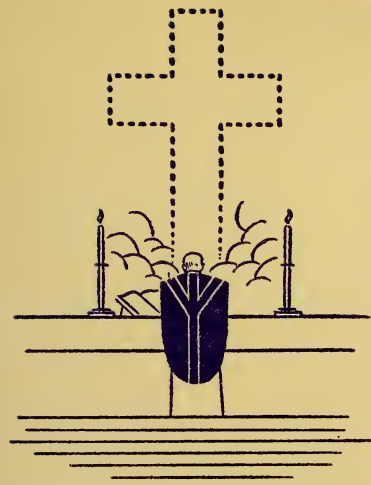


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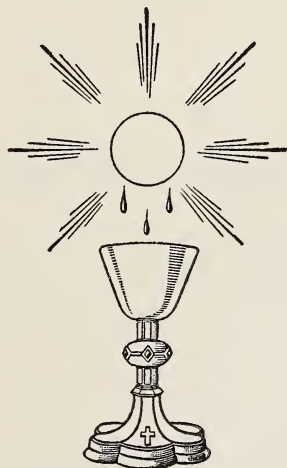
THE DRAMA OF  
**Eternal Love**

*Narrated by*  
**RT. REV. MSGR. WILLIAM J. McDONALD, Ph.D.**

*Celebrated by*  
**REV. THOMAS O'DONNELL, C.S.C.**



# The Drama Of Love Eternal



## An Explanation Of The Mass

Narrated by: Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. McDonald, Ph.D.

Celebrated by: Rev. Thomas O'Donnell, C.S.C.



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# KNOW THE MASS

Address delivered on February 3

Part I. *Beginning to Gloria*  
"I will go to the altar of God"

## 1. *Introduction*

Welcome to our program! We think you will find it not only different but, in a real sense, unique! We are going to present, in a friendly and informal—although, we hope, reverent—manner, what has rightly been called the most wonderful and impressive drama in all the world, a drama not just of human but also of Divine love, namely, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Whether you are one who, as a Catholic, attends Mass regularly or one who goes only on special occasions as a guest—perhaps to the wedding of a relative or the funeral of a friend,—you must have sometimes wondered about the real reason for the Mass and the precise meaning of what the priest wears and says and does. To some, I suppose, it may appear to be just a mere pantomime, or a gorgeous but meaningless pageant of ritual. Now suppose that you were to come into my study to ask for an explanation of the Mass and that while we were talking together we could also

watch a priest offering the Holy Sacrifice. I could then tell you in a much more vivid way what was going on and why. This is the fortunate position we happen to be in here. I have asked a friend of mine, Father Thomas O'Donnell, to be the celebrant of our televised Mass and he is now making his preparation.

The Mass is in reality one continuous action and since we intend for your benefit to break it up into four parts—one part for each succeeding Sunday—as well as to show certain features in slow motion, as it were, therefore you will understand that this will not be a real sacrifice although every detail will be presented precisely as if it were. In any event the obligation that Catholics have to hear Mass on Sundays and holidays could not be fulfilled through television but it is our fervent hope that "shut-ins" and those who because of some disability or grave reason are prevented from actually attending the Holy Sacrifice will derive some consolation and spiritual profit from our portrayal. It is to such souls and to all who are honestly seeking truth and self-betterment

that our program is especially dedicated.

## 2. *Preparation for Mass*

### i. *The Altar*

And now while Father is getting ready suppose we take a look at the altar or the scene where Mass is to take place. It is, first of all, specially blessed or consecrated for this purpose. The flat part of the altar is, simply, a table resembling the table you have seen in pictures of the Last Supper at which Christ sat with his companions on the night before He died. This as we shall see is the great historical event, the death of Christ, which the Mass commemorates and continues. The entire altar, especially of course, the cross at the top reminds us of Mount Calvary where He was crucified. The table is covered with three linen cloths representing those wrapped around Our Lord's Body while He was buried in the tomb before His Resurrection.

The missal, a word coming from the same origin as Mass itself, is the book on the wooden stand on your right as you face the altar. (That's called the epistle side, the other is the gospel side). It contains the prayers and Scriptural lessons read at Mass while the three altar cards,

one in the center and one on either side, conveniently reproduce certain prayers said while the priest happens to be in that particular place. The flowers are ornaments. They betoken the graces and virtues which adorn the soul close to God. The acolyte, or altar boy as he is generally called, is now lighting the candles. These servers, incidentally, are important helpers who play a special role because they represent the people in their actions and responses. At every Mass there must be candles burning on the altar, at least two, and four for a sung Mass such as we are to have here. These candles were practical necessities in the early days of the Church when Mass was often said underground in the darkness of the Catacombs. They still retain their mystical significance. What a wealth of meaning there is in such a simple thing as a lighted candle! Light, in general, signifies faith. The burning candle represents the Godman, the light of the world; the bright flame symbolizes His Divinity, the candle itself His humanity. The wick is His soul and since the candle must be of pure beeswax we have here also an emblem of Our Blessed Lord's most pure body.



## ii. *The Vestments*

Comparatively few lay persons ever have occasion to see the sacristy or room near the altar where we now join the celebrant. He has washed his hands in order, as it were, to wash away the dust and stains of the world. Before him you see, neatly arranged, the costume or special articles of dress he is to put on. These, as practically everything else in the Mass, are saturated with history and meaning. The outer garb may be of different colors depending upon the Saint or mystery in honor of which Mass is offered. These colors lend beauty and variety as well as a rich and deep symbolism. Red is for martyrs who have shed their blood for the faith, also for the Holy Spirit who kindles in our hearts the red flame of love. Green, often used on Sundays, denotes the spring-time of hope, purple is for penance; black appears in requiem Masses for the dead; while white (used today because we have selected, for special reasons, not the Mass of this Sunday but that in honor of Our Lady of Mercy) signifies the bright lustre of purity, holiness and heavenly joy.

Altogether the priest wears

six special vestments for Mass. As he puts on each one he says a special prayer which indicates the dispositions he should bring to the altar, driving home the fact that his whole life should be a preparation for Mass as the life of Our Lord was for Calvary. Although these garments do not conform to today's style most of them would appear familiar to a Roman citizen of the early Christian centuries since they are simply the "Sunday clothes" worn generally at that time.

Not so, however, the *amice* or oblong piece of linen which he now places on his head, wraps around his shoulders and fastens with strings. This was introduced in the Middle Ages and worn first as a hood or head-dress. It is the helmet of hope and salvation and takes the place of the cloth with which Christ was blindfolded.

Next the *alb*, a wide white linen robe covering the entire body. This is the old tunic once worn by persons of dignity. Our Lord was so clothed by Herod in the garment of a fool but, significantly, it represents spotless innocence.

The tunic was bound around the waist by a belt or sash. This is now the *cincture* or rope with which the Redeemer was tied

while being scourged. It means mortification, the quenching of the fires of passion.

The remainder of the vestments are always of the color required by the occasion. The *maniple*, which he kisses and places on his left arm, was originally a handkerchief carried in the hand or thrown over the arm much as a waiter carries a napkin. It suitably reminds us of Christ's passion. We should purify our souls with the perspiration of good works and tears of penance.

