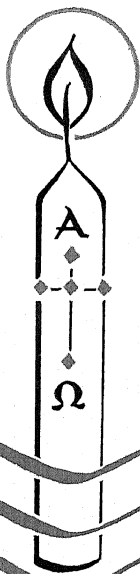
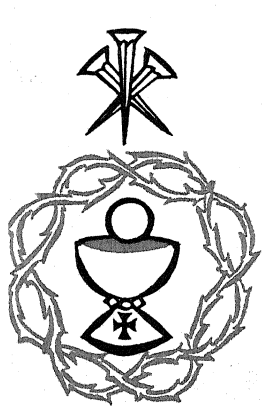


THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD



VOLUME
TWO

EASTER CYCLE

BENEDICT BAUR, O.S.B.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Volume II

The Light of the World qualifies as one of the most popular works of contemporary liturgical and spiritual literature both in the original language and in its English translation. Eight editions of the work have been exhausted -- evidence of the enduring appeal of the work.

To accommodate the liturgical changes of recent years, the learned Benedictine author has meticulously revamped the entire work, and the result is a profound tribute to the deep spirituality and scholarship of the Archabbot.

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Archabbot Baur in his preface to this edition states that one of the compelling reasons for his revision was to integrate the feasts of the saints with the liturgical year. He added another volume to *Werde Licht* which has been published in a two volume English translation with the title, *Saints of the Missal*.

The Light of the World has won a unique place among the mass of books for meditation and spiritual reading. The title provides a clue to the plan of the author.



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The Light of the World

II

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Saints of the Missal: Liturgical Meditations
on the Saints in the Roman Missal, 2 vols.

BENEDICT BAUR, O.S.B.

The Light of the World

LITURGICAL MEDITATIONS FOR
THE WEEKDAYS AND SUNDAYS
OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

II

The Easter Cycle

TRANSLATED BY

EDWARD MALONE, O.S.B.

Revised Edition

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The Prenten Season

INTRODUCTION

During the season of Christmas and Epiphany, the Redeemer made His appearance among us. Awed by our nearness to the Divinity, we cast ourselves down in adoration at His feet. "Adore Him all you His angels" (Ps. 96:7). "Behold the Lord, the Ruler, is come, and the kingdom is in His hand, and power and dominion" (Introit for Epiphany). "Come let us adore Him."

Now the scene is suddenly changed. On Septuagesima Sunday, the picture of Christ as the King of Glory is withdrawn. Now He stands before us as the suffering and dying Redeemer. Holy Mother the Church will accompany Him on the sorrowful journey through His passion, will suffer and die with Him, and will arise again with Him at Easter.

During Lent we, too, shall "die." We shall die to sin and to the world and all its vanities. This death will impose on us a relentless and bitter struggle against our passions, our worldliness. It will require of us much suffering and much self-restraint. Through the privations of this life we shall gain the glory of the life to come.

During the time from Septuagesima to Easter we must wage an unceasing battle with nature that we may overcome sin, the flesh, and the world. Through the holy liturgy we carry on

this battle daily. Through strife we achieve victory; by dying we live. "I shall not die, but live" (Ps. 117:17).

The Liturgy of Septuagesima Sunday

1. Septuagesima Sunday ushers in the Easter cycle, and our thoughts dwell on the blessed mystery of Easter. The Easter cycle includes Christ's passion, resurrection, and glorification. The devout Christian soul will accompany the Church as she contemplates Christ in His passion, death, resurrection, and eternal glorification. Through struggle to victory is the universal law. Through suffering, tribulation, and death the soul achieves self-mastery, resurrection, and life. This struggle valiantly waged in this life will bring the soul to the resurrection and eternal life in heaven.

2. On Septuagesima Sunday in the ancient Church, the candidates who were to receive baptism at Easter were selected from those who had presented themselves for instruction. This practice should remind us also that we once were presented for baptism, and as members of Christ's mystical body we should renew our resolution to accompany Him on His sorrowful journey. We shall accompany Christ through His struggles to victory. Having resolved to acquit ourselves manfully in the struggle for the glory of God, and having concentrated all our energies for that task, we shall eventually achieve a glorious victory and a blessed Easter. Our model of mortification during this season is the martyr St. Lawrence. We gather around him in his church at the beginning of Lent to prepare for the struggle. Dimly in the background we catch a glimpse of the greatest of all martyrs, Jesus Christ, clothed in garments crimsoned with His own blood. With Him and His holy Church we press forward for the struggle. "The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrows of hell encompassed me; and in my

affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy temple" (Introit). Feeling the burden of our sinfulness, we cry out: "Graciously hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the prayers of Thy people, that we who are justly afflicted for our sins, may mercifully be freed for the glory of Thy name" (Collect).

Having made our humble plea for mercy, we arise to gird ourselves for the struggle that lies ahead of us. The goal which we expect to reach is the eternal resurrection. But to attain our goal we must chastise our bodies and bring them into subjection (Epistle). The strength to persevere in this life of self-denial we must seek from God, who will not deny His help to those who seek Him (Gradual). With the catechumens let us present ourselves again as laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. In this vineyard we shall work out our own salvation and that of our neighbor, and shall contribute to the success of the Church on earth. We have been called into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, that is, in the era of Christ, in the era of the new dispensation. God has given us a sublime calling. Since He also gives us strength and directs our labors, we can hardly refuse to labor zealously.

3. When we make our offering in the Mass today, we do so in the spirit of the willing laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. As the paten is raised by the priest, we offer with the spotless wafer our determination to struggle against the weakness of the flesh, the allurements of the world, and sin. We unite to this offering all the trials and sufferings that the days may bring us, and beg the grace of sustaining them in the spirit of St. Lawrence and in union with the suffering of our Redeemer.

Thus we begin Mass by renewing our belief that this sacrifice is truly a renewal of the offering on Calvary, and we declare ourselves ready to follow Him to death. The consummation of this sacrifice will not be death, but life; we look forward, not to Good Friday, but to Easter Sunday; not to the darkness of the grave, but to the brilliance of the resurrection;

we are interested, not in the struggle, but in the victory. Christ now offers Himself, not as the suffering Redeemer, but as the living, glorified conqueror of death and sin. Through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, He makes us partakers of this resurrection and glorification. We share also in His love of the Father, His sanctity, His perfect prayer, His union with God; and thus we become most pleasing to His heavenly Father. Although He is now risen and glorified, He descends to give Himself to us in Holy Communion, and shares His glorified life with us. We are now enlightened by the glory that is His, and we begin to share His glorified life. A soul thus favored is, in a sense, already adorned with the crown of victory, and has placed in its hands already in this world the penny that is the reward for faithful service in the vineyard of the Master. The favors enjoyed by such a soul are an earnest of the crown of victory that is to be its reward in heaven. Through its sufferings it will conquer.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Through struggle to victory

1. Easter, the day of victory, the day of resurrection and redemption, is already beginning. We gather at the stational church of the martyr St. Lawrence, who was tortured on the gridiron. We feel that we are united to him, and this union gives us strength for the struggle. Victory may be gained only through strife. At Easter we shall renew that spirit of our baptism and rise to a new life. But the road to Easter leads over Golgotha.

2. "The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard" (Gospel). He begins his search for laborers early in the day and visits the market place again at the third, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh hour. At each visit he finds unemployed laborers idling in the market place, unconcerned about the work in the vineyard of souls. So, too, the Lord approaches us with the question, "Why stand you here all the day idle?"

. . . Go you also into My vineyard." We have as yet done very little for the salvation of our own souls or for those of others. We must now take up the task earnestly and zealously. The Lord has given us the call: "Go you also into My vineyard," work for the salvation of souls. Today at this very hour the invitation is given to us. For us it is not yet too late; it is never too late for any soul that is willing to turn from its evil ways and make an earnest effort. It is too late only for those who abandon the struggle. "Why stand you here all the day idle?" God calls us today to bear patiently the heat and the burden of the day in His vineyard; He invites us to strive in the arena of the world for the incorruptible crown of eternal life. We must struggle valiantly for the crown of victory.

The liturgy places St. Lawrence before us as a model for our conduct during Lent. While suffering on his bed of fire at the time of his martyrdom, he cried out: "The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrows of hell encompassed me; and in my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy temple" (Introit). A second model is given to us in the Epistle in the person of St. Paul, the valiant champion of the Church: "Brethren, know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (Epistle).

The chosen people, the Israelites, provide a third example of the preparation we should make for Easter. The thought of our baptism and of the Holy Eucharist dominates the Easter cycle, which we are now beginning. But the liturgy warns us to remember that the chosen people, too, had a baptism and a Eucharist. They "were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud

and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ). But with most of them God was not well pleased" (Epistle). Only a small remnant of the chosen people reached the Holy Land. The majority of them were unfaithful to God in spite of their baptism and the heavenly manna. Woe be to us if we should prove unworthy of our baptism and of the Holy Eucharist. Even the most holy things can be misused.

3. "Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things." That should also be our program at the beginning of Lent. Why must we give up everything? That Christ the conqueror may conquer again in us and have the honor that is His due. We must reject everything and purify ourselves, so that nothing may hamper Christ's work in us. We die, and yet we live. We must die to all sin and to all willful imperfections. We must abandon all desires and thoughts that are not in conformity with God's holy will. We must die to our own will in order that the will and the spirit of Christ may dominate us completely. This is what the holy season of Lent wishes to accomplish in us. Are we prepared to sacrifice everything? "Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize?" (Epistle.)

Only "one receiveth the prize." This one is Christ, the conqueror of sin and death. We shall win only in so far as we are united to Him as members of His mystical body. Living in union with Him, making use of this strength, we, too, shall conquer. That He may triumph in His members He must live in us and we in Him. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass today we shall enter more fully into His life and He into ours. In Him we shall receive the prize, the possession of eternal life.

PRAYER

Graciously hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the prayers of Thy people, that we who are justly afflicted for our sins, may mercifully be freed for the glory of Thy name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect.)

MONDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

Original sin

1. "Go you also into My vineyard" (Gospel). Where were we idling before He called us into His vineyard? The lessons at Matins answer this question for us; during the week following Septuagesima Sunday, they relate the story of creation and of original sin. We see the effects of original sin and of separation from God, in which state we should have remained had not God called us into His vineyard.

2. "The serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth. . . . And he said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree in Paradise? And the woman answered him, saying: Of the fruit of the trees that are in Paradise we do eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of Paradise God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it lest perhaps we die. And the serpent said to the woman: No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened; and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil. And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat" (Gen. 3:1-6).

This action of our first parents was fatal. The serpent had made a true but tragic prophecy. "Your eyes shall be opened." Eve toyed with temptation. She believed the tempter and violated the commandment of God. She preferred her pride, her disobedience, her own will, to that of God.

"And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: Where art thou? . . . Thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat. And Adam said: The woman, whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree and I did eat. And the Lord God said to the woman: Why hast thou done this? . . . I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and

he shall have dominion over thee. And He said to Adam: Because thou hast harkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work. With labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof, all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:9 ff.). Severe punishment! Adam was cast out of Paradise and condemned to a life of toil and suffering, and in the end to a bitter death. And what of the eternity that was to follow this death?

3. Sin means a separation from God, a desertion of God and His law; it is the setting of our will against His. Sin means so many things. It means preferring a created good to the uncreated God, a momentary pleasure to a divine love. I place my own whim before God's will; God receives second place.

Today we unite ourselves with all sinful mankind and say in its name and for its intention the prayer at the Introit of the Mass: "The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrows of hell encompassed me" (Introit).

Woe to us should the master of the vineyard fail to visit the market place and invite us to labor in His vineyard, if He should fail to call us to membership in His holy Church. How thankful we should be today that He has already called us! In order to show our gratitude, we should labor faithfully in His vineyard and do His will in all things.

"In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy temple" (Introit). Thus we approach the altar today and take the precious body and blood of Christ in our hands and offer them to the heavenly Father: Father for the sake of Thy Son, have mercy, pardon our sins, and restore us to grace. "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant," upon Thy Church, upon all mankind, "and save me in Thy mercy" (Communion). "If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, O Lord who shall abide it?" (Tract.)

PRAYER

Graciously hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the prayers of Thy people, that we who are justly afflicted for our sins, may mercifully be freed for the glory of Thy name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect.)

TUESDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

“Go ye into my vineyard”

1. “Go you also into My vineyard” (Gospel). In the vineyard of the Lord you will find work enough to occupy you for the rest of your life, if you will only do the work.

2. God calls us first of all to work in the garden of our own soul. Sanctify and save thy soul. “For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26.) Let us look first to the salvation of our own soul, our one immortal soul. All other tasks must give way and be subservient to this one all-important duty. Our first thought should always be: “My soul and eternity.” We are occupied with many things. A continual round of duties claims our attention, and we live in continual unrest and haste. Our life is one continuous succession of projects, schemes, plans, books, and formulas without end and without measure. Yet we find no time for our soul, for self-examination, or for a restful quarter of an hour before the tabernacle. We are too busy for mental prayer or for a quiet moment with God. We have no time for the urgent work in the vineyard of the Lord, where we were to acquire virtue and free our soul from its vices. O ye of little faith! The Son of God becomes man, dies upon the cross, founds His Church, establishes the sacraments, and lives continually in the tabernacle. All this He has done for us and for the salvation of our souls. All His thoughts are concentrated on this task. “Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Christ lives in us. He draws us to Himself with promises, with trials, with consolations, and He seeks to make

us share His work and live united to Him. He has really only one objective—the salvation of our soul. What are we doing to cooperate with Him?

God calls us to labor in the vineyard of the Church. The heart of Jesus is the center of the world. By the fire of its all-consuming and life-giving love, He unites all hearts in one. He fills up the great void between Himself and the heart that abandons itself to Him. Through the medium of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christian hearts communicate their light and their love to one another, and maintain a loving contact with one another. They live for one another, they bear each other's burdens, and share their riches and virtue. Such is the communion of saints. What one accomplishes in the vineyard of his own soul, he accomplishes in the souls of others, in the souls of his brothers and sisters.

“Go you also into My vineyard.” We are invited to share in the redemption of the souls of our brothers and sisters. We are urged to share with our neighbor the strength, the life, and the spirit that Christ has infused into our souls. “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). He who labors faithfully in the vineyard of Christ for the salvation of his own soul, labors also for the souls of others who are members of the kingdom of Christ. The rose that adorns itself adorns also the garden in which it grows. The same is true in the order of grace. Nothing is ever lost. I have in me the power to bring about the salvation or ruin of the world. I must of necessity either contribute to the edification of the world, or I will be a scandal to it. He who fails to edify scandalizes. Either I must live the life of grace and practice virtue, and then I live for the whole, or I am sick, blind, and lame, and then I am a burden on society, a hindrance exposing the whole to the danger of ruin. I am either a servant of God or a menial of Satan. There can be no neutrality in the life of grace. I am responsible, not only for my own virtue, but for the virtue of others also. Thus we see how vast is the vineyard in which Christ has invited us to work. He

has given me a task of great importance to accomplish. Have I given serious thought to my obligations?

3. "Go you also into My vineyard." Septuagesima cries out to me to bestir myself. It charges me to be a true soldier and commands me to work harder than before. Such faithful service I owe to God, who has called me. I owe it to my own soul, and to each and every one of my fellow men.

Behold those who strive for the mastery in the arena. They withhold themselves from all things harmful. We have a crown of much greater value to strive for. Consider the disposition of St. Paul, "I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (Epistle). Do I dare act otherwise? "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24).

PRAYER

O God our refuge and our strength, be attentive to the prayers of Thy Church, and grant that we may seek the things that are of God, and serve Thee in body and soul. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

God's call

1. "The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard" (Gospel). At the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour he returns to the market place in search of laborers. At the eleventh hour, that is, at the time of the New Covenant, he called us. "Why stand you here all the day idle? . . . Go you also into my vineyard," we are told in the Gospel on Septuagesima Sunday.

2. The first call. The householder, the heavenly Father, calls us to labor in His vineyard early in the morning, that is, in

our youth. At the time of our baptism He said to us, "Go you also into My vineyard." He enclosed us in His holy vineyard, the Church, and set us to work. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and thy whole strength" (Mark 12:30). "I am the Lord thy God, . . . thou shalt not have strange gods before Me" (Exod. 20:2 f.). We have declared ourselves ready to serve Him. We have entered into a solemn agreement to obey God, to observe His commandments, to promote His honor and glory, and to extend His kingdom. We are obliged to deny ourselves, to labor for Him, to pray to Him, to suffer for Him, and to fight for Him. We should use our hands only to execute His will, our tongue only to speak what He wills. Our feet must carry us only to those places where He would have us be. Our hearts should love Him alone. All our strength, our powers, our talents, should be consecrated to His service. He will allow us no other gods. We have the duty to give up our own will and to live for Him alone. We must forsake our own desires and plans and preferences. He must be our whole life. We are on earth for only one reason—to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him. That is our calling.

The second call. With Septuagesima Sunday we enter the Easter cycle. The center of this division of the Church year is the resurrection of Christ on Easter morning and our resurrection from sin through baptism. Our preparation for Easter is the renewal of our baptism, which should bring us a new and more perfect realization of the importance of the call we have received and of the value of the precious gifts that came to us at baptism. It should renew and deepen our consciousness also of the obligations we have undertaken. It should make us ask ourselves seriously whether we have been faithful to these obligations. "I am the Lord Thy God, . . . thou shalt not have strange gods before Me." Have we accomplished the task for which we were called into the vineyard? Could God still not say to us with truth: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" Why are you occupied with so many vain and useless things? Why do you serve so many false gods? Why are you so covetous

of gold, solicitous for your body and for its comforts? Why are you chasing so many vain shadows? Why are you so eager to enjoy the esteem of others? Why are you so desirous of honor and of the empty glamour and show of the world? Why are you so careless of sin and so insistent on your own will and your own ambitions? The householder comes out to call us again to-day. Today we again renew our contract with God. From this day forward we shall serve more faithfully and more zealously Him into whose vineyard we have been called.

3. At the Offertory of the Mass we place on the paten our will and the promise of a more faithful service. "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer" (Introit). "It is good to give praise to the Lord, and to sing to Thy name, O Most High" (Offertory). But our praise must be not merely a lip service. Our life, our works, and our service must also be worthy of Him. We should seek nothing for ourselves, but everything for Him. With this disposition we begin the Holy Sacrifice today.

The reward, the penny promised us, is given in Holy Communion. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:55). We shall be awakened to the perfect life in heaven. This is the reward we seek by our labor in the vineyard of the Lord. "Many are called, but few chosen" (Gospel). Only a few are found worthy of their vocation. I am determined to be among those few, cost what it will.

PRAYER

May Thy faithful people, O God, be strengthened by Thy gifts; that in receiving them, they may seek after them the more, and in seeking them, may receive them forever. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Postcommunion.)

THURSDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

Through darkness into light

1. We stand now on the threshold of Easter. Our eyes contemplate the mystery of Christ's passion and resurrection, of the darkness of Good Friday and the brilliance of Easter morn-

ing. In the suffering and the triumph of St. Lawrence we acknowledge with the liturgy the dominion of Christ. We pray in the Introit: "The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrows of hell encompassed me; and in my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy temple."

2. "The sorrows of death surrounded me." These words apply to Christ in His suffering. We accompany Him on His sorrowful journey to the Mount of Olives. We are to witness the terrible agony that caused Him to break out in a bloody sweat. "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). We accompany Him also to the hall of judgment and stand with Him before the Sanhedrin. We are present, too, when He is dragged before Pilate, the pagan judge. We contemplate His terrible suffering at the pillar, and see Him crowned with thorns and derided by the Roman soldiers. With heavy hearts we follow His bloody footprints on the way of the cross, and share His agony as He hangs in torture for three hours on the cross. "The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrows of hell encompassed me."

"In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice," Christ cried out in His struggle. Thou art "a helper in due time, in tribulation; . . . for Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee" (Gradual). On Easter morning He will rise in glory. He has won the reward of victory: resurrection and glorification. He has conquered Satan, sin, and death. Now He possesses dominion over our spirits and over our hearts. Since He became obedient unto death, "God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). "I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice."

3. But we have not told the whole story when we contemplate Christ as He is presented to us in the Gospel today. The

suffering He underwent two thousand years ago, He experiences again in His members today. It is He they calumniate, slander, ridicule and resist when they do these things to the Church. It is Christ who is persecuted and cast into prison in His members. It is He who is unjustly condemned to slave labor and tortured slowly to death. But it is He also who has predicted that His Church would be persecuted. "They will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into the prisons, dragging you before kings and governors, for my name's sake. And it shall happen unto you for a testimony [to the Gospel]. Lay it up therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before how you shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay. . . . And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But a hair of your head shall not perish" (Luke 21:12 ff.). "Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone" (John 12:24).

And what is true of the Church of Christ is equally true of us who are its members. By reason of our baptism we are bound to Him by the closest relationship in life and death. Because of our baptism it is our vocation to live His life with Him, to share in His struggles, to share in His resurrection, and eventually, in His glorification. Through struggle we achieve victory, through death we are given life! Christ lives in me. He fights and conquers in me and I conquer through His strength!

Today as we attend Mass we witness the renewal of the mystery of His death and resurrection on our altar. We will not allow Him to undertake this renewal alone. We unite ourselves to Him and resolve to make ourselves a holocaust to the Father. We resign our claim to all things: to our will, our earthly possessions, our health, our strength, our body, our soul, and all that we possess. All this we place on the paten with the altar bread, as a pure and holy offering to the Father. We die, but we arise again when He comes to us in Holy Com-

munion to fill us with His life and His strength. Supported by His strength we go forth to meet the tasks of the day, "to fight the good fight of faith" (Tim. 6:12). We call out to the Lord and He hears us. We shall conquer, and we shall win the crown.

PRAYER

Graciously hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the prayers of Thy people, that we who are justly afflicted for our sins, may mercifully be freed for the glory of Thy name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

The reward of victory

1. "I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air" (Epistle). St. Paul, who here also speaks to us, knows what he is working for. He is conscious of his aim, and that aim is the winning of an imperishable crown. He is determined that nothing shall prevent his obtaining it.

2. "I believe in life everlasting." This eternal life is our objective. This life will be the rest due to the weary soldier after battle. It is the possession of every good that the heart of man could desire, the possession of the highest and most desirable good conceived by the spirit and heart of man. The crown we shall win is an imperishable crown, not a mere perishable wreath. It will be the possession of complete inner happiness and an abode of bliss. Our crown shall be the clear vision of the living God, and a sharing of His divine life and that of the glorified Christ. It is the being honored by God and by all the inhabitants of heaven, both men and angels. This crown we shall possess, not for one brief moment, but for all eternity. It is the perfection of the entire man, the perfection of his will, his heart, his strength, his character, and his personality, which has an inborn capacity for enjoying the company of God and the saints. Is not this reward worth the striving? Should we not put aside everything that does not help us to win this crown? "Everyone that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things" (Epistle).

“Bodily exercise is profitable to little, but godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (I Tim. 4:8). Godliness gives promise of a reward even in this life. The reward of virtue in this life is a perfect soul, which knows but one law: the will and honor and glory of God. Its perfection consists in nothing more than perfect conformity to the will of God. It seeks but one thing, and that is to do what is pleasing to God. When such a soul is persuaded that a certain task is the will of God, nothing is too difficult for it. It sets about its work without haste, without anxiety, undisturbed and confident in the possession of God. Come what will, it seeks only to do the will of God though men oppose it on all sides. It has only one rule—the will of God. It fears the loss of nothing but the approval of God. It is prepared at all times to sacrifice its harmless and well-intentioned pleasures, the occupations to which it is attached, and even that to which most men cling passionately, the hope of reaping the fruit of the seed they have sown. Such a soul conducts itself with equanimity in all undertakings and sufferings, in honor or in disgrace, in success or in failure, when praised or when condemned; yes, even when it has actually made a mistake, the attitude of such a soul does not change. It is attached to its own works, of course, but the honor of God comes before all these. It is good to every man, and prizes truth and virtue above all else. It offers correction without bitterness, but speaks the truth without respect to persons. It weeps with the sorrowful and rejoices with those that rejoice. It fulfills the commandments faithfully, but is not slavishly attached to them. It is prepared at every moment to forsake anything and everything for the love of God, and to fulfill the will of God. It is delighted with every opportunity to work and sacrifice to accomplish the will of God. Having found God, it has found itself and true freedom of spirit. This is the reward of true piety, even in this world.

