Church as long as he does not cut himself off from membership by schism (denying or defying the authority of the Pope), or by heresy (denying one or more of the truths of faith as proclaimed by the Church), or by excommunication (being ejected from membership because of certain grave and unrepented sins). But even such persons as these, having been validly baptized, are still basically subjects of the Church and are obliged by her laws unless specifically exempted.

Having said all this, we yet realize that we have been looking at the Church only from the outside. Just as a man is more than his visible, physical body, so also is the Church infinitely more than a mere outward visible organization. It is the soul of a man that makes him a human being. And it is the soul of the Church which makes the Church a living *organism* as well as an organization. Just as the indwelling of the three divine Persons gives to the soul that supernatural life which we call sanctifying grace; so also does the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity give to the Church her unquenchable life, her everlasting vitality. Since the work of salvation (which is the work of divine Love) is ascribed to the Holy Ghost by appropriation, it is therefore the Holy Ghost whom we acknowledge as the *soul* of the Church — of the Church of which Christ is the Head.

Discussion: 1. Besides administering the sacraments and teaching us God's truths, what other need is there for a Church? 2. What is the definition of the Church? 3. How does one become a member of the Church? 4. How may a person lose membership in Christ's Church? 5. What do we mean when we say that the Holy Ghost is the soul of the Church?

From the dust of the earth did God fashion the body of Adam, and then — in the beautiful imagery of the Bible — God breathed a soul into the body, and Adam became a living man. In much the same way did God create His living Church.

In the Person of Jesus Christ, God first designed the Body of His Church. This was a task spread over three years, from Jesus' first public miracle at Cana until His ascent into heaven. It was during this time that Jesus chose His twelve Apostles, destined to be the first bishops of His Church. For three years He instructed them and trained them for their duties, their task of establishing the kingdom of God. During this same time Jesus designed the seven sacraments — the seven channels through which would flow into men's souls the graces Jesus would gain for men upon the cross.

Concurrently, Jesus imparted to the Apostles their threefold mission, the threefold mission of His Church. The mission to teach: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). The mission to sanctify: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). "This is My body. . . . Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). The mission to govern in His name: "If he refuse to hear even the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican. . . . Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. 18:17-18). "He who hears you, hears Me; and he who rejects you, rejects Me" (Luke 10:16).

Another task of Jesus, as He formed the Body of His Church, was to provide leadership for His Kingdom upon earth. It was to the Apostle Simon, son-of-John, that Jesus assigned this post of leadership — and in doing so Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, which means rock. Here is the promise: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona. . . I say to thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:17, 18-19). This was the promise. After His resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the promise, as we read in the twenty-first chapter of St. John's Gospel. After first extracting from Peter a thrice-repeated avowal of love ("Simon, son of John, dost thou love Me?"), Jesus made Peter the supreme shepherd of His flock. "Feed My lambs," Jesus says, "Feed My sheep." The entire flock of Christ — the sheep and the lambs; the bishops, priests and people — were to be under the jurisdiction of Peter. Of Peter and his successors, because, of course, Jesus did not come upon earth just to save the souls who were contemporaries of the Apostles. Jesus came to save all souls, so long as there would be souls to be saved.

Discussion: 1. How long did Jesus spend in forming the body of His Church? 2. During this time, what steps did Jesus take towards establishing His Church? 3. What was the threefold mission which Jesus imparted to His Apostles? 4. How did Jesus provide leadership for His kingdom upon earth? 5. Why was it necessary for Peter to have successors?

The triple duty (and power) of the Apostles — to teach, sanctify and govern — was to be passed on by them, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, to the men whom they would ordain and consecrate to carry on their work. The bishops of today are the successors of the Apostles. Each bishop of today has received his episcopal power in an unbroken continuity from Christ through the Apostles. And the supreme power of Peter, whom Christ made the head of *all*, resides today in the Bishop of Rome, whom we lovingly call our Holy Father. That came

about, in the designs of Providence, by reason of the fact that Peter traveled to Rome and died there as the first bishop of that city. Consequently, whoever is Bishop of Rome is automatically the successor of Peter and therefore possesses Peter's special power as teacher and ruler of the entire Church.

This, then, is the Body of His Church as Jesus Christ created it: not merely an invisible brotherhood of men united only by bonds of grace; but a *visible society* of men with authoritative leadership and governance. It is what we call a *hierarchical* society, with the admirable and solid proportions of a pyramid. At the top is the Pope, the spiritual monarch with supreme spiritual authority. Immediately below him are the other bishops, whose jurisdiction, each in his own diocese, flows from union with Peter's successor. Below them are the priests, to whom the sacrament of Holy Orders has given the power to sanctify (as in the Mass and the sacraments), but not the power of jurisdiction (the power to teach and govern). A priest possesses the power of jurisdiction only to the extent that it is delegated to him by the bishop whom he was ordained to assist. Finally, there is the broad base of God's people — the baptized souls for whose sake all the rest of it exists.

Again, this is the Body of the Church as Jesus constituted it during His three years of public life. Like the body of Adam, it awaited only its soul. That soul Christ promised when He told His Apostles before His Ascension: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We know well the story of Pentecost Sunday — the tenth day after our Lord's Ascension, the fiftieth day after Easter (Pentecost means "fiftieth"). "And there appeared to them [the Apostles] parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:3-4). And now the body so marvelously fashioned by Jesus through three patient years suddenly comes to life. The Living Body rises and begins to walk abroad. It is the birthday of Christ's Church.

Discussion: 1. How are the bishops of today the successors of the Apostles? 2. Why is the Bishop of Rome the successor of St. Peter? 3. Describe the hierarchical organization of the Church, top to foundation. 4. How does a priest differ from a bishop in his powers? 5. When and how did the body of the Church receive its soul?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Realizing that it was for me and my salvation that Jesus established a Church, I shall pray daily for the welfare of the Church. I shall pray especially that it may be governed by worthy bishops and served by good and holy priests.
2. Being gratefully proud of my membership in the Church, I shall be conscious of my obligation to reflect credit upon the Church by my manner of living.
3. I shall try to be an *active* member of Christ's Church, lending my help in any way I can to the various undertakings of my parish.

WE ARE THE CHURCH

WHAT is a human being? We might answer that question by saying that a human being is an animal that walks on its hind legs and can reason and talk. Our definition would be correct, but it would not tell the whole story. It would tell what a man is like, looking at him from the outside. But it would leave out of the reckoning the most wonderful thing about a man: the fact that he has a spiritual, immortal soul.

What is the Church? We can answer that question also by looking at the Church from the outside. We can define the Church (and frequently do so) by saying that it is the society of all baptized persons united in the one true faith under the authority of the Pope, the successor of St. Peter.

But when we describe the Church in these terms, and when we describe her hierarchical organization of Pope, bishops, priests and laity, we must remember that we are describing what is called the *juridical* Church. That is, we are looking at the Church as an *organization*, as a public society whose members and leaders are bound together by visible and legal bonds of unity. It is somewhat similar to the manner in which the citizens of a nation are bound together by visible legal bonds of citizenship. The United States of America, for example, is a *juridical* society.

Jesus Christ did indeed establish His Church as a juridical society. It had to be a visible organization if it was to fulfill its purpose of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling mankind. Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical letter *On the Mystical Body of Christ*, points out this fact. The Holy Father also emphasizes that as a visible organization the Church is the most perfect juridical society that exists. It is the most perfect of all societies because it has the noblest of all purposes: the sanctifying of its members for the glory of God.

Then the Holy Father goes on, in his encyclical, to make plain that the Church is far more than just a juridical organization. It is the very Body of Christ, a body so special that it must

have a special name — the Mystical Body of Christ. Christ is the Head of the Body; each baptized soul is a living part, a *member* of the Body; and the Soul of that Body of the Mystical Body of Christ, is the Holy Ghost.

Discussion: 1. What do we mean when we say that the Church is a juridical society? 2. Why is the Church the most perfect of all juridical societies? 3. Why do we say that the Church is *more* than just a juridical society? 4. Who is the Head of the Mystical Body? 5. Who is the soul of the Mystical Body?

The Holy Father warns us: "There is question here of a hidden mystery, which during this earthly exile can only be dimly seen." But let us try to see it, at least in its dimness. We know that our own human body is made up of millions of individual cells, all working together for the good of the whole body, under the direction of the head. The various parts of the body do not occupy themselves with private business of their own. Each is working all the time for the good of the whole. The eyes and ears and other senses gather knowledge for the use of the entire body. The feet carry the entire body wherever it may wish to go. The hands carry food to the mouth, the stomach absorbs nourishment for the whole man. The heart and lungs send blood and oxygen to every part of the anatomy. All live and labor for all.