The *stole* is a long silken strip with a cross in the center which he also kisses before placing it over his shoulders and tying it in the form of a cross. It is a sign of office, the distinctive badge of the deacon, once worn by judges and those in authority much as traffic officers wear their safety straps today. In the Mass we may conceive it as the cord tied around Our Savior's neck. It also signifies immortality regained through His sufferings.

Finally he puts on the *chasuble* which gets its name from *casula*, meaning a little house. This broad cape-like garment with ample folds began as a weather cloak and is still used as such today in some parts of the

world. It signifies the warmth of charity and protection against the powers of evil. It covers the other vestments as charity does the virtues. The cross on the back is the sweet burden of Christ. Together the front and back represent love of God and of neighbor and the twofold object for which every Mass is offered, namely, to honor God and to sanctify our fellow human beings.

### iii. *The Choir*

As he puts on his cap or biretta, takes the covered chalice, which we shall explain later, bows to the cross and proceeds toward the altar the people stand as a mark of respect and the choir begins to sing the first part of the Mass, the Introit, which means "he is entering." The official music of the Church when Mass is sung is plain chant and like other parts of the sacred liturgy, the bows of the head, the bending of the knee, it is intended to appeal to the whole human being and to bring every power of our personality into an attitude of reverence. The Mass is a community, not an individual, service. Many parts, such as the Introit, the Kyrie, and the Gloria are frequently sung by the whole assembly, otherwise

they lose much of their force. Music helps to elevate the mind and heart and makes divine worship more solemn and majestic. St. Paul advises that we should be "singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord." (Ephesians, V, 19). We know that Christ Himself sang with his followers. St. Matthew tells us that "they sang a hymn and went out to Mount Olivet." (Matthew XXVI, 30). Pliny the Younger refers to chants in honor of the Christ-God in the first Christian assemblies.

### 3. *Beginning of Mass*

#### i. *Preliminaries and Opening Prayers*

Now the priest genuflects at the center and goes up to the middle of the Altar. He places the veiled chalice on a square white linen cloth called the corporal because on it the consecrated Host, the Body of Christ, will later rest. He moves to the epistle side and marks in the missal the Mass to be said. (Sometimes the chalice and its appurtenances are put on the altar before Mass and the missal is already prepared). Returning to the center he bows to the cross and descends to the foot of the altar where, having genuflected again, he begins the

Mass by making the Sign of the Cross. This is part of the symbolic language of the liturgy and since earliest Christian times has been the sacred symbol of salvation. It is a digest of essential Christian beliefs representing not only the Cross on which Christ died for all but also invoking at the same time the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Notice the celebrant is speaking in Latin. People often ask why the Mass is in a language they can't understand. Well, not all of it or everywhere. The Mass is said in other tongues Greek, Syriac, Coptic, for instance and even in our Western world, where Latin is now used almost exclusively because of its universal and changeless character, words from other languages still remain as we shall see. How wonderful to think that we are actually pronouncing the exact words used by the great saints in ages past and that the Mass is the same no matter where you may be! Besides Latin is one of the languages in which the inscription over the Cross was written. Thus it is not only consecrated by long use giving us as in the case of the vestments, a panoramic sweep of the ages but it has also a clearness and dig-

nity befitting the great central act of Christian worship. Its use in no way prevents understanding since all are urged to follow what the priest says word for word in a translation. Using your English Missal is the ideal way to know and participate in the Holy Sacrifice.

Most of the Mass prayers are taken from the Bible; thus they have a beauty and sublime quality surpassing human genius. The priest begins by saying "I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth." This expresses the dominant note of the early part of the Mass which is one of gladness not sadness. Whether young or old we can all say it because it expresses a longing for the altar of God where alone real rejuvenation, a new spiritual life, is possible. This longing is continued in the 42nd psalm now being recited. This psalm, ascribed to King David, expresses in the beautiful lyric poetry of the Hebrews the desire of the chosen people to return to the Holy City of Jerusalem. Anciently it was recited by those not yet baptized as they marched in procession for the early part of the Mass which is mostly intended for their instruction. Aware of his own imperfections the priest implores

the heavenly Father to distinguish his purpose from that of the godless. Hope is restored as he recalls the mercy of the Lord and bows his head saying "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit," the ending which most frequently concludes all our prayers.

The Confiteor or Confession, which he now makes while inclining profoundly in humble self-accusation is an admission of sin and a petition for help. It has been well said that to appreciate its dramatic nature we must picture the penitent standing at the throne of God around Whom are the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints. There is the Archangel Michael who stood at the gate of Eden with a flaming sword; yonder is St. John the Baptist, the great Apostle of penance who announced the coming of Christ. The sinner, bowing low, admits before all heaven he has erred. His act of contrition rises to a climax in the *mea culpa*, "through my fault," and *mea maxima culpa*, "through my most grave fault." Then he appeals for help to all the heavenly court and to the good Lord Himself. And he hears the promise of God's pardon coming from the servers who likewise now confess in the name of all the people



their sense of unworthiness. They, in turn, receive absolution from the priest, who then says a few more short verses and as he goes up the steps two prayers, further pleas for mercy and expressions of reliance, because he is now approaching the Holy of Holies. At the words "whose relics are here" of the second prayer he kisses the altar because there, in a small stone slab embedded in the wood are the relics of the saints and also because it represents Christ, the corner-stone of the Church. Thus the Church, that is, the bride salutes Christ, the bridegroom.

### ii. *The Introit*

What we have seen so far is really only the prologue. The drama proper now starts with the Sign of the Cross made by the priest as he reads the Introit. Certain parts of the Mass are always the same while others vary. Here begins the changeable portion of the Mass. Generally consisting of a fragment of Scripture and part of a psalm the Introit strikes the keynote of the particular feast or season. Sometimes it is in a vein of joy and praise such as "To thee have I lifted up my soul" and sometimes, as today, in a strain of tenderness, pity and love. Often

the opening verse ends with a twofold "alleluia" which as in the case of *Amen* meaning Truly or "may it be as you say," is also a Hebrew word for "Praise ye the Lord." These have a force and compactness that cannot really be translated. The frequent repetition of the lovely liquid Alleluia reminds one of waves of prayer washing, so to speak, around the throne of God.

### iii. *The Kyrie Eleison*

The next prayer which the priest says standing at the middle of the altar with hands united in supplication is not in Hebrew or in Latin but in Greek, *Kyrie eleison*, Lord have mercy on us, said three times to God the Father, then changing to *Christe eleison*, Christ have mercy on us, repeated three times to God the Son and again a triple *Kyrie eleison* to the Holy Spirit. The *Kyrie* is also a link with antiquity since it was given its present form in the Mass by Pope St. Gregory the Great nearly 1500 years ago. Originally it was part of a much longer litany sung alternately by two choirs or by clergy and lay people. Nothing illustrates better the back and forth dialogue of the Mass between God and us as well as between priest and people

than this plaintive plea reminiscent of the touching appeal of the poor blind man in the Gospel who when he heard that Jesus was passing by cried out repeatedly "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." (Mark X, 46-54). The Mass is indeed the "transitus Domini," the passing of the Lord, but to see this we must have eyes of faith.