3. “Everyone that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a cor-

ruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one." The reward we seek is eternal life with God in the world to come, and intimate union with Him in this life. We seek repose in God, a repose which lifts man high above the restless and inconstant things of this world. This repose envelops the innermost recesses of the soul where only God can enter. The soul possessed of such peace no longer seeks anything and no longer complains of anything. In such a soul the passions are subdued, the imagination is kept in order, the spirit is firmly established in control, and the heart firmly guarded against any instability or impulsiveness.

3. But there can be no victory without a struggle. The kingdom of God is not for the lazy, the indolent, the sentimental, the timid lovers of ease. It has place only for those who are prepared to fight. Those who would belong to it must fight for that which is heavenly against that which is earthly, for the light against the darkness, for Christ against Belial.

He who would win the crown of victory must have courage. Only those who have the courage to deny themselves and endure hard things will win this crown. They must be prepared to reject all that is contrary to Christ and His law. They must disengage their hearts from self-will, from all that is transitory, from all that threatens to separate them from God.

PRAYER

Hear us, we beseech Thee, O Lord: cleanse our hearts and grant us Thy grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

Self-denial

1. "Everyone that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things. . . . I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (Epistle). The season that precedes Lent and the lenten season itself

are seasons for serious and earnest self-denial. Even St. Paul feared that he might be lost should he fail to practice mortifications and bring his spirit into submission.

2. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matt. 16:24). No man in this world is so perfect that he can afford to neglect self-denial; that is, no man can afford to neglect the task of subjecting his senses and his passions to his will. No one has the garden of his soul so thoroughly cleansed of weeds that it needs no further weeding. Scarcely has a person finished his work before the weeds spring up again. A man never reaches so great a height of perfection in this world that he destroys the roots of sin. For this reason there can never be any secure virtue unless it is accompanied by true self-denial. He who has not gained control over his self-will, can never practice perfect obedience. He who has not brought his passions firmly under the control of his will, can never practice perfect chastity. No man can practice fraternal charity and love even his enemies unless he has first overcome himself and mortified his own desires. Self-denial is especially necessary for those who seek to practice virtue. "You will progress in virtue in the measure in which you gain control of yourself."¹ Why do we remain stationary so long in one degree of perfection? Why are we so lacking in strength and initiative? It is simply because we fail in self-denial. Without mortification we can have no taste for meditation, no fervor in prayer, no strength in the face of temptation, no power of resistance to the seduction of the flesh, and finally, no true virtue. Therefore, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself."

"I say to them: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against flesh; for these are contrary one to another; so that you do not the things that you would. . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects. . . .

¹ *Imitation of Christ*, I, chap. 25.

They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity" (Gal. 5:16 ff.).

"Walk in the spirit." On this principle our mortification should be grounded. If we walk in the spirit, we shall be able to free our fallen nature from the domination of our inordinate passions and regulate it according to grace. By means of mortification we subject our lower nature to the spirit. Mortification is a powerful remedy for the weaknesses and ills of the spirit. It is indispensable as a means of acquiring perfection and union with God. "And they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5:24). Can this be said of the followers of Christ today? Very few of them prize mortification, and most of them flee from it. Are we, then, still really Christians?

3. In the prelenten season and during Lent, the liturgy centers our attention on mortification and self-denial. Daily it calls to our attention in the Preface for Lent the value of mortification: "By the fasting of the body Thou dost curb our vices, elevate our minds, and bestow virtue and reward." Do we live according to this principle? The mortification urged by the liturgy is required, not merely of great sinners, penitents, novices, and newly ordained priests, but even of those advanced in virtue; those advanced in age also need mortification both of body and mind. These, too, need to mortify their pride and self-will, their unruly passions, their dissatisfaction, their bitterness, and their self-seeking. Even those advanced in age and virtue daily experience how prone the human spirit is to evil. Age is no protection against foolishness or temptation; for temptation follows us always, and even an old man may easily fall unless he unceasingly practices self-control by all manner of mortification. "We suffer with Him [Christ] that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17). We die in order to live. Without death through mortification during Lent, there can be no resurrection at Easter or eternal life.

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to hear our prayers. Deliver us from our sins; protect us from all evil. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Liturgy of
Sexagesima Sunday*

1. The stational church for Sexagesima Sunday is St. Paul's in Rome. St. Paul speaks today for the assembled faithful. Their needs are his needs, their griefs his griefs, their cries his cries. He has experienced in his own person all the bitterness and weakness and the sufferings of the Church, and here where we are assembled today he allows us to share his struggles again with him.

2. "Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise and cast us not off to the end" (Introit; Ps. 43:23). O suffering Church of Christ! Psalm 43 recounts for us the wonders and miracles God worked on behalf of His people; it relates His intervention and the destruction of their powerful enemies. Today His people cry out, "Our belly hath cleaved to the earth" (Introit). Yes, O Lord, Thou dost lift Thy eyes to behold Thy children, the children born to Thee in baptism, nurtured and raised for God, and instructed in holy wisdom. Thou hast healed their wounds with Thy holy sacraments and nourished them with the Holy Eucharist. In these days of licentiousness, when men dance and sing, when the world is steeped in materialism and sensuality, and nations live at enmity with God and His Christ, Thou standest before us as before so many living corpses. In so many of Thy children Thou cleavest to the earth.

"Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord?" A sincere cry for mercy rises from the bosom of the Church. Oh, that the world had the grace of understanding the words of St. Paul, around whose tomb the faithful are assembled today! St. Paul tells us that

he who would serve Christ must undergo hardships of all kinds, and be prepared to fight the good fight for Christ. He must not expect to find his way to Christ by an easy way, but by way of hardships, self-denial, toil, patience in suffering, fidelity under temptation, and in an unwavering reliance on supernatural grace. What would Paul have been without his sufferings, his chains, and his martyrdom? But where would he have found strength to endure these things except in the all-powerful help from above? (Gradual.)

But grace alone is not enough. Grace must fall on good ground to be fruitful, on ground such as the soul of Paul. When the seed of enlightenment of the spirit and of the guidance of the will falls by the wayside, it is trampled upon and destroyed. When it falls on stony ground, it can strike no root and will wither away. When it falls among thorns, the tender shoots will be strangled. Only when the seed falls on good ground can it bring forth fruit (Gospel). How many there are who belong to the church, who are immersed in a veritable sea of grace, and yet bring forth no fruit! Is this because God fails to give them the seed of grace? No, indeed; it is the earth that is found wanting, not the seed.

3. It behooves us therefore to follow in the footsteps of the blessed apostle Paul, in the way of voluntary self-denial and penance. We should detach our heart from all earthly things and from all unnecessary occupations. We shall prove fruitful ground only if we devote ourselves entirely to Christ and His interests. We should crucify our vices by earnest works of Christian mortification, that having cast out the old man, we may live a new life in union with God. We shall then bring forth fruit a hundredfold when Christ unites Himself to us in Holy Communion and fills us with His life and His strength. "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

This new life itself is the seed for the bearing of another fruit, the fruit of eternal union with God. In that life our resurrection will be to a life of unending bliss, an eternal

Easter in heaven. But as yet "our belly hath cleaved to the earth." "O Lord, arise and cast us not off to the end. . . . Help us and deliver us" (Introit) now in the Mass and Communion and again when we shall "go in to the altar of God [in heaven], to God who giveth joy to my youth" in the resurrection of eternal life (Communion).

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

Strength in weakness

1. Today we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at the tomb of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul. Today he becomes a type of the Church. He is persecuted and tried on all sides, and yet he is filled with the strength of Christ, "for power is made perfect in infirmity" (Epistle).

2. "Our belly hath cleaved to the earth. . . . Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord" (Introit). That is the cry of unredeemed mankind. It is likewise the prayer of the Church militant although it is now redeemed. However, even as Christ, the head of the Church, was not exempt from suffering during His earthly life, neither are His members exempt from suffering. The Epistle gives us a picture of the suffering Church in the sufferings of the Apostle. We see in St. Paul the suffering priests and the suffering faithful. He suffered many things, "in many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often." He was "in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, . . . in perils from false brethren; in labor and painfulness, in much watching, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (Epistle). Thus, too, the Church must suffer. She is contradicted, slandered, misrepresented, and persecuted by those outside her fold. She suffers much from her own children also. Many of her priests prove unfaithful; her princes and her religious often fail her; her children are often given to bitter and unjust criticism, to distrust and worldliness. We feel her suffering and grief when she cries out to God today, "Arise,

why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest Thou Thy face away and forgettest our trouble? Our belly hath cleaved to the earth; arise, O Lord, help us and deliver us" (Introit). We cannot free ourselves or raise ourselves from the earth because we are so weak and wayward and helpless.

"Thou hast moved the earth, O Lord, and hast troubled it. Heal Thou the breaches thereof, for it has been moved" (Tract). These breaches are the sufferings and struggles of the Church and her children on earth. These sufferings are part of the plan of God. They are trials through which He purifies His Church. Through these sufferings, trials, temptations, and humiliations, the earth (the Christian soul) is "moved" and is troubled. God takes the soul in His strong hands, shakes and moves it until it is prepared to admit its own helplessness and worthlessness. Now it will recognize and declare its abject poverty and unworthiness. Once it has made this acknowledgement, it is prepared to receive the good seed. From this point on it attempts nothing of itself, but depends on God for grace and on the love of Christ for everything. The seed that God sows in the humbled and troubled soul falls on good ground. The souls that receive this seed "in a good and perfect heart . . . bring forth fruit in patience" (Gospel). The strength of Christ is perfected through the weakness of humanity. The soul is prepared for receiving the strength of Christ by the recognition of its own weakness and unworthiness.

Having been humiliated by the hand of God through suffering and labor, the soul is exalted. The more it is torn, and the more thorough and complete this humiliation, and the more docile the soul is under the hand of God: the deeper the seed of grace sinks into it, and the more fruitful it becomes. The Church and the truly Christian soul is therefore thankful for the trials that come from the hand of God. In the cross is salvation.

3. It is in these very humiliations, trials and sufferings, which God allows to overtake His Church, that the mystery of her

internal growth lies. The more she is tried, the stronger and more vigorous she becomes. What is true of the Church at large is equally true of the individual soul. The words of the *Imitation of Christ* are ever true: "There is no health of soul nor hope of eternal life but in the cross. . . . There is no other way to life and to true internal peace but the holy way of the cross and of daily mortification" (Book II, chap. 12). Christ comes to us in the Holy Sacrifice and at the time of Holy Communion. He sows His seed in our soul. In the soil of the soul that has been prepared to receive it by humiliation and suffering, the seed sown by Christ will bring forth rich fruit. "Power is made perfect in infirmity (Epistle). But this is true only if the soul submits to the trials and sufferings that God sends it. These sufferings are profitable only for the soul that embraces them willingly and receives them blindly from the hand of God with complete and perfect confidence in His providence. If we are wanting in faith and confidence in God, these visitations will fail in their purpose.

God influences the Church and the souls of men in various ways, but the one He uses most frequently is that of inflicting suffering from within and from without. No other method has proved so fruitful for the Church and for souls. God sends suffering to His Church and to souls precisely because He loves them. He must send them trials if they are to grow strong, become perfect, and bear fruit. "Thou hast moved the earth, O Lord." Only when the Lord has moved it can the earth (the soul) become fruitful.

"Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved. Incline Thy ear and hear my words. Show forth Thy wonderful mercies, Thou who savest them that trust in Thee" (Offertory). With this prayer we surrender ourselves to the strength of Christ which flows from the Mass. The weakness of men will be perfected by the strength of Christ. Sharing the strength of Christ, the Church and the soul of the Christian will be faithful in the way of the Lord. Christ gives the soul a new life (Secreta), holy joy (Communion), and a devout way of

life (Postcommunion). That is the substance of our thoughts and prayers as we celebrate the liturgy today.

PRAYER

O God, who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do of ourselves; mercifully grant that by the protection of the Doctor of the Gentiles, we may be defended against all adversities. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The Deluge

1. The lessons read at Matins during this week relate the story of the Deluge. During the whole week the liturgy dwells on the terrible judgment passed by God on sinful mankind.

2. "And after that men began to be multiplied upon the earth and daughters were born to them. The sons of God [the descendants of God-fearing Seth], seeing the daughters of men [the descendants of Cain] that they were fair, took to themselves wives of all which they chose. . . . And God, seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented Him that He had made man on the earth" (Gen. 6:1 ff.).

God then considered destroying man, but He waited patiently for one hundred and twenty years. He commanded Noe to build an ark which could be seen by all men, and charged him to tell them that God would destroy the world should men fail to give up their evil ways. Erring men had only ridicule and derision for Noe, his ark, and his fantastic story. God then carried out the threat He had made. "And the flood was forty days upon the earth, and the waters increased and lifted up the ark on high from the earth. For they overflowed exceedingly; and filled all on the face of the earth, and the ark was carried upon the waters. And the waters prevailed beyond measure upon the earth; and all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. . . . And all flesh was destroyed that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beasts, and of all creeping things that creep upon the earth;

and all men. . . . And Noe only remained and they that were with him in the ark" (Gen. 7:17 ff.). God will not be mocked. "But except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5).

Salvation can be found only in the Ark, in Christ. The normal approach to Christ is through the Church, which is the body of Christ. Only if we associate ourselves with the Church can we share in the redemption and obtain salvation. "No one can have God for his father who does not have the Church for his mother" (St. Cyprian). The same saint compares the Church to the ark of Noe. Only he who enters the church can be saved. Only those who are guided by the infallible authority of the Church, who are submissive to her teachings, and who make use of her sacraments with faith and humility, can escape eternal death.¹ "Just as Christ is the way for all men so too is His Church. He who would seek salvation outside the Church is straying from the true way and his efforts are in vain" (Leo XIII). "One might find everything else outside the Church but not salvation" (St. Augustine). We should therefore be eternally grateful that through the grace of God we have been taken into the Ark of the Church.

3. "And all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times." We all know from our own past experiences how terrible and how persistent is the power of sin in man. With St. Paul we may all say: "For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me; but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. . . . But I see another law in my members, fighting

¹ However, the grace of God is not restricted. Pope Pius IX, while reiterating the traditional teaching, "Outside the Roman Church no one can be saved," nevertheless adds: "It must likewise be held as certain that those who live in ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible, are guilty of no fault in this matter before the eyes of God" (Denzinger, no. 1647). [Ed.]

against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members" (Rom. 7:18 ff.).

We should acknowledge our inborn perversity with all humility and fight against the roots of evil that are embedded in our soul. "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24 f.). We shall seek this grace, then, in our Lord Jesus Christ, through His holy Church. In this Ark we shall find salvation.

"Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). The Deluge was a punishment sent by God because of sin and man's impenitence. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day" (Ecclus. 5:8). "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitence of heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of just judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4 f.). In the name of the whole sinful race we cry out in the Introit of today's Mass: "Arise and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest Thou Thy face away and forgettest our trouble? . . . Arise, O Lord, help us and deliver us." Let us not become the victims of sin. Give to each of us the grace to perform sincere and adequate penance.

Today we thank God that he has called us, unworthy as we are, into His Ark, the Church, in which we shall most certainly be saved.

PRAYER

O God, who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do of ourselves; mercifully grant that by the protection of the Doctor of the Gentiles, we may be defended against all adversities. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEXAGESIMA

St. Paul

1. The stational church for Sexagesima Sunday is the basilica of St. Paul in Rome. We assemble there in the house of the

holy Apostle and feel ourselves united to him in the closest fellowship as "companions of the saints." He is filled with the spirit of Christ, burning with zeal for Christ, and prepared to undergo all sufferings and hardships for Him (Epistle).

2. "I know a man in Christ" (Epistle). This man is St. Paul himself. We are amazed when we read today his account of the sufferings and labors he undertook to win souls to Christ. He has suffered in many labors, in frequent imprisonment, from abuse without measure; often in danger of death, five times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned, three times he suffered shipwreck; his travels were endless; he endured hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, blows, and unrelenting persecutions. This is the "man in Christ" who was "caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter" (Epistle). To this same man is given a sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet him. "Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." This is "a man in Christ," a man of courage, of self-sacrifice, of heroic zeal for souls. What kind of men are we? We are so weak, so querulous, so timid in our piety, so self-centered, so miserly in our dealings with God and our fellow man, so unskilled in the practice of virtue.

How has Paul acquired this breadth and profundity of holiness? He has identified himself with Christ and united himself to Him in all things. He feels the strength of Christ in his veins; Christ's aims and objectives live in him; he is inflamed with a love of Christ and of souls which gives him no rest, but drives him on to undertake all sacrifices, sufferings, and labors; and each new trial and persecution only serves to renew the fire of that love. St. Paul is no longer conscious of anything but Christ; everything else is vanity in his eyes. He has only one ambition, and that is to gain Christ and to have Christ take complete possession of him. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

3. By baptism we too have been incorporated in Christ and have become living members of His body, the Church. "I am the vine, you the branches. He that abideth in Me and I in

him, the same beareth much fruit" (John 15:5). By the daily reception of Holy Communion this union is intensified and perfected. In this manner the "man in Christ" is created.

The true Christian has a profound faith in his incorporation with Christ, and is sincerely grateful for the favor of having been made a branch of the vine, and for the privilege of sharing the life and strength of the vine. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me," in Him whose life fills me and vitalizes me. He shares His life with me through Holy Communion.

Today we assemble in the house of St. Paul to join him in offering the Holy Sacrifice and in receiving Holy Communion, and to become like him, a "man in Christ." We return to our daily tasks and carry with us to all our undertakings the strength of St. Paul and Christ. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

PRAYER

O God, who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do of ourselves; mercifully grant that by the protection of the Doctor of the Gentiles, we may be defended against all adversities. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The Divine Sower

1. "The sower went out to sow his seed." Three fourths of the seed will be unfruitful because it falls on barren soil. That which falls on fertile ground, however, will bring forth fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold (Gospel).

2. We are dependent on the divine sower. The soil of our hearts (our spirit, our thoughts, our will) can of itself produce nothing. Of ourselves we are incapable of the least good thought or resolution, or of the smallest act of Christian virtue. "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from Christ" (II Cor. 3:5). "For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish

according to His good will" (Phil. 2:13). We are so entirely dependent on the sower that He assures us, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Without Him we are incapable of anything but sin, and we sink in our misery as a stone sinks in water. Without His help we are as abandoned as the victims of the Deluge, of whom Holy Scripture says: "And all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times" (Gen. 6:5). "Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4:7.) We depend entirely on the divine sower to sow the seeds of good in our hearts.

The sower comes to us to sow good seed in our hearts. First of all He plants the seed of virtue by baptism, incorporating us in His mystical body, the Church. How often He has planted and replanted these seeds in our hearts! He has planted it through the word of God, which is given to us through the Church and her priesthood. In the sacrament of baptism our soul was bathed in the redeeming blood of the Savior and cleansed from all stain of original sin, so that we might arise as new men reborn to a new life and the sonship of God. In the sacrament of confirmation Christ renewed His grace in us and gave us the power to grow to our full stature as children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, He gives us his very self; His flesh and blood become our daily bread. He now no longer merely helps and strengthens us, He Himself lives within us by a true physical union of His flesh and blood with ours. He has become as close to us as a vine is to its branches. At every crucial turning point in our lives, at the moment of our greatest successes and failures, from our youth to our old age, from the moment of our baptism to our last illness, Christ is near, concealed in the Blessed Sacrament, but ever ready to sow the seed of His grace in our hearts. Oh, that we had the eyes of faith to see Him sowing His seed by whispering His divine counsel into our ear, and that we had the wisdom to profit by His advice and to heed His warnings! Would that we had the

gracefulness to thank Him for His help and the wisdom to open our hearts so that the seed He sows might take deep root!

3. "At that time, when a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto Jesus" (Gospel). The people mentioned in the Gospel today are these people who are assembled here today to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. We have the sower in our midst; today He will sow this good seed in our hearts through the lessons taught by the Epistle and Gospel of the Mass, through the edifying example set for us by St. Paul in the Epistle, through the example He Himself gave us by His death on the cross, and by the unbloody renewal of that death in the Mass today. He became "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

"The sower went out to sow his seed." The seed which Christ today sows in the Mass is, in the mind of the sacred liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion. This seed cannot fail to reproduce itself "sixtyfold if it falls on fertile soil. Yet in the soil of our soul it so often fails to bear fruit at all. The soil has not been properly prepared. We are too pre-occupied by worldly cares and burdens of our life. We are too concerned about that which is worldly and transitory and too little interested in that which is divine and eternal. Thus the soil of our soul becomes rocky ground, so hard and forbidding that the seed can strike no roots. The holy sacraments produce fruit, the Council of Trent tells us, according to our preparation and dispositions.

PRAYER

Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved; incline Thy ear and hear my words; show forth Thy wonderful mercies, Thou who savest them that trust in Thee, O Lord. (Offertory.)

THURSDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The ground and the seed

1. Lent, the spring and seeding time of the soul, is near at hand. In the Mass and in the Holy Eucharist good seed will

be sown in our soul. The divine sower strews His seed with a prodigal hand. Is the soil of our soul prepared to receive it?

2. "Some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. . . . And they by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart" (Gospel). These are the souls which are dissipated and unmortified. They no longer have taste for anything but that which is superficial and worldly; they have abandoned the practice of recollection; they preserve no watch over their senses and over the desires and movements of their heart. They are they who hear the word of God; "then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart."

"And other some fell upon a rock. And as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it had no moisture." This seed sprang up, but it soon withered because it could not fix its roots in the soil. These are the souls who receive the seed with good will, but as soon as they are subject to temptation or are required to make sacrifices, they weaken and submit. "In time of temptation they fall away."

"And other some fell among thorns. . . . And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit." The soul tends naturally toward God and earnestly receives His grace. But at the same time it is troubled by various illicit desires and the cares of its station in life; it is troubled about its past and worried about its future. It is concerned about its health, frightened by the prospect of humiliation, depressed by the injuries it has suffered, terrified by uncertainties and hardships; and amid all these trials the seed can neither strike roots nor bring forth fruit.

3. "I will go in to the altar of God; to God who giveth joy to my youth" (Communion). I will go to the altar of God and obtain the good seed, Holy Communion, and plant it today in the good soil of my heart. I will open wide the furrows of my soul and prepare in my heart good ground, free of stones

and thorns, so that the seed may take root and bear fruit a hundredfold.

In Holy Communion, Christ gives us His flesh and blood, and with them and through them His spirit. His spirit operates in our soul and performs the same service for it that the blood performs for the body. His spirit fills us completely, and He lives in us. If we listen to His inspirations. He will soon bring us to a perfect union with Himself. Then we shall see all through the eyes of Christ and shall will what He wills. Then we shall desire only what He desires, love only what He loves. Then our heart will be one with the heart of Christ, and we shall be able to say with St. Paul, "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ then will completely occupy our heart, and we may then truly be said to be "another Christ," because of the union of His heart and soul with ours. Then we shall have lost our own life, but we shall have acquired the life of Christ. Then the prophecy of Christ will be fulfilled in us: "And I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John 6:58). This is the hundredfold fruit of Holy Communion.

In order that our soul may reap this fruit, the Lord has "moved the earth" (our soul) "and hast troubled it" (Gradual) through humiliation, trials, and sufferings of all sorts. The "power [of God] is made perfect in [our] infirmity" (Epistle).

PRAYER

We humbly beseech Thee, O almighty God, to grant that we who have been refreshed by Thy sacraments may so live as to do Thee worthy and acceptable service. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Postcommunion.)

FRIDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEXAGESIMA

Venial sin

1. "The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. . . . And they by the wayside are

they that hear; then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart" (Gospel). The devil removes the word from their heart by holding them bound by venial sins. By such sin the inspirations of grace are prevented from germinating and growing.