And it is the soul, of course, that gives life and unity to all these separate parts, to all these individual cells. When the digestive tract changes food into our bodily substance, the new cells are not added *onto* the body in casual fashion like a plaster stuck onto the skin. The new cells become a living part of the living body, because the soul has become present in the new cells just as it is in the rest of the body.

We can apply this now, by analogy, to the Mystical Body of Christ. When we are baptized, the Holy Spirit takes possession of us, very much as our soul takes possession of newly formed cells of our body. This same Holy Spirit is at one and the same time the Spirit of Christ who, to quote Pope Pius XII, "delights

to dwell in the beloved soul of our Redeemer as in His most cherished shrine; this Spirit Christ merited for us on the cross by shedding His own blood. . . . But after Christ's glorification on the cross, His Spirit is communicated to the Church in an abundant outpouring, so that she, and her individual members, may become daily more and more like to our Saviour." The Spirit of Christ becomes, in Baptism, our Spirit too. The "Soul of the Soul" of Christ becomes the Soul of our soul too. "Christ is in us through His Spirit," continues the Holy Father, "whom He gives to us and through whom He acts within us in such a way that all divine activity of the Holy Spirit within our souls must also be attributed to Christ."

That, then, is the Church as seen from "inside." A juridical society, yes, with a visible organization provided by Christ Himself. But more than this, it is a living *organism*, a living Body, with Christ as the Head, us (baptized) as the members, and the Holy Spirit as the Soul. It is a living Body from which we could be cut off by heresy or schism or excommunication as a finger might be cut off by a surgeon's knife. It is a Body in which mortal sin, like twine twisted around a finger, may temporarily cut off the flow of life to a member until the tourniquet is removed by repentance. It is a Body in which every member profits by every Mass that is offered, every prayer that is said and every good deed done by every member throughout the world. It is the Mystical Body of Christ.

Discussion: 1. In describing our human body, we say that all parts live and labor for all. Show how this is so. 2. How does the example of our own body apply to the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church? 3. Why is it, as Pope Pius XII says, that "all divine activity of the Holy Spirit within our souls must also be attributed to Christ"? 4. Why do we say that the Church is a living *organism*? 5. How may a person cut himself off from the Mystical Body?

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. I am a member of that Body. What does this mean for me? I know that in the

human body every part has a duty to perform: the eye to see, the ear to hear, the hand to grasp, the heart to pump blood. In the Mystical Body of Christ is there a duty for *me* to perform? We all know that the answer to that question is "YES." We know, too, there are three sacraments by means of which Jesus Christ assigns our duties to us.

First there is the sacrament of Baptism, by which we are made members of Christ's Mystical Body. We say that by Baptism we are "*incorporated*" in Christ. The word "*incorporated*" comes from the Latin word "*corpus*," which means "*body*." In Latin the complete word is "*in-corporatus*," which means "*made a part of the body*." Food is incorporated in us when it is changed to living cells and becomes a living part of our body. That, by analogy, is what happens to us when we are baptized; we are *incorporated* in Christ.

Having united us to Himself in this so-intimate union, Jesus makes us sharers, according to our human limitations, in all that He is and all that He has. He makes us sharers especially in His eternal priesthood. We share with Christ in His awesome task of offering adequate worship to the Most Blessed Trinity. The baptized Christian, consciously exercising the common priesthood which he shares with Christ, participates in the Mass in a way that an unbaptized person never could.

But we adore God in other ways besides the Mass. We adore God by prayer and by sacrifice, and by the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and charity, *especially* by the virtue of charity. Charity means love, love for God, and love for the souls whom God has made and for whom Jesus has died. As members of Christ's Mystical Body, as sharers in His eternal priesthood, we are driven by a zeal to labor actively with Christ in His work of redemption. To be true to our vocation as baptized Christians, we *must* have this zeal for souls. We must be apostles, all of us, and if we belong to the laity we are called "*lay apostles*."

Both of those words come from the Greek language. In Greek, the word "*apostle*" means "*someone who is sent*." The twelve men whom Jesus sent into the world to establish His Church are called the Twelve Apostles, written with capital

letters. But they were not to be the only apostles. At the baptismal font Jesus sends every one of us forth to continue what the Twelve Apostles began. We too are apostles, with a small "a."

The word "lay" also originates in the Greek language. Quite simply, it means "people." We know that in the Church there are three broad classifications of members. There are the *clergy*. This term includes the bishops, priests and all seminarians who have received the tonsure, their first step on the way to the priesthood. Then there are the *religious* — men and women who live in community life and make the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Thirdly, there are the *laity*, the people. This term embraces everyone baptized who is neither a cleric nor a religious.

Discussion: 1. When we say that by Baptism we are incorporated in Christ, what do we mean? 2. By Baptism we share with Christ all that is His. What does this mean for us in practice? 3. What is the meaning of the word "apostle"? 4. How did the word "lay" originate? 5. What does it mean to belong to the laity?

All three classes of members in the Church *together* make up the Mystical Body of Christ. Not the clergy alone; not the clergy and religious; but clergy, religious and laity — all three united in one Body constitute the Church of Christ. In that Body each of the three classes has its own function. But all have this in common: no matter to which class we belong, each of us has, through Baptism, the call to be an apostle, each according to his state.

His eternal priesthood which Jesus shared with us in Baptism, He still more fully shares with us in Confirmation. Having shared with us in Baptism His office of worshiper of the Trinity, Christ in Confirmation shares with us His "prophetic" office, His office of teacher. As we were marked at Baptism with the indelible seal of membership in His Body and sharer in His priesthood, we are marked again in Confirmation with the indelible seal of channel of divine truth. We now have the right to whatever graces we may need to be strong in our own faith,

and whatever enlightenment we may need to make that faith intelligible to others, always supposing, of course, that we do our part to learn the truths of our faith, and are guided by the teaching authority of the Church, which resides in the bishops. Once confirmed, we have a *double* responsibility to be lay apostles — and a double source of grace and strength to fulfill that charge.

There is, finally, the third of the "priesthood-sharing" sacraments: Holy Orders. This time Christ *fully* shares His priesthood — fully with the bishops and only a little less with the priests. In Holy Orders there is not only a calling, there is not only grace, but there is *power* as well. To the priest is given the power to consecrate and forgive, to sanctify and bless. To the bishop is given, in addition, the power to ordain other priests and bishops, and the jurisdiction to rule souls and to define the truths of faith.

But we are all called to be apostles. We are all expected to help the Mystical Body of Christ grow and be healthy. Christ expects each of us to labor for the salvation of the world — the little part of the world in which we live: our own home, our neighborhood, our parish, our diocese. He expects us in our own lives to make Him visible to those with whom we live and work and recreate. He expects us to feel a sense of responsibility for the souls of others, to be saddened by their sins, to be worried at their unbelief. Christ expects us to give support and active assistance to our bishops and priests in their gigantic task.

All this is only a little bit of what it means to be a lay apostle. And when our apostolate is carried on by us not as private individuals or as members of a private group but officially, under the direction of our bishop, and with a mandate from him, then our apostolate reaches its fullness, and we are engaged in what is called Catholic Action.

Discussion: 1. What do all three classes in the Church — clergy, religious, and laity — have in common? 2. Beyond Baptism, how does Jesus further share with us His eternal priesthood? 3. In what sacrament does Jesus fully share His

priesthood? 4. In what part of the world does Jesus expect us to carry on our apostolate? 5. When does the lay apostolate become Catholic Action?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Realizing that there is no one with whom I come into contact, even for a short while, who is not a little better or a little worse for having known me, I shall be more conscious of my responsibility to Christ for the souls of others. I shall try to be a *good* influence wherever I go.
2. I shall try to learn all that I can about my religion, so that I may not be afraid to explain or discuss my religion with others. I shall watch for opportunities to exercise my vocation as a sharer in Christ's teaching office.
3. Knowing that my primary apostolate is to those who are closest to me and depend most upon me, I shall be doubly conscientious about exhibiting a truly Christian spirit in my own home. If a parent, I shall teach my children to love their faith by my example even more than by my words.

WHERE DO WE FIND IT?

“NONE genuine without this trademark!” That is a slogan which manufacturers often feature in their advertising. We may not swallow all the hokum about “quality product” and “discriminating buyers,” but most of us, when we go shopping, do insist on getting the particular brand of article for which we ask, and very few of us ever pick up a piece of silverware without turning it over to see if it is stamped “Sterling”; very few of us ever examine a ring without looking inside for the carat mark.