#### iv. *The Gloria*

Suddenly the whole tone changes. On festive occasions the celebrant, standing in the center, elevating and uniting his hands in a sweeping gesture of invitation intones the opening words of the beautiful song of the angels on the first Christmas, "Gloria in excelsis Deo," "Glory to God in the highest," and the choir takes up its heavenly strains. The initial sentence of the Gloria is found in the 2nd chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke and the rest "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee" and so on, was added by the early Fathers of the Church. Its meaning here is clear. Christ Who was born at Bethlehem is about to be re-born on the altar. Hence the joyous outpouring of the heart of the Church, the notes that peal forth in a torrent of unremitting

praise. This exquisite song has been compared to "the roaring of many Waters," to Niagara with its endlessly cascading stream of prayer bringing the only shimmer of hope for our poor broken bleeding world. Truly "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of" and the Mass is the prayer par excellence.

#### 4. *Conclusion to this Section*

##### "Know the Mass"

And so with the singing of this glorious hymn of praise and with the strains of its heavenly harmony in our ears we conclude this first part of our presentation of the Mass. The Gloria summarizes very well the twofold purpose of the Holy Sacrifice. 1) Glory to God. He is the reason for our existence as well as for our presence at Mass. The most perfect glory given to God, the only really adequate worship is through Christ, His Divine Son made man. As God He can speak to God, as man He can speak for us. He alone can completely appease the Eternal Father. 2) Peace on earth. The result is reconciliation, peace, and peace here includes all blessings, love and joy and hope and security. These are promised to all persons of good will.

So the Mass brings us a message from heaven as quickening and refreshing as rain upon the parched earth. That is why we believe that in the Mass we have the greatest treasure in all the world and because it's so good and precious we want you to know about it, too. We hope you found this first part of interest. It's only the beginning and we'll be looking forward to having you with us next week. Meanwhile why not drop in to the Catholic Church in your

neighborhood preferably when Mass is going on and say a prayer. Talk to the priest: he'll be happy to give you fuller information. And if you would like to study further what we have tried to tell you today please write in for a free printed copy of our description. We'll be glad to send it to you. So until next Sunday may the good Lord Who comes to us in the Mass be with you and may Mary, His Blessed Mother, protect you in her sheltering embrace.

# PRAY THE MASS

Address delivered on February 10

## *End of Gloria to Sanctus*

“Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable.”

### 1. *Introduction*

Welcome once again to the great drama of the Mass! Last week we saw the first act in our portrayal of the Holy Sacrifice. We learned that the Mass is not just an empty spectacle; that, on the contrary, every word and every action is filled with meaning. Even the vestments or clothes worn by the priest speak eloquently of the agelessness of the sacred rite. Besides they impress on him, and indeed, on all of us the purity and perfection we should try to bring with us to the altar of God. The laity are not passive but active participants in the Mass; each one present is a co-actor in the drama. It is especially this unity and co-operation of priest and people that is emphasized in the second part which we are about to present.

The prologue was mainly concerned with the work of preparation, that is, the interior cleansing of the soul. In the opening prayers, notably the Confiteor,

we strive to remove obstacles impeding our approach to God by a humble admission of guilt. The vivid realization of our condition fills us with dread and deepest sorrow. In ascending the steps, approaching as it were the Holy of Holies, the priest invokes the help of the saints, those close to God, and kisses the altar where their relics are kept. The Introit sets the tone proper to the particular feast or season. At the Kyrie eleison we are so overpowered by a sense of weakness and unworthiness that we break into the touching and oft-repeated plea for pity, Lord, have mercy on us, Christ, have mercy on us. Then filled with the thought of the helps God will give us we are impelled to cry out in joy and gratitude the Gloria, Glory to God in the highest, that jubilant hymn of praise which sums up the two great purposes for which Mass is offered, to honor Almighty God and thus bring much-needed peace to the world.

### 2. *Collects, Epistle and Gradual*

#### i. *The Prayers*

The process of cleansing continues but now begins also the



enlightening of the soul by means of prayers and heavenly messages contained in readings from Sacred Scripture. Having once more ascended the steps the priest kisses the altar as if to say, "Pardon me Lord, for turning my back on you" and then facing the people, who remain standing, he makes a comprehensive gesture with his hands in order to include everybody and sings a greeting which is to recur many times during the Mass, *Dominus vobiscum*, the Lord be with you. This was the way the early Christians saluted each other and it is still used in certain countries, Syria, for instance, and Ireland where such beautiful phrases as "The Lord prosper you," and "God be with you" are often heard along the road. Our familiar "Goodbye" is the same thing in short form, "God be with you." The meaning is obvious. As long as you are in God's friendship, that is, in the state of grace, all is well. And the servers replying for us wish the same to the priest, "And with thy spirit." Actually as in the early times we should all answer this greeting and try to translate it into action. How can we expect the Lord to be with us unless we put ourselves definite-

ly on His side? "He who is not with Me is against Me."

Immediately after the *Dominus vobiscum* the priest goes to the book, holds his hands up and apart, as Moses did of old, and sings "Oremus." This is the crisp, rousing call to prayer. He says to us with alarm clock effect: "Come, let us pray." The name given to these prayers—there may be more than one depending on the occasion—*Collecta* or combined prayers again stresses the notion of unity. In former times *Collect* actually meant the whole assembly gathered for divine worship. Like the others in the Mass it is not private but a liturgical or public prayer. It should be said in common by all for all. Prayer, of course, is our life-line to God. Our Lord assured us "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you." This is an opportune time and so the S.O.S. signals to heaven during Mass may be for various purposes. In the Missal we find them under such headings as, "For Our Holy Father," "For our civil rulers," "For our family" and "For devoted friends." "For fine weather" and so on. With slight variations the ending is "Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who with Thee and with

the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever," to which we answer, "Amen," "May it be as you say." We make the priest's request ours, asking God to count us in, too.

### ii. The Epistle

Having finished the prayer or prayers, the priest places both hands on the book grasping, as it were, the hand of the Church for guidance and reads the epistle. The people are seated. So far we have been talking to God. Now, He speaks to us. Through His revealed Word, we hear news-flashes, words of advice, encouragement or warning from His chosen saints and writers. In this Mass the lesson is from the Book of Wisdom, a passage from the Old Testament referring typically to Our Blessed Lady. Frequently the epistle is taken from one of St. Paul's many letters and contains some appropriate message such as "Now is the hour to rise from sleep" or "We exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain" or "Charity is patient, is kind." At the end we thank God with a fervent *Deo gratias*."

### iii Gradual and Tract

Now occurs possibly the only gesture in the Mass not prescribed by the liturgy. At the end of

the epistle the priest turns his head slightly or places his left hand on the altar but this is simply a signal to the server to come and move the book. In olden times a procession formed at this point—we still have it in a Solemn Mass—and during the procession the Gradual and Tract now being read by the priest were sung. Gradual comes from *gradus*, a step, because the one who intoned it was standing on a step and Tract is from *Tractus*, a musical term referring to the slow, protracted measure. On special occasions, Easter, say, or Pentecost, the Gradual is omitted and instead the powerful cry, Alleluia falls on our ears repeatedly like claps of thunder followed by what is called the Sequence, generally a long canticle or hymn. However, all this chant in between serves only to form a transition or dying away echo between the epistle and the gospel.