2. Deliberate venial sin ruins the soil of the soul so that it cannot bring forth abundant fruit. Such sin does not separate the soul from God, but attaches itself like a dead weight to the soul and spirit, so that a man is hindered from living for God. Such a soul is like an eagle whose wings have been clipped. Venial sins show a neglect of God and a contempt for Him, even though such neglect and contempt are not directly intended. By such sins we set up our own will against the will of God for the sake of some desire, some need, some temporal advantage which we prefer to the command and will of God. We thereby reject the inspirations of grace by our venial sins. Then we return to seek an increase of grace and love. Will God again offer us the grace which we once rejected? Since we have already misused the grace He gave us, God is likely to be less prodigal with His grace, and we shall receive it less frequently and in smaller measure. We shall easily fall into new faults, and thus the will becomes accustomed to giving way to venial sin. Our mental powers will be darkened; our faith will be weakened; the soul will become indifferent. If we are not on our guard and if we do not make strenuous efforts at the first sign of unfaithfulness, we are in danger of becoming spiritually blind and hardened. "And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down."

Our ruin is completed by habitual venial sin. There are many pious people who murmur and criticize others and never make an effort to cure this fault, never strive earnestly against it, and never feel sorrow for having given way to it. They are disobedient in little things, impatient and uncharitable in their thoughts and in their dealings with others, untruthful in speech, lazy and indolent in their religious duties, unmortified and insolent in speech. They treat lightly the good name and

the good works of others, and are not always honest in their dealings with others. They know that they have these faults and bemoan them, but they are not really sorry for them, nor do they make use of the proper means for correcting them. They are not convinced that each of these faults and imperfections is a millstone about their neck which drags them ever downward. They do not consider that they began to fall into these faults by allowing their thoughts to become worldly. They do not remember that they began by neglecting and misusing the grace that was given them. The seed that was sown was good seed, but it fell by the wayside. "I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. 3:16). Such is the fate of those who are indifferent to venial sin.

The seed fell by the wayside and on stony ground. How can it strike roots in such soil? How can grace produce fruit in a soul that is given up to habitual venial sin, that is overcome by sleep and indifference, and abuses grace? How can the seed bring forth fruit in such a soul? How can grace be fruitful in a soul that scarcely ever prays, that is entirely occupied with creatures, and that withstands the Holy Spirit?

3. "Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise and cast us not off to the end. . . . Our belly hath cleaved to the earth. Arise, O Lord, help us and deliver us" from the evil of habitual venial sin (Introit). Who can deliver us once we have become victims of this baneful vice? Only the mercy of God. But what if the mercy of God should be inclined to vomit us out of its mouth? We may be sure that during the holy season of Lent, God will show His mercy.

What should our lives as Christians be if not a life of living submission to God through Christ Jesus? But how is this possible when even those who are priests and religious consecrated to God continue to oppose God, trifle with the things that are displeasing to Him, and thus place themselves in danger of turning their back on Him entirely? It is high time that we break away completely from venial sin.

PRAYER

Thou hast moved the earth, O Lord, and hast troubled it. Heal Thou the breaches thereof, for it has been moved, that they may flee from before the bow, that Thy elect may be delivered. (Tract.)
Deliver us from the bonds of venial sin. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The good soil

1. Today we listen with astonishment as the words pour forth from the mouth of the apostle Paul telling of the wonderful fruit borne by the seed the Lord placed in his soul on the way to Damascus. "But that [which fell] on the good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience" (Gospel). St. Paul received the word of God into his heart, nourished it with grace, and brought forth fruit in patience.

2. "The sower went out to sow his seed" (Gospel). "Saul, as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ," set out from Jerusalem to Damascus with the intention of bringing the disciples back to Jerusalem in chains. His heart was fixed with zeal for the Law and for the religion of his fathers, and in this heart God sowed the seed of His word. "And suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him. And falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? Who said: who art Thou, Lord? And He: I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad. And he, trembling and astonished, said: Lord what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said to him: Arise and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:3-7). The seed has been sown. Saul received it willingly "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" He does as he has been directed, and enters the city. He remains there waiting patiently in his blindness, without eating or drinking. He prays and abandons himself entirely to the direction of Ananias, who restores his vision and baptizes him.

He retires to solitude and to prayer that the seed may take root deeply in his soul. It springs up vigorously, and Saul becomes Paul. From that moment on he is obsessed by one idea: Christ, His Church, and the salvation of souls. "Forgetting the things that are behind" (Phil. 3:13), he now knows only Christ and Him crucified. "For to me, to live is Christ; and to die is gain. . . . But I am straightened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better" (Phil. 1:21, 23).

A soul so fully occupied with Christ, so full of zeal for the salvation of souls and the welfare of the Church, a soul that has broken with all that is not of Christ, is certainly good soil. We need not wonder, then, that St. Paul's life and labors were so marvelously fruitful and that he bore suffering and trials with such heroism. Neither are we surprised that he so soon reached such sublime heights of prayer and contemplation that he was "caught up to the third heaven" (Epistle). "But that [which fell] on the good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience."

"In a good and perfect heart." We have received the word of God, and we shall continue to receive it. But shall we continue to preserve it in a perfect heart? Shall we receive it and protect and nourish it as St. Paul did? Why do we not experience a growth in holiness such as Paul experienced? There are three things that interfere with our growth in holiness. "Some fell by the wayside," in a soul distracted and dissipated by idle fancies and futile plans. Such a soul is barren of spiritual fruit, because it must investigate every new face that appears, read every item in the papers, and know and listen to everything that goes on about it. Its energies are dissipated by the pursuit of temporal things and has no time for God, for prayer, or meditation. It walks so much in the world that it has no time to walk with God.

"Some other fell upon a rock." This is the timid or selfish soul that shrinks from any sacrifice. It may be pious and reli-

gious, but as soon as it is called upon to undergo hardships or temptation, it renounces the word for its own peace and comfort. "And some fell among thorns." These souls receive the word of God, and by the grace of God are determined to become pious and virtuous. In spite of their good resolutions, however, they allow bad habits and unmortified passions to grow up in their hearts. They retain a passionate attachment to their worldly goods, to the comforts of life, to the esteem of their fellow men, to their profession, their studies, and their hobbies. They insist on their own will, they fail to improve their traits of character, they insist on their own opinions, and waste much time and effort pampering their bodies and providing for their own comfort.

3. Today we are assembled at the tomb of St. Paul. We feel ourselves united with him, and as we gather in his church today, we long to be filled with his strength and his spirit. Oh, that like him we might prove good ground, in which Christ, the divine husbandman, sows the seed so abundantly!

We will have to improve ourselves in many ways if the seed is to bring forth fruit in our souls. We must remove all that can prevent or impair the work of grace in our hearts. Indifference, lukewarmness, and attachment to the world must go. Above all, we must cast off all ill-regulated attachments and unbecoming activities. Then only can Christ become our all, and then only can we truly say with St. Paul, "the love of Christ impels us" (II Cor. 5:14). If we are impelled by such love we are good ground and we will bear fruit.

Today, as we gather to celebrate the holy mysteries, we place our petitions on the paten and beg God, for the sake of Christ's offering, to give us the strength to renounce perfectly everything that would hinder the growth of His grace in our soul.

PRAYER

We humbly beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we may be enlightened by Thy grace, that we may know what we must do, and do what is right. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of Quinquagesima Sunday

1. In the Gospel of today's Mass the Church reveals the mystery of the approaching lenten and paschal seasons. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished, which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him they will put Him to death" (Gospel). The apostles, even St. Peter, whose church is the stational church today, "understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them." Nevertheless they bravely accompany Jesus to Jerusalem.

2. In the liturgy of the Mass which we are about to celebrate, we go along with Christ to Jerusalem and to the Calvary of the altar. There the mystery of which Christ spoke shall be re-enacted before our eyes. We join ourselves to the offering of our great high priest, and accompany Him on the path that He has chosen. That path will lead us through strife and struggle to victory, to the eternal Easter. So we pray with our Savior in the Introit, which represents His journey to Jerusalem: "Be thou to me a God, a protector, and a place of refuge to save me." With these words we enter prayerfully with the Church into the arduous struggle of Lent. It will be a struggle against our passions and temptations, against the solicitations of the world and hell. Lord have mercy upon us. "Guard us from all adversity, who have been loosened from the bonds of sin" (Collect).

Renunciation, sacrifice, and heroic struggle: that is our program for Lent. These difficulties must be borne patiently and in the spirit of love. Our works and sufferings will be to no avail unless they are performed with love. For this reason the Apostle in the Epistle speaks of love in such glowing terms. It was love that drew Christ to Jerusalem to offer Himself up for us. It is

His love that makes Him share with us the fruits of His suffering and death. With gratitude we acknowledge in the Gradual: "Thou art the God that alone dost wonders; Thou hast made Thy power known among the nations. With Thy arm Thou hast redeemed Thy people, the children of Israel and of Joseph."

3. Love must rule all our actions also. With love we accompany Him; with love we offer with Him; with love we offer all we have, our bodies and our souls, our time, our health, and all that we possess. In this spirit we join with our Lord in the Offertory procession this morning. We are prepared to share His suffering with Him, to be reviled, to be scourged, yes, even to accompany Him to death. "Teach me Thy justifications" (Offertory). Heal us of the blindness that makes us fail to appreciate the mystery of the cross, the mystery of the sacrifice and death of our high priest, and give us the grace to understand Him, to follow Him, and to live with Him. Through death to life! "He that loveth his life shall lose it; he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). If we offer ourselves with Christ in the Offertory, life will be given to us in Communion. "They did eat and were filled exceedingly" (Communion). St. Peter, in whose house we are assembled, leads us along the way we must follow. At first he, too, failed to understand the word; but love opened his eyes. It obliged him to follow his Master and to share His crucifixion. Love opened to him the door to life and to the eternal Easter.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

"Lord, that I may see"

1. Struggle and labor are the lot of Christ and His Church. We know that because of our weakness we could expect nothing but defeat and disillusionment. But our very weakness is our strength. The more we humble ourselves and the greater our trust in the Lord, the surer we are of victory. From Him we shall obtain the strength for victory. For this reason we cry out with the Church today, like the blind man in the Gospel: "Be

Thou unto me a God, a protector, and a place of refuge to save me; for Thou art my strength and my refuge; and for Thy name's sake Thou wilt lead me and nourish me" (Introit).

2. "And when He drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying: Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me. . . . And Jesus, standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was come near He asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God" (Gospel).

"But the miracles of our Lord and Savior should be so understood, dearly beloved brethren, that on the one hand the deeds themselves are truly believed, and on the other, that they contain some mystic interpretation for our instruction. . . . Who this blind man was historically we do not know, but yet we do know what he signifies mystically. Truly blind is the human race, which once expelled from the joys of Paradise in the person of its first parent, now suffers the darkness of its own damnation, being ignorant of the brightness of divine light" (Lesson at Matins, Gregory the Great).

The blind man of the Gospel is, in the eyes of the liturgy, the Church of the Gentiles. Abandoned to itself, it is the blind man sitting by the wayside in misery and poverty. How it longs for the ability to see! The power of vision would be its most priceless possession. But who can and who will give it the power of sight? The Son of God descends from heaven and meets it on the wayside. It learns that the Lord is passing by and cries out to Him from the depths of its misery, its poverty, and its helplessness: "Son of David, have mercy on me." The Lord is disposed to grant mercy. "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" "Lord, that I may see." Only let me see; only give me light. Give me that, and I shall be rich and possess all things. The Lord

gives it the desired grace, the grace of faith. Now its desires are satisfied, and in the possession of the faith it possesses all things: God, the world, time, eternity, light, and love. With joy and gratitude it cries out: "Thou art the God that alone dost wonders; Thou hast made Thy power known among the nations. With Thy arm Thou hast redeemed Thy people, the children of Israel and of Joseph" (Gradual). "Sing joyfully to God, all the earth; serve ye the Lord with gladness. . . . We are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Tract).

3. We are the Church. In baptism Christ heals our blindness. The Fathers were wont to call baptism "the enlightenment." In this sacrament we receive the gift of faith and Christ, the truth, our God and our all. Would that it could be said of us, as it was of the blind man, "And immediately he saw and followed Him, glorifying God"!

In the mind of the liturgy, today should be a day of thanksgiving for the gift of faith. How often has it been necessary for Christ to restore our "inner sight" since the time of our baptism? How little we treasured it! How carelessly we cared for it! We should imitate the liturgy, which never wearies of thanking God for this marvelous gift. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy justifications. With my lips I have pronounced all the judgments of Thy mouth" (Offertory).

Until now we were helpless, poor, and blind. Then through Christ we received our sight. We now behold the marvelous world of His gifts and His grace, the most resplendent of which is the Holy Eucharist. He comes to us again today in the Eucharist to bring us new light, a deeper insight. "They did eat and were filled exceedingly; and the Lord gave them their desire; they were not defrauded of that which they craved" (Communion). Who is so fortunate and rich as the children of the Church? Indeed, in the Church, in Christ, we are not defrauded.

In our weakness lies our strength. It is our very weakness that draws us to Christ, to baptism, to the Holy Eucharist, to the altar, to the unceasing search for God. "Thou art my strength

and my refuge; and for Thy name's sake Thou wilt lead me and nourish me" (Introit) with Thy strength and Thy life. "And I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John 6:58).

PRAYER

Graciously hear our prayers, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and guard us from all adversity, who have been loosened from the bonds of sin. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA

The canticle of love

1. With heartfelt gratitude the Church praises God today for having been cured of its blindness. Christ has given her the light of faith, and with it the gift of love. Love rules the world and all mankind. But there are two kinds of love. There is a love that is impure and unholy, a love of self that degrades, a love that seeks the things that God has condemned and forbidden. This is the love that fills man with the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life. This love degrades man, separates him from God, and plunges him into misery (John 2:16). There is also a pure love, a holy love that seeks God, elevates the soul, and induces man to forget self and dedicate himself entirely to God. For this love the liturgy thanks God today. This is the kind of love that God gave to His Church when He enlightened her. This is her wealth, that she loves God, and in God her neighbor. This is the theme of the Epistle of Quinquagesima Sunday, which is a canticle of love for God and our neighbor.

2. "Brethren, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and

have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (Epistle). Everything depends on our having charity. But what kind of charity must we have?

"Charity is patient, is kind. Charity envieth not; dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." See here the inner life of the Church, her heart, her love of God and her love of men.

"Charity never falleth away, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known. Now there remaineth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (Epistle).

3. These virtues are the treasures of the Church: She possesses faith; she has hope; she has, in the person of many of her children, knowledge and the gifts of prophecy and of miracles. But above all these treasures is the gift of love—the pure and perfect love of God. This love fulfills perfectly the will of God, not out of fear or because it is constrained, not for the sake of any reward, but simply in order to be pleasing to God and to give joy to Him who has first given Himself to us. This love controls all thoughts and desires, directs them to God in prayer, in work, and in service. This love makes its possessor strong and eager to bear all sacrifices and trials for love of Him.

This love of God makes the Church inexhaustible in her works of charity. The history of the Church is one uninterupted epic of heroic fraternal charity. She has been unremitting in her service of the orphans, the poor, the widows, the

slaves, the exiled, the imprisoned, the wretched, and the helpless. What is the life of her priests, her missionaries, her religious of both sexes, but a marvelous story of lives devoted to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

We should examine ourselves carefully according to the maxims of the Epistle. Have we the spirit of charity? In baptism the spirit of charity was planted in our soul. By the offering of the Holy Sacrifice and the reception of Communion the flame of charity is stirred to life and increased. Do we live and practice fraternal charity? Have we not lost many opportunities to practice it? Let us beg our Lord, "Enkindle in us the fire of Thy love."

PRAYER

Graciously hear our prayers, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and guard us from all adversity, who have been loosened from the bonds of sin. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA

"Let us go up to Jerusalem!"

1. Today we stand silent before the beginning of the lenten season. The Church has prepared us for it in three stages. In the lessons at Matins she presents the three great patriarchs, Adam, Noe, and Abraham. Adam, who is the author of original sin, is also a figure of Christ; Noe, having been rescued from the Deluge by the ark, is a figure of mankind rescued from sin through the Church by means of baptism. Abraham, offering up his son on Mount Moriah, is a figure of the sacrificial death of Christ on Calvary. Three great figures of the New Testament appear in the three stational churches on each of these three Sundays, St. Lawrence, St. Paul, and St. Peter. Three main thoughts dominate the Gospels for these three Sundays: the invitation to the laborers to work in the vineyard of the master (Septuagesima); the sowing of the seed of the word and of grace in the Church (Sexagesima); the healing of the blind man (the

Church) by baptism, the beginning of our enlightenment in the eternal Easter of heaven (Quinquagesima).

2. "At that time Jesus took unto Him the twelve and said to them: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man; for He shall be delivered to the Gentiles and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon; and they will put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again" (Gospel). With a deep earnestness and a quiet determination the Lord goes to meet His death. His disciples (His Church) are to go with Him. They are one with Him. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem" (to Holy Week, to Easter). Of every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass it could be said: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," to the mount of Calvary, to relive there with our Lord the mystery of His suffering and death. Our whole life as Christians is nothing else but an ascent to Jerusalem and the sharing of His painful journey. During the season of Lent the liturgy will banish all our doubts and scruples and will clearly show us the path. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," to suffer with our Master, to die with Him, and to rise with Him to eternal life. "Through battle to victory" must not remain empty words. By dying we live. "Yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17).

"And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said." The apostles had now been with Him for three years. He had taught them carefully, and as the incarnate Son of God, He had given them an example of humility, patience, and zeal. Still their thoughts are earth-bound. Their hopes are still based on a national hero to throw off the Roman yoke and establish a Jewish kingdom. And these twelve apostles dream of obtaining the preferred places and honors in this kingdom. "They understood none of these things" when He spoke to them of the kingdom of God and told them that His kingdom is not of this world but is founded, not on national or political

power, but on suffering and the cross. They are still blind although they have been so long in the company of Him who came to be the light of the world. The doctrine of suffering and of humility is often an unwelcome doctrine even to pious souls. The blindness of the apostles afflicts us also.

We are now approaching the season of Lent, Good Friday, the cross and suffering. The Church bears witness to the fact that the contemporary world has lost the spirit of true penance. The world lets Christ make His painful journey unaccompanied. We beg Him to spare us suffering. We admire the Christian heroes of the cross, the martyrs and saints of the Church, and celebrate their feasts. Yes, they are wonderful, we say, but we are incapable of their heroism and love of the cross. Modern Christians, both in the world and in the cloister, have forgotten how to appreciate and love the cross. The love of the cross has too small a place in our spirit, in our life, in our heart (I Cor. 1:17). We have forgotten how to treasure the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14). We would be ashamed to have it said of us that we knew nothing "but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). We read and meditate devoutly on the chapter from the *Imitation of Christ*, "The Royal Way of the Cross," but it remains for us just a beautiful theory. We read and sing in the Introit of the Mass, "We ought to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But we never get beyond the words themselves. It is a mere theory. We celebrate the mystery of His suffering daily with Christ in the Mass. We even receive into our hearts the Lord who has been offered up for us. He longs to fill us with His spirit, with His love of the cross. Every day we stand before the cross and pray. "But they understand none of these things!" — these baptized, these Christians, these priests, these religious!

3. "Lord, that I may see," the Church cries out to the Lord when He appears in her midst today. "Lord that I may see." She begs that all her children may be given the grace to learn and understand again the mystery of the cross, the lesson of Good Friday.

“Lord, that I may see.” Lord, that we may know and acknowledge that there is no salvation except by sharing the suffering and the cross of Christ. If we would be saved, we must accompany Him not only to the cenacle, but also to the Mount of Olives, to the hall of scourging, and to Calvary. “Lord, that I may see” that penance and self-discipline are proper to the true servant of God and are the only true mark of the follower of Christ.

“Lord that I may see.” This is our prayer today for ourselves and for all the children of Holy Mother the Church. What we need most is a love of the cross, of penance, of self-control, and of self-sacrifice.

PRAYER

Graciously hear our prayers, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and guard us from all adversity, who have been loosened from the bonds of sin. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Season of Lent

THE SEASON OF LENT

“The acceptable time”

1. Holy Mother the Church is about to “go up to Jerusalem” with the Lord. With Him she will suffer and die and rise again from the dead. She longs to obtain the light of the Resurrection, and she can attain it only if she shares the passion and death of Jesus. The more she shares His passion and death, the more perfectly will she share His life. With this end in view, the Church and we her children with her enter into the holy season of Lent, which originally began on the first Sunday of Lent.

2. “Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation” (Epistle of the first Sunday of Lent). “Now is the acceptable time.” The Church here refers to the jubilee year of the Israelites, for whom every fiftieth year was a year of grace. During this year all debts which had been contracted and were as yet unpaid, were canceled. All Jewish slaves received their freedom, and all possessions that had been purchased from other Jews were returned to their original owner. Even the land enjoyed a rest, for there was no work in the fields, and men lived on what had been produced in the preceding years. This was the jubilee year, the year of grace, when God was again acknowledged as the real Lord and Master of all things on earth, and His people acknowledged His right to dispose of their goods as He saw fit. By this practice the people were re-

minded that they were to be always in readiness to serve God and to expend themselves in His praise and honor. The Jews were thus reminded that their first duty was to live for God, and that all concern for earthly possessions was secondary.

The jubilee year is a figure of the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21) and of man's final redemption. It is also a figure of the coming of the Savior and of the New Dispensation in which we live. In this New Dispensation the sins of men were to be forgiven by virtue of the sacrifice of the Son of God. We have thus been redeemed from the bondage of Satan. We are now the children of God, members of His family, and we are nourished by the bread of life, the Holy Eucharist. Our first and most essential duty, then, is to show our gratitude to God by praising and honoring Him. For this purpose the Church has provided us with the psalms and hymns of the Divine Office. But she does even more: She places in our hands the bread and wine which are to become the body and blood of Christ, so that we may offer to the Father a "pure, holy, and unspotted sacrifice." "Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation," the year of grace, the jubilee year.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us. In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but perish not; always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (II Cor. 4:7-10). "In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God; in much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in distress, . . . by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet known; . . . as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing and possessing all things" (II Cor. 6:4-10).

3. The true Christian, as described by the Epistle of the first Sunday of Lent, is rich in God and united to Him, and by His strength lifts himself above the world, its goods, and its ideals.

And yet the Church knows that many of her children will be unable to attain to this high goal. They are still attached to the world, sharing its viewpoint, cherishing its maxims, anxious and concerned about temporal affairs. She knows that in many of her children she is still stained and tainted. Realizing this, she has provided the season of Lent as a time for cleansing and purification: "O God, Thou dost purify Thy Church with the annual observance of Lent" (Collect of the first Sunday of Lent). During this holy season perfect harmony should be re-established between God and all the children of the Church.

We enter this season in the spirit of the Church and of her liturgy. We seek to wash away the stains of sin and to rid ourselves of our inordinate attachment to all that is temporal and worldly. We renounce everything that hitherto has prevented us from reaching the heights of a truly Christian life. This renunciation will cost us effort, strife, and suffering. Yet we unite ourselves to our suffering Savior, persuaded that He who is our head will triumph in His members. The more perfect our union with Him in the Holy Sacrifice and in the sacrificial banquet of Holy Communion, the more certainly shall we share His new life and His glorification at Easter. Then we shall, as men risen from the dead, dedicate our lives to God anew in this year of grace.

4. Three prominent ideas are proposed for our contemplation by the liturgy of Lent: the passion and the resurrection of Christ; baptism; penance. During Lent we are to think of ourselves as living with Christ, the innocent one, who is to be condemned, disgraced, persecuted, and finally delivered up to death. We are to share His labors, His sacrifices, and His humiliations as He relives them during this season. Following the suggestion of the lenten liturgy, we renew the promises which we made at baptism. We renew our profession of faith and our renunciation of sin. We join the ranks of the penitents and seek by our good works to atone for our past sins and negligences. We withdraw from the world and devote more of our time than is customary to recollection, prayer, holy reading,

and meditation. One of the best good works for the season of Lent is the daily attendance at Mass.

The fast, as taught by holy lore,
We keep in solemn course once more;
The fast to all men known, and bound
In forty days of yearly round.

More sparing therefore let us make
The words we speak, the food we take,
Our sleep and mirth,—and closer barred
Be every sense in holy guard:

In prayer together let us fall,
And cry for mercy, one and all,
And weep before the Judge's feet,
And His avenging wrath entreat.

Blest Three in One, and One in Three,
Almighty God, we pray to Thee,
That this our fast of forty days
May work our profit and Thy praise. Amen.

ASH WEDNESDAY

"Be converted"

1. We receive from the hands of the Church the cross of ashes, and with it we join the ranks of the public penitents, who during Lent, in the early days of the Church, publicly performed severe penance for their sins. They were excommunicated, excluded from Holy Communion; then on Holy Thursday they were again readmitted into full communion with the Church. The cross of ashes is a sign of our readiness to lead a life of penance. "Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return."