Since His wisdom is the wisdom of God, we would expect that Jesus Christ in establishing His Church would be no less intelligent than modern merchandisers. We would expect Jesus to mark His Church in such a way that all men of good will could easily recognize it. Especially would we expect this in view of the fact that Jesus founded His Church at the cost of His own life. Jesus did not die upon the cross “just for the fun of it.” He did not make it a matter of free choice for men to belong to His Church or not to belong, as they might prefer. His Church is the Gate of Heaven through which everyone (at least by implicit desire) must enter.

Having made His Church a prerequisite of our everlasting happiness, our Lord has not failed to stamp it plainly with His “trademark,” with the mark of its divine origin. He has marked it so plainly that we can recognize it even on the modern “notions counter” of a thousand differing churches and sects and religions. We might say that the trademark of Christ’s Church is a square. He Himself has told us what to look for on each side of that square.

First there is *unity*. “And other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring,” Jesus says, “and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd” (John 10:16). Or again: “Holy Father, keep in Thy name

those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one even as We are" (John 17:11).

Then there is *holiness*. "Sanctify them in the truth. . . . And for them I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:17, 19). That was our Lord's own prayer for His Church, and St. Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and cleanse for Himself an acceptable people, pursuing good works" (Titus 2:14).

Discussion: 1. When you go shopping, why do you insist on certain brands of products? 2. Why would we expect Christ to mark His Church in such a way that it could be recognized? 3. Why does Jesus care whether or not a person belongs to His Church? 4. From what words of Christ do we expect to find *unity* in His Church? 5. In what words did our Lord pray for *holiness* in His Church?

On the third side of the square there is *catholicity* — with a small "c" — or *universality*. The word "catholic" comes from the Greek; "universal" comes from the Latin. Both mean the same thing, *all*. *All* of Christ's teachings, to *all* men at *all* times in *all* places. Hear our Lord speak: "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a witness to all nations" (Matt. 24:14). "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "You shall be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The square is then completed with the note of *apostolicity*. The word itself is a bit of a jawbreaker; but it means simply that any Church claiming to be Christ's own must be able to trace its lineage in unbroken continuity back to the Apostles. It must be able to show its legitimate descent from Christ through His Apostles. Again, Jesus Himself speaks: "And I say to thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Speaking to all the Apostles: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). St. Paul drives home this point of *apostolicity* when he says to the Ephesians, "Therefore, you are now no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are citizens with the saints and members of God's household: you are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20).

There we have Christ's own trademark. One, holy, catholic and apostolic. It is a square which He has stamped ineradicably upon His Church, sharp and clear as a goldsmith's die. These are the four marks which must be exhibited by any church which claims to be Christ's own. There are many churches in the world today which claim to be Christian. Let us shorten the labor of our examination by "picking up" our own church, the Catholic Church, for scrutiny. If we find the trademark of Christ there, we shall have no need to look further.

Discussion: 1. What does the word "catholic" mean? 2. How does Christ intend the word "all" to apply to His Church? 3. What must a church be able to show if it claims to be *apostolic*? 4. What does St. Paul say about the necessity of apostolicity? 5. In order to discover the true Church of Jesus Christ, is it necessary for us to examine all the various churches?

No matter how mistaken you may be about something, it will get your "dander" up if someone tells you flatly that you are wrong. And as they carefully explain to you *why* you are wrong, you get more stubborn by the minute. Maybe not always. Maybe not at all if you are a saint. But in general, human nature is like that. That is why it seldom does any good to argue about religion. We should be ready to *discuss* religion at the drop of a hat, but never to argue. The minute we say to someone, "Your religion is wrong and I'll tell you why," we have slammed the door of the person's mind. Nothing that we say afterwards will get in. On the other hand, if we know our own religion well,

and explain it in intelligent and kindly fashion to our neighbor who is not a Catholic, there is a good chance that he may listen to us. If we can show that the Catholic Church is the true Church established by Jesus Christ, we don't have to tell him that his church is not the true Church. He may be stubborn, but he is not stupid. He can be trusted to make his own deductions. Keeping that in mind, then, we proceed to examine the Catholic Church to see whether it bears the trademark of Christ — whether Jesus has unmistakably stamped it as His own.

We look first of all for the *unity* which our Lord said must characterize His flock. We look for this unity in three dimensions: unity of belief, unity of leadership, and unity of worship.

We know that the members of Christ's Church must exhibit unity of belief. The truths which they hold are the truths made known to us by Jesus Christ Himself; they are truths which have come to us directly from God. There are no "truer" truths which the human mind can know and accept than truths revealed by God. God *is* truth. He knows all things and cannot be mistaken. He is infinitely truthful and cannot lie. It is easier to believe that there is no sun in the sky at midday, for example, than to believe that Jesus could be mistaken when He says that there are three Persons in one God.

That is why we think the principle of "private judgment" to be so very illogical. There are many people who maintain the right to private judgment in religious matters. They admit that God has made certain truths known to us, but they say that each man should interpret those truths to suit himself. Let every man read his own Bible; and whatever he thinks the Bible means, that is what it *does* mean for him. Our answer is that whatever God has said is so, and is so for always and for everybody. It is not for us to pick and choose and to adjust God's revelation to our own preferences and our own convenience.

Discussion: 1. Why does it seldom do any good to *argue* about religion? 2. In discussing religion, along what line should we proceed? 3. In what three dimensions or directions should we look for unity in Christ's Church? 4. Why must the members of Christ's Church exhibit unity of belief?

5. Why does the principle of "private judgment" not make sense?

This theory of "private judgment" has led quite naturally one step further: to the denial of *all* absolute truth. There are many men today who claim that truth and goodness are *relative* terms. Something is "true" as long as the generality of men find it helpful, as long as it seems to work. If it helps you to believe in God, then believe in God but be ready to cast the belief aside if it begins to get in the way of progress. The same thing holds for what we call "good." A thing is good, or an action is good if it contributes to the welfare and happiness of humanity. But if chastity, for example, seems to slow up man's onward march in an ever-changing world, then chastity ceases to be good. In short, that may be called good or true which is here and now useful to the community, to man as a constructive member of society, and it is good or true *only so long* as it continues to be useful. This philosophy is called pragmatism. It is very hard to discuss truth with a pragmatist, because he has cut the ground from under your feet by denying that there is any real, absolute truth. About all that the believing Christian can do is to pray for him — and try to show him by a truly Christian life that Christianity *does* work.

The foregoing has been a bit of a sidetrack to our main theme, which is that no church can claim to be Christ's own unless all its members believe the same truths, since they are God's truths, eternally unchangeable and the same for all people. We know that in the Catholic Church all *do* believe the same truths. Bishops, priests and first-grade children; Americans and Frenchmen and Japanese; white or colored; every Catholic, everywhere, means exactly the same things when he recites the Apostles' Creed.

We are united not only in the things we believe but also are united under the same spiritual leadership. It was Jesus Christ who made St. Peter the chief shepherd of His flock and provided that Peter's successors until the end of time would be the head of His Church and the guardian of His truths. Loyalty to the Bishop of Rome, whom we lovingly call our Holy Father,

will ever be the binding center of our unity — and the test of our membership in Christ's Church. "Where Peter is, there is the Church!"

In worship too we are united, as is no other Church. We have but one altar, upon which Jesus Christ daily renews the offering of Himself upon the cross. The Catholic is the only person who can take a trip around the world and know that wherever he goes — Africa or India, Germany or South America — he will feel religiously at home. Everywhere the same Mass, everywhere the same seven sacraments.

One in faith, one in head, one in worship. Here is that unity for which Christ prayed, the unity which He pointed to as one of the marks which would identify His Church forever. It is a unity which we find only in the Catholic Church.

Discussion: 1. Try to give in your own words a summary of the philosophy of pragmatism. 2. Why is it so hard to discuss truth with a pragmatist? 3. How did Jesus provide for unity of leadership in His Church? 4. Why is it that a Catholic feels at home, religiously, wherever he goes in the world? 5. Can you, now, name the four sides of the square which is the "trademark" of the Church of Christ?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Being mindful of my oneness with Catholics everywhere, I shall include in my daily prayer-intentions my fellow Catholics who are being persecuted for the faith in other lands.
2. I shall be careful not to create antagonisms against the Church by attacking the religion of another in a tactless way, but I shall be ready at the drop of a hat to explain why I am convinced that the Catholic Church is Christ's own Church.
3. If I have any influence with a young person preparing to go to college, I shall try to persuade him or her to choose a Catholic college, where truth will be respected as an absolute value.

HOLY AND CATHOLIC

THE strongest arguments against the Catholic Church are the lives of bad Catholics and lax Catholics. If you were to ask a lukewarm Catholic, "Is one church as good as another?" he probably would answer indignantly, "Of course not; there is only one true Church, the Catholic Church." And then he will do his best to prove himself a liar by swapping the same dirty stories with his non-Catholic friends, by getting drunk with them at the same parties, tomcatting with them at the same conventions, exchanging with them the same malicious gossip, buying the same contraceptives — perhaps even exceeding them a bit by the sharpness of his business practices or the dirtiness of his politics.