### 3. The Gospel

While the server moves the book the celebrant comes to the center of the altar, raises his eyes toward the cross and then, with head bowed and hands joined, says the *Munda cor meum* begging Almighty God to give him the right kind of heart

and to sear his lips with a burning coal, in order that he might be worthy to announce the gospel, the "good news" which Christ brought into the world. The priest goes to the book, now on the other side which is reserved solely for the Gospel, said here and at the end of the Mass. The change of sides signifies the difference between the Old Law and the New. As the people stand (they do so whenever the priest sings) the celebrant gives the familiar greeting "The Lord be with you" which receives the customary response. Then he chants the heading "The continuation (or beginning) of the Holy Gospel according" to whichever one of the four Evangelists it happens to be. In this Mass it is from St. Luke. The gospel, as you know, is the living word of God. It contains an authentic record of the sayings, doings, and sufferings of Christ. That is why as the priest pronounces this opening sentence he imprints a cross with his thumb on that part of the book and then on his forehead, mouth and breast. The sign on the book is to express that the whole doctrine of salvation conveyed by the gospel is summed up in the mystery of the Cross and by the other signs the priest

and faithful show they wish to preserve the symbol of their Redemption in mind and heart and proclaim it with their lips. At the end of the gospel the priest lifts the book, inclines a little and kisses it at the beginning of the passage read thereby showing our great reverence and affection for the Holy Scripture. At the same time he says in a low tone, "By the words of the Gospel may our sins be blotted out" and the server addressing Christ directly says in the name of all, "Praise be to Thee."

#### 4. *The Credo*

If there were a sermon it would come naturally at this point by way of an explanation of the gospel. Otherwise the celebrant, standing once more in the middle of the altar, and again extending, raising and joining his hands intones the initial words of the Credo, I believe in one God, and the choir and people unite with him in the great act of faith. Each one, as it were, answers the voice of God heard in the gospel by saying "I believe." A summary of Christian doctrine the Nicene Creed here recited is so-called because its central truth, the Divinity of Christ, is almost literally reproduced from the words of the

Council of Nice held in 325. This was the first general meeting of the Bishops after the Church was first granted freedom under Constantine. The Creed, corresponding on the religious level to our Declaration of Independence and Constitution, contains the things we stand for. It represents the bond which unites all believers, priests and people, in mind and heart and to hear it chanted in unison by representatives of various nationalities, as, happens at Lourdes, is a truly unforgettable experience. One understands then that international peace and harmony depend not on externals, not on material possessions or on a forced uniformity; they can be attained only through the free acceptance of common beliefs and principles. The best formula was given long ago, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." This is the ancient faith for which men and women have suffered and are still suffering even in our age of freedom. It is the victory which conquers the world. Without faith — a guiding star not just a leap in the dark—there can be no hope here or hereafter.

You noticed that all genuflected toward the middle of the

Credo. That was at the words which recall the fact that Our Lord "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary; and was made man." (Also the priest bowed his head a couple of times during its recital and at the final words made the sign of the Cross.)

### 5. *The Offertory*

Now we come to the Eucharistic Sacrifice properly so-called. In olden days all those not yet baptized or not in full membership with the Church had to leave before the Credo. Hence the distinction, between the Mass of the Catechumens (those under instruction) and the part which begins here. This Mass of the Faithful, as it is called, comprises the three essential acts of sacrifice, (1) the Offertory or offering, (2) the Consecration or sacrificial action proper, (3) the Communion, which is the participation in and completion of the sacrifice. Today we shall have time to show you only what happens at the Offertory or Oblation.

First there is a repetition of the *Dominus vobiscum*. The priest will not turn to give this greeting again for quite some time. Then he sings with the same awakening effect the *Ore-*



*mus* after which he says in a low voice an anthem or short verse. Actually the term *Offertory* includes the whole series of prayers that is to follow. It was at this time that the people once brought their gifts, bread and wine to be used in the Holy Sacrifice. It must be unleavened bread, from pure wheaten flour mixed with natural water. Now the priest spreads the corporal so called because on it the Body of Christ will rest and, having removed the veil and the pall (a square piece of carboard covered with linen), he lifts up the paten, a little plate of gold or silver on which is the altar bread or round white wafer specially baked for this purpose. It must be unleavened bread, from pure wheaten flour mixed with natural water. On presenting it he says a prayer in which he tells God that he is offering "this unspotted victim" (the Mass being one action the priest can call it that already) not only for his own sins and failings but for all present and for the dead as well as the living. Then taking the chalice, a gold or silver cup—the interior at least must be gilt with gold—he pours in wine, the other element required for the Holy Sacrifice. The wine used must be pressed from ripe

grapes, fully fermented, and not falling below or exceeding a certain alcoholic content. To this the priest, having first blessed it, adds a few drops of water (the amount must be less than one eighth the quantity of wine) saying at the same time a significant prayer, "O God Who in creating human nature did wonderfully dignify it" etc. which brings out the idea that the mingling of the wine and water is not only a symbol of the union in Christ of two natures, human and divine, but also of the fact that we are "made partakers of His divine nature." When Our Lord's side was pierced on the Cross blood and water gushed forth. The cup and its contents thus suggest union through suffering. "Father," He said during His Passion, "if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me, nevertheless not My Will but Thine be done."

Now the priest lifts up the chalice saying the prayer "We offer" (note that "We") "to Thee, O Lord, the Chalice of salvation" and then having covered it he bows down fittingly for the "In spiritu humilitatis" begging God to accept the sacrificial elements now prepared. Then arising and elevating his hands he blesses them and goes over to the epistle

side where he washes the thumb and forefinger of both hands and dries them reciting the Psalm: "I will wash my hands among the innocent." We wash our hands before we eat; therefore this action besides its purifying signification also points to what is to come. Before the last Supper the Master washed the feet of His followers, a rite still observed on Holy Thursday.

Having said, while inclining before the center of the altar, another prayer of offering in which he asks the Holy Trinity to accept the gifts "Which we make Thee, in memory of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord" the priest turns and by action and word invites those present to unite with him saying, "Orate fratres," "Pray, brethren that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God," and we obey by asking the Lord to "receive this sacrifice for the praise and glory of His name, for our benefit and for that of His Holy Church." As the priest recites the secret prayer a holy sense of quiet, of anticipation falls over the group. The climax is now approaching. But before the great silence the stillness is broken for a while by the tones of the Preface, beginning with a sublime dialogue

which exhorts us amongst other things to "lift up our hearts" and to "give thanks to God." This gratitude on our part is right and fitting. It is profitable for us "at all times and in all places to give thanks to our Eternal Father." So at the end of the Preface we should join with the priest who, bowing low, says (while the choir sings) the Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus etc. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

#### *Concluding Message*

"Pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable." Why shouldn't we all take this invitation seriously? Each one—you, and you and you—can be a co-actor in this drama. Why not pray the Mass along with us? Surely here is one place we can all get together no matter what our differences of race or color, temperament or outlook. The Mass is for everybody; we have seen how it stresses the notion of unity. The prayers and ceremonies insist on the share of the faithful in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. Although not possessing the sacerdotal charac-

ter lay persons may have, in a true sense, certain priestly powers. This follows from our incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ. He is the Head; we are the members. So when Christ, our Head, offers the Holy Sacrifice—we shall see that the priest takes His place and speaks in His Name—then all Christians offer it with Him. The various parts of the body cannot be passive; they get life and motion from and share vitally in those of the brain and soul. In the Mass we do not pray alone. In fact it is not we who pray; rather it is Christ and the Church praying through each one of us. Thus we derive support and strengthen from unity.