2. "Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to re-

pent of the evil. . . . Blow the trumpet in Sion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather together the people; sanctify the Church. . . . Between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people, and give not Thy inheritance to reproach" (Epistle). Such is God's appeal to the Church of the Old Testament. God first asks for penance, the interior sentiments of penance, sorrow, contrition; the external works of penance, fasting and self-denial, are to follow. Through sin we have turned away in disobedience to His commandments and deprived Him of the honor and recognition due to Him. We have gone after something else, a creature, and made it our god. Penance must make recompense for our departure from God and our service of creatures. In repentance the soul must turn back to God: "Be converted to Me with all your heart." Because it has given itself up to the service of a creature and preferred it to God, the soul must in penance subject itself to a punishment, a privation, an act of self-denial. Only in this way does man free himself from sins which he has committed, and places himself in a position to receive pardon for his sins. "Be converted to Me with all your heart."

"When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. . . . But thou, when thou fastest, . . . appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee" (Gospel). Man is so shallow that he becomes absorbed in mere outward appearances and display, and particularly in things that are vain and transitory. Such shallowness is the more dangerous by reason of the fact that it often masquerades under the guise of piety.

Christianity is the religion of the inner self, not of external greatness before men nor of outward appearance. Christian piety keeps its eyes fixed on God and His holy will. Its motive is the love of God, of which we are reminded, not without cause, at the beginning of Lent. No one should be able to notice our fasting. But we should be more recollected than usual, more

strict with ourselves than during the rest of the year. We should deprive ourselves somewhat of sleep, devote more time to prayer, and observe more carefully the virtue of silence. But towards others we should be more charitable, all the more ready to serve, all the more pleasant, cheerful, and cordial. No one should know that during these weeks we practice more mortification than usual. "Lay not up to yourselves treasures [honor, recognition, praise] on earth, where the rust and moth consume. . . . But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven," before God, with the intention of pleasing Him alone. According to these directions of the Gospel, let us take upon ourselves the work of Lent.

3. "Let us change our garments for ashes and sackcloth; let us fast and lament before the Lord; for our God is plenteous in mercy to forgive our sins."

"Let us amend for the better in those things in which we have sinned through ignorance, lest, suddenly overtaken by the day of death, we seek time for penance and be not able to find it. Attend, O Lord, and have mercy; for we have sinned against thee. Help us, O God, our Savior; and for the honor of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us" (Antiphons before Mass).

"By the fasting of the body Thou dost curb our vices, elevate our minds, and bestow virtue and reward" (Preface for Lent).

We pray and do penance in the name of the community, for the entire Church militant. We know we are united with all our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we implore, one for all and all for one: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; for my soul trusteth in Thee. Thou hast mercy upon all, O Lord, and hatest none of the things which Thou has made, overlooking the sins of men for the sake of repentance, and sparing them; because Thou art the Lord our God" (Introit).

PRAYER

Grant to Thy faithful, O Lord, that they may undertake the venerable solemnities of fasting with piety and carry them through with unwavering devotion.

Look with favor, O Lord, on those who bow before Thy majesty,

that they who have been refreshed with the divine gift (the Holy Eucharist) may ever be strengthened by heavenly aid. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

The power of prayer

1. We gather for the divine services in the sanctuary of the soldier and martyr, St. George. Together with us he prays the Introit: "When I cried to the Lord, He heard my voice from them that drew near to me. . . . Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Let us pray like King Ezechias in the Epistle and like the Roman officer in the Gospel. Lent is a time for prayer.

2. "In those days Ezechias was sick even to death; and Isaias, the son of Amos the prophet, came unto him and said to him, Thus saith the Lord: Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live. And Ezechias turned his face towards the wall and prayed to the Lord and said: I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Ezechias wept with great weeping. And the word of the Lord came to Isaias, saying: Go and say to Ezechias, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father: I have heard thy prayer and I have seen thy tears; behold I will add to thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of the Assyrians, and I will protect it" (Epistle). Ezechias begged for a favor, and more was granted him than he had dared ask for. "Ask and it shall be given you" (Luke 11:9). "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Introit).

The Roman soldier comes with great faith to Jesus, urged on by a loving care for his ill servant (Gospel). He besought the Lord: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him, I will come and heal him. And the centurion, making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a

man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this: Go, and he goeth; and to another: Come, and he cometh; and to my servant: Do this, and he doeth it." Such confidence moves the Lord, who answers the prayer of the centurion, "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour." "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).

3. The sacred liturgy sees in the Roman centurion of the Gospel the stationary saint, St. George. He comes today to the Lord and implores for his sick servant; that is, for the congregation which is present in his house. He comes with the love and the solicitude of the centurion of the Gospel and makes a plea for us, his congregation. We have confidence that his plea will be answered. From the statements made in the Epistle and Gospel we understand the power of humble and confident prayer to God. Christian prayer obtains its great effectiveness because of the union of the members with their Head, Christ. If Christ is praying with us, what great confidence this should give us.

The liturgy exhorts us urgently today to prayer of petition. We are urged to pray for ourselves, as Ezechias did, and for others, as the centurion of the Gospel did. "Ask and it shall be given you," reads that great command of the order of grace. The one, then, who does not ask, does not receive. He who asks for little, receives little; who asks for much, receives much. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich [who do not ask] He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). "All [adults] who are saved, are saved because they have prayed. And all who are damned, are damned because they have not prayed" (St. Alphonsus Liguori). Prayer is the ordinary means of obtaining grace from God.

In the days of faith and devotion, Christians frequently prayed the seven penitential psalms and the way of the cross, and daily assisted at Mass and performed other special works

of penance during Lent. We also should pray more during Lent than is our wont.

PRAYER

O God, who art offended by sin and appeased by penance, graciously regard the prayers of Thy people making supplication to Thee, and turn aside the scourge of Thy anger, which we deserve for our sins. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Fraternal charity

1. The liturgy today leads us into the house of the "two men of mercy," the holy martyrs John and Paul. They had distributed their large possessions to the poor, so that they could follow the way to heaven without impediment. On account of their charity "the Lord hath heard them and hath had mercy on them" (Introit). From the example of these two saints of effective brotherly love, the Church teaches us today the third aspect of our lenten work and baptismal renewal; it consists in the perfecting of the spirit of active Christian, brotherly love. "He that loveth not, abideth in death" (I John 3:14).

2. "Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the bundles that oppress; let them that are broken go free, and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh [your fellow man]. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise. . . . Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and He shall say: Here I am. Because I the Lord thy God am merciful" (Epistle). "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). Fasting, mortification, works of penance are good and necessary, but only when they are preceded by the observance of the first commandment, the love of God and of one's neighbor, and serve love and kindness. "And

if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor. 13:3).

"He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." Every other commandment is contained in this precept. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. . . . Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:8 ff.). Dispensation can be given from fasting; but from love, never. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 19:19). Do we observe this command?

"You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and [the Pharisees added this] hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Gospel). To the sanctification of Lent belong the will of brotherly love and the act of this love, even of the love of one's enemy. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you" (Luke 6:36-38).

3. "We know that we have passed from death [sin] to life [grace] because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death" (I John 3:14). How is true penance or the forgiveness of sin possible if we are not diligent in the practice of brotherly love?

Today's liturgy reminds us of two special fields of brotherly love: almsgiving and the love of one's enemies. In the liturgy the stationary saints, John and Paul, are the men of mercy, men of good deeds to the poor. If the Church today takes us into their house, she wishes that we enter into their spirit and perform works of mercy, especially almsgiving. Are we doing our duty in this regard? Have we not much to make good during the holy season of Lent? "He that hath the substance of this

world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how does the charity of God abide in him?" (I John 3:17.) How can he obtain forgiveness from God if he attend not to his brother's need?

How about our love of our enemies? "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." Love of our enemies is not merely a counsel, it is a holy, positive command of the Lord. It is a proof of the genuineness of our love for our neighbor and for God. If the love of enemies, which the Gospel asks for, is to be found so seldom even among us Christians, that is an indication that among us Christians—it is unfortunately true—very little love is to be found.

Herein lies the principal weakness in our Christian life: we lack sufficient love of our neighbor, both inwardly and outwardly. Our lives are full of self-love and self-seeking. Here our lenten activity must begin its work. The effort that the holy season of Lent asks of us is: "Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." Die to self-love and to self-seeking. That is the most important mortification.

PRAYER

O God, strength of those who hope in Thee, be propitious to our prayers; and because without Thee human weakness can do nothing, grant us the assistance of Thy grace, so that we may be pleasing to Thee by the fulfillment of Thy commandments both in desire and in act. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

"As many as touched Him were made whole"

1. It is night, and we labor at the oars, struggling to bring our faltering ships to land through the troubled waters of our daily life. On the shore, waiting to receive us, is Jesus. At the

time of the fourth watch of the night, that is, toward morning, He enters into our boat by means of Holy Communion, and guides our troubled craft to the desired goal (Gospel). The struggle to preserve our souls from every sin and to practice the penance imposed on us for past offenses, has been a trying experience. Nevertheless we place all our trust in Christ. In the Holy Eucharist we shall find the strength to finish successfully the works of penance undertaken during Lent.

2. Beautiful is the fruit which is produced during the season of Lent. "If Thou wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee, and cease to stretch out the finger and to speak that which profiteth not. When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in the darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday. And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones. And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water, whose waters shall not fail. And the places that have been desolate for ages shall be built in thee; thou shalt raise up the foundations of generation and generation" (Epistle).

When the true spirit of Lent prevails, the divine life of grace flourishes in the soul, and all virtues and good works come rapidly to perfection. When the Christian acquires this spirit, he becomes a co-worker with Christ in building the kingdom of God, both in his own soul and in the Church. He contributes to the salvation of the whole race by his example, by his prayers, and by his merits. He becomes a rugged stone upon which the rest of the structure can be built. His good works during Lent support the other members of the Church and furnish them with grace for enlightenment, strength, and conversion. We are part of the whole, and the whole depends on us.

The converse is true if we fail to bring forth good works of penance during Lent. What a loss to ourselves and to the whole Church! In the story of salvation we must be either builders or destroyers; either we gather or we scatter. There can be no neutrality. This is the mystery of the body of Christ. For this

reason our Holy Mother the Church takes a serious view of the season of Lent. Would that we shared her concern!

Both the desire to perform good works and the strength necessary to complete them come from Christ. We are like the apostles in today's Gospel, confronted with adverse winds and unable to make progress in spite of our work at the oars. We shall ever have adverse winds and shall ever find obstacles to the spiritual life within ourselves. We possess a fallen nature, prone always toward evil and lacking an appreciation of the one thing necessary, divine life. In addition to our fallen nature, we must face the world with its enticements, its false principles, and its faulty reasoning. To these obstacles Satan will add the weight of his cunning and immense power. How can we hope to overcome such great obstacles? The Gospel of today gives us cause for hope, for "He [Christ] went up to the mountain to pray" (Mark 6:46). He is in heaven and in our tabernacles waiting to join our prayer to His to obtain for us the necessary help.

In the early morning Christ will come into our tiny ships in Mass and in Holy Communion. "And the wind ceased." Borne onward by His prayers and by those of His Church, strengthened by His coming to us in Holy Communion, we shall complete successfully our trying journey through the season of Lent, through the time of our earthly sojourn, and arrive one day at the blessed shores of eternity to enjoy an eternal Easter.

3. "Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling; embrace discipline lest you perish from the just way" (Communion). Although we believe firmly in the merit of our good works during Lent, we trust more in the merits of Christ and His prayers and those of His Church. His infinite wisdom and His omnipotence are always with us. He brings them to us daily in the Mass and in Holy Communion.

"And whithersoever He entered into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets and besought that they might touch but the hem of His garment, and as many as touched Him were made whole" (Gospel). What tremendous significance

these words should have for us who receive Him daily in Holy Communion! What does He desire during this holy season of Lent, but that we be healed of our ills and weaknesses? Oh, if we only had a greater faith and confidence in Him! He would heal the wounds of our soul.

“One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord” by assisting at Holy Mass and by partaking of Holy Communion. “And as many as touched Him were made whole.”

PRAYER

Be mindful, O Lord, of our supplications and grant that we may keep with devout service this solemn fast, which Thou wholesomely ordained for the healing of our souls and bodies. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of the First Sunday of Lent

1. Today we gather with the faithful of the early Church in the Lateran basilica, the church of the Savior in Rome. In the apse of the basilica we see the venerable mosaic of the divine Savior. We gather at His feet, conscious of His presence and of our union in spirit with Him. At His side for the ensuing forty days we shall practice self-denial and penance. From the heavens above us we hear the consoling promise of the Father, “He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him. I will deliver him and I will glorify him” (Introit). Thus, full of confidence, we send up our cry for mercy, *Kyrie eleison*, and unite our prayers to those of the Church.

2. The path which we are to follow during Lent is one of self-denial, of voluntary mortification, and of patient acceptance of crosses, suffering, and humiliations. It is a time of grace, a time of salvation. We die, and yet we live (Epistle). The more we die to ourselves during Lent, the more surely shall we live

to God. We should begin Lent full of confidence, for God's help and grace are at our disposal (Gradual and Tract). When nature becomes incapable of further sacrifice, grace supports it. Thus we are invited by the Gospel to undertake a fast of forty days with our Lord. He who so triumphantly overcame Satan and all his temptations, fights and conquers in us also. He makes us strong and invincible. We shall conquer even as He conquered, but we must undertake the struggle of Lent if we would rise at Easter. At the Offertory we bring our good resolutions to the altar and resolve to tread the path of suffering with our Master. These resolutions we lay on the paten as the priest offers up the host, and thus enter into the closest sacrificial union with our blessed Savior. We wish to be made a sacrificial victim with Him.

3. At the Consecration of the Mass, He will come among us and become our sacrificial gift to the Father. He becomes our own possession, and we take Him in our hands to offer Him up as our sacrifice to the heavenly Father. We offer His merits, His forty days of fast in the desert, His self-denial, His suffering, and His death. He represents us and the whole Church; but with Him we offer ourselves also as a sacrificial gift. Henceforth we shall live, not for ourselves, but as men dedicated to God. We have dedicated ourselves to Him; we have become victims with Him; we are now dead to sin and the world.

At the sacrificial banquet of Holy Communion we receive grace and salvation in return for what we offered at the Consecration. "He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings thou shalt trust. His truth shall compass thee with a shield" (Tract). The mighty hero, Christ Himself in the Eucharist, will be our protection and shield against Satan and his attacks, against the world and sin. Should we not, then, enter Lent with courage and hope? The Holy Eucharist which we have received gives us the assurance that we shall rise again to an eternally blessed life for the enjoyment of perfect happiness (Postcommunion).

Full of gratitude for what we have received from the Holy

Sacrifice of the Mass, we breathe forth our thanks, *Deo Gratias*. Armed with the blessings of Christ through the hands of His priest, we withdraw to our homes to take up alone the battle of the spirit against the flesh. The spirit of the world still lives in us, and we must fight against it. Christ the conqueror lives in us, and we must not waver. "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Tract).

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Our strength

1. There is joy in the song of the liturgy today. "He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him" (Introit). Christ is in the desert, praying and fasting. The Church has gone into the desert with Him. "He shall cry to Me" during the holy season of Lent, "and I shall hear him. I will deliver him and I will glorify him; I will fill him with length of days" at Easter, at our resurrection to the everlasting life of heaven. The season of Lent is a preparation for the glory of Easter morning, and the beginning of our glorified life in heaven. The season of Lent gives us the assurance of salvation and of our deliverance from sin through Christ. As Christ rose from the dead and was exalted, so shall we also rise and be exalted. Truly this is a time of grace. For this reason the liturgy of the first Sunday of Lent is characterized by joy, confidence, and longing for Easter.

2. "At that time Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry. And the tempter [came] to Him" (Gospel). Like Christ, the Church and her children are led into the desert during the season of Lent. Lent is a time of self-denial and of suffering. During this time we, too, shall be tempted by the devil, the flesh, and the world. Three times the tempter approached Christ. "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Then the devil took Him up to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself

down; for it is written: That He hath given His angels charge over Thee." On the third attempt the devil took Christ up to a high mountain. There he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "All these will I give Thee if falling down Thou wilt adore me." But all these temptations were futile, for "behold, angels came and ministered to Him" (Gospel). In Christ, His Church and we His members were also tempted. Christ's victory over the temptations of the devil was really our victory. His victory prefigures and assures our victory over sin and the devil. Such a victory, however, can be assured only to those who are closely united to Christ through His Church. As living branches of the vine, filled with His vitality and strength, they share in His victory. If we are thus united to Christ, we have little to fear from the tempter, for His strength supports us. Of ourselves we are weak and easy victims of Satan, but in Christ we are strong and invincible. The closer our union with Christ, the greater our strength.

The liturgy of the Mass today offers us two excellent helps in our struggle with the temptations of Satan, the world, and the flesh. The two weapons offered to us are the word of Christ and the body of Christ. Christ's body is offered in the oblation and the Communion of the Holy Sacrifice. From the altar on which the Holy Sacrifice is celebrated springs the fountain from which we drink in Holy Communion the strength of Christ. Strengthened by this nourishment, we answer the solicitations of the devil, "Begone Satan." Here at the altar the Church and her children draw the strength to resist the tempter and his enticements. "It is written," and we are confident that the enemy will not overcome.

The liturgy of Lent also offers us the word of Christ in Holy Scripture. In every Mass new texts and maxims are presented to us. Holy Scripture is our spiritual food. "Not in [earthly] bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Gospel). Every word of Holy Scripture which the liturgy presents to us in the lessons of the Divine Office and the chants of the Mass, comes from the

mouth of God. Every word is issued by the Spirit of God and helps to bring the tempter to naught. Can the tempter, the world, and the flesh injure us if we take refuge in these means provided for us, in the word of God and in the Eucharist?

3. During Lent we retire for forty days to fast and to fight against our evil inclinations and against the devil if God should allow him to tempt us. If we cannot observe so severe a fast as our Lord observed, let us do at least as much as we can. In the desert of Lent to which we have withdrawn, let us show ourselves in all things the servants of God. Let us serve God "in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, . . . in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, . . . in charity unfeigned; . . . by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report" (Epistle). We must preserve this attitude without becoming impatient, without complaint, without giving in to ill-humor, without exonerating ourselves, keeping the spirit of sacrifice at all times for the love of Christ.

During the trying season that is before us, our lives should be characterized by a firm confidence in God, who lives in us, fights in us, and conquers again in us. "Thou art my protector and my refuge; my God, in Him will I trust. For He hath delivered me from the snares of the hunter. . . . He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings thou shalt trust. His truth [grace] shall compass thee with a shield; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night. . . . For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. . . . Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he hath known My name. He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him; I am with him in tribulation. I will deliver him and I will glorify him; I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him My salvation" (Tract; psalm 90). So we believe and trust.

PRAYER

O God, who dost purify Thy Church with the annual observance of Lent, grant to Thy household that what it strives to obtain from

Thee by abstinence, it may secure with good works. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Baptismal graces and obligations

1. Like the neophytes of the early Church, we now seek to stir up in our hearts the grace which we received at our baptism. At baptism we were chosen to be the children of God and were received into the number of the "blessed of the Father." The stational church for the Mass today is that of St. Peter in Chains. In the person of St. Peter, who was bound with chains and miraculously delivered by Christ, we recognize ourselves. We, too, were bound by the chains of sin and were miraculously delivered by Christ through our second baptism in the holy sacrament of penance. The Mass today reminds us of the grace of our baptism and the obligations it imposes.

2. The grace of baptism. "I will bring [my sheep] out from the peoples [the heathens] and will gather them out of the countries, and bring them to their own land [the Church]. And I will feed them in the mountains of Israel; . . . I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures. . . . I will seek that which was lost; and that which was driven away I will bring again. And I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak" (Epistle). At the time of our baptism Christ lovingly and mercifully segregated us from the pagan world and placed us in His Church. Thus He manifested Himself as the good shepherd who leads His sheep to good pastures (to grace, truth, and the sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist). By means of His Church and His grace He leads us to the great day when the goats shall be separated from the sheep. "When the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, . . . all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then

shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you" (Gospel). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

We have been baptized; we are the children of God and the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. If we prove true to the vows we made at our baptism, we shall hear that blessed invitation on the day of judgment: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." How eternally thankful to God we shall then be for having incorporated us into Himself and His Church through baptism!

Obligations of the baptized. By baptism we were incorporated in Christ as a member of His body, or as a branch of the vine. Christ lives in His members as a vine lives in its branches. What is done to the members of Christ, then, is done also to Him. "I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; . . . sick, and you visited Me. I was in prison, and you came to Me." But what we should do to His members and fail to do, we fail to do to Him. "I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink. I was . . . sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me." Therefore, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Why is this penalty inflicted upon men? "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting" (Gospel).

At baptism we enter into a union with Christ's body, a union of love. The responsibilities of our baptism must be fulfilled. We must cherish our neighbor for the sake of Christ, who prayed "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. . . . I have made known Thy name, . . . that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them" (John 17:21, 26). "This is

My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). We shall all be judged by the degree of charity we practiced with regard to our neighbor.

3. "As the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us" (Introit). Thus we implore with the catechumens, who said this prayer looking forward ardently to the time of their baptism. This should be our prayer also for all those who stand in need of reconciliation through the sacrament of penance. We feel their need of help and we pray with them and for them that they may find their way back to God during the holy season of Lent. This is a season of grace even for those who have abandoned God. In their name we cry out to God: "As the eyes of the servants are on the hands of their masters, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy" and grant them pardon and grace. "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us."

"As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Gospel). It is a spiritual work of mercy to pray for sinners and to undertake sacrifices for them that they may find the grace to return to God. Since they are still members of the same body, although diseased, we feel a responsibility for their conversion. We become even more conscious of this responsibility during Lent. The Lord has assured us, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. 33:11).

In the Communion prayer of the Mass the liturgy reminds us again, "Amen I say to you: What you did to one of My least brethren, you did to Me. Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The Church never tires of repeating this truth. The first fruit of Holy Communion should be an abiding love for others. "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. 7:16). The fruit of Holy Communion is love. Love is tolerant, it forgives easily, it places itself at the service of the one beloved.

Love covers the multitude of sins and faults in the one loved with a veil of charity. Has our frequent reception of Holy Communion produced this spirit of charity in us?

PRAYER

Convert us, O God, our salvation, and that the lenten fast may profit us, instruct our minds with Thy heavenly instructions.

Loose the bonds of our sins, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and do Thou mercifully avert whatever we deserve for them. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Seek the Lord!

1. Renounce whatever displeases God or prevents your approach to Him. This is the invitation extended to us by the liturgy in today's Mass. We celebrate the divine mysteries in the church of the holy martyr and virgin, St. Anastasia. We pass down the crooked little street through the noisy, boisterous cattle market which now lies near the church, to the home of the virgin martyr. We brush aside the turmoil of all mundane things going on about us, and press forward to the *Anastasis*, the resurrection of Easter.

2. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive" (Epistle). Jesus enters solemnly into Jerusalem. "The whole city was moved, saying: Who is this? And the people said: This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee" (Gospel). They recognized Him to be the Messiah. Jesus enters the Temple and there finds the money changers, the merchants, and those who bought and sold the animals of sacrifice. They are too absorbed by their worldly occupation to observe that the Lord has appeared among them. They ignore Him; they cannot be bothered with Him. Christ turns on them with wrath and drives them all from His Temple.

"It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves" (Gospel).

Having disposed of the money changers, Christ turns His attention to the Pharisees. These are the wise ones of Israel, the self-satisfied teachers, who look upon themselves as divinely inspired. They indeed have heard of Him and do not fail to notice His approach. But they murmur against Him and reproach Him; they determine to cast Him out of the Temple and to put Him to death. He interferes with their plans: "And leaving them, He went out of the city."