We know that such men and women are in the minority, but even one would be too many. We know too that we must expect that there will be unworthy members in Christ's Church. Jesus Himself compared His Church to a fish net in which bad fish are caught along with the good (Matt. 13:47-50); to a field of grain in which weeds grow up with the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30); and to a wedding feast at which one of the guests does not have on a wedding garment (Matt. 22:11-14).

The sinners then are with us to stay. To the end of the road they will be the cross that Christ in His Mystical Body must carry on His shoulder. Yet, Jesus pointed to *holiness* as one of the distinguishing marks of His Church. "By their fruits you will know them," He said. "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit." (Cf. Matt. 7:16-17.)

In answering the question, "Why is the Catholic Church holy?" the catechism says, "The Catholic Church is holy because it was founded by Jesus Christ, who is all-holy, and because it teaches, according to the will of Christ, holy doctrines, and provides the means of leading a holy life, thereby giving holy members to every age."

Now that is true, every word of it, but it is not an easy point to get across to a non-Catholic acquaintance, especially if he has spent last night "doing the town" in the company of Joe Doakes, who is a member of the Holy Name Society at St. Pia's parish. *We* know that Jesus Christ founded the Church, and that all other churches were founded by mere men. But the Lutheran probably would pooh-pooh the idea that Martin Luther founded a new church; he would say that Luther merely "purified" the ancient church of its errors and abuses. The Episcopalian doubtless would have a similar answer: Henry VIII and Cranmer did not start a new church; they merely cut loose from the "Roman branch" and established the "English branch" of the original Christian church. The Presbyterian would say the same of John Knox, and the Methodist of John Wesley, and so on through the long list of Protestant sects. All of them doubtless would claim Christ as their founder.

Discussion: 1. How does a lukewarm Catholic's life contradict his belief? 2. Why must we expect that there will be unworthy members in Christ's Church? 3. In what words did Christ point to *holiness* as one of the distinguishing marks of His Church? 4. What does the catechism have to say about the mark of holiness? 5. Why is holiness not an easy point to get across to a non-Catholic?

Much the same thing would happen when we pointed to the fact that the Catholic Church teaches a holy doctrine, as proof of the Church's divine origin. "My church teaches a holy doctrine, too," our non-Catholic acquaintance very likely would answer. "In fact," he might even claim, "my church teaches a *holier* doctrine than yours. We don't believe in card-playing or drinking or gambling as you Catholics do." If we were so rude as to bring up such matters as contraceptives and divorce, he perhaps would brush us off with the charge of being unrealistic, not keeping up with the demands of social progress.

But at least we could point to the saints, couldn't we, as proof of the fact that the holiness of Christ is at work in the Catholic Church? Yes, we could; and it is a pretty tough piece of

evidence for anyone to evade. The many thousands of men and women and children who have led lives of supereminent sanctity, and whose names make up the calendar of the saints: these are pretty hard to explain away, and there is nothing like them in any other church. However, if our discussant is glib in the terminology of modern psychology, he may double-talk his way around the saints with such words as "hysteria," "neurosis" and "sublimation of basic drives." In any case, the saints are storybook people to him. You can't *show* him a saint, right here and now.

So what does that leave us? It just leaves us ourselves, you and me. Our interested friend (we suppose that he is) may claim Christ as his founder too, may claim a holy doctrine for his church, too, may bypass the saints as an arguable point. But he can't escape *us*; he cannot be blind and deaf to the testimony of our lives. If every Catholic whom our imaginary inquirer meets is a person of outstanding Christian virtue: kind and patient and unselfish and sympathetic; chaste and charitable and reverent in speech; honest and truthful and a stranger to all double-dealing; generous and pure and temperate in conduct — what kind of impression would *that* make?

Just in our own country alone, if our 31,000,000 Catholics led that kind of life, what a thunder of witness that would be to the holiness of Christ's Church! We have need to remind ourselves time and time again that we *are* our brother's keeper. We may not indulge our petty weaknesses and our self-love and think that all is well when we have dusted ourselves off in confession. It is not only for our sins, but for the souls who may have missed heaven because of us that we shall have to answer one day to Christ. Thirty-one million did I say? Let's forget about the other 30,999,999; let's concentrate right now, you on you and me on me. Then will the mark of holiness in the Catholic Church be vindicated at least in the little area where we live and move.

Discussion: 1. What might a non-Catholic's answer be if we claim "holiness of doctrine" for the Catholic Church? 2. Why is the evidence of the saints hard for anyone to evade? 3. How

might a person try to talk his way around the evidence of the saints? 4. What is the one argument that our non-Catholic inquirer cannot escape? 5. For what else besides our sins shall we one day have to answer to Christ?

All the time, all the truths, all the places. That, in capsule form, describes the third of the four marks of the Church. It is the third side of the square which is the "trademark" of Christ, the hallmark which proves the divine origin of the Church. It is the stamp of genuineness which only the Catholic Church bears.

The word "catholic" means "embracing all." It is derived from the Greek language, as we have mentioned before; and it means the same thing as the word "universal," which stems from the Latin tongue.

When we say that the Catholic Church (with a capital "C") is catholic (with a small "c") or universal, we mean first of all that the Church has been in existence at *all times*, from Pentecost Sunday right down to today. The pages of any history book will bear this out — and it doesn't have to be a Catholic history book, either. The Catholic Church has had a continuous existence of nineteen hundred and more years, and it is the *only* church of which this is true.

Whatever other churches may say about being "purifications" of the ancient Church, or "branches" of the one true Church, the fact remains that for the first eight hundred years of Christian history there was no other church but the Catholic Church. The oldest non-Catholic church is the Greek Orthodox Church. That church had its beginning in the ninth century, when the archbishop of Constantinople refused Holy Communion to the Emperor Bardas, who was living in sin. In anger, the emperor tore Greece away from union with Rome, and the Orthodox Church was born.

The oldest Protestant church, which is the Lutheran Church, came into being in the sixteenth century — almost fifteen hundred years after Christ. It began with the revolt of Martin Luther, a Catholic priest of magnetic personality, and owed its quick success to the support of the German princes who resented

the power of the Pope at Rome. Luther's attempt to remedy the abuses in the Church (and there were some real ones) ended in the far greater evil of a divided Christendom. Luther made the first break in the dike. After him came a flood of others. We have mentioned Henry VIII and John Knox and John Wesley. But the original Protestant churches splintered and subdivided (mostly in the Germanic and English-speaking countries) into hundreds of differing sects; and the process still goes on. Not one of them existed, however, before the year 1517, when Luther nailed his famous "95 Theses" to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Discussion: 1. How may we describe, in capsule form, the third mark of the Church? 2. During what period of time has the Catholic Church been in existence? 3. For how many years was the Catholic Church the *only* Christian church? 4. When, and in what way did the Orthodox Church begin? 5. Which is the oldest Protestant church, and how was it started?

Not only is the Catholic Church the only church whose uninterrupted history goes all the way back to Christ; it also is the only church which teaches *all the truths* taught by Jesus, as He taught them. The sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction, the Mass and the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the spiritual supremacy of Peter and his successors the Popes, the efficacy of grace and man's ability to merit grace and heaven — some or all of these are rejected by the various non-Catholic churches. In fact there are churches today which claim the name of "Christian" which even question whether Jesus Christ is truly God. There is not a single truth revealed by Jesus Christ, however (whether personally or through His Apostles), which the Catholic Church does not still declare and teach.

Besides being universal in time (*all* the years since Pentecost) and universal in doctrine (*all* the truths taught by Christ), the Catholic Church also is universal in *extent*. Mindful of her Founder's commission to make disciples of all nations, the

Catholic Church has carried Christ's message of salvation to every latitude and longitude on the face of the globe, wherever there are souls to be reached. The Catholic Church is not a "German" church (Lutheran), or an "English" church (Episcopalian), or a "Scotch" church (Presbyterian), or a "Dutch" church (Reformed), or an "American" church (hundreds of different sects). The Catholic Church is in all these countries and in every other country, besides, where missionaries have been permitted to penetrate. But the Catholic Church belongs to no nation and to no race. It is at home in every land, but is the property of none. This is as Jesus Christ willed it. His Church is for *all* men. It must be world-wide. The Catholic Church is the only church of which this is true; it is the only church which is everywhere, throughout the world.