Last week we invited you to know the Mass. Now we may go further and beg of you to PRAY the Mass with us. Maybe it will mean a little self-denial but that,

too, is part of the idea of sacrifice. Both wise and simple brought their offerings to Christ. No matter who you are you can bring Him yours too, the greatest gift outside of the Mass—the gift of yourself. And in that offering of yourself with all you have, including your worries, you will find the greatest peace you have ever known. How could we hate somebody if we recall: “He and I pray together” “We knelt together at Mass this morning”? So write to us for our free booklet which will give you more information and be with us again next Sunday for the high-point of our program. Meanwhile pray and, if possible, speak to some priest. He will tell you exactly how you can discover what the one-time great sinner, St. Augustine, found; that in the Mass we have “the mystery of devotion, the center of unity, and the bond of peace.”

# LOVE THE MASS

Address delivered on February 17

*The Mass—Drama of Eternal Love*

Part III: *Love the Mass*

Beginning of Canon to Pater Noster

*"This is My Body: This is My Blood"*

I. *Introduction* (Choir picks up from last week: Celebrant says Sanctus—Bells ringing—Then silence.)

Have you ever stood in a crowd awaiting the arrival of some great hero or important person? For a while there is a buzz of confusion and anticipation. Then as the appointed time draws near the noise dies down and a hushed silence falls over the scene. Somebody says "He is coming," a quiver runs through the crowd and each one, caught up by the enthusiasm of the moment remains still. Such is the atmosphere now as we approach the most solemn part of the Mass. The sacred moment of sacrifice is near: the tension increases. We are on our way to Calvary to await the Divine Guest, the Conqueror of sin and death. Truly we can say: "This is our finest hour." And the

silence, the profound stillness which reigns, is most fitting. The priest, like Moses, is now on the mountain top communing with God. Besides did not Our Blessed Lord Himself before His Mass on Calvary maintain silence in the face of His accusers?

So the drama of the Mass is now rapidly approaching its climax. You who have patiently followed us so far will have noticed not only a unity which runs like a thread through the first two parts but also a gradual heightening, an increasing intensity rising from the Confiteor or Confession through the readings from Sacred Scripture, the Epistle and Gospel, to the Credo or testament of faith and the Preface, the prayer of thanksgiving which we have just concluded. We saw that the Mass is a two-way communication. First, we speak to God, then He speaks to us. But not content with just talking to God we offer Him something, bread and wine, common elements which in a sense represent all creation. This offering is the first essential idea in the notion of sacrifice which might be described as an



act of Divine worship whereby something is destroyed, or changed and then presented to God in recognition of His Supreme mastery over all. We shall see in a moment how this happens in the Mass. We shall see also that our poor humble gifts to God are not rejected. He not only accepts them but He gives us something in return, something far beyond our deserts.

## II. *The Canon*

### 1. *General*

Meanwhile let us pick up the sequence from last week. On that as well as on the previous occasion we concluded with the singing by the choir of an angelic song. The first part ended with the Gloria and last Sunday we closed with the singing of the Sanctus. That followed the Preface and a preface is always by way of introducing something. Here it ushers in what may be called the nucleus or the very heart of the Mass. This part, in itself a complete unit, is called the Canon. Canon means a set rule, a fixed formula, and indeed it has remained essentially unchanged since about the year 600. Its lovely literary style, its beauty and simplicity are such that it would almost

seem to be heaven inspired. But the Canon is not simply a matter of words, important as each word is. Words are but signs, especially when we are in intimate contact with the unseen world. What is done is even more important. Therefore the Canon is also called the "action" of the Mass. In point of fact the phrases so often used such as "the priest says Mass" and "the people hear Mass" are somewhat misleading. We saw already that the people are not just listeners or bystanders; they play an active role in union with the celebrant and with Christ Whom he represents. Perhaps a better expression, if it were permissible, would be to say that the priest "did" Mass and the people helped him do it. At any rate to derive maximum profit we must never lose sight of the fact that the Mass is an action and the proper attitude is one of active participation.

### 2. *The First Three Prayers of the Canon*

This part of the sacred ritual brings out very well the four purposes for which every Mass is offered, to adore, to thank, to ask, and to atone. In the Preface as, of course, in the Gloria and

elsewhere, we give thanks; soon at the Consecration we shall unite in the infinite act of adoration and atonement which Christ offers to His Eternal Father. But immediately preceding this almost frightening event the priest now says three prayers of petition and of remembrance. They are really one as appears from the single conclusion at the end of the third prayer. The priest standing in the middle of the altar, extends and raises his hands, lifts his eyes to the Cross and then joining his hands again bows low for the beginning of the Canon.

i. *The Church*: First he prays for the Church. Bending he kisses the altar in reverence and then makes the sign of the Cross three times over the bread and wine. It is interesting to note the relation between the kiss and the Cross. At one time the priest kissed not the altar but the first letter of the Canon, which is a capital T, resembling one form of the Cross. From now on the Cross becomes more and more prominent, its shadow begins to fall heavily across the liturgy and our lives. Having asked the Father to bless "these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unspotted sacrifices" the priest

extends his hands and makes his first request, for the Church. Often hated and attacked, either openly or otherwise, because she opposes the evil of the world, the Church needs, as the prayer puts it, unity, protection, and peace. She, like her Divine Founder, has two aspects. In her Divine aspect she is beyond the reach of all human and diabolical agencies but in her human development she patterns herself after the earthly life of Our Blessed Lord. Hence it is fitting that we should remember here those to whom Christ committed the governing of His Church on earth, our Holy Father, the Pope, its visible head; our bishop, the local superior from whom the priest immediately gets his authority. And then as if to show that there is nothing narrow about the Church, that she is truly catholic or universal the prayer ends by broadening out its scope to include all true believers and promoters of the faith.

ii. *The Living*: The second prayer (of this sequence) is for the living. This shows the thoughtfulness of the Church in our regard. Every Mass is offered for the living and the dead and here the priest prays silently

for those who asked that he would include especially their intention. By the way, perhaps this is a good place to mention the offering made to the priest by persons who request him to offer his Mass for their special intention. Frequently by such a request the priest is offered a donation or gift. This means of supporting the clergy, which has replaced the offerings of the early Christians during Mass, is sometimes misunderstood. There can be no question of "buying a Mass." That would be impossible since the Mass is infinite in value. Nor does it mean that only the wealthy who can afford it receive benefit from the Mass. True the special fruits are applied for the donor's intention but the general fruit of the Holy Sacrifice is still shared by the whole community of the faithful. We may be sure that the good God Who makes the sun shine on all alike would permit no injustice in this respect.

iii. *The Saints and Martyrs:* The third prayer "within the Action" or Canon of the Mass gets us into communication with the other branch of the Church, the blessed in heaven. As we come closer to the arrival of the Divine Guest we remember those

intimately associated with Him and we review them in rapid succession calling on some of them by name, His Blessed Mother, His twelve apostles, five of His Popes, three of them immediate successors of St. Peter, also St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, St. Lawrence, arch-deacon of Rome and others, all celebrated martyrs of the early centuries. We cannot help thinking of our modern martyrs, those who are now suffering and dying for the faith in Eastern Europe, in the Orient and elsewhere today. Then as now the only retaliation the Church makes is to plead, as the next short prayer emphasizes, for "peace in our days." This is in accordance with the advice and example of Christ Who, on the eve of His Passion prayed to His Eternal Father for unity "that they may be one as We are One" after He had predicted, "the hour comes and now is that whosoever kills you thinks he does a service to God."