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." He is here and may be found, but those who buy and sell in the Temple will not find Him, for they are too preoccupied with other things. He is here, but the Pharisee will not find Him; rather, he deliberately turns from Him. Let this warning guide us during Lent. Only those will find Him who seek Him sincerely. Not only those who offer Him active opposition, but those also who fail to look for Him will be condemned. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

"And there came to Him the blind and the lame in the Temple, and He healed them." At His approach the children cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." To the Pharisees, who were indignant at this acclamation and who asked Him, "Hearest Thou what these say?" He answered: "Yea. Have you never read: Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" (Gospel.) The blind, the lame, and the children recognize Him when He comes. They seek Him and gather around Him. They are not absorbed by the cares and occupations of the world; the noise and bustle and unrest of the world have not destroyed their sense of values. In the eyes of the world they are the outcasts, the useless, the worthless. They can produce nothing, and yet they seek the Lord. With faith and confidence they gather around Him, crying out their hosanna. Should we not be as the blind, the lame, and the children? When shall we put aside our vain occupations? When shall we see the emptiness and vanity of all transitory things?

When shall we find the grace to withdraw from the busy market place of the world to seek the Lord? "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord," we sing now and at the Consecration of the Mass. Under the inspiration of grace we repeat this song at the time of Holy Communion. But we must renounce what is not of God and whatever hinders our approach to God. We must renew our baptismal vows. "I do renounce sin," we said at our baptism; and we must now renew our promise and turn with our whole heart to the Lord. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

3. "And leaving them, He went out of the city into Bethania, and remained there" (Gospel). The Lord comes to all during the lenten season; but He will turn away from the man who trifles with grace. Will He come a second time?

"He went out of the city into Bethania." The Lord is not pleased with the man who is absorbed by the business of the world. He turns away from the man who is excessively concerned about the things of time, who is enslaved by worldly passions. In the heart of such a man there is no room for God. "You have made [My house] a den of thieves." The soul of the Christian is the temple of God, a house of prayer, and it must not be profaned by sin or worldly occupations. Christ came to take up His abode in our souls and thus to complete the work of His redemption. We must assist Him by purifying our hearts, by casting out of this temple the idols that make it a place of pagan worship. Our soul must be a house of prayer. It must reproduce the quiet and peace of Bethania, a penitential spirit, a spirit of recollection and seclusion. Let us then seek the Lord while He may be found.

"I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord. I said, Thou art my God, my times are in Thy hands" (Offertory). "Thou art my God."

PRAYER

Look down upon Thy household, O Lord, and grant that our minds, having been chastened by the mortification of the flesh, may

glow in Thy sight by the desire for Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May our prayers ascend to Thee, O Lord, and drive away all wickedness from Thy Church. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EMBER WEDNESDAY IN LENT

To the mountain of God

1. "As He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him" (Gospel). With Mary, the mother of Jesus, who today gathers us about her in her sanctuary (the stational church for the Mass today is St. Mary Major in Rome), we come to Jesus as He speaks to the multitudes in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We must listen carefully to His words. He tells us of the high vocation to which we are called by baptism, and He warns us lest we should prove unworthy of this high calling.

2. "The men of Ninive [the pagans] shall rise in judgment with this generation [the chosen people of Israel] and shall condemn it; because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas here. The queen of the South [of Saba] shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold a greater than Solomon here" (Gospel). The chosen people would have nothing to do with their Savior when He came to them. They rejected Him, and therefore they themselves were rejected. We who are of the Gentiles have been chosen in their place. Mary and our Holy Mother the Church lead us to Him. In baptism we were made His brothers and sisters and were joined to Him in a union of prayer, in a union of life and spirit. From that moment we are bound to do the will of the Father.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:28). Christ and His blessed mother had but one ambition, and that was to do the will of the Father. When Mary asked to see her Son, Jesus stretches forth His hand toward His disciples and says, "Behold

My mother and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, He is My brother and sister and mother" (Gospel). To be a Christian is to be the brother of Christ, to have the same will, the same desires, the same burning zeal to accomplish the will of the Father. Have we really understood the implications of our baptism? Have we sought the will of the Father before all else?

The chosen people renounced their inheritance in spite of the abundant graces and the miraculous guidance they had received from God. In spite of the preaching of the prophets and the frequent warning of God, in spite of the revelations of the holy books and their possession of the true faith, they failed to recognize and accept the promised Messiah. The long awaited Redeemer "came unto His own; but His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Israel repudiated its Savior and condemned Him to a most cruel death. How could such an action be possible? Yet it is possible and is a warning to us. Our having been called by baptism, our possession of faith and membership in the true Church, is no guarantee against infidelity or apostasy. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). "And when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man [at the time of baptism or after a good confession], he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out; and coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished [by grace and the beginning of virtue]. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation" (Gospel).

We, too, can prove unfaithful to our vocation, lose our faith, and fall away. How many examples of apostasy do we not have in the history of the Church, in the annals of religious houses, and even among the clergy! For this reason the Church presses upon us the urgency of self-examination, penance, and meditation during the holy season of Lent, for "the men of Ninive

did penance at the preaching of Jonas" and thus found favor with God.

3. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the great grace that has been given to us in baptism. We should renew our desire and our resolution to accomplish the will of the Father. "I will meditate on Thy commandments which I have loved exceedingly; and I will lift up my hands to Thy commandments, which I have loved" (Offertory).

Moses spent forty days and nights in fasting and in a mysterious association with God on Mount Sinai, and received the two stone tables of the law (First lesson). Elias, after being exhausted by his severe life in the desert, received a hearth cake and a vessel of water; on the strength of this bread and without any other nourishment he walked for forty days and forty nights till he came to the mountain of God, Mount Horeb (Second lesson). Like Moses, we shall spend forty days in the daily celebration of Holy Mass, and in converse with God; fed with the bread of Holy Communion, we shall, like Elias, walk through the Lent of our earthly life till we come to the Mountain of God, Mount Horeb, that is, the eternal possession of God in heaven.

PRAYER

Mercifully hear our prayers, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty against all things that work against us.

Enlighten our minds, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the light of Thy brightness, that we may be able to see what we ought to do and have the strength to do what is right. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Do penance!

1. Today we are urged to do penance. The Church leads us to the place where the blessed martyr St. Lawrence suffered, the Church of St. Lawrence in Panisperna. On this spot St.

Lawrence suffered his passion on the glowing coals and attained the crown of glory. During Lent we can share his struggles and his martyrdom by our self-denial, and thus atone for our past sins and negligences.

2. "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die" (Epistle). The sinner must not place the blame for his sins on others. He may not say that, because the father hath eaten sour grapes, the teeth of the children are set on edge. "As I live, saith the Lord, . . . behold all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father so also the soul of the son is Mine. The soul that sinneth, the same shall die." Such a one can live only if he does penance for his sin and if the sin be forgiven. "And if a man be just and do judgment and justice, . . . and hath not wronged any man, but hath restored the pledge to the debtor; . . . hath given his bread to the hungry and hath covered the naked with a garment; hath not lent upon usury, nor taken any increase; . . . hath walked in My commandments and kept My judgments, to do truth: he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Almighty" (Epistle). The soul that would be saved must practice justice, forgiveness, charity, and fidelity to the commandments of God.

"At that time Jesus went forth and retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan [a heathen woman] who came out of these coasts, crying out, said to Him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word. . . . But she came and adored Him, saying: Lord, help me. Who answering, said: It is not good to take the bread of the children [the chosen people of Israel] and to cast it to the dogs [the heathens]. But she said: Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master. Then Jesus answering said to her: O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was cured from that hour" (Gospel). This is a picture of the Church in action. She is the woman of Canaan who moves the Lord by her urgent entreaties. "Have mercy on me, O Lord,

Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil." The Church beseeches the Lord for pardon and grace for her sinful children, who until the feast of Easter stand at the church door with the penitents. They have been separated from the altar, excluded from offering their gifts and from receiving Holy Communion; they are the "whelps" who may not share the bread at the table with the children, but who are fed from the crumbs that fall from the table. "It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs." Poor abandoned sinners. They have, through their sins, excluded themselves from the family of the Church and may no longer receive the bread of the children of the Church, Holy Communion. Even though the Church must exclude them and urge them to do severe penance, nevertheless, she suffers with them and prays the more fervently for them that they may obtain forgiveness and be readmitted to the table of God to share the bread of God's children. The Church continues to pray for sinners even though the Lord may pretend to ignore her. She will move Him with her importunity. "Woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt."

3. "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die." But it has still a means of salvation. Its mother, the Church, still prays for it: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David." The Church makes the concerns of her sinful children her own concern. She has committed her official prayer, the Divine Office, to her priests and religious, who as a body raise their hands together to ask the Lord for grace and mercy for those who live in sin. We should have full confidence in the intercession of the Church. What a consolation for us to remember that we never pray alone, that we are not alone in our anxiety for the conversion of those dear to us! Holy Mother the Church is also aware of their needs and is solicitous for them. And the Church will surely be heard.

Today in the spirit of the liturgy it behooves all of us to assume the attitude of penitents. With the Canaanite woman we should pray fervently and perseveringly: "Have mercy on

me, O Lord; . . . my daughter [my soul] is grievously troubled by a devil." Bowed down and full of remorse we pray at the foot of the altar: *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. Turning from our own unworthiness we approach the heavenly mother, Mary, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, blessed John the Baptist, and all the saints in heaven, and implore them to ask God to forgive us our sins. Then we turn to the celebrating priest and through him to the whole Catholic Church that they also may include us in their prayers to God. And the Church answers through her priests, "May the almighty God have mercy on you and forgive you your sins." "Show us O Lord Thy mercy, and grant us [in this holy season of Lent] Thy salvation." *Kyrie eleison; Christe eleison; Kyrie eleison*. The Church's prayer for mercy is heard.

The Church offers the Holy Sacrifice to the blessed Trinity as an act of propitiation for our sins and the sins of other men. After the Consecration she offers the blood of the Redeemer to the Father, begging Him to forgive us our sins.

PRAYER

Behold with kindness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the devotion of Thy people, that they who are now mortified in the flesh by abstinence, may be refreshed in mind by the fruit of their good works.

Grant to all Christian peoples, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to understand what they profess and to love the heavenly gifts to which they have recourse. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EMBER FRIDAY IN LENT

The living water

1. Ember Friday finds us assembled in the church of the Twelve Apostles. The Mass has in mind both the penitents and the neophytes. We join ourselves to them at the Introit and pray, "Deliver me, O Lord, from my necessities, see my abjection and my labor, and forgive me all my sins. To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul; in Thee, O my God, I put my trust."

2. "If the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he hath committed, and keep all My Commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done; in his justice, which he hath wrought, he shall live. Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live? But if the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered; . . . in his sin which he hath committed, in them he shall die. . . . And when the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness, which he hath wrought, and doeth judgment and justice; he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away himself from all his iniquities which he hath wrought, he shall surely live and not die" (Epistle). Blessed penance! God rejoices in the opportunity we give Him for forgiving our sins. He is eager to forgive the sins of anyone who will turn away from his evil ways and do penance. "The days of penance have come," the liturgy admonishes us every day at Tierce. "The days of penance have come to us, to redeem our sins and save our souls." The chapter at Sext continues: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord; and He will have mercy on him" (Isa. 55:7).

"Jesus went up to Jerusalem." Christ came to Jerusalem on a Sabbath and approached the pool of Bethesda. The pool was surrounded by a building having five porches, where lay a great multitude of the sick who were waiting for the movement of the water. He who first reached the water after it had been moved by the angel, was freed from whatever infirmity troubled him. Here Jesus met a man who had suffered for thirty-eight years. "Wilt thou be made whole?" The infirm man answered, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond; for whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. Jesus saith to him: Arise, take up thy bed and walk. And

immediately the man was made whole, and he took up his bed and walked." What the Gospel records becomes for us a reality in the holy liturgy. The porches of the pool of Bethesda are for us the world in which we live. Here on every hand lie the sick, the halt, and the lame. The pool is the Church with its fountains of grace which spring up eternally. We are the sick man of the Gospel, with our sins, our vices and evil desires. Who can heal us? Of ourselves we can do nothing. Only Christ can heal us. When He comes to us He can make us whole if we repent of our sins and do penance.

3. Our sickness is symbolized by the number thirty-eight. Forty, according to St. Augustine, is the number of perfection in earthly life. Our number of thirty-eight falls short by two years of reaching our prime and perfection. These two missing years symbolize our lack of the love of God, and love of our neighbor. As long as we lack these two things we are sick. The Sabbath on which the Lord comes to us and heals us, is Holy Saturday or the moment of our baptism. With the grace of baptism He implants charity in our hearts and makes us whole. But we have so often cast this charity out of our hearts again by sin. Then He comes to us again in the sacrament of penance. We repented, we acknowledged our sin, we did penance and He healed us again: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk. Thy sins are forgiven thee."

The liturgy insists on penance, and justly so. We Christians of the twentieth century are lacking in a real understanding of the necessity, purpose, and value of penance. A true penitential spirit and real works of penance are for the most part unknown to us; we shy away from mortification and privation. We have no patience with suffering and seldom have control over our desires and impulses. We fail to recognize the danger of too much sleep, luxurious dress, and sumptuous meals; and we seek to avoid every inconvenience and spiritual burden. It is a grave burden on us if we are required to fix an hour for rising and for performing our duties. We fret at the loss of our trivial pastimes, and at the sacrifice of empty pleasures. We

find it difficult to control our tongues, to guard our eyes, to temper our curiosity, to refuse some dainty morsel, to omit some slight diversion, to give up even some sinful habit that has been dominating us. If this is our disposition, how shall we overcome temptation? "The kingdom of heaven [of virtue and perfection] suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. 11:12). "Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it" (Matt. 7:13).

PRAYER

Be gracious to Thy people, O Lord, and as Thou dost make them devoted to Thee, mercifully cherish them with Thy benign assistance.

Hear us, O merciful God, and show to our minds the light of Thy grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EMBER SATURDAY IN LENT

Transfiguration

1. The liturgy of the Mass today again recalls the early ages of the Church. The stational church is St. Peter's in Rome, and the divine services begin at night. Early Sunday morning, at sunrise, we bring the service to a close with the Eucharistic sacrifice and the reception of Holy Communion. Thus we pass the lenten night of our earthly existence to our real life after the resurrection of Easter.

2. The liturgy attempts to arouse in us a longing for redemption and the brightness of Easter morning. We return to that hour when for the first time, at the moment of our baptism, the heavenly light shone upon us. We cast off at that moment the darkness of sin and freed ourselves of Satan and his pomps. We turned to Christ, the light of men, the sun of life, and promised: I believe; I dedicate myself to God; I dedicate myself to Jesus Christ; I dedicate myself to the Holy Spirit and to the Church. Today we relive that moment. "This day the Lord

thy God hath commanded thee to do these commandments and judgments [baptismal vows], and to keep and fulfill them with all thy heart and with all thy soul. Thou hast chosen the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, and keep His ceremonies and precepts and judgments, and obey His commands. And the Lord hath chosen thee this day to be His peculiar people and to keep all His commandments, . . . that thou mayest be a holy people of the Lord thy God" (First lesson). As the people of the Lord, we make our journey through the night of our earthly life toward the light. We are surrounded on all sides by hostile adversaries (Second and third lessons). We see ourselves menaced by Satan, by the world, by our base passions, by the perversity of our own heart. We therefore cry out to God, "Have mercy upon us, O God of all, and behold us in the light of Thy mercies" (Fourth lesson). "Look down, O God our protector, and grant us who are burdened with the weight of our sins, to obtain mercy and thus serve Thee with a tranquil mind" (Second Collect). The liturgy here expresses its longing for light, freedom, and resurrection from the death and bondage of sin. It longs for the coming of the angel of the Lord, who will snatch us from the darkness of the night and lead us to the brightness of eternal day, as he saved the three young men from the fiery furnace (Fifth lesson).

The Mass shows us how this longing may be fulfilled. In the Gospel we are led up to Mount Tabor so that with Peter, in whose church we celebrate the holy mysteries today, we may be witnesses of the transfiguration of the Lord. The path of our life leads through the night of our earthly pilgrimage, and as we follow it we must embrace the cross, mortification, humiliation, and suffering; but it will lead us finally to the heights of Mount Tabor and transfiguration. Christ is the head and we are the members of one body. Today He appears in the splendor of His transfiguration on Mount Tabor and in the Holy Sacrifice; we who are members of His body will one day share in that glorification, and with the Church we shall live eternally united to Him. The transfigured host on the Tabor

of the altar is our certain assurance of the future glorification and transfiguration of the Church. With confidence we dwell, not on the night that surrounds us now, but rather on the glory of the awakening that awaits us in the eternal transfiguration of the everlasting Easter. "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

3. Today we renew our baptismal vows. At the celebration of the Mass we should repeat our *Abrenuntio*: "I renounce." With the gifts of bread and wine which we bring to the altar, we join ourselves to the sacrifice and pledge: "Receive my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my will. I give Thee all that I am so that You may do with me what You will."

Transfiguration! After the lenten trials and sacrifices of our earthly life, we may look forward to transfiguration in heaven. Now we see only the hard, stony path that stretches out before us. We are so absorbed by the struggle with ourselves, so busy with the sacrifices, prayers, and works that are imposed on us, that we are prone to lose sight of the glory that awaits us. If we could keep the thought of our future glory before us, we should find new courage and strength to bear our trials and hardships more joyfully. If only the glorified Savior were more truly a part of our conscious life! Today the holy liturgy urges us to acquire such an awareness.

"That thou mayest be a holy people of the Lord" (First lesson). Baptism, religious profession, and holy orders make us the holy people of the Lord. How easily we forget that we are His chosen people! How readily we forsake Him and turn to lesser gods!

PRAYER

Look favorably upon Thy people, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and by Thy mercy turn aside from them the scourges of Thy wrath.

Direct our actions, we beseech Thee, O Lord, by Thy inspiration and further them with Thy continual help; that every prayer and work of ours may begin always from Thee and through Thee likewise be ended. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Liturgy of the
Second Sunday of Lent*

1. In early Christian times, when the fervor and heroism of the first converts were still ardent, the Ember celebration began late on Saturday evening. On this day the faithful in Rome gathered at the Church of St. Peter. Since there were many lessons to be read before the conferring of holy orders, and since there were to be lengthy sermons by the bishops, and the alms were to be distributed to the poor, the services lasted until the next morning. Thus it happened that the Mass which we now have on Ember Saturday was actually said on the following Sunday morning. As men grew to dislike the long services, however, they were shortened and were transferred to the morning of Ember Saturday. A new Mass was then composed for the Sunday which followed. This Sunday Mass was more or less a substitution for the Mass of Ember Saturday and was made up largely from that Mass. The Mass for the second Sunday of Lent, therefore, breathes the spirit of Ember Saturday. It centers about the transfiguration on Mount Tabor. Our Savior in His transfiguration is the first gleam of light in the gloom of the lenten season. Thus we are reminded that we go through darkness to light, through suffering and death to life and resurrection, and eventually to transfiguration.

2. We are conscious of our many sins, and in the Introit we cry out for God's mercy, for the remission of our sins, for the cleansing even from all sinful thoughts (Collect). We long for the light of the resurrection which illuminates Christ in His transfiguration. "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14.) We are the children of light, and therefore we should not linger in the mire of passion, lust, and avarice. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification" to walk in the light (Epistle). Walking in the light of the trans-

figuration today are the apostles (Gospel). Filled with reverence and awe they fall on their faces and exclaim, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." In the mind of the liturgy today we are the apostles.

As we gaze upon the splendor of the scene, we express our faith in the transfiguration. We know that all too soon we shall see this same Christ in shame and humiliation on the Mount of Olives and on Golgotha. We know that we, too, shall one day be transfigured after we have suffered a similar passion and struggle in our earthly life. Through the night of this suffering we shall pass to the light. This belief leads us to recite the Credo with joy. "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." We are strengthened in our resolutions. "I will meditate on Thy commandments, which I have loved exceedingly; and I will lift up my hands to Thy commandments, which I have loved" (Offertory).

3. In the Consecration of the Mass, that which was related in the Gospel becomes a reality. Our altar is Mount Tabor. On this altar is enthroned the transfigured God. The apostles heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To Him we are now closely united in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and with Him we become one victim, one host, one sacrifice offered to the Father. With Him and through Him we, too, are the sons of God. Through His lips we can cry, *Pater noster*: "Our Father." Truly the Father hears in our prayers and supplications the voice of His beloved Son, and He is well pleased. We may expect, then, that He will shower His blessings and His graces upon us in Holy Communion. There our hearts become a Mount Tabor, the scene of a delightful transfiguration. The light surrounding this transfiguration dispels the darkness within our soul. The beloved Son becomes our most treasured possession. We live, now not we, but Christ lives in us. He implants in our hearts the seed of a future transfiguration. Let us then, advance through the night of our earthly life, bravely, firmly, and with confidence that we may one day reach the brightness of

the eternal Easter. "Walk then, as children of the light" (Eph. 5:8).

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Mount Tabor

1. Last Sunday we considered the temptation of Christ in the desert. Today His triumph is acknowledged on the heights of Mount Tabor by Moses and Elias (the Old Testament), and God rewards it by the Transfiguration. Today the Father in heaven acknowledges Christ as His Son. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Gospel).

2. "At that time Jesus taketh Peter and James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart; and He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun; and His garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here. . . . And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo! a voice out of the cloud saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him" (Gospel). In Peter and James and John we recognize our Holy Mother the Church. During the season of Lent, Christ takes His Church aside to the mount that He may reveal to her His glory and His essence. In view of His approaching passion, His apostles, His Church, must be strengthened by the vision of His transfiguration. By this revelation it is made aware of His divinity and immortality. Today we take the place of His apostles, and we climb Mount Tabor in order to see Him transfigured. We shall not lose faith in Him when we see Him descend to suffering and humiliation. "Brethren: We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more. For you know what precepts I have given you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication. . . . God hath not called us to un-

cleanness, but unto sanctification in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Epistle).

Bright heights of Tabor! On all sides yawn the abysses of darkness and sin. The Epistle mentions especially the abyss of fornication and sins of lust and all dishonest dealings with our fellow men. Then St. Paul warns us: "The Lord is the avenger of all those things, as we have told you before and have testified. For God hath not called you to uncleanness, but unto sanctification." Thus the lesson we have to learn during Lent is that we must allow the transfigured one to lift us up and to transfigure us, not only in the next life, but here on earth—now. We must struggle now to sanctify our thoughts, our affections, our intentions, and our motives. Our prayers and labors and sufferings must be transfigured while we are still in this life, or they will be worthless. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." We shall be transfigured when we have obtained the mastery over our sensual appetites, over the lust of the eyes, the desires of the flesh, and the pride of life. Everything that is dishonorable in our life must be cast off. The transfiguration of the outward man is achieved by disciplining the tongue, the senses, and the whole body. The transfiguration of the inner man is brought about by the cultivation of purity of thought and motives. Thus in the eyes of the true Christian there already shines some of the brilliancy of the transfigured Christ. Something of the whiteness of His garments and the brilliancy of His face as it appeared on Mount Tabor is already shared by the Christian who leads a pure life in this world. Such a transfiguration is the purpose of all our lenten practices.

3. Today we see Christ transfigured on Mount Tabor, and by this vision we are strengthened and confirmed in our belief in Him. We look up to Him, and having been strengthened by the vision of His power and glory, we go bravely on our way. Dead to our sensual passions and to unjust dealings with our fellow men, we walk as we have been taught to walk in order that we may please God and advance in perfection.

This is the will of God, our transfiguration, our sanctification, that we may arise new and perfect men. During the season of Lent we ardently desire to escape from the mire of lust, worldliness, and self-love, and to ascend the mountain of the transfiguration. "Remember, O Lord, . . . Thy mercies that are from the beginning of the world. . . . Deliver us, O God of Israel, from all our tribulations" (Introit). Deliver us from the slavery of all that is sinful, worldly, and unjust. "Harken to the voice of my prayer, for to Thee will I pray, O Lord" (Communion). Transform my soul through Holy Communion, that it may be purified from all uncleanness and may be transfigured by sanctifying grace, by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by virtue, and by good works.

Today we see Christ transfigured again on the Tabor of our altars. His face shines like the sun. His garments are white as snow. Reverently we prostrate ourselves with Peter, James, and John, and adore Him. Christ comes to us in Holy Communion; He touches us and says to us, "Arise, and fear not." We should be strengthened by this assurance of the Master and go forth bravely to meet the trials and tribulations of our daily life. Supported by His strength, we are prepared to meet the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Holy Communion gives us the strength to walk as we were taught to walk, that we may please God and sanctify our souls. The inner purity which Holy Communion produces in us shines in our faces and makes known to the world the transfiguration that has taken place in us.