Catholic or universal — in time and truths and territory; that is the third mark of the true Church of Christ. And the fourth mark, which completes the square, is "apostolicity." This means simply that the church which claims to be Christ's own must be able to prove its legitimate descent from the Apostles, upon whom as a foundation Jesus established His Church.

That the Catholic Church does possess this mark of "apostolicity" is easy enough to demonstrate. We have the list of the Bishops of Rome, going back from the Holy Father of our own day in a continuous line to St. Peter. And the other bishops of the Catholic Church, true successors of the Apostles, are today's latest links in an unbroken chain which stretches back through 1900 years. Since the days when the Apostles laid hands upon Timothy and Titus and Mark and Polycarp, the episcopal power has been passed on, in the sacrament of Holy Orders, from generation to generation; from bishop to bishop to bishop.

And so the square is closed. The trademark of Christ is discerned clearly etched in the Catholic Church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We are not so naïve as to suppose that converts will come running, wholesale, when we point out the trademark to them. Human prejudices do not yield that easily to reason. But at least let us be sure that we see the trademark plainly ourselves.

Discussion: 1. How do other churches differ from the Catholic Church in the doctrines they teach? 2. Why do we say that the Catholic Church is universal in extent? 3. In what way do other churches lack this mark of universality? 4. What is the meaning of the mark of "apostolicity"? 5. Why is the mark of apostolicity easy to demonstrate?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. I shall make a more determined effort to prove the holiness of Christ's Church by the blamelessness of my own life.
2. Being aware that Christ's mission is to *all* men, I shall be a generous supporter of the missions, especially of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.
3. Convinced of the importance of religious unity within the family, I shall try, if I am a parent, to persuade my adolescent children to date none but Catholic companions; knowing that one who dates only with Catholics is certain in the end to marry a Catholic.

REASON AND FAITH — AND MYSELF

GOD has given to man the power of reason, and He expects man to use this gift. There are two ways in which the power of reason may be abused. One way is by not using it. A person who has not learned to use his reason is the person who takes as gospel truth everything he reads in newspapers and periodicals, no matter how "slanted" the news may be. He is the person who will accept without question the most extravagant claims of salesmen and advertisers and is the gullible tool of smart propagandists. He is awed by prestige; if a famous scientist or industrialist says there is no God, then, of course, there is no God. In other words, this non-thinker likes his opinions ready-made. It is not always laziness which makes the non-thinker. Unfortunately sometimes parents and teachers are the cause of this mental apathy when they discourage the natural curiosity of youth and squelch every normal "why" with a "because-I-said-so!"

At the other extreme is the man who makes a veritable god of reason. This is the person who will believe nothing that he cannot see and understand. For him the only facts are those which come out of scientific laboratories. Nothing is true unless it "makes sense" for him, unless it has good practical results right here and now. What works is true; what is useful is good. This type of thinker is called a pragmatist. He rejects any truth that is based upon authority. He will believe in the authority of an Einstein and will accept the theory of relativity, even though he may not understand it. He will believe in the authority of the nuclear physicists and will accept the fact of nuclear fission, even though he may not understand that. But "authority" is a fighting word to him when it is a question of the authority of the Church.

The pragmatist will respect the pronouncements of human authorities, because he says he has confidence that they know what they are talking about; he trusts in their ability. But the

pragmatist will look with impatient pity upon the Catholic who, for this very same reason, respects the pronouncements of the Church, confident that the Church knows what it, in the person of the Pope and bishops, is talking about.

It is true that not all Catholics have an intelligent understanding of their faith. With many, faith is a blind acceptance of religious truths on the authority of the Church. This unreasoning acceptance may be due to lack of opportunity to study, or to lack of education, or even (unfortunately) to mental laziness. This is not to say that a blind faith is necessarily to be condemned. For children and for the untutored, religious belief has to be an unproved belief, just as their belief in the need for certain foods and the poisonousness of certain substances also must be an unproved belief. The pragmatist who may say, "I'll string along with Einstein; he ought to know what he's talking about," hardly can find fault with the child who says, "I believe it because Daddy says it's so"; and later, "I believe it because the priest (or Sister) says it's so." Nor can he find fault with the unlettered adult who says, "What the Pope says is good enough for me."

Discussion: 1. What is the first way in which the power of reason may be abused? 2. How do parents and teachers sometimes contribute to mental apathy? 3. What type of person is it who makes a god of reason? 4. Why is the pragmatist inconsistent in rejecting the authority of the Church? 5. Why is it that not all Catholics have an intelligent understanding of their faith? 6. Show that the Catholic who says, "What the Pope says is good enough for me," is no less reasonable than the pragmatist.

For the thinking Catholic, however, the acceptance of religious truths is a *reasoned* acceptance, an intelligent acceptance. It is true that the virtue of faith itself — the *ability* to believe — is a grace, a gift of God. But adult faith is based on reason; it is not a frustration of reason. The instructed Catholic has satisfied himself from the clear evidence of history that God has spoken; that God has spoken through His Son Jesus Christ;

that Jesus Christ has established a Church as His mouthpiece, as the visible manifestation of Himself to mankind; that the Catholic Church *is* that Church established by Jesus Christ; that it is to the bishops of that Church, as the successors of the Apostles (and especially to Peter's successor, the Pope), that Jesus Christ gave the power to teach, to sanctify, and to govern spiritually in His name. This competency of the Church to speak in Christ's name on matters of doctrinal belief or moral action, to administer the sacraments and to exercise spiritual governance, we call the *authority* of the Church. The man who has satisfied himself, by the use of his reason, that the Catholic Church does possess this attribute of authority, is not going against reason — on the contrary he is *following* reason — when he asserts, "I believe all that the Catholic Church teaches."

Equally is the Catholic following reason as well as faith when he subscribes to the doctrine of infallibility. This attribute of infallibility means simply that the Church (either in the person of the Pope, or of all the bishops together under the Pope) cannot make a mistake when she solemnly proclaims that a certain matter of belief or of conduct has been revealed by God and must be held and followed by all. Jesus Christ's promise, "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20) would be meaningless if His Church were not infallible. Certainly Jesus would not be with His Church if He allowed His Church to fall into error concerning the essentials of salvation. The Catholic knows that the Pope can sin, like any other human being. The Catholic knows that the Pope's personal opinions enjoy only as much standing as the Pope's human wisdom may give them, but the Catholic also knows that when the Pope, as the head of Christ's Church, publicly and solemnly proclaims that a certain truth has been revealed by Christ, either personally or through His Apostles, Peter's successor cannot be in error. Jesus would not establish a Church which could lead men astray.

Discussion: 1. If the virtue of faith is a gift of God, why do we say that the thinking Catholic's acceptance of religious truths is a *reasoned* acceptance? 2. What do we mean by the

authority of the Church? 3. What is the meaning of the doctrine of *infallibility*? 4. How does this attribute of *infallibility* follow from Christ's own words? 5. With regard to the Pope, what does *infallibility not* mean?

The right to speak in Christ's name and to be heard — that is the attribute (or quality) of the Catholic Church we call "authority." The assurance of freedom from error when solemnly proclaiming the truths of God to the universal Church — that is the attribute we call "infallibility." There is a third quality which characterizes the Catholic Church. Jesus not only said, "He who hears you, hears Me; and he who rejects you, rejects Me" (Luke 10:16) — *authority*. He not only said, "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20) — *infallibility*. He also said, "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). It is in these words that our Lord points to the third quality which is inherent in the Catholic Church — *indefectibility*.

The attribute of *indefectibility* means simply that the Church, as Jesus Himself founded it, will last until the end of time. It means that the Church is here to stay, that it will continue to exist as long as there are souls to be saved. "Permanence" would be a good synonym for *indefectibility*, but theologians always seem to love the longer words.

It would be a great mistake for us to let this attribute of *indefectibility* lull us into a feeling of false security. Jesus said that His Church would last until the end of time. But He did not say that it would last in *this* country or in *that* country until the end of time. With atheistic Communism threatening us in the East and in the West, it would be tragic if we remained smugly indifferent to the threat, telling ourselves that nothing really bad can happen to us because Christ is with His Church. If we neglect our high vocation as Christians — and therefore apostles — Christ's Church may again become (as it once was in the Roman empire) an underground Church of martyrdom-marked souls. It is not so much the bombs and the guns of

Communism that we have to fear; it is rather the fervor, the dynamism, the missionary-mindedness of the Communists that is the long-range danger. They have so little to offer, and yet are so zealous in proclaiming it. We have so *much* to share, and yet seem so lackadaisical, almost indifferent, in showing the truth to others.

Discussion: 1. Besides the attributes of "authority" and "infallibility," what is the third quality that is inherent in the Catholic Church? 2. What would be a good synonym for the word "indefectibility"? 3. Why should the indefectibility of the Church not cause us to feel complacent about the Church's future? 4. How may history repeat itself with regard to the Church? 5. What have we to fear most from Communism?