### 3. *The Consecration*

Now the supreme moment has arrived! The warning bell rings as the priest holds his hands over the bread and wine. By that action he offers himself

and the people together with the elements about to be consecrated just as under the Old Law those offering an animal in sacrifice placed their hands on the victim to signify their union with it and through it with God. Thus, as in the case of the early Christians bringing their gifts to the altar, it became in a sense their victim, their sacrifice. But, of course, the Old Testament sacrifices were merely types, "weak and needy elements," St. Paul calls them, when compared with the great and real Sacrifice of the New Law.

Now the priest makes the sign of the Cross five times in all asking God for a final blessing and ratification of what he is about to do so that, as he says, our offering "may become for us the Body and Blood of Thy most beloved Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord." Then completely casting off, as it were, his own personality and taking on the Person of Christ, Whose representative he is, the priest follows in every detail during the Consecration, the words and actions of Our Lord as recorded in Sacred Scripture. You may compare for yourself the text of the Missal here with the account of the Last Supper given in the gospel of

St. Matthew, the 26th chapter, St. Mark the 14th, St. Luke, the 22nd chapter and especially St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, the 11th chapter. As we read along with the priest the words of Consecration notice the exactness with which he follows the direction given: The words are:

"Who," (this refers back to Our Lord mentioned at the end of the previous prayer) "Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and having lifted up His eyes to heaven, to Thee, O God, His Almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, blessed it, broke it (this action comes later) and gave to His disciples saying: Take all ye and eat of this:—

"For This is My Body"

As he pronounces these divine words (notice he says "My body" because he is taking the place of Christ,) a tremendous, awe-inspiring change takes place. In a real Mass the bread would no longer be bread, its appearances alone would remain but its substance would have been changed and instead Christ's living Body would become truly present on the altar. The gates of heaven open and the Divine Guest is with us. No wonder the priest



falls on one knee in reverent adoration. The soldiers who came to arrest Our Lord fell back in terror when they must have glimpsed one blinding flash of His Divinity. But there is no such manifestation now. He comes to us quietly, not as when He appeared to Moses midst the thunders and lightnings of Mt. Sinai. It is all so simple and unobtrusive. The bell rings as the priest lifts up the Sacred Host, as the Sacrificial Body of Christ was lifted up on the Cross, so that all may gaze on it and say "My Lord and My God." With the keen vision of faith the people at this moment see the glory of the coming of the Lord. They know He is there just as I know you are there even though I do not see you.

Now comes the essential requirement for the sacrifice in the separate consecration of the wine. The priest takes the chalice in his hands (from now until after the Communion the thumb and forefinger of both hands will remain together) and again, suiting the action to the word he says:

"In like manner after He had supped taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, again giving thanks to

Thee, He blessed it and gave it to His disciples saying: Take all ye and drink of this:—

"For this is the chalice of My Blood, of the new and eternal testament; the mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you and for many, unto the remission of sins."

As he genuflects again the priest repeats the words whereby Christ gave to His Apostles and to every priest the power to do what He Himself did: "As often as you do these things you shall do them in memory of Me." Then lifting the chalice for the adoration of the faithful as the bell rings again three times, he places it on the altar, covers it, and genuflects once more.

The mystery of faith! Here indeed we walk among mysteries. In a real Mass the very ground we tread becomes holy. And yet the explanation of it all is not too difficult. Christ died for us on Calvary. That historical act of Redemption, His complete self-offering to His Eternal Father, happened once and for all. But the Mass re-presents in a mystical, though none the less real, manner what happened physically on the Cross. The victim is the same, namely, Our

Blessed Lord, true God and true man, Who becomes present under the form of bread and wine. The Offerer is also the same Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who through the human priest his representative came down on the altar to praise and thank God and to win for us pardon and help. Therefore the Sacrifice of the Mass continues the Sacrifice of the Cross. They are not two sacrifices but one. The sole difference lies in the fact that in the Mass there is no shedding of blood because Christ's death occurs in a mystical manner. How does this happen? Quite simply in the separate consecration of the bread and the wine thereby representing the separation of Christ's Body from His Sacred Blood.

This is how Our Lord Himself wished it. This is what He did and this is what He commanded others to do. "Do this in memory of Me." But the Mass is more than a memory, more than a mere recalling of some great event of the past. The Sacrifice of Christ becomes really, not just mentally, present. As often as Mass is celebrated the fruits of Christ's redemptive death are being applied to the souls of man. But Christ is no

longer alone on Calvary. Now His Church, His Mystical Body, is with Him and each one of us who participate in the Mass should, as it were, die in spirit with Him. In this way our union as well as our offering becomes complete.

#### 4. *Prayers after the Consecration*

##### i. *First Three Prayers after Consecration:*

The high-point of the Mass is now reached but we are not permitted to stop. Having bid Our Lord "a hundred thousand welcomes" we continue the prayers prescribed by the Church. The first one after the Consecration appropriately calls to mind the blessed Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. These are all included in the sacrifice which is here offered to God. In the early and middle ages Christ was often depicted as a vested priest on the Cross,—His wounds now glorious—crowned as a King ruling over the world. The priest again makes the sign of the Cross, three times as he speaks of the "pure," "holy" and "spotless Victim" and twice over "the holy bread of eternal life and the chalice of everlasting salvation." Suddenly in the next

prayer the scene switches back for a moment to pre-Christian times,—only the Church can take such a sweeping view of history—and we recall the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech. These, as we said, were but faint foreshadowings of the Mass. Melchisedech, however, is regarded as especially the type of Christ, the High Priest. Consequently every priest, because he shares in the Priesthood of Christ, is reminded on his ordination day, “Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.”

ii. *The Commemoration of the Dead:*

The priest now asks that the Divine Offering be carried by an angel to God’s Altar in heaven which is one with that on earth and again makes a sign over the Sacred Body and Blood. The Mass is not really in time but in eternity. All share in it whether living or dead as we are reminded now in the special remembrance of those “who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep the sleep of peace.” These are the souls in Purgatory who are being purified and prepared for the blessed Vision of God. With head bowed

—Our Lord bowed His head on the Cross when He died—the priest now mentions those for whom he wishes especially to pray. What a consolation to know that even though we should forget them, our loved ones are always remembered in the Mass just as we ourselves will be long after we have passed away! The Church has a long memory!

iii. *The “Nobis quoque,” “Per quem haec omnia,” the Little Elevation.*

The silence is now broken by the voice of the priest as, once again stricken with a consciousness of sin, he strikes his breast and cries: “To us, also, sinners.” Continuing in a low tone he again goes down a brief list of apostles and martyrs, athletes of Christ such as Stephen, Matthias, Ignatius and strong women such as Lucy, Cecilia and Agnes (who was only about 12 years old when she suffered martyrdom). Here we recall our union with them and ask for a share in their heavenly bliss. Finally the Canon closes with two short prayers during which the priest makes the sign of the Cross many times—seven in all—first with his hand and then with the Sacred Host after

which occurs what is known as the Little Elevation. This is so-called because the priest raises the Host and Chalice together slightly from the altar, not however above his head as before. Prior to the 12th century he generally faced the people when saying Mass, and therefore, this action could be easily seen. Then with a brief introduction the priest extending his hands and gazing at the Host chants the beautifully simple Pater Noster, Our Father. What is more appropriate than that he should now recite the prayer composed by Christ Himself and at the same time look directly at Our Blessed Lord while doing so! His mind is now wholly centered in Christ.