Our Holy Mother the Church, however, is grieved at the sight of so many of her children who do not walk as they were taught to walk, who are not pleasing to God, who do not keep themselves clean, but give themselves up to impurity and lust. They are like the Gentiles who know not God. They were invited and were given the grace to walk with Christ in the splendor of Mount Tabor, in purity, in holiness, and in a transfigured life. But instead they have given themselves up to sensuality and uncleanness. Their lives are a source of great sadness

to the Church. "The troubles of my heart are multiplied," she prays to the Lord. "Deliver me from my necessities, O Lord. See my abjection and my labor, and forgive me all my sins" (Gradual). See my sorrow and grief over my many straying children. In the Mass we cry out, "Forgive us our trespasses, . . . and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," the evils of sensuality, sin, and eternal death.

PRAYER

O God, who seest that we are wholly without strength in ourselves, keep us both within and without; that we may be protected in body from all adversity, and cleansed in mind from every evil thought. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

"I go, and you shall seek Me"

1. Today for the first time the theme of Christ's passion enters the lenten Masses. Christ is persecuted by the Jews. We take an active part in this persecution which reached its climax in the crucifixion; but it continues in His mystical body, the Church; and only on the last day will it finally be overcome, and Christ and His Church will be triumphant.

2. In the Epistle, Daniel represents Christ. Our Savior has taken upon Himself the sins of the world. By His suffering He expiated them, and on the cross His blood pleaded for forgiveness for His brethren. "O Lord, our God, who hast brought forth Thy people out of the land of Egypt, with a strong hand [through baptism], . . . we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, O Lord, against all Thy justice; let Thy wrath and Thy indignation be turned away, I beseech Thee, from Thy city Jerusalem [the Church]. . . . For by reason of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are a reproach to all that are round about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the supplications of Thy servant and his prayers; and show Thy face upon Thy sanctuary which is desolate. . . . O Lord, hear; O Lord, be appeased; harken and do;

delay not for Thy own sake, O my God; because Thy name is invoked upon Thy city and upon Thy people, O Lord our God." Thus our Lord prays for us, His people. Once He prayed for us on the cross; now He prays for us each day in the Mass, which is a sacrifice of propitiation and of petition for pardon and for grace. Alas, the many sins and injustices that are committed by the holy people of God! What would have happened to us if Christ had not taken our sins upon Himself? How should we be saved if He had not interceded for us? In spite of our unworthiness, He offered Himself for us on the cross, and continues to do so daily in the Mass.

"I go" (Gospel). Christ clearly foresaw the sufferings that awaited Him. He knew beforehand that He would be obliged to submit to the scourging and the disgraceful mockery before the judges and the soldiers of Herod. He knew that the people whom He loved so tenderly would reject Him. Nevertheless He says, "I go." His love of the Father and His intense desire to make reparation for the sins of men urge Him on. Love moves Him to redeem men and thus transform them from the children of wrath into the sons of God. Because He wishes to share with us the blessedness of His life in God, He can say: "I go" to offer Myself up for all men.

The Son of Man, in the name of penitent sinners, now goes before His father in the Holy Sacrifice. He makes petition for His Church, humiliated by the sins of so many of her children. On the altar He repeats in an unbloody manner the sacrifice which He offered on the cross, that He might earn pardon, grace, and help for His Church. Everything that He did while He was on earth, He now offers for this intention. He repeats His prayers, His sufferings, and His works, and offers them for each one of us. He goes, and we go with Him. We recognize in the Mass the repetition of His sacrifice on the cross, inspired by the same love and by the same desire to redeem and save us. The Son of Man goeth, and we join ourselves to Him and to the offering of bread and wine, that we may become one sacrifice of expiation and immolation with Him. Having pre-

pared ourselves to sacrifice everything for Him, we also become holocausts of love. We also are prepared to be rejected, judged unjustly, humiliated, and crucified with our Lord and Savior.

3. We join our prayers to those of the Savior who today lifts His voice to plead for His Church. We read the touching words of the Epistle and offer them as our prayer for all humanity.

Today we have met in the church of St. Clement. High up in the apse there is a beautiful mosaic cross which reminds us of His prophecy, "When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man [on the cross], then shall you know that I am He" (Gospel). During Lent we should learn to recognize Him in His passion, in His self-immolation, in His humiliation, and in His charity.

"He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone; for I do always the things that please Him" (Gospel). Would that we could truly say with our Savior, "I do always the things that please Him"!

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that Thy people, while afflicting the flesh by fasting from food, may follow after justice by abstaining from sin.

Hear our supplications, O almighty God, and kindly grant the effect of Thy wonted mercy to those whom Thou dost permit to rely confidently on Thy goodness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Loving service

1. "I have sought Thy face; Thy face, O Lord, I will seek; turn not away Thy face from me" (Introit). With this longing for the countenance of the Lord, we make our way with the penitents and the neophytes to the sanctuary of St. Balbina. In order to appear properly in the presence of the Lord, whose image looks down upon us from the apse of this basilica, we leave behind us all that pertains to the world. The leading thought of the liturgy of the day is that the life of the Christian should be one of humble service offered as a gift of love to God.

2. The gift of love. St. Balbina was one of those heroic Roman virgins who gave themselves up entirely to the practice of works of charity. She devoted her fortune, her energy, and her full time to the care of the Christians confined to prison, to the sick, the poor, and the oppressed. St. Balbina has a prototype in the kind widow of Sarephta, the pagan woman of whom the Epistle speaks today. Elias the prophet is sent to Sarephta and by chance he meets the widow gathering wood. He addresses her and makes the request: "Give me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink, . . . and a morsel of bread." The widow promptly shares with the prophet her last morsel, which she had intended for herself and her son. The widow's charity and her generous alms are promptly rewarded. "The pot of meal shall not waste, nor the cruse of oil be diminished. . . . And from that day the pot of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished." Almsgiving always brings blessings, whether to the widow of Sarephta or to St. Balbina. Therefore in your almsdeeds give gladly and generously. "Give and it shall be given to you; good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

Humble service. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Gospel). The pagan, the unbaptized, the scribes and the Pharisees are of another opinion. They sit on the chair of Moses. They are the teachers and set the standard for others. They love to be heard, to be seen, to be admired, and they require others to listen to their wisdom. They allow themselves to be called Rabbi, Master. Be not thus, you who are baptized. "He that is the greatest among you shall be your servant." The greatness of a Christian does not consist in the adulation of men, but rather in the humble service of his brethren in Christ, for which St. Balbina has given us a sublime example. Her greatness consists in the humble service of others. "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Gospel). We are to see in our brother, who is a child of God and a

brother of Christ, another Christ. When we find an opportunity to serve our brother, we should congratulate ourselves that we have found an opportunity to serve and help Christ, for out of love and reverence for Him we should do the deed. "As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40).

3. The liturgy urges us to perform good works during Lent and particularly to give alms to the needy. "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Gradual). He sustained the widow of Sarephta, who had "only a handful of meal in the pot, and a little oil in a cruse" (Epistle). She had intended to prepare a little hearth cake for herself and her son, "that we may eat it and die." Although there was a great famine in the country, the prophet tells her, "fear not . . . but first make for me of the same meal a little hearth cake, and bring it to me; and after make for thyself and thy son." The widow obeys the word of the prophet, and behold, "From that day the pot of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished." Thus does God reward alms given for His sake and for the sake of Christ. "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

"Deal thy bread to the hungry and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him and despise not thy own flesh" (Isa. 58:7). These words, which the liturgy speaks to us daily during Lent (at None), the early Christians understood literally and fulfilled literally. It was their custom to share, not only their bread, but all their personal property as well. They brought to the apostles even the wages they received for their labor and the money received from the sale of their property, so that none of their fellow Christians should be in want. That is the spirit of true Christianity.

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy; O Lord, blot out my iniquity" (Offertory). In almsdeeds we have an excellent means of atoning for our sins.

"He that is the greatest among you shall be your servant. . . .

And he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Gospel). In the Sacrifice of the Mass we behold Him who "humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names" (Phil. 2:8 f.). We are to follow Him on this path of humiliation by humbling ourselves, by submitting to the will of God, and by the charitable service of our fellow men.

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O Lord, kindly to support us in this holy observance, that what we know by Thy authority should be done, we may accomplish with Thy help.

Mercifully listen to our supplications, O Lord, and heal the maladies of our souls, that having received the remission of our sins, we may ever rejoice in Thy blessing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

St. Cecilia—The Church

1. Before going up to Jerusalem with His disciples, Christ predicts to them His passion and death. "The Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and the third day He shall rise again" (Gospel). Then the mother of two of the apostles, James and John, approached Him with the request: "Say that these my two sons may sit, the one at Thy right hand and the other at Thy left, in Thy kingdom. And Jesus answering said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to Him: We can." This Gospel is read today in the station church of St. Cecilia. Just as Salome, the mother of James and John, brought her sons to Christ, so St. Cecilia brought her spiritual sons, Valerian and Tiburtius, to Christ, to baptism, and to martyrdom. Salome and Cecilia are types of the Church, who during Lent leads her children, the neophytes, to baptism, to

Christ, and to participation in the sufferings and resurrection of Christ.

2. The Church prays for her children. In the Gospel of the Mass today, Salome leading her sons to Christ represents the Church praying for her sons. The mother of James and John forgets herself and casts herself down at the feet of the Lord to make a request for her children. In the Epistle, too, we find a picture of the Church praying for her children. Esther the queen entreats King Assuerus in behalf of her people who had been condemned to destruction. Esther finding favor in the sight of the king, is a picture of the Church, who is all-powerful in her prayers to God. She prays day and night through her priests and religious, through her saints in heaven and on earth. "O Lord, all things are in Thy power and there is none that can resist Thy will, if Thou determine to save Israel [souls]. . . . And now, O Lord, O King, . . . have mercy on Thy people, because our enemies resolve to destroy us and extinguish Thy inheritance. Despise not Thy portion, which Thou hast redeemed for Thyself out of Egypt. Hear my supplication and be merciful to Thy lot and inheritance, and turn our mourning into joy, that we may live and praise Thy name, O Lord; and shut not the mouths of them that sing to Thee, O Lord our God" (Epistle). Thus the Church prays during Lent for her children, the neophytes, the sinners, the penitents, and for all of us. The world owes its continued existence to the continual prayer of the Church.

The Church leads souls to Christ as did St. Cecilia, who led her pagan friends, Valerian and Tiburtius, to Christ. We see the Church also exemplified in Salome in the Gospel. She has no other mission than to point the way to Christ. Through her sacraments and her sacrifices, in life and in death, she leads men to Christ. She takes her children by the hand and leads them to Christ, who is the fountain of truth, of life, and of grace. She and she alone can lead us to Christ and to eternal salvation. Lead us, O Holy Mother the Church, for thou alone dost know the way to Christ.

The Church also induces her children to participate in the chalice of the Lord. When a man becomes a Christian through baptism, he begins to taste the chalice of Christ. "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" the Lord asks us. With James, and John, and Valerian, and Tiburtius we answer, "We can." We are determined to share everything with Christ, into whose body we have been incorporated by baptism. We accompany Him and turn away steadfastly from the world and its vanities. We wish to share His love of poverty, His privations, His mortifications, His self-denial, by patiently bearing the hardships of our state of life. We follow Him by a willing acceptance of difficulties, sufferings, troubles, and reverses. Thus we become martyrs of love, confident of His love and providence.

3. The Church prays for her children and leads them to Christ and makes them share His suffering and humiliation. We should not fear when she invites us to share with Him fasting, self-denial, and the cross. By thus inviting us she proves that she is from above and not of the earth. She is filled with the spirit of God, not with the spirit of the world.

The Church leads us to Christ especially in the celebration of Mass and in the reception of Holy Communion. We participate in the Mass in order that we may drink His chalice with Him. We place ourselves on the altar next to the Lamb of God, and with ourselves we offer everything that we possess, everything that we are. In all sincerity we wish to be offered with Him and to share His chalice completely. For this reason in Holy Communion He fills us with a consuming desire to make sacrifices for Him. Now we feel strong enough to drink His chalice throughout the day in whatever form it may appear. To attend Mass and to live in a spiritual atmosphere now means that we, too, are a sacrifice to God. It means the acceptance of trials sent by God and the search for voluntary mortification. It means that we must surrender ourselves unconditionally to the will of God, becoming like grains of wheat that are ground between the millstones of the duties of our state

of life. It means that we must become a bread which at the moment of consecration will cease to be bread; that is, we shall cease to live for our own sake and begin to live for Christ.

PRAYER

Look upon Thy people with favor, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and grant that they whom thou dost command to abstain from food may also refrain from baneful vices.

O God, the restorer and lover of innocence, direct the hearts of Thy servants unto Thee, that being filled with the fervor of Thy spirit, they may be found steadfast in faith and efficacious in works. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

The wages of sin

1. Our lives should be devoted to penance. Today we join the penitents at St. Mary's in Trastevere. They are allowed to assist at the celebration of Mass only "at the gate" and are excluded from the reception of Holy Communion. They are like the miserable Lazarus and wait for "the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table"; that is, from the Christians who are permitted to receive Holy Communion. Today we shall meditate on the curse of sin in this life, and the wages of sin in the next; meanwhile let us earnestly perform penance in expiation for our sins.

2. What should the true Christian be like? He should be like "a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture. . . . And the leaf thereof shall be green, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit" (Epistle). The Christian should be a tree planted by the waters of grace in the fruitful soil of the Church. He should be a branch of the true vine, Christ, and live by the strength and vigor of the vine. When we commit sin, we cease to be green and to bear fruit. We become like withered and barren trees, fit only to be burned. By sin we voluntarily separate ourselves from God. The veins through which the life blood of Christ

reached us are now severed, and we are dead to grace and dead to God. Holy love has been banished from our soul. Only the divine virtues of faith and hope remain behind as mute witnesses of the desolation of a holy place. These virtues, too, may die as a result of frequent sin. The yoke of sin becomes heavier with the passing years. Evil habits bind the soul in iron bands and rob her of all freedom. Thus she loses courage to resist and becomes an easy prey to temptation and to her own passions. That is the penalty for sin already here on the earth.

The final wages of sin is the eternal punishment of hell. Hell is the exclusion of the soul from God, from all light, from all satisfaction, from the one true good. It tortures the soul with unhappiness and merciless flames, in which, according to today's Gospel, the glutton languishes. This desolate soul craves a drop of water to moisten his tongue; but his longing is in vain. He suffers unspeakable pain and looks about him for help. He looks in vain, for the time for mercy, the time for repentance and conversion, the time of grace, is past. Only one thing remains, and that is an eternity in hell. This is the external penalty of sin. While man is still on earth, sin can be expiated; once he has passed into eternity, it is too late. Let us, then, do our good works and perform our penances while we have time. Let us "commend ourselves to God in much patience, in fasting, in the armor of justice" (Antiphon for Sext); that is, through a holy Christian life.

3. In the Offertory we are reminded of the true Moses, Christ. He comes in the Mass to offer Himself to the Father as a victim for our sins. He comes to make satisfaction for us, to pacify His Father, and to obtain forgiveness for men. At the Consecration we receive Him into our hands and raise Him up to heaven saying: "Why, O Lord, art Thou angry with Thy people? Let the anger of Thy soul be appeased." Remember Thy Son, who on the tree of the holy cross poured out His blood; and for His sake have mercy on us. "And the Lord was appeased from the evil which He had threatened to do to His people" (Offertory). At the Communion the Father gives His Son the

kiss of peace; now we, too, have peace, for we are again the children of God, living members of Christ. At Easter, Christ will be able to take us with Him to the Father. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (Communion).

Which was the more fortunate, the poor Lazarus or the rich worldling? What has happened to the riches and the pleasures of the rich worldling? Money and riches led him astray, and now he is buried in hell. "Woe to you that are rich" (Luke 6:24). There is indeed great danger in wealth. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm [the perishable goods of this earth, such as money, pleasure, and position], and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like a tamaric in the desert" (Epistle). O unhappy worldling!

"Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture; and it shall not fear when the heat cometh. And the leaf thereof shall be green, . . . neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit" (Epistle). Such is the poor, sick Lazarus.

PRAYER

Grant us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the assistance of Thy grace, that being duly intent on fasting and prayer, we may be delivered from the enemies of soul and body.

Hear, O Lord, Thy servants, and shower perpetual kindness upon those who ask it; that to those who glory in Thee, their Creator and Ruler, Thou mayest restore an abundance of good things, and preserve what Thou dost restore. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

The suffering Lord

1. Four weeks from today will be Good Friday. In the Collect of the Mass today we pray that we may receive the grace to prepare ourselves for the coming solemnities with sincere minds. Thus our thoughts today are carried forward to the passion

and death of our Lord. The atmosphere of Good Friday hovers over the liturgy today and takes possession of our soul.

2. The liturgy furnishes us with an image of the suffering Savior in the person of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph is the favorite son of Jacob, but he is hated by his brethren. Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers in Sichem, where they have been pasturing their sheep. Joseph carries out the wish of his father and finds his brethren, not in Sichem but in Dothain. They see him coming from afar and say, "Let us kill him and cast him into some old pit, and we will say: Some evil beast hath devoured him" (Epistle). Ruben, one of the brethren, is opposed to this plan, and they are content to cast him into a dry cistern; later they decide to sell him as a slave for thirty pieces of silver, to a group of merchants who are making their way into Egypt. Then they tell their father that Joseph has been slain by a wild beast.

Meanwhile Joseph, who was rejected and sold into captivity by his brethren, is wonderfully exalted by the Lord in Egypt. He becomes the first minister to the king of Egypt and saves the country from famine. When his brethren come to pay their respects to the King and obtain grain, Joseph reveals his identity, and his aged father hastens to his son, whom he had thought to be dead, and finds a home and needed assistance. "In my trouble I cried out to the Lord; and He heard me. O Lord, deliver my soul from wicked lips and a deceitful tongue" (Gradual). Thus the liturgy wishes us to pray to the Savior, of whom Joseph is a figure.

"A householder . . . planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower [for protection], and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country. And when the time of the fruit drew nigh, He sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits thereof; and the husbandmen, laying hands on his servants, beat one and killed another." Again the householder sent other servants, who also were treated cruelly. "Last of all he sent to them his son, saying: They will reverence my

son. But the husbandmen, seeing the son, said among themselves: This is the heir, come, let us kill him and we shall have his inheritance. And taking him, they cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed him" (Gospel). The householder is God, who sent His prophets and servants to His chosen people. But Israel rejected the messengers whom He sent to them, and even stoned them and put them to death. Then God sent His own divine Son. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Like Joseph, He is sold to His enemies by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of silver. He has rendered nothing but good to His people, but they reject Him as their Savior, turn from Him, and shout to His judges, "Crucify Him; crucify Him. . . . His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Luke 23:21; Matt. 27:25). Betrayed, despised, disgraced, and burdened with the curse of His people, He staggers painfully toward the heights of Calvary. There He will be crucified and His blood will be shed. But on "the third day He shall rise again" (Matt. 20:19). "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. By the Lord this has been done and it is wonderful in our eyes" (Gospel).

3. Today we gather in the sanctuary of St. Vitalis, who, like Joseph, was thrown alive into a pit and then covered with stones and earth. In this martyr Jesus continues His passion and death. In the passion of St. Vitalis, the Church participates in the passion, humiliation, and death of the Lord. Really the Church herself is a martyr and treads the path of Christ. She allows herself to be hated by the world, to be calumniated and crucified and abused by her enemies. In this way she proves that she belongs entirely to Christ, that she is His bride, His true Church. The word of the Psalmist is true of her. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Ps. 117:22).

When we celebrate Mass in the church of St. Vitalis, we likewise choose to follow the path of suffering with Christ. At the Consecration we will be sanctified and crucified with Him. In

Holy Communion we receive the flames of the martyr's love and the strength to share faithfully and steadfastly the way of the cross. With Him whose disciples we are, we may expect to be hated, calumniated and persecuted. "But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called" (I Pet. 2:20).

Through baptism we are called upon to suffer with Christ. We renew our choice in every Mass and Communion. Now is the time to share the sufferings of Christ, and we pray: "In my trouble I cried to the Lord" (Gradual). Now is the hour of suffering, but when that hour has passed, the day of exaltation will come. "Thou, O Lord, wilt preserve us and keep us from this generation for ever" (Communion); in virtue of Holy Communion, may we remain faithful to You in our suffering, and thus also arrive with You at a common glorification. Yes, we must be faithful to our suffering Savior, that we may be glorified with Him.

PRAYER

Grant we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that with the sacred fast to purify us, Thou mayest cause us to come with sincere minds to the holy things that are before us.

Grant unto Thy people, we beseech Thee, O Lord, health of soul and body, that by persevering in good works we may deserve to be defended by the protection of Thy power. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Conversion

1. The stationary saints, Peter and Marcellinus, remind us of the two brothers of the Old Testament, Esau and Jacob, and of the two brothers who are mentioned in today's Gospel. The story of Esau and Jacob reminds us of the mystery of our being called to membership in the Church. The parable of the prodigal son reminds us of our call to conversion. "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls. . . . The heavens show

forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands" (Introit).

2. By the mysterious operation of God, Jacob, the younger son, is preferred to Esau, the first-born. Jacob receives the great blessing of his dying father Isaac: "God give thee the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn and wine; and let people serve thee, and all tribes worship thee. Be thou lord of thy brethren, and let thy mother's children bow down before thee. Cursed be he that curseth thee, and let him that blesseth thee be filled with blessings" (Epistle). Here Jacob represents the Church, which comprises souls taken from the pagan nations. We are Gentiles; but we are preferred to the chosen people, Israel, without any merit on our part and in spite of our unworthiness. We have received the blessing of our heavenly Father in the possession of Christ and eternal salvation.

O blessed mercy of God! Without any merit on our part He has shown us mercy. Why have the first-born, the people of Israel, been rejected? Why has redemption been withdrawn from them and offered to the Gentiles? Why has God called me to membership in His Church, while passing by so many who are perhaps more worthy than I? "How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom. 11:33.) How does it come about that "two women shall be grinding at the mill; one shall be taken [into the kingdom of God] and one shall be left" (Matt. 24:40)? Why is one man given light and another left in darkness? Whoever has the light of grace, has received it by an infinite, loving, and completely mysterious election. Jacob has been chosen instead of Esau. In gratitude the liturgy confesses: "It is good to give praise to the Lord, and to sing to Thy name, O Most High. To show forth Thy mercy in the morning and Thy truth at night" (Gradual). Let us consider this truth and give thanks to God. "What hast thou that thou has not received?" (I Cor. 4:7.)

How have we responded to this love of our Father? Have we proved worthy of our election? The Gospel gives us the answer.

Like the younger of the two sons we come to our Father and ask, "Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me." After a few days the younger son, the prodigal, takes all his possessions and goes into a far country. There he wastes his substance, living riotously. A famine comes, and he cleaves to one of the citizens of that country, who sends the prodigal to his farm to tend the swine. The foolish young man suffers great hardships and returns to his senses. He says to himself, "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father's house and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son. And rising up he came to his father." His father, recognizing him already from a distance, is moved with sympathy, hastens toward him, embraces him, and kisses him. The repentant son falls at his father's feet. "Father, I have sinned. . . . I am not worthy to be called thy son." But the father forgives him, and calling one of his servants, says to him, "Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found."

This story is repeated again today. It is the history of the Church; it is the history of our own desertion. In this Gospel we are given an urgent call to repentance and conversion. "Father, I have sinned." Penance alone can save us. Our Father welcomes us with mercy. The sin and its eternal punishment are forgiven; the good works which we did before sin and the merits which we lost through sin are revived. The Father receives us again as His children, and celebrates a joyful banquet with us at Holy Communion.

3. In the story of each human life, God's mercy stands on one side and the unfaithfulness of man on the other. Will God have to cast us off as He did the people of Israel? Have we not fully deserved it? Sometimes it appears that God wishes to

allow our faithless generation to go its own way. If He does, it will merit a well deserved punishment.

What can save us from rejection? Only penance, self-examination, and conversion. "Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning" (Chapter at Tierce; Joel 2:12). "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive" (Chapter at Sext; Isa. 55:7).

PRAYER

Grant salutary effects to our fasts, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that the chastisements of the flesh which we have undertaken, may bestow more life to our souls.