"How many converts have I made?" Or at least, how much thought and effort have I given to the making of converts? That is a question that each of us ought to ask himself, at least once a year. The thought of standing before God in judgment, empty-handed, is a thought to make us tremble. "Where are your fruits, where are your souls?" He rightly will ask — and He will ask it of the layman as well as of the priest or religious. We cannot wholly discharge our obligation by giving money to the missions. That is a necessary part of it, but it is only the beginning. There also is the matter of prayer. Our daily prayers would be woefully incomplete if they did not include prayers for the missionaries, home and foreign, and for the souls among whom they labor. But do we pray every day for the gift of faith for our next-door neighbors, if they are not Catholics? Do we pray for that girl who works at the next desk, that fellow who works at the next machine? How often during the year do we invite a non-Catholic friend to attend Mass with us, providing him in advance with a booklet that will explain what is going on? Do we have a few good books on the Catholic faith, and a supply of interesting pamphlets at home, that we offer to give or lend on the slightest provocation, to anyone who seems the least bit interested? If we do all these things, even offering (when a question seems too big for us)

to take an inquirer to meet a priest, then we are doing what we ought; we are fulfilling at least some of our responsibility to Christ for the treasure that He has entrusted to us.

We do not believe, of course, that all non-Catholics go to hell, any more than we believe that just calling oneself a Catholic will get one to heaven. The dictum that "Outside the Church there is no salvation," means no salvation for those who are outside the Church through their own fault. One who has been a Catholic and who deliberately abandons the Church cannot be saved unless he returns; the grace of faith is not lost except through one's own fault. A non-Catholic who knows the Catholic Church to be the true Church but remains outside through his own fault cannot be saved. A non-Catholic whose ignorance of the Catholic faith is a self-willed ignorance, a deliberate blindness, cannot be saved. Those, however, who are outside the Church through no fault of their own, and who do the best they can according to what they know, making good use of the graces that God surely will give them in view of their good will — these *can* be saved. God does not ask the impossible of anyone. He will reward everyone in the light of what he has done with what he has. This does not mean, however, that we can escape our responsibility by saying, "My neighbor can get to heaven without being a Catholic; so why should I worry?" Nor does it mean, "One church is as good as another."

God still wants all men to belong to the Church which He has established. Jesus Christ still wants one fold and one Shepherd. And we *ought* to want our relatives and friends and neighbors to have the greater certainty of salvation which we ourselves have in Christ's own Church: the greater fullness of truth, the greater security in knowledge of what is right and wrong, the unmatched helps offered by the Mass and the sacraments. We wear our own faith lightly indeed if we can mix with people day after day without ever asking ourselves, "What can I do to help this man (or woman) to recognize the truth of the Catholic Church, and to become one with me in the Mystical Body of Christ?" The Holy Spirit lives in the Church

forever, but so often He must wait upon me to find entrance into the soul of that man beside me.

Discussion: 1. What question ought we to ask ourselves at least once a year? 2. What will God ask of us, in judgment? 3. What more is needed besides giving money to the missions and praying for the missions? 4. What does the saying, "Outside the Church there is no salvation," mean? 5. Does the fact that a non-Catholic whose ignorance of the truth is unblamable, can get to heaven, excuse me from all responsibility for his soul?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. If a parent, I shall respect my child's intelligence and encourage him to use his reason and to ask questions, even though I do find his questions tiresome. At the same time I shall teach him that no human mind is big enough to understand *everything*; that some things must be accepted on authority.
2. I shall not let mental laziness be an excuse for my own lack of understanding. When a question concerning a point of religion comes into my mind, I shall either look up the answer (for example, in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* at the public library) or inquire from someone who knows.
3. Next Sunday I shall take a non-Catholic to Mass with me and shall be primed to answer his questions.

THE END OF THE ROAD

WE LIVE and we labor, for a few years or for many — and then we die. This life, as we well know, is a time of testing and of trial; it is eternity's proving ground. The happiness of heaven consists essentially in the fulfillment of love. Unless we enter eternity with love for God in our hearts, we would be absolutely incapable of experiencing the happiness of heaven. Our life upon this earth is the time that God has given us to acquire and to *prove* our love for Him. We must prove that our love for God is greater than any of His created gifts, such as pleasure or wealth or fame or friends. We must prove that our love can withstand the pressure of man-made evils, such as poverty or pain or humiliation or injustice. Whether we are on the heights or in the depths, at every moment we must be able to say, "My God I love You!" — and prove what we say by our actions. For some the road is short, for others long. For some the road is comparatively smooth, for others rough. But for all of us the road ends. We die.

Death is simply the separation of the soul from the body. Through the ravages of time or of disease or of accident, the body becomes damaged to the point where the soul no longer can continue to operate through the body. At this point the soul leaves the body, and we say that the person is dead. The exact instant at which the soul leaves the body can seldom be known. The heart may have stopped beating, breathing may have ceased, but the soul may still be present. This is proved by the fact that sometimes persons apparently dead are revived by artificial respiration or other means. Unless the soul still were present, they could not be revived. That is why the Church permits a priest to give conditional absolution and conditional Extreme Unction for as long as two hours after apparent death, just in case the soul *may* still be present. Once the blood has begun to congeal, however, and *rigor mortis* has set in, we know definitely that the soul has left the body.

What happens then? At the very instant the soul leaves the body, it is judged by almighty God. Even while those about the bedside are crossing the hands upon the breast and gently closing the sightless eyes, the soul already has been judged; the soul already knows what its eternal fate is to be. This judgment of the individual soul immediately after death is called the Particular Judgment. It is a tremendous moment for all of us. It is the moment for which all our years upon earth have been spent, the moment towards which our whole life has been directed. For all of us it will be pay day.

Discussion: 1. Why must we enter heaven with love for God in our hearts? 2. For what purpose has God given us our life upon this earth? 3. What is death? 4. Why does the Church allow the sacraments to be given conditionally after apparent death? 5. What happens to the soul the instant it leaves the body?

Where will this Particular Judgment take place? Probably right there on the spot where we die, humanly speaking. Beyond this life there is no "space" or "place" in the sense in which we ordinarily understand these words. The soul doesn't have to "go" someplace to be judged. As to the form which this Particular Judgment will take, we can only guess. All that God has revealed to us concerning the Particular Judgment is that it will happen; that is all we need to know. The description of the Particular Judgment as a judicial proceeding, with the soul standing before God seated upon His throne, with the devil on one side as the prosecuting attorney and the guardian angel on the other as the defense attorney — all this, of course, is poetic imagery and nothing more. Theologians speculate that what actually takes place probably is that God illumines the soul so that the soul sees itself as God sees it — sees the state it is in, of grace or of unforgiven sin, of God-loving or God-rejecting — and sees what its fate is to be in accordance with the infinite justice of God. It is a fate which cannot be changed, a sentence which cannot be reversed. The time of preparation

and trial is ended. God's mercy has done all that it can. Only God's justice prevails now.

What comes next? Well, let us get the worst over with first. Let us consider the lot of the soul which has chosen self in preference to God, and which has died without turning back to God; in other words, the soul which dies in the state of mortal sin. Having deliberately cut itself off from God during life; having died without that bond of union with God which we call sanctifying grace, it has now no means by which it can establish contact with God. It has lost God forever. It is in hell. For such a soul, death, judgment and hell are simultaneous.

What is hell like? No one knows exactly, because no one has ever come back from hell to describe it to us. We know that in hell there is everlasting fire, because Jesus Himself has said so. We also know that it is not the kind of fire we see in our stoves and furnaces. That fire could not afflict the soul, which is a spirit. All we know is that there is in hell a "pain of sense" (as the theologians term it) of such a nature that it cannot be better described by any other word in our human language than by the word "fire."

But what matters most is not the "pain of sense." What matters most is the "pain of loss." It is the pain of loss, the eternal separation from God that constitutes the worst of hell's suffering. I suppose that within the framework of revealed truths each person views hell in his own way. To me, the soul-shuddering thing about the thought of hell is its awful loneliness. I think of myself as standing nakedly alone in a vast emptiness that is filled only with hatred, hatred for God and hatred for myself, wishing that I could die and knowing that I cannot, knowing too that this is the destiny which I have freely chosen for myself in exchange for some mess of pottage, and all the while there is being dinned into my ears the voice of my own jeering conscience: "This is forever . . . no rest . . . no surcease . . . forever . . . forever. . . ." But no picture of hell that words or brush can paint will ever be as bad as the reality. God spare us all!