### III. *Pater Noster and Concluding Message.*

Our Father Who art in heaven." This prayer is always recited aloud at Mass so that all of us may join in saying it and in entering into the spirit of it with child-like confidence. God is our Father: heaven is our home. In the Mass we really venerate His Name and we actually see His kingdom come on earth. By assisting at Mass devoutly we are doing His Will.

"Do this" He said, "in memory of Me." Through the Mass as we shall see in our next and final program, He gives us our daily bread, not just food for the body, but for the soul. Together at Mass we can ask and find forgiveness of God for our offences against Him and against each other. And above all in these days we need the Mass to deliver us from evil. Sometimes when we shudder at the thought of all the crime and iniquity in our large cities and in the world generally we wonder why God did not wipe it out even as He destroyed the sinful cities of old. Why doesn't He? Because daily from millions of altars "from the rising of the sun to its going down" the chalice of benediction is lifted up to appease God's anger and bring salvation to the world.

For all these reasons we should love the Mass but especially because in the Mass there comes to us One Who loved us so much that He laid down His life for us. "Greater love than this no man hath." At every Mass myriads of angels, God's ministering spirits, are present but the Mass is not intended for the angels. It was given, as a result of sheer love, to you



and to me that we might profit from it and be holy; for to be holy is simply to be close to God. Learn to know and pray and love the Mass. And if you do no matter who you are or what your condition, whether you be like John the beloved disciple or like Peter who once betrayed the Master, whether you be like

Mary, the sinless one, or Mary, the sinner in the city, you too can go to Mass, which means that you, too, can run to Calvary and there, standing at the foot of the Cross, you too, can be bathed in the torrent of love and of mercy that gushes out from the open heart of Christ.

# LIVE THE MASS

Address delivered on February 24

*"Never permit me to be separated from Thee."*

*Pater Noster to the End of Mass*

## *1 Introduction*

Today we come to the final act in the drama of love that is the Mass! And may we say how delightful it has been to have been able to visit with you and talk to you in this way about the Holy Sacrifice. Now at the end we would ask you to picture once more a scene which took place long ago when his faithful friends gathered around Christ in an upper room in Jerusalem. It was the eve of His death on the Cross. For years He had been with them and now that He was about to leave they began to realize how weak they would be without Him. Then they remembered how after the miracle of the loaves and fishes when He had fed five thousand in the wilderness He promised He would give them a much more important food later. "I am the living bread that has come down from heaven," He had said, ". . . and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (John, VI, 52). We

shall see how well He kept this promise.

Last week at the Consecration, which follows exactly the instructions given by Our Lord at the Last Supper, we learned that the bread and wine presented to God at the Offertory are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the essence of the Sacrifice but it is still not quite complete. The priest and people have yet to participate in it. In other words, the Holy Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a sacrament or food. Today we shall bring our series to a close by showing you how through the Mass you can achieve a life of union with Christ, physically and spiritually. Hence this part will be divided into the preparation for Communion, the receiving of Our Lord and the concluding prayers and ceremonies.

## *2. Preparation for Communion*

### *i. Libera nos; haec commixtio.*

The Lord's Prayer is really a grace before meals. Its first half, as we saw, has reference to God and the rest is concerned with saving us from sin, temptation, and evil but both parts are closely connected with the central re-

quest in which we ask for our daily bread. This includes food not only for the body but also for the soul. Have you ever thought that if we ate only as frequently as we pray and take spiritual sustenance how quickly we would starve to death?

The next prayer which the priest says continues in the strain of the Our Father. We are now in God's presence but fearful of the things which may cause us to lose Him. So we ask Him, again through the good offices of the saints especially the Blessed Virgin, the apostles Peter, Paul and Andrew—powerful intercessors—to deliver us from all evils, past, present and to come, to “graciously grant peace in our days” so that “we may always be free from sin and secure from all disturbance.” As he says this prayer the priest takes the paten or plate in his right hand, wipes and kisses it and then places it under the Sacred Host. He uncovers the chalice, genuflects, and taking the Host begins to break it reverently into two parts. (Recall here the words of the Consecration, “And taking bread he blessed and broke it.”) This action synchronizes with the ending of the prayer. He places one half of the Host on the paten and having

broken off a small particle from the other half, chants the last words of the prayer, “World without end,” followed by “May the peace of the Lord be always with you.” As he sings the last phrase he makes a triple cross with the particle over the Chalice and then drops it in to mingle with the Precious Blood. Formerly a fragment of the Host from a previous Mass was here mixed with the present sacrifice. This is still done on Good Friday in the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified.

This breaking and mingling are simple acts with great meaning. They are linked up with the sacrificial action going before as well as the Communion which follows. The early Christians called the Mass “the breaking of the bread” and you remember how the two companions who walked with the Master after His Resurrection did not know who He was until they saw Him perform this action. May we, too, learn to recognize Christ in the “breaking of the bread.” At the Consecration we told you the Sacrifice consisted in the mystical separation of the Body and Blood. On the Cross Our Lord's Body was bruised and mangled and broken but in the Mass He suffers no pain nor is there shed-

ding of blood. Nevertheless there is a severance and the mingling now implies a re-union. The Sacred Body and Blood are again brought together as it were and re-vivified symbolically. This means that we become witnesses of His Resurrection. We have now an undivided and living Victim. The whole Christ is one sacrificial food which we are to receive in Holy Communion.

### ii. Agnus Dei.

Now comes the triple recital of the Agnus Dei, "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." In the parable of the pharisee and the publican we read that the publican struck his breast and said "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Such are our sentiments now. To the first two invocations we answer, "Have mercy on us." The removal of sins recalls the purpose of the sacrifice. Our Lord on the Cross is the true Paschal Lamb and as His death was crowned with victory in His Resurrection so our death in sin will soon be changed into the supernatural life we find through union with Christ.

In the third response we beg for peace. Whenever we want to show real friendship we ask somebody to break bread with

us. Hence in the breaking of the bread we wish to express friendship and union with each other in Christ. Thus it is connected with the Kiss of Peace and for many centuries this mark of affection was exchanged by all present. Now it is restricted to clerics and occurs only at a Solemn Mass. Perhaps this omission is indicative. We no longer seem to feel the same sense of solidarity. Yet love, as expressed by the Kiss of Peace, is the touchstone of Christianity. It was so evident amongst the early followers of Christ that it excited the admiration of those amongst whom they lived. Only Judas betrayed the Master with a kiss. We must re-capture this feeling of community and express it not only in our spiritual but also in our social and economic life. "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us partake of the one bread." (I Corinthians X, 17, 18).