Keep Thy household, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with continual loving kindness, that as it relies only on the hope of heavenly grace, it may also be fortified by heavenly protection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Third Sunday of Lent

1. The liturgy for the third Sunday of Lent has been arranged with the catechumens in mind, that is, those who are to receive baptism on the vigil of Easter. We who have already been baptized unite ourselves to them and relive the great event of our baptism, which is the basis of our whole life as Christians. We gather together in the church of St. Lawrence, under whose protection the catechumens were placed on Septuagesima Sunday. Today the first act of their solemn baptism is anticipated: the first exorcism of the evil spirit. Filled with an ardent longing for freedom from the slavery of Satan and inspired by a desire of ranging themselves on the side of Christ, the catechumens, and we with them, pray: "My eyes are

ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare." Filled with longing we cry out with the catechumens: "Look Thou upon me and have mercy on me" (Introit). In the Collect we pray, "Have regard to the desires of the lowly, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty in our defense."

2. What do the catechumens seek? What are they trying to accomplish? The answer is given in the Epistle: "Brethren, be ye followers of God as most dear children. . . . But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints. . . . For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light." Here we find clearly explained the meaning of the baptism we have received.

It is imperative that we grasp what the Epistle tells us with regard to the effects of our baptism and the obligations we assumed. Should we not arouse ourselves to a manner of life such as our baptism requires? For this we pray when we say, "Arise, O Lord, let no man be strengthened. . . . To Thee I have lifted up my eyes who dwelleth in heaven. . . . Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us" (Gradual and Tract). Give us light and strength.

The poor man in the Gospel, from whom the devil was driven, is a figure of the baptized. "The strong one" has been driven out of our hearts by one who is stronger, by Christ. Christ has deprived him of his armor, so that he no longer has any power over the baptized. Truly the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace and salvation, is at hand. But the work of salvation is not yet finished. The operation of grace in our souls requires our full cooperation. It is for this reason that the candidates for baptism, and we the baptized, are admonished: "He that is not with Me is against Me." There can be no neutrality with Christ. There can be no halfway mark between the service of two masters. We must choose the one or the other. This is the charge laid upon the baptized: they must be entirely devoted to Christ. We must believe in Him implicitly,

imitating His example and obeying His commands. If one is not with Christ, one is against Him and drives Him out of his heart. Satan then enters into such a man and takes with him seven other spirits worse than himself, and the last condition of the man is worse than the first. In gratitude for our baptism we assent to it again when we recite the Credo, and thus we renew our baptismal promises and submit to the judgments of Christ, which are "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" (Offertory).

3. When we make our offering we place ourselves on the side of Christ. "He that is not with Me is against Me." As the drops of water used at the Offertory mingle with the wine in the chalice, so we wish to be united with Christ in the Mass. With Him we wish to be crucified to sin and to the world. We offer ourselves with Him, dedicating to God our thoughts, our works, and our deeds, thus becoming with Him one holy and immaculate offering. Our offering will be sealed by Holy Communion. The stronger one enters our hearts and subdues by His power the strong one who lives there. He stretches forth the right hand of His majesty to protect us. We are made secure in Christ. This is the fruit of our offering and of our baptism. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house" (Communion). Through our baptism, our Mass, and our Communion we are bound to Christ and filled with Him. Renewed by His spirit we repeat with all our heart our baptismal promises; with Christ and for Christ we work, suffer, and pray. "My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare" (Introit). From the struggle of Lent in this world we shall make our way to the light and glory of eternity.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

The children of light

1. The stationary church today is that of St. Lawrence, the patron of neophytes. On his glowing gridiron he attains his transfiguration. He looks at us also with a burning desire for

our salvation. We, too, must purify ourselves for the transfiguration of Easter morning. "My eyes are ever toward the Lord. . . . To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul" (Introit). We beseech Him during this holy season of Lent to perfect in us and in all faithful children of the Church the work of regeneration.

2. "At that time Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb. And when He had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke and the multitude were in admiration at it" (Gospel). In former times the driving out of the evil spirits from those to be baptized, was undertaken in the sanctuary of St. Lawrence. The very incident recorded in the Gospel of the Mass today, took place in our own lives when we were baptized. In the person of the priest, who represents Him, Christ came to us and drove out the evil spirit who had possessed us from our entry into the world. "I command you, every unclean spirit, in the name of the Father Almighty, and in the name of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord and Judge, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to depart from this creature of God, which our Lord has designed to call His temple, that it may be a temple of the living God, and that the Holy Ghost may dwell in it. Through the same Christ our Lord, who shall come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire. Amen."

Christ, who is stronger than Satan, has driven the mighty adversary from our souls. When we renounce Satan and all his pomps, we do so with perfect freedom and we undertake a life-long struggle against him. We are incorporated in the living Christ and share in the life of the "strong one." The strength of Christ, which made St. Lawrence victorious on his burning griddle, operates in us also. Thus we approach the battle of life for the decisive meeting with Satan. "He that is not with Me is against Me" (Gospel). We place ourselves under the banner of Christ, for there can be no neutral position. We have devoted all our energies to the struggle, and today in the middle of the lenten season we look back on what has been accomplished. Have we been faithful to our baptismal promises? Has

Satan and sin and the powers of darkness made no inroads upon us? The liturgy rightly reminds us today: "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints; or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks. For know ye this, and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean or covetous person, which is a serving of idols, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Epistle).

Let us therefore examine ourselves seriously. "Today if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. 94:8). Woe to us if the unclean spirit should return to our souls and bring with him seven other spirits worse than himself. The last condition of that man is worse than the first. "For you were heretofore darkness; but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth" (Epistle). We are children of the light and should no longer know darkness; we should walk always with our gaze fixed on God, in unfaltering faith and in unceasing praise of our Creator. What are the fruits expected of the children of light? Their lives must be characterized by unflinching charity towards their fellow men, by an upright life and a ceaseless search for that which is most in conformity to the will of God and conducive to the salvation of one's neighbor and of one's own soul. The children of light can have nothing in common with wickedness. They cannot share the passions and jealousies and affectations of men of the world.

The essence of a true Christian life lies in an unflinching love of God and our neighbor. The life of the Christian is a life of love. That love obliges him to separate himself completely and effectively from all that is sinful; not only from that which is mortally sinful, but from every venial sin and imperfection that is in any way deliberate. This love can endure no willful imperfection. It knows and desires only what is pleasing to God. Its every action is performed out of pure love of God and of Christ. This love seeks to give to God and to the Savior every-

thing that it has, even to the last drop of its blood. It is prepared to suffer all trials and humiliations for the love of God, and even rejoices that it is permitted to undertake this suffering for the love of God.

3. We must wage a constant battle against "the strong one" lest he return to the dwelling from which Christ has driven him. We must also strive constantly to maintain our love for God, and to seek always what is right and just and true. But we cannot do these things with our own strength alone. Therefore, we lift our eyes to God and pray: "Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord, our God" (Tract). Filled with confidence we turn to Him with the Church: "*Oculi mei semper ad Dominum*"—"My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare [of the evil spirits]. Look Thou upon me and have mercy upon me, for I am alone and poor" (Introit).

Today with the celebration of Mass we renew the battle with Satan. As we did at the time of our baptism, we renounce Satan, the world, the flesh and sin. We unite ourselves to Christ who is offering Himself to His Father. Through our Holy Communion we share His life anew and more deeply. By His strength we are able to fight against evil, and to bring out the "child of light" who is in us. As children of light we press forward toward Easter and toward eternal life.

"Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Gospel). That is the way of light and love. Only he who loves can fulfill the law of God perfectly. To this commendation of Christ the true lover replies: "The justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts, and His judgments are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; for Thy servant keepeth them" (Offertory).

PRAYER

Have regard to the desires of the lowly, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty in our defense. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Children of the Kingdom of God

1. Naaman, a heathen officer of the king of Syria, comes to the prophet Eliseus and humbly submits himself to the direction of the servant of God. He bathes in the Jordan, and while sojourning in Israel (that is, in the Church) he is cleansed of his leprosy (Epistle). While the heathen finds a cure in Israel, the people of Israel, the inhabitants of Nazareth, reject the "prophet" (Christ), and seek to put him to death. The chosen people reject their Savior, and we, the Gentiles, are called to Christ and salvation. Such thoughts fill our minds as we gather at the church of a holy pope, Mark, to celebrate the holy sacrifice.

2. "He came unto His own and His own received him not" (John 1:11). Christ visited His home in Nazareth, where He was well known. Since the time He began His public life, the people of Nazareth had been hearing of the miraculous cures He had worked in Capharnaum and in the other cities of Galilee. But his fellow townsmen ridiculed His miraculous power. Why does He not perform in Nazareth the wonderful things He has been performing in the other cities of Israel? He answers their mockery, "Amen I say to you, that no prophet is accepted in His own country. . . . There were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, . . . and to none of them was Elias sent but to Sarephta of Sidon, to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian." They understand very well the indictment implied in these words, and they become very angry. They drive Him out of the city, and leading Him to a high hill on which their city was built, they seek to cast Him headlong over the cliff. "But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way" (Gospel).

Israel, and particularly Nazareth, did not recognize the time of grace. They had only a shallow ridicule and a bitter hatred for Christ, and sought to dispose of Him. "But He . . . went

His way." Christ will not force His grace upon those who do not wish to receive it. Through their own fault "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out" (Matt. 8:12). Here again the liturgy earnestly admonishes us not to turn away from Christ and His call to penance, but to be converted to do penance and to prepare for Easter.

"There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian." (Gospel). The kingdom of God slips through the fingers of the proud, the unbelieving, the self-satisfied, and falls into the hands of him who believes and seeks God. Naaman, the heathen, longed for a new, vigorous life. He came from far off, from Damascus to Samaria, and humbled himself by submitting to the directions of Eliseus and by descending into the waters of the Jordan. His faith, his humility, and his submission to the prophet bring him the cure of his leprosy. "There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed." The heathens believed and received salvation; the Israelites lost the kingdom of God through their unbelief. The inheritance that was the portion of the chosen people, is offered to us who are members of the Church, but only on condition that we have faith and submit humbly to the teaching and commandments of Christ and His Church. We shall be saved only if we are conscious of our unworthiness and frailty, and confidently seek help from Him. "Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication; be attentive to me and hear me" (Offertory). "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for man hath trodden me underfoot; all the day long he hath afflicted me" (Gradual).

3. Today in the liturgy we are like the heathen Naaman. In the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice we come to the great prophet, Christ. We submit ourselves in faith, humility, and confidence to His grace, which we are to receive when He comes to us in Holy Communion. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (John 6:55, 57). "In God I will trust. I will not fear what man can do against

me" (Introit), because by virtue of my baptism Christ lives in me as the head lives in its members. In Him "I can do all things" (Phil. 4:13).

Whatever we obtain now from Christ is only the beginning. Our salvation will be assured only when we have entered safely into eternity and have arrived at the eternal Easter. To that happy day we look forward when we say the Communion prayer: "When the Lord shall have turned away the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad." With firm confidence in God we repeat: "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." To obtain this resurrection, we must come to the great prophet in the land of Israel, to Christ in His holy Church.

"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). If the chosen people could lose the salvation that had been promised them, why cannot the same happen to us? What is our protection against such a catastrophe? It is humility. If we have faith and submit humbly to Christ and His Church, we shall not fall. We must cling to Christ and to the things of God with faith and reverence.

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour forth Thy grace into our hearts, that as we abstain from carnal food, so also we may withdraw our senses from harmful excesses.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, succor us, that we may be worthy to be snatched by Thy protection from the dangers that threaten us, and to be saved by Thy deliverance. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

"Forgive us as we forgive"

1. The Sacrifice of the Mass today is celebrated in the church of the holy virgin St. Prudentiana, on the spot where St. Peter once lived and worked in Rome. The virgin Prudentiana carries in her hand the vessel of oil, the vessel of the love of God. "She overcame numberless trials, provided an honorable burial for a

large number of holy martyrs, and distributed her entire fortune to the poor for the love of Christ" (Martyrology).

2. "In those days a certain woman cried to the prophet Eliseus saying: Thy servant, my husband is dead. . . . And behold the creditor is come to take away my two sons to serve him. And Eliseus said to her: . . . Tell me, what hast thou in thy house? And she answered: I thy handmaid have nothing in my house but a little oil to anoint me. And he said to her: Go borrow all thy neighbors' empty vessels, not a few. And go in and shut thy door; . . . and pour out thereof into all those vessels; and when they are full take them away." The woman did as she was told, and when all the vessels were full of oil, the prophet commanded her: "Go sell thy oil and pay thy creditor; and thou and thy sons live of the rest" (Epistle). This miracle is meant to be a figure of the blessings wrought by our lenten penances. The widow mentioned in the Epistle is our Holy Mother the Church. Her spouse has ascended into heaven and has left her, and since that day she has been persecuted. The creditor, Satan, seeks to take from her the children who have been born to her by baptism; and now Satan would give them over to destruction. She turns to the great prophet, Christ, and obtains help. During the season of Lent, He pours out abundantly the oil of grace that will pay off her indebtedness. Now is the time of grace. Now, by baptism and penance, He breaks the bonds by which the creditor holds her captive. Not in vain, therefore, we cry out, "I have cried to Thee, for Thou, O God, hast heard me; O incline Thy ear unto me and hear my words. Keep me, O Lord, as the apple of Thy eye; protect me under the shadow of Thy wings" (Introit). "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant" (Gradual). Now our prayers shall be heard and we shall obtain forgiveness.

"Amen, I say to you [the apostles], whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (Gospel).

Peter is near at hand in the house of Prudentiana. To him and to the other apostles Christ entrusted the power to bind and to loose. Peter is in our midst. We have come to him and to the Church to obtain the forgiveness of our sins. The creditor, Satan, can no longer press his claims upon us. The Church through her priesthood possesses the power to forgive sins, even the greatest. What she forgives will be forgiven also in heaven. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John 20:23) in the sacrament of penance. We need only to come to Peter, to the Church, and make a humble confession of our guilt. If we do that, the Church assures us: "I absolve thee from thy sins." When this grace has been given to us, we may truly say, "The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength; the right hand of the Lord hath exalted me; I shall not die, but live, and shall declare the works of the Lord" (Offertory). Lent offers us an excellent opportunity to do penance for our sins and to receive the sacraments fervently and worthily.

3. The Church today prays for her children, and her prayer is always efficacious. "If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father, who is in heaven; for where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them" (Gospel). The Lord Himself, whose petitions are most efficacious, prays with His Church.

"The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength, the right hand of the Lord hath exalted me; I shall not die, but live, and shall declare the works of the Lord" (Offertory). God still works wonders of mercy and forgiveness in His Church. But there is a condition. The holy liturgy explains this in today's Gospel. Peter asks the Lord. "Lord how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Jesus answers, "Not till seven times but till seventy times seven times" (that is, whenever and as often as he offends). In the Our Father we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matt. 6:12). On another occasion Christ

said, "Forgive and you shall be forgiven. . . . For with the same measure that you mete, withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:37, 38).

When we forgive our neighbor with sincere hearts then we "shall consent upon earth" with regard to what we wish to ask of the Father. Christ has promised that such prayers will be granted: "Whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven" (Gospel). When we pray with a forgiving spirit Christ prays with us.

PRAYER

Hearken to us, O almighty God, and favorably grant us the gifts of saving self-denial.

Defend us, O Lord, with Thy protection and keep us forever from all iniquity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

God's commandments

1. Today we stand at the tomb of the holy pope and martyr, St. Sixtus, and receive the Ten Commandments, which in the early Church were given to the neophytes on this day that they might learn them by heart and meditate on them.

2. In spirit we are on Mount Sinai. Peals of thunder and flashes of lightning and the glare of the burning mountain announce the presence of Jahve. Like the Israelites, we are seized with terror. "Thus saith the Lord God; Honor thy father and thy mother; . . . thou shalt not kill. . . . You shall not make gods of silver. . . . You shall make an altar of earth unto me," and you shall offer sacrifice. The Ten Commandments, which we accepted when we were baptized, are nothing but the expression of the will of God, holy, wise, and as immutable as God Himself. These commandments result from the providence, wisdom, and holiness of God. There can be nothing more reasonable, more important, more holy, than the will of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments, which we vowed to keep at the moment of our baptism, when we dedicated ourselves to

the service of God. Today we renew this dedication and renew our resolution to keep the Ten Commandments. In one way or another they all concern themselves with the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength, . . . and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27).

How have we observed the commandments of God? Let us hope that we have observed them with more sincerity than had the Pharisees of today's Gospel. They twist the meaning of the immutable commandments so that they can fulfill them outwardly, yet accomplish their own will in the end. They "transgress the commandments of God for your tradition" (Gospel). They substitute human wisdom for the commandments of God. May such an observance of the law of God be far from us who are baptized.

We should receive the commandments of God in reverence and in faith, because we believe that they express the will of God. We keep them because we wish to conform our wills to His; because we love God and our blessed Savior. We observe the commandments because we believe their observance is pleasing to Him. The will of God is our joy. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John 4:34). In baptism we died to ourselves and to the desires of the old man; we gave up our right to direct our own activities and to live according to our own desires. We dedicated ourselves unconditionally to the will of God and to a blind trust in His providence. "Thy will be done." I was baptized "not to do my own will, but the will of Him" who called me (John 6:38). To do God's will is the essence of a good Christian life. The devout Christian submits to the holy will of God in all things. Are we so disposed? Do we seek first the will of God and look to Him for guidance in all things?

3. At the Offertory of the Mass today we place our heart and our will on the paten. We will die to ourselves in order to rise again with Christ and live according to the divine will. In Holy Communion He inspires us with His spirit and supports us by

His strength. We conform ourselves to Him who followed, not His own will, but the will of His Father. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." In our lives, as in the life of Christ, there must be a complete conformity to the will of the Father. This should be the fruit of our reception of Holy Communion.

Men often substitute human traditions for the laws of God. What fantastic notions our age has of the meaning of sin. Many no longer look upon what used to be called sin as a rebellion against the commandments of God, but rather as a misconception of a darker and earlier age. Or they look upon the notion of sin as the fruit of a faulty education or self-deception. Some would have us believe that we are fundamentally evil so that man is incapable of avoiding sin. With these and a thousand other flimsy devices, modern man seeks to set aside the clear commands of God. Unfortunately, even some Christians take this attitude. Every voluntary sin is at the bottom an attempt of man to substitute his own wishes and desires for the will of God.

PRAYER

Grant us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that being disciplined by salutary fasting and abstaining from baneful vices, we may the more easily obtain Thy merciful forgiveness.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who seek the favor of Thy protection, may be delivered from all evil and serve Thee with a quiet mind. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

The Divine Physician

1. Today at the tomb of the holy physicians, Cosmas and Damian, the Church implores God that we may have the strength to keep holy the second half of Lent, and continue our penance with courage and fidelity.

2. Jesus enters into the house of Simon Peter. "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought Him for her. And standing over her, He commanded the fever, and it left her. And immediately rising, she ministered to them"

(Gospel). Christ was moved to perform this act of charity by the pressing desire of His heart to help those who suffer. He is in name and by His very essence a Savior. St. Augustine, in explaining this gospel, says that we are afflicted by the fever of avarice, passions, lust, ambition, and anger. We are sick and acknowledge with humility that we are weak and that we have been guilty of sins and imperfections of all kinds. Only Christ can cure us. We hasten to Him now in the Mass and at the time of Holy Communion, in the reception of the sacrament of penance, by our acts of contrition. "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord; and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand and fillest every living creature with blessings" (Gradual). Thou art the Savior. Thou dost come to us during the holy season of Lent, and particularly at the time of Mass and Holy Communion, to be a savior for Thy people and for Thy Church. "The eyes of all hope in Thee." "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "I am the salvation of the people, saith the Lord; from whatever tribulation they shall cry to Me, I will hear them; and I will be their Lord forever" (Introit).

In the house of Peter (in the Church) the divine physician carries on His works. "Hear ye the word of the Lord, all ye men of Juda that enter in at these gates [through baptism] to adore the Lord. . . . And I will dwell with you in this place," in the house of Peter, the Church (Epistle). The more intimately we enter into the life of the Church, the closer the Savior comes to us. We draw close to Him by faith, by obedience to His Church, by submission to her authority, and by the devout use of her sacrifice and her sacraments. Our attitude toward the body of Christ, the Church, is the determining factor in our relationship to Christ Himself. Here in the family of the Church we shall find salvation after the Lord has died and returned to His Father.

3. The Epistle addresses us earnestly: "Make your ways and your doings good. . . . For if you will order well your ways and your doings, if you will execute judgment between a man

and his neighbor, if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, . . . and walk not after strange gods to your own hurt, I will dwell with you in this place," in the community which is the Church. "Trust not in lying words, saying: The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, it is the temple of the Lord"; that is, do not assert foolishly: "I am a Catholic, therefore I shall be saved." God demands more than mere membership in His Church; He demands also a holy life within the Church.

Who will measure the extent of the sacrifices made by the Son of God for the salvation of men? Let us consider well His incarnation, His poverty, His degradation, and His humiliation. How cruelly He was calumniated! And how persistent is that calumny even today! Who can weigh the depth of the ingratitude of His people, who called upon the Roman governor to "crucify Him"? He who would understand the suffering and the love of Christ, must consider His agony in the Garden of Olives, His cruel scourging at the pillar, the pain of the crowning with thorns, the bitterness of the mockery when the soldiers thrust the reed into his hands as a scepter. He who would understand the love of God must follow Him on the way of the cross and watch Him die on Calvary. All these sufferings He accepted to accomplish our salvation. How grateful we should be for such a Savior!

At Holy Communion we should unite ourselves to our Savior. "Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently; O that my ways may be directed to keep Thy justifications" (Communion). That should be our program for life.

PRAYER

May the blessed solemnity of Thy saints, Cosmas and Damian, magnify Thee, O Lord, for by Thy ineffable providence Thou hast granted eternal glory to them and assistance to us.

May heavenly favor increase the people subject to Thee, O Lord, and make them always obey Thy commandments. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

The rock in the desert

1. We assemble again today in the sanctuary of St. Lawrence, the patron and model of catechumens. Near the church there stood, in ancient times, an open fountain. Today's liturgy refers to the waters of baptism, "springing up into life everlasting" (Gospel). Today we join the newly baptized Christians and stir up the grace of baptism within ourselves.

2. Moses struck the rock in the desert, and water flowed forth to relieve the thirst of the people of Israel and to save them from death in the desert (Epistle). The rock is an image of Christ (I Cor. 10:4). The rod which Moses used to strike the rock is a figure of the cross upon which Christ died. The water which flowed from the rock, foreshadowed the grace which flows from the sacraments. We receive first the graces of the sacrament of baptism, which the neophytes now await with great longing.

Just as the water from the rock refreshed the Israelites in the desert and saved them from a terrible death from thirst and gave them the strength to continue and finish their perilous journey to the land of promise, so the waters of baptism strengthen and refresh us, the new Israel, that we may continue our journey through the wilderness of our earthly life to the promised land of heaven, guided and protected by the pillar and the cloud of God's providence. Christ the rock accompanies us. Day by day we may refresh ourselves at the life-giving waters which Christ earned for us by His life and death. This life-giving water comes to us through the Mass and the sacraments. From the precious wounds opened in His sacred body by the scourge, by the nails of the crucifixion, and by the lance of the centurion, this life-giving water flows down upon us in a continuous stream. Deprived of this water from the Rock (Christ), men would languish and die in the wilderness. "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever" (Gospel). What a wonderful promise! We discover the Rock

which gives this precious water when we are baptized. It is the water of salvation. The devout Christian believes and is grateful. Let us engrave the image of this Rock in our hearts.

Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman the mystery of the water that gives eternal life (Gospel). Fired by a zeal for the salvation of souls, He seats himself by Jacob's well and awaits the approach of the Samaritan, the sinner. He offers her the water which He alone can give. He assures her that he who drinks of this water will not thirst again. It is the water of eternal life, which He gives to the soul of the Samaritan woman, changing her from a sinner into a disciple. The woman leaves her water-pot standing by the well; she no longer has any thought of the natural water she came to draw. After she has tasted the living water which Christ gives her, the natural water no longer has any attraction for her. A new world has been opened before her eyes. She breaks with sin and becomes a new creature, nourished by the spirit of Christ. This Samaritan woman is an image of the catechumens and of us who have been baptized.