Discussion: 1. What do we know for certain about the Particular Judgment? 2. What opinion do theologians offer as to what takes place? 3. Why has the soul which dies in the state of mortal sin lost God forever? 4. What do we know about hell? 5. In hell, what matters most?

Probably few of us are so optimistic as to expect that our Particular Judgment will find us free from every trace of sin. That would mean being free not only from all mortal and venial sin, but also free from all undischarged temporal punishment—the debt of atonement we owe to God even after sin itself has been forgiven. We do not *expect* to die with a soul so spotlessly pure, perhaps, but there is no reason why we should not hope for it. That is what the sacrament of Extreme Unction is for; to cleanse the soul from the “remains of sin.” That is what plenary indulgences are for, especially the plenary indulgence at the moment of death, which the Church grants to the dying by means of the Last Blessing.

Supposing that we do so die: fortified by the last sacraments and with a plenary indulgence fully gained at the very moment of death. Supposing that we do die without the least trace or spot of sin upon our soul. What then can we expect? In that case our death, which the instinct of self-preservation has made to seem so fearsome, will in fact be our moment of brightest victory. As the body reluctantly relinquishes its hold upon the spirit which has given the body its life and its value, the instantaneous sight of God will itself be our judgment.

The “beatific vision” is the cold theological term for the magnificent reality which beggars human imagining or description. That reality is not merely a “vision” in the sense of “seeing” God. It is a union with God; God possessing the soul and the soul possessing God in a unity so ravishingly complete as to be infinitely beyond the ecstasy of the most perfect human marriage. As the soul “enters” heaven, the impact upon it of the Infinite Love that is God would be so shattering as to annihilate the soul, if God Himself did not give to the soul the strength it needs to endure the happiness that is God. If we are able for a moment to tear our thoughts from God, how

petty then shall we think the worst of our earthly sufferings and trials to have been; what a ridiculously small price we shall have paid for the searing, tearing, choking, spiraling happiness that is ours. It is a happiness, too, that nothing can take from us. It is a telescoped, concentrated instant of pure bliss that will never end. This is happiness eternal; this is the essential happiness of heaven.

There are other incidental joys also that will be ours. There will be our joy in the company of our glorified Saviour Jesus Christ, and of our Mother Mary, whose sweet love and beauty we so long have admired from a distance. There will be our joy in the companionship of the angels and the saints, including our own family members and friends who precede or follow us to heaven. But these joys will be only the tinkling of little bells compared to the crashing symphony of God's love that beats upon us.

Discussion: 1. Can we hope to escape purgatory? 2. What happens to us immediately if we die without the least trace of sin upon our soul? 3. Does the beatific vision consist merely in "looking at" God? Discuss. 4. How will our earthly trials seem to us when we are with God in heaven? 5. What incidental joys shall we have in heaven?

But what if, when we die, the Particular Judgment finds us neither severed from God by mortal sin, nor yet with that perfect purity of soul required for union with the all-holy God? This, indeed, is very likely to be the case, if we have been content to remain upon the level of spiritual mediocrity: parsimonious in prayer, dodging self-denial, making compromise with the world. Our mortal sins, if any, may have been forgiven in the sacrament of Penance (do we not say, in the Creed, "I believe in . . . the forgiveness of sins"?); but if ours has been a "comfortable" religion, it is not likely that we shall be capable, in our last moments, of that perfect and selfless love for God which is required for a plenary indulgence. So here we are in Judgment: neither deserving of hell nor fit for heaven. What becomes of us?

It is here that the doctrine of purgatory manifests its eminent reasonableness. Even had the doctrine of purgatory not come down to us from Christ and His Apostles through the tradition of the Church, reason alone would indicate that there must be some final process of purification to cleanse away whatever lesser imperfections might yet stand between the soul and God. This is the function of that state of temporary suffering which we call purgatory. There is in purgatory, as there is in hell, a "pain of sense," but just as the essential suffering of hell is everlasting separation from God, so also the essential suffering of purgatory lies in the excruciating agony which the soul must suffer at being delayed, even for an instant, from union with God. The soul, let us remember, was *made* for God. Because in this life the body serves (we might say) as an insulator, we do not feel the terrific attraction that God has for the soul. Some of the saints feel that attraction faintly, but most of us feel it hardly at all. However, the moment the soul leaves the body, it is exposed to the full power of God's "pull" upon the soul. Crazy with hunger — with hunger for God — the soul beats itself against the barrier of its own remaining imperfections until finally it is purged by the very agony of its own restraint — and the barrier falls, and God is there!

It is consoling to note that the soul in purgatory suffers joyfully, even though the suffering is of an intensity unknown this side of Judgment. The great difference between the suffering of hell and the suffering of purgatory is the hopelessness of hell's eternal separation against the certainty of purgatory's release. The soul in purgatory would not want to appear before God in its present state, and so there is joy in its agony — joy in the knowledge of the ecstasy to come.

It is evident that no one can know "how long" purgatory lasts for any individual soul. I have put "how long" in quotes because, while there is *duration* beyond the grave, there is no "time" as we know it; no nights and days, no hours and minutes. However, whether we measure purgatory by duration or by intensity (and an instant of twisting torture can be worse than a year of mild discomfort), the fact remains that the soul in purgatory cannot lessen or shorten its own sufferings. But

we the living can help that soul, by the mercy of God; and the frequency of our remembrance, and the endurance of our remembrance, whether of an individual soul or of all the faithful departed, will be measured only by our love.

Discussion: 1. What type of soul is likely to find itself after death, undeserving of hell but unfit for heaven? 2. Why is the doctrine of purgatory so eminently reasonable? 3. In what does the principal suffering of purgatory consist? What is the great difference between the suffering of purgatory and the suffering of hell? 5. Why should we pray for the souls in purgatory?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Realizing that a thousand years of suffering here would be a small price to pay for heaven, I shall let the thought of heaven help me overcome my impatience and annoyance when "things go wrong" with me.
2. If a parent, I shall speak often of the wonders of heaven and the goodness of God, in correcting the wilfulness of my children — and not make them think of God as a hard taskmaster by always threatening them with hell.

THE END OF THE WORLD

IF THERE is one thing that is certain, it is the fact that we do not know when the world will end. It may be tomorrow, it may be a million years from now. Jesus Himself, as we read in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, has indicated some of the portents that must precede the world's dissolution. There will be wars and famine and pestilence; there will be the reign of Antichrist; the sun and the moon will be darkened and the stars will fall from the heavens; the cross will appear in the sky. Only when all this has happened shall we "see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty" (Matt. 24:30). That, however, tells us very little; there already have been wars and famine and pestilence. The Communist domination very easily could be the rule of Antichrist. The spectacles in the sky could happen at any time, and all the prophecies would be fulfilled. On the other hand, the wars and famines and plagues that the world has witnessed up to now may be as nothing compared to those which actually precede the world's end. We just do not know. We can only be ready.

For centuries the twentieth chapter of St. John's Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation in the Protestant versions of the Bible) has provided a source of fascinating material for Scriptural students. There St. John, describing a prophetic vision, says that the devil will be bound and imprisoned for a thousand years, during which the dead will come to life and reign with Christ; at the end of the thousand years the devil will be released and finally vanquished forever, and then will come the second resurrection. Some, such as the Witnesses of Jehovah, have chosen to interpret this passage literally — always a dangerous way to interpret the figures of speech in which prophecy abounds. Those who do take this passage literally and believe that Jesus will come to reign upon earth for a thousand years

before the end of the world, are called millenarists — from the Latin word “millenium,” which means “a thousand years.” This view, however, does not agree with Christ’s own prophecies, and millenarianism is rejected by the Catholic Church as a heresy.

Some Catholic scholars believe that the “thousand years” is a figure of speech for a long period of time before the end of the world, when the Church will enjoy great peace and Christ will reign over the souls of men. The more common interpretation of Catholic Biblical experts, however, is that the “thousand years” represents the whole period of time from Christ’s birth, when Satan, indeed, was chained. All the just who live during this time have a first resurrection by Baptism and reign with Christ so long as they are in the state of grace; and they have a second resurrection at the end of the world. Paralleling this is the first death by sin, and the second death in hell.

Discussion: 1. What do we know for certain about the end of the world? 2. What are some of the portents that must precede the end of the world? 3. Why do these portents not tell us much about the approach of the world’s dissolution? 4. Who are the “millenarists” — what is their belief? 5. In what two ways do Catholic scholars interpret St. John’s “thousand years”?