### iii. The Three Prayers before Communion.

Christ by His glorious death and resurrection became the author and source of peace. This note runs all through the Mass but it is especially prominent now. The first of the three pray-

ers immediately before Communion reproduces the words of His final discourse at the Last Supper, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." (John XIV, 27). In this prayer we ask that the Church be preserved from external disturbances whereas in the second prayer we again address Our Lord directly and ask for internal peace. "Make me always obey Thy commands and never allow me to be separated from Thee." The third prayer refers to the Holy Eucharist and contemplates the dread possibility of receiving unworthily. While it is to be so conceived as a means toward, rather than solely a reward for, sanctity we must have for the feast the wedding garment of sanctifying grace; otherwise it may result in "judgment and condemnation" rather than be, as was intended, "*a safegurad* and remedy for soul and body."

### 3. Communion

#### i. Of Celebrant.

Now the priest genuflects and while rising says "I will take the bread of heaven and call upon the name of the Lord." Then inclining he holds both parts of the Sacred Host in his left hand and with his right hand he strikes his breast three times repeating

almost exactly the words of the centurion who, when Christ offered to come and cure his servant, said "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; but only say the word and my servant (soul) shall be healed." (Matthew VIII, 8). Our attitude at this stage recalls also the humility of St. Peter when he fell on his knees and said: "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke V, 8).

The priest now lays one part of the Host over the other and makes the sign of the Cross with them saying "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting." Then leaning forward he reverently consumes the Host thus completing the mystical destruction of the Victim. After a brief pause he expresses a sentiment in the form of a question which should be frequently on our lips if we but realized God's goodness to us, especially in the Mass, "What return shall I make to the Lord for all the things He has given to me?" While saying this prayer he uncovers the chalice, genuflects, and collects any scattered fragments of the Host by sweeping the paten over the corporal. These he puts into the chalice be-



fore drinking which he says, "The Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting, Amen." Making the sign of the Cross with the chalice he consumes its contents and then prepares to give Holy Communion to the people present who wish to receive it.

## ii. Of People.

As distinct from the priest the people assisting at Mass do not now receive Our Lord under both species but only under the form of bread. It is obvious that if they receive Christ's living Body, as they do, then they must at the same time also receive His Sacred Blood. For the reception of Holy Communion only two conditions are necessary. We must be in the state of grace, that is, we are not conscious of any grave sin and, normally, we must be fasting from the previous midnight. It will be readily understood that these are but minimum requirements arising out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament. As the servers recite the Confiteor or Confession the priest opens the Tabernacle where the small consecrated Hosts are reserved or kept in a vessel called a Ciborium. Note that Christ not only comes to us in the Mass but remains with us

in the Tabernacle. Therefore it is the holiest and most important place in your community. This explains why so many persons not of the faith tell us that when they pray alone in a Catholic Church they are comforted by a feeling of some indescribable Presence. Like Mary Magdalene they might well say, "Rabboni, Master." The Master is indeed here and calls for you.

The priest now genuflects and facing the people pronounces the Absolution by making the sign of the Cross and asking God to grant them pardon for their sins. Then, taking the Ciborium he holds up a Host saying "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world" after which he again repeats three times the "Lord, I am not worthy." Assisted by one of the acolytes he goes down the altar rail where the people are kneeling. (In olden days the procession to the altar to receive was the counterpart of the earlier procession when they came up at the Offertory to give.) The priest places a Host on the tongue of each one saying, "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus preserve your soul unto life everlasting, Amen." Choir sings here. Having finished he goes back to the altar, replaces

the Ciborium in the Tabernacle, and continues with the Mass.

#### 4. *Post Communion to End.*

Now occurs the process of cleansing the Chalice so as to remove all stains of the Precious Blood. The altar boy pours in a little wine which the priest drinks, having said a short prayer. Then he takes the Chalice, and reciting another prayer holds the thumbs and forefingers of both hands over it in such a way that the server can pour on them first wine and then water. Then the priest returns to the middle of the altar and wipes his fingers and consumes the second ablution or cleansing. He dries and covers the Chalice and goes to the book to read the Communion verse which varies with the occasion. Returning we hear once more the greeting, "The Lord be with you" after which he sings the Postcommunion, a sort of thanksgiving which generally stresses the theme of love, union, and perseverance. Quickly the Mass runs on to the end as he sings another *Dominus vobiscum* and the dismissal, from which the Mass gets its name "*Ite Missa est*," "Go the Mass is ended." Then, having recited another short prayer, in which he asks that "the humble tri-

bute of my worship may be pleasing" he turns and gives final blessing. The Mass is concluded by the reading of the last gospel, which is generally the opening part of the gospel of St. John. (In a Low Mass this would be followed by some prayers in English at the foot of the altar, ordered, incidentally, for the special purpose of converting the Russian people. The Mass is truly universal in its scope!)

The gospel read here is most appropriate. One of the most profound passages in all Scripture it describes not the earthly coming but the eternal generation of the Word, the Son of God. In Him is life. He is, in fact, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the true Light but, tragically, He came, then and now, unto His own and His own receive Him not. But to those who receive Him He gives power to become the sons of God. At the beginning we make the sign of the Cross on forehead, mouth, and breast signifying our desire to know, to speak and to love the truths it contains and we genuflect at the end when we reflect once more that God has come down, taken human flesh and continues to dwell amongst us in the Mass and in the Tabernacle.

*Concluding Message*

The Mass is ended! We come down from the holy mountain where we have seen His Glory to go back to our daily round of work but now even the grimy business of making a living seems different. Our hearts burn within us because of the precious privilege that has been ours. Having offered ourselves up with Christ and united ourselves with Him everything we do is transmuted, raised to a higher plane. We have learned to know and pray and love the Mass. Now we want to live the Mass. It becomes the center, the focal point in our life. It is like a rainbow or a bridge to heaven. The highest act of human adoration it is the sun around which we revolve and from which we draw life and vigor and hope. We are, in a sense, deified. "I live" said St. Paul, "now not I but Christ lives in me."

The Mass is also the rallying point for the whole community of the faithful. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to myself." He draws us by the sheer force of love. In Holy Communion we are united with God but we must think of it not as an individual privilege but rather as a union of all of us, the

whole family, at a common table. The Mass is many things. It is not only a re-union (the very word "Church" means calling the gathering together); it is also a conversation with God and a festival (the priest "celebrates" Mass). Moreover, it is an offering—all our work and pain find meaning in the Mass—and, above all, it is a living, real, and true sacrifice. Perhaps, as has happened elsewhere, we will not fully appreciate it until it is taken away from us. Then what a dreary desolate place our world would be. Truly as a discerning statesman, not a Catholic but one anxious to suppress the faith, once said, "It is the Mass that matters." If God is here with us then what else really does matter?

"O Sacred Banquet" says St. Thomas Aquinas, "in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is renewed and a pledge of future glory is given to us." The Mass is a foretaste of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is like a man who planned a great feast. You are invited. So the Mass to you, then, is something else. It is a call and a challenge. You, too, can unite yourself with God at Mass. Even when you cannot be present in person at Mass you can con-



stantly unite yourself in spirit with all the Masses going on at every moment in some part of the world. Our missionaries and our brave and devoted Chaplains in the service have brought the Mass literally to the very ends of the earth. Maybe you, too, will recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread and say to Him:

“Stay with me, Lord, for the day is far spent.” “Never permit me to be separated from Thee.” Then no matter what may happen you are safe, safe for eternity. Truly the Mass is our only hope if we are again to enjoy the God-given blessings of love and of lasting peace.