We have entered into this brief discussion of the millenium because it is a point that may arise in religious discussions with non-Catholic friends. Of more practical import to us, however, are the things which we know for *certain* concerning the end of the world. One such certainty is the fact that, when man’s history ends, the bodies of all who ever have lived will be raised from the dead and will be united again with their proper souls. Since it is the *whole* man, body as well as soul, that has loved God and served God, even at the cost of pain and sacrifice, it is then but just that the *whole* man, body as well as soul, enjoy that eternal union with God which is the reward of love. And since it is the *whole* man who has rejected God by unrepented mortal sin, it is but just that the body share with the

soul in the eternal separation from God which the whole man has chosen for himself. Our risen bodies will, of course, be reconstituted in a way that will free them from the physical limitations which characterize them in this world. They no longer will need food or drink or rest, and will be in some sense "spiritualized." In addition, the bodies of those who are in heaven will be "glorified"; they will possess a perfection and a beauty that will be a participation in the perfection and beauty of the soul which is united with God.

Because the body of a person in whom grace has dwelt has been truly a temple of God, the Church always has insisted upon great reverence being shown to the bodies of the faithful departed. They are committed with loving prayers and ceremony to graves which have been especially blessed to receive them. One human person who escaped the corruption of the grave was the Mother of God. *By the special privilege of her Assumption, the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary, united to her immaculate soul, was glorified and taken into heaven.* Her divine Son, who had taken His flesh from hers, took her unto Himself in heaven—an event which we commemorate on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption.

The world ends, the dead rise again—and then comes the General Judgment. The General Judgment will find Jesus Christ occupying the throne of divine Justice, which had replaced His throne of infinite mercy—the cross. The Last Judgment will hold no surprises for us, as far as our own eternal fate is concerned. We already shall have undergone our own Particular Judgment; our souls already will be in heaven or in hell. The purpose of the Last Judgment is primarily to give glory to God by manifesting to all mankind God's justice, and wisdom, and mercy. The whole of life, which so often has seemed to us like a tangled skein of unrelated events, sometimes harsh and cruel, and even unjust and stupid—all now will be unfolded before us. We shall see how the jigsaw piece of life that we have known, fits into the great magnificent whole of God's plan for man. We shall see how God's wisdom and power, His love and mercy and justice have been at work through it all. "Why does God let this happen?" so often we have complained. "Why doesn't

God do thus and so?" so often we have asked. Now at last we shall know all the answers. The sentence which was passed upon us in our Particular Judgment now will be publicly confirmed. All our sins — and our virtues too — will be exposed to public view. The shallow sentimentalist who said, "I don't believe in hell; God is too good to let a soul suffer forever," now will find that God is not, after all, a doting grandmother. God's justice is just as infinite as His mercy. The souls of the damned, in spite of themselves, now will glorify God's justice forever, as the souls of the just will everlastingly glorify His mercy. For the rest, let us turn to the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and let Jesus Himself (verses 34-46) tell us how to prepare for that last and awful day.

Discussion: 1. Why is it just that our bodies should rise from the dead? 2. What will be the nature of our risen bodies? 3. Why is such reverence shown for the bodies of the dead? 4. What do we commemorate on the Feast of the Assumption? 5. What is the purpose of the Last Judgment? 6. What will the Last Judgment accomplish?

Most of us probably would wince if someone were to call us a saint. We are too conscious of our imperfections to accept such a title. And yet, in the early Church, all faithful members of the Mystical Body of Christ were classified as saints. It was St. Paul's favorite term for members of the Christian community. He speaks of "the saints who are at Ephesus" (Eph. 1:1) and the "saints that are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1). The Acts of the Apostles, which is the history of the infant Church, also classifies as saints all who are followers of Christ.

The word "saint" derives from the Latin word "sanctus," which means "holy." Every Christian soul, incorporated with Christ by Baptism, and harboring within himself the Holy Spirit (so long as he remains in the state of sanctifying grace) *is* holy, *is* a saint in the original meaning of the word. Nowadays, of course, the word "saint" is limited generally to those who are in heaven. But it is the original meaning of the word that we

are using when we say, in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe . . . in the communion of saints." The word "communion" here means "union with" (again from the Latin), and we are saying that we believe that there exists a union, a fellowship, an intercourse among all souls in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. This fellowship includes first of all ourselves, members of the Church here upon earth. Our "branch" of the communion of saints is called the Church militant—that is, the Church still struggling, still fighting against sin and error. If we should fall into mortal sin, we do not cease to be members of the communion of saints; but we are cut off from all spiritual interchange with our fellows as long as we continue to exclude the Holy Spirit from our soul.

The souls in purgatory also are members of the communion of saints. They are established in grace forever, even though their minor sins and debts of penance have still to be purged away. They cannot yet see God, but the Holy Spirit is in them and with them, never again to be lost. We often refer to this branch of the Church as the Church suffering.

There is, finally, the Church triumphant, made up of all the souls of the blessed in heaven. This is the everlasting Church. Into it will be absorbed, after the last Judgment, both the Church militant and the Church suffering.

Discussion: 1. How did St. Paul use the word "saint"? 2. Why do we have a right to be called saints? 3. What do we mean by "the Church militant"? 4. To what "branch" of the communion of saints do the souls in purgatory belong? 5. Which is the everlasting Church?

And now, what does the communion of saints mean for us in practice? It means that all of us who are united in Christ—the saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory, and we upon earth—must be mindful of the needs of one another. The saints in heaven are not so rapt in their own bliss as to forget the souls they have left behind. They could not forget if they would. Their perfect love for God must include a love for all the souls

whom God has made and adorned with His graces, all the souls in whom God Himself dwells, all the souls for whom Jesus died. In short, the saints *must* love the souls whom God loves. The love that the blessed in heaven have for the souls in purgatory and the souls on earth is not a passive love. We might call it an active, *hungry* love. The saints long to help onward to heaven all souls, whose precious value they now realize as never before. And if the prayer of a good man on earth has power with God, there is no estimating the power of the prayers which the saints offer for us. They are God's heroes, God's intimate friends and familiars.

The saints in heaven pray for the souls in purgatory and for us. We for our part must reverence and honor the saints. Not just because they can and will pray for us; but also because our love for God demands it. An artist is honored when his works are praised. The saints are masterpieces of God's grace; when we honor them, we are honoring their Maker, their Sanctifier and their Redeemer. Honor given to the saints is not honor taken from God. On the contrary, it is honor given to God in a manner which He Himself has indicated and desires. And it is worth remembering that when we honor the saints, we are undoubtedly honoring many of our own loved ones who now are with God in heaven. *Every* soul in heaven is a saint, not just the canonized ones. That is why, in addition to special feast days for certain canonized saints, the Church dedicates one day to the honor of the whole Church triumphant, the Feast of All Saints on November 1.

As members of the communion of saints, we upon earth also pray for the suffering souls in purgatory. They cannot help themselves now; their time for meriting is past. But we can help them by the favor of God. We can relieve their sufferings and speed them on to heaven by our prayers for them, by the Masses we offer and have offered for them, by the indulgences we gain for them. (Almost all indulgences granted by the Church can be applied to the souls in purgatory, if we make that intention.) Whether or not the souls in purgatory can pray for us we do not know, but we do know that once they

are numbered among the saints in heaven they surely will remember us who remembered them in their need and will be our special intercessors with God.

It is obvious that we upon earth must also pray for and help one another if we are to be faithful to our obligations as members of the communion of saints. We must have a truly supernatural love for one another, practicing the virtue of fraternal charity in thought and word and deed, especially by performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. If we are to assure ourselves of *permanent* membership in the communion of saints, we dare not take lightly our responsibilities here.

And here the story of man's salvation ends, the story that the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, has written. With the end of the world, and the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment, the Holy Spirit's work is ended. His work of sanctification began with the creation of Adam's soul. For the Church it began on Pentecost Sunday. For you and me it began on the day of our Baptism. As time ends and only eternity remains, the Holy Spirit's work finds its fruition in the communion of saints, now one single company in everlasting glory.

Discussion: 1. What does the communion of saints mean for us in practice? 2. Why is it certain that the saints in heaven want to help us? 3. Why must we honor the saints in heaven? 4. Why should we have a *personal* interest in the saints in heaven? 5. How can we help the souls in purgatory? 6. As members of the communion of saints, what are our obligations to one another?

MY APOSTOLATE:

1. Keeping in mind that, until the very end of time, the world is going to be a better or a worse world as a result of my having lived in it, I shall try my very best to be a willing instrument in the hand of God for the doing of His will. "What would God probably want?"

rather than "What do I want?" will be the basis of my decisions.

2. I shall let no day go by without a prayer for the souls in purgatory; I shall try to gain all the indulgences that I can for them.
3. Every morning as I dress, this shall be my prayer: "O Lord, grant that everyone I meet today may find his burden a little lighter — and not heavier — for having met me."

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