At Jacob's well, which for us is the sacraments and the tabernacle, Christ waits for us, who are unworthy sinners. He wishes to save us by means of the living water which He will give us. Having been allowed to drink from this water, we leave our pot standing at the well, as did the Samaritan woman. We leave behind us the old man with his outlook on life, his ambitions, and his base motives. Only one thing now has any value in our eyes: the life of grace as children of God, a life filled with love for God and for souls. We wish to become disciples of Christ and apostles of His grace and His doctrine. We indeed are like the Samaritan woman, who found Christ at the well of Jacob; henceforth we shall live by His grace and His spirit.

3. Now during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus stands at the well of Jacob, the fountain of grace. There He waits for me, the Samaritan, that He may teach me by means of the Epistle and Gospel. He has been waiting for me at the well of Jacob that He might lead me to the Father through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, that He might apply to my soul through

this means the graces that He has merited for me, and that He may even give Himself to me in Holy Communion. In the Communion we sing: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, saith the Lord, it shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting." He gives us this water to drink in Holy Communion. Thus we have within ourselves the fountain which springs up into life everlasting.

"Show me, O Lord, a token for good; that they who hate me may see and be confounded, because Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and has comforted me. Incline Thy ear, O Lord, and hear me, for I am needy and poor" (Introit). The Church wends her way over the long desert road of her earthly pilgrimage, poor and helpless, deprived of all human support, persecuted, and hated by the devil, the prince of this world, and by all his minions. She has only one support: the rock that she finds in the desert, the life-giving rock, Christ in the Holy Eucharist. God entrusted to her the Holy Eucharist as a sign of His goodness. She will not fail, but she will live, pursuing her way confidently to eternal life, serene in the possession of Christ in the Eucharist. "In God hath my heart confided, and I have been helped; and my flesh hath flourished again, and with my will I will give praise to Him" (Gradual).

PRAYER

Look down with merciful approval on our fasts, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that as we abstain from food with our body, so too may we refrain from sin in our minds.

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we who trust in Thy protection, may by Thy help overcome all things standing in our way. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

The adulteress

1. Today we devote ourselves entirely to penance. We acknowledge the sins by which we have proved ourselves unfaithful to God, and we pray to the Lord in the Introit of the Mass:

"Give ear, O Lord, to my words; understand my cry; harken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God."

2. During the days of the Feast of Tabernacles, an adulterous woman was brought before our Lord, who had come to the Temple early in the morning and was preaching to the people, who flocked to hear Him. The scribes cast before Him a poor woman they had just taken in adultery, and said: "Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest Thou?" (Gospel.) For the Jews adultery was one of the basest of sins, and in the Old Testament it was punishable by death.

In the liturgy the adulterous woman is a figure of the sinful Christian soul. By our sins we, too, have been unfaithful to God, to our Savior, and to the Church. We have turned our back on Him who from the moment of our baptism has not ceased to shower us with love and grace. We have withdrawn our heart and our love from God, its true spouse, and have given it to another. We have pandered our love to a base desire, to an empty pleasure, to the prince of this world, who seeks only our destruction. This is indeed spiritual adultery. The adulterous woman was cast before Jesus, and He received her kindly. What will He say to those who have accused her? They have quoted Moses. Will He uphold them? Jesus says not a word, but bows down and silently writes with His finger in the sand, as if to indicate that He wishes to have nothing to do with the persecution of this poor woman. The scribes insist on an answer to their question. Jesus rises and gives them an answer they were not expecting: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." Are they without sin who wish now to stone her? One after another they slip away to hide their shame. The sinful woman is left alone with Jesus. "Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither will I condemn thee" (Gospel).

Jesus forgives this shameful sin, but not without the admonition, "Sin no more." This is a consoling thought for us. We, too,

have been guilty of many sins, but we are not lost if only we come to Jesus with sorrow and contrition, confess our guilt to the representative of Christ, and resolve to give up our sins in the future. Christ is always ready to receive the penitent sinner. "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death [as did the adulterous woman], I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, O Lord" (Gradual). Thou dost not will the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live (cf. Ezech. 18:23; 33:11).

3. The Pharisees, zealous for the law, consider how they may hand the adulterous woman over to death. They are without feeling and without mercy. But Jesus is of a different disposition. He will not destroy, but save. He receives the sinner back again. He reveals in His passion and death how vigorously He condemns and rejects sin; but the sinner He will save. We must acknowledge our sins, do penance for them, and avoid them in the future. "Direct my steps, . . . and let no iniquity have dominion over me, O Lord" (Offertory).

The Epistle of this Mass is the complement of the Gospel. Susanna, the wife of Joakim, is falsely accused of adultery by the two wicked elders. She is being led out to death when Daniel, enlightened by the Spirit of God, brings the truth to light. Through the wisdom of Daniel, the innocence of the chaste Susanna is proved, and she is saved from death. The Old Testament is the testament of justice, in which sin is punishable by death; the New Testament is the testament of mercy, in which the sinner may find forgiveness through penance. The New Testament gives the sinner strength to overcome passion and sin, and to raise himself to a life of virtue and holiness. How grateful we should be for having learned to know Christ, and for the opportunity of coming to Him through penance! We should be grateful, too, for the Eucharist. In virtue of this sacrament we may unite ourselves to Him ever more intimately, and partake of His life and His strength.

"He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." How shall we fare in the final judgment if He applies

to us the code that we use in the judgment of our neighbor? We frequently and unjustly condemn the faults of our neighbor, and cast stones at him for his least faults. Are we acting within our rights? We must change our attitude if we hope to find mercy. We are too much like the two elders who accused Susanna, and like the scribes who accused the woman of the Gospel. We should be more like Christ, who forgave the adulterous woman and all sinners who came to Him.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that they who mortify the flesh by abstaining from food, may observe justice by refraining from sin.

Stretch forth to Thy faithful, O Lord, the right hand of Thy heavenly aid, that they may seek Thee with all their hearts and may be worthy to obtain what they ask. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Liturgy of the
Fourth Sunday of Lent*

1. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord" (Gradual). Today we go into the house of the Lord, known as the church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. Jerusalem! Here the catechumens and the faithful (the baptized) touch the holy ground upon which they stand. In Jerusalem, Christ was crucified and buried, and there He arose from the dead. But for the faithful and for the catechumens, Jerusalem is more than a mere reminder of these holy events; for the faithful it is a reality, it is the Catholic Church of which they are members; for the catechumens it is the holy Church which soon shall receive them through baptism. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord." "Rejoice with joy . . . and be filled from the breasts of your consolation" (Introit). The Church unlocks

the fountains of grace and happiness. How exalted the new Jerusalem stands before us! In the old Jerusalem the Synagogue is only a shadow of the law of dread and servitude. In the new Jerusalem, the Church of the New Dispensation, we become the children of God; we are brothers and sisters of the Son of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; we eat at the family table of our mother, the new Jerusalem (Epistle). What happiness to be incorporated in this new Jerusalem! Thus we read with joy the theme of this Sunday. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord" (Introit). "He shall not be moved forever that dwelleth in Jerusalem" (Tract).

2. Christ now lives and works in the Jerusalem of the Church. The Church is also the mount which Christ ascends in today's Gospel. Many people accompany Him, following Him "up into a mountain," far away from the bustle of the world, far from the wild disorder of town and city. But how shall this multitude be fed? They have followed Him into the desert and up the mountain, renouncing the world and its pleasures (through baptism), and they now receive from Christ's own hands a new bread that contains all sweetness. He gives them bread and fish—the Eucharist. On the mount of the altars of the Catholic Church that bread is prepared for the multitude. "Praise the Lord for He is good; sing ye to His name, for He is sweet; whatsoever He pleased, He hath done in heaven and in earth" (Offertory).

3. Now He comes in person into our midst. Today we are of the multitude which followed the Lord, as the Gospel tells us. We desire to be with Him. What we once vowed in holy baptism—"I do renounce Satan"—we promise again today in the Mass. We leave the path of sin, the indulgence of our inordinate passions, the joy of the world. Together with our Savior we enter upon our lifelong lenten journey and withdraw from the world of pleasure into the desert of mortification. We have Christ; that is enough for us. We will keep Him, listen to Him; we will fill ourselves with His spirit. We shall live a new life,

an inspired life, a life dedicated to God. This life in union with Christ we undertook when we were baptized, and we renew our promise again in the Mass today. To offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with Christ means to die to the world and to live with Christ. "For in that He [Christ] died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:10 f.). When we have entered into the consecration, when we have made a step forward in the work of our inner "transubstantiation," we become capable of fruitful participation in the sacrificial meal of Holy Communion. Oh, the happiness produced by a worthy Communion! One must have experienced it to understand this happiness that can be had only in the Jerusalem of our Holy Mother the Church. There alone Christ gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. "Rejoice with joy you that have been in sorrow, that you may exult and be filled from the breasts of your consolation" (Introit).

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jerusalem, rejoice!

1. Laetare Sunday. Today is the Sunday of joy which has been placed in the middle of the austere season of Lent. We are on our way through the desert. In fasting and prayer we have given ourselves to penance. We have been longing for release from our sins, from the tyranny of our senses, from the tedium of our life. We long to renew our spirit with Holy Mother the Church, and to put on the new man. Today we pause momentarily to look ahead toward our destination. A few weeks ago we set out for Jerusalem, the City of God, the city into which, once our work is over, we shall enter. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord" (Gradual).

2. "It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman [Agar] and the other by a free woman [Sara]. . . .

Which things are said by an allegory. For these are the two testaments. The one [the Old Testament] from Mount Sinai, engendering unto bondage. . . . But that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother" (Epistle). O Jerusalem, holy city of Israel, within whose walls lies the temple of God! To Jerusalem the pilgrim of Israel brought his offerings to thank God, to atone, to entreat, and to sit at the same table of sacrifice with the Lord. Because of this intimate union with the living God, the Holy City was called the bride of the Most High. He guarded and protected her with His special love. In Jerusalem the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the promised Messias, was to be erected. From Him salvation was to come to men. Truly the prophet had good reason to cry: "Rejoice, O Jerusalem." But this bride of Christ, this favorite of God, proved unfaithful. The Lord, the bridegroom, came. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). She became the harlot; the slave woman; she became a captive of the Pharisees, a puppet in the hands of the politicians and scribes. She scoffed at those who loved God, and she crucified her bridegroom and Savior. "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27:25). To this unfaithful city is addressed the words: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the sons of the free woman" (Gal. 4:30). In place of the faithless Jerusalem, Christ raised up a new Jerusalem.

"But that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother" (Epistle). The Church is His body, His visible form, His spouse whom He loves. The Church is she for whom He "delivered Himself up that He might sanctify it; . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:25 ff.). The Church is "a chosen generation, . . . a holy nation, a purchased people, . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God, . . . who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9 f.). "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord."

We shall go into the house built on faith, built on one Lord and one God. There is a firm union between the foundation and all the stones that go to make the walls of this structure, between Christ and us. We form one unit, one family, having one faith and one sacrifice, all receiving the same holy sacraments. To this Church will come the nations from the four corners of the earth. They will enjoy a unity of life with her; they will receive a rich share of her fullness of grace and truth. Each year will see the spread of her dominion.

The rocks which are taken from the quarry of the human race are shaped by baptism so that they may be used to build the structure of the Church on the cornerstone which is Christ. Having been baptized, the soul becomes a living rock. Thus we become "fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God" (Eph. 2:19). In this house there is peace and abundance (Gradual). The Lord has deposited in His Church the fullness of His goods, His truth, His grace, and His life. He gives to all who are living in that house the bread of the Eucharist that they may be filled. To this holy repast come the people of God (Communion). Let us rejoice, O Jerusalem, O holy Church; come together all you that love the Church. "Rejoice with joy, you that have been in sorrow, that you may exult and be filled from the breasts of your consolation," the Church (Introit).

3. "Jerusalem, . . . thither did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to praise Thy name, O Lord" (Communion). The Jerusalem of the Church points today to the Jerusalem in heaven. There we shall find the fulfillment of all our desires. There we shall find peace and abundance of happiness (Gradual). Banished will be every anxiety, everlasting our union with the highest good, uninterrupted our beatific vision. From God and Christ glory will be communicated to the blessed, who shall be transfigured by the divine splendor flowing through them and shall be satiated with His delights. "We shall go into the house of the Lord."

With St. Paul we cry out to the Lord of Majesty that He may enlighten the eyes of our heart that we may see to what exalted

things we are called. We beg to understand how rich is the inheritance assigned to the saints, and how irresistible is the power of Him who called us to the Church. We were dead by reason of our sins and wallowing in our fleshly lusts. We were doing whatever our flesh and our evil hearts dictated, and were by nature children of wrath. But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love for us, has called us back to life with Christ and restored to us our right to heaven by calling us to membership in the Church (Eph. 1:17; 2:1 ff.). How grateful we should be! How precious the Church should be to us. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord."

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we who rightly suffer for our deeds, may be relieved by Thy consoling grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

"Destroy this temple"

1. Today the story of our Lord's suffering for the first time appears prominently in the liturgy. We are now called upon to share His suffering and death. "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matt. 20:22.) Yes, we feel that we can drink the chalice of Christ, and we desire most earnestly to do so. For this reason we assemble in the church of the Four Crowned Martyrs for Mass today. Christ, the great martyr, has drawn us here. We wish to share His martyrdom, His humiliation, His rejection, His crucifixion, that we may share also His resurrection.

2. Jesus is the true Solomon. The Epistle tells us of the two mothers who came to Solomon for justice. They were both living in the same house. Each of them gave birth to a child, but one of these women overlaid her child in her sleep. She took the dead child and placed it in the arms of the other woman while she slept. She then claimed the living child as her own. In the morning the mother of the living child notices that the

infant in her arms is not her own. Both women come now to Solomon that he may judge their dispute. With the wisdom that God had given him, Solomon decides the case and determines who is the mother of the living child, which he returns to its true mother. In this story we find another significant figure of things that were to come. The two women represent the Synagogue and the Church of Christ. The Synagogue, the Old Testament, can no longer save souls after the coming of Christ. It can bring only death and ruin to those who remain attached to it. But the Church can save souls. She snatches them from the grasp of the robber, death. Christ is the judge between the two women. From the cross He assigns to the Church the souls which He has redeemed through His blood. The veil of the temple is rent; the Old Testament has no more to give. "Give the living child to this woman [the Church of the New Testament] and let it not be killed; for she is the mother thereof" (Epistle). Christ not only passes judgment as Solomon does in the Epistle. He also takes His cross upon Him and goes to a painful death in order to return us to our true mother, the Church. By reason of His death He also provides the Church with everything she needs to be a true mother and to lead us to eternal life. "Sing joyfully to God all the earth; come before his presence with exceeding great joy" (Offertory). Through His death on the cross He has given us the Church as our mother, and through her, eternal life.

"And when he had made as it were a scourge of little cords He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen" (Gospel). The Gospel repeats the same idea given us in the Epistle. The Old Testament with its sacrifice is abolished. It no longer has any power to give life to men. Place must be made for a new sacrifice and a new priesthood, and Christ will be both priest and victim. The Jews were indignant at Christ's action. "What sign dost Thou show unto us, seeing Thou dost these things." In giving them His answer, Jesus refers to the temple, the temple of His body. They will destroy this temple by crucifying Him. But He answers them, "in three days I will

raise it up again," that is to say, He will rise from the dead. This is the sign the Jews had asked for. "When, therefore, He was risen again from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this." The disciples—and we are today's disciples—are thus led step by step by their trust and unshakable faith in the Master to a more perfect understanding of Christ. The disciples are led to the fullness of grace while the Jews because of their unbelief sink deeper and deeper into their blindness. The acceptance of Christ is the point of cleavage for all men, in this world and the next. "This child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many" (Luke 2:34).

3. "Destroy this temple." Jesus proves His mission by His cross; for the first time on Good Friday and daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the living representation of His death and resurrection. He proves His mission by the cross in the history of the Church and in the lives of the saints. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23). "With Christ I am nailed to the cross" (Gal. 2:19). This is the unmistakable sign of the true Christian, of the true church, of the true martyrs, in whose church we celebrate the sacred mysteries today. How little we have understood this, how feebly we have practiced it!

"Save me, O God, by Thy name, and in Thy strength deliver me; O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth" (Introit). This is the prayer of the Savior on the Mount of Olives, at the pillar of the scourging, during the way of the cross, and on the cross itself. It is the prayer of the suffering and persecuted Church. Today we unite ourselves and our prayers with those of the suffering Savior.

In the Sacrifice of the Mass we enter into a union with the suffering Christ. We wish to be true Christians; that is, martyrs. We are prepared to give up all things in order to be with Him. We wish to renounce our passions, the world, and all that is evil, that we may be a pure oblation to the Father. We wish to be martyrs to the love of God, and we wish to submit ourselves perfectly to all His desires.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, almighty God, that by keeping the sacred observance with devotion year by year, we may be pleasing to Thee both in body and soul.

Graciously hear our supplications, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and grant the help of Thy protection to those to whom Thou dost give the spirit of prayer. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

"The Lord was appeased"

1. Lawrence, the stationary saint, directs our attention to the great martyr, Christ. "Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication; be attentive to me, and hear me. I am grieved in my exercise; and I am troubled at the voice of the enemy, and at the tribulation of the sinner" (Introit). There He hangs on the cross in an unspeakable agony, the "mediator of God and men" (I Tim. 2:5). His blood cries out for mercy on sinners. "Let Thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people" (Epistle). The Church unites herself with the Lord, praying and offering Himself for His people. "Be appeased," she cries out to heaven, "upon the wickedness of Thy people." Now, in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Lord has been appeased.

2. The Lord is praying for us. Moses, the Epistle continues to inform us, spent forty days on the heights of Sinai. At the foot of the mountain the people who had just received the Ten Commandments amid thunder and lightning, were making themselves an idol. They danced about their idol and thus broke their covenant with Jahve. Descending the mountain, Moses sees what has happened and in his anger he breaks the tables of stone on which the commandments have been engraved. God will destroy this generation. "I see that this people is stiff-necked; let Me alone that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them." God promised Moses that he would make him the father of "a great nation"

if He destroyed this people. But Moses besought God for mercy for his erring people. "Why, O Lord, is Thy indignation enkindled against Thy people. . . . Let Thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people." "And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people" (Epistle).

The liturgy recognizes in Moses a figure of Christ our Lord. We are the sinful people of Israel. By our baptism the Lord led us out of Egypt and snatched us from the slavery of Satan and sin. He received us into His kingdom, and blessed us with the benefits of supernatural life as children of God. But we soon proved unfaithful to the things which Christ had taught us by His word and example. We allowed our hearts to become attached to the vain goods of this life, and we made for ourselves idols, which we adored and to which we offered sacrifice. God became angry with us for this breach of loyalty. Then the Son of God descended from the mountain (from heaven) to plead for His sinful people. He prays to the Father: "Why O Lord, is Thy indignation enkindled against Thy people, whom Thou has brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? . . . Let Thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people." Thus He prayed in the first moment of His incarnation when He entered into the world. Thus He prayed without interruption during His earthly life; thus He prayed in the Garden of Olives, at the pillar of the scourging, and as He was being rejected and condemned by the judges of His nation. His prayer continued as He began His painful journey to Calvary; it was not interrupted by His agony on the cross. Now, before the throne of His Father in heaven, He repeats the same prayer unceasingly, "always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). In the silence of the tabernacle He prays continually to His heavenly Father, "Be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people," "Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication; be attentive to me, and hear me" (Introit).

The Lord offers Himself for us. When Jesus entered the

Temple to teach He found Himself faced with a crowd of hostile and critical Jews. "How does this man know letters, having never learned" (John 7:15). A dispute soon arose among the bystanders and finally some of them sought to apprehend him; "and no man laid hands on him because his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30). His time will come when He freely chooses. Six months later He will indeed allow Himself to be apprehended and to be dragged before a prejudiced judge. He will freely submit to examination by the heathen ruler of the land who will condemn Him to a cruel death by crucifixion. But all of this will be freely chosen in order that He may redeem us. "O Lord, let Thy anger cease and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people" (Epistle). Jesus offers Himself up for His people, surrendering His life and His blood in payment for a debt which we could not pay. By His death on the cross He destroys all sin in His blood. "O Lord, let thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of thy people. . . . And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people."

3. With grateful hearts we draw near to the Savior who sacrificed Himself for us. We will accompany Him on His way of suffering, into the Garden of Olives, into the house of the high priest, into the prison in which He was held captive during the night. We follow Him as He is dragged to Pilate, and from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back to Pilate. We suffer with Him when the pagan judge has Him brought forth before the people, who cry out: "Crucify Him." We share His shame when a common murderer is preferred before Him. We follow Him through the cruel scourging, the shameful mockery, and the painful crowning with thorns. We follow in sorrow as He begins His dreadful journey up the mount of Calvary, for we wish to share also in the redemptive act He is about to perform. He is praying and offering Himself up for us. "Be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people. . . . And the Lord was appeased" by the death of His son, our Redeemer and our mediator.

With the same intention of making atonement for our sins and of reconciling us with the Father, He offers Himself up for us daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the mysterious repetition of His passion and death on the cross. By this means also the grace won for us on Calvary is applied to our souls. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass He prays for us: "Let Thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people." "Forgive us our trespasses. . . . And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." Deliver us from impenitence, from inconstancy, and from an evil death.

Jesus is praying for us and offering up His sacrifice for us. This does not mean that there is nothing left for us to do. We must not suppose that we may continue in sin. Having seen in the death of Christ the malice of sin, we must separate ourselves from it and give ourselves up to penance, fasting, and mortification. We must now take part in His sufferings and perform works of expiation for our own sins and for those of our neighbor. We are responsible, not only for our own souls, but also for those of our neighbors. We are, in a sense, co-redeemers and partially responsible for their salvation. We shall perform our share of the work of redemption in so far as we penetrate into the sufferings of our Lord, who prayed and suffered for us. We shall share in His redemptive work in the measure in which we share His spirit.

Inspired by the spirit of Christ, we go forth now to our daily tasks and seek to sanctify them by prayer and sacrifice. We may thus obtain for our brethren in Christ the strength to overcome all their temptations in matters of faith and morals.

PRAYER

May the fasts of the sacred observance, we beseech Thee, O Lord, make us grow in holiness and procure for us the continual help of Thy favor.

Have mercy on Thy people, O Lord, and from the unceasing tribulation under which they labor, grant them relief in Thy mercy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

"I am the light of the world"

1. Today we accompany the catechumens to the Basilica of St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. During the early years of Christianity, the catechumens were on this day subjected to a severe scrutiny to determine whether they could be admitted to baptism. On those who passed the scrutiny successfully, the ceremony of the "opening of the ears" was performed. They were then given the book of the Gospels, the confession of faith, and the Our Father, all of which remind us of our own baptism.

2. "At that time Jesus, passing by, saw a man who was blind from his birth" (Gospel). Born blind! Eternal night! The beauty of the world is entirely hidden from the blind man. How sad an affliction! But Christ happens to pass the blind man. He forms a paste out of spittle and dust, and rubs it into the eyes of the blind man, and commands him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloe." The blind man does as he is told and returns with his vision restored. Spiritually we are all like the man born blind. Original sin has cast the spell of night over us. We are blind and deprived of all supernatural light. But Jesus passed us in the way and sent us to bathe in the pool of the baptismal font, and our spiritual sight was restored to us. A new world was opened to us, just as a new world was opened to the man born blind. The vision that was restored to us was the vision of faith, the vision of truth. In the light of faith we gaze into God's world of thought, and we begin to think the thoughts of God. We now have the "light of life" (John 8:12). We can now understand the important issues of life in the light of God's eternal wisdom. We are now in a position to understand whence we came, why we came, and where we are going. We know now with certainty why we dwell in this world, what we have to do while here, and what will be our destiny when this life is finished. We were blind, but now through baptism we have been made to see.

"I will pour upon you clean water [baptism]; you shall be

cleansed from all your filthiness [sin]. . . . And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit in the midst of you, and I will cause you to walk in My commandments and to keep My judgments and do them. And you shall dwell in the land [heaven] which I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people, and I will be your God" (Epistle). Behold here the new man who has been cured of his blindness through baptism.

3. Jesus heals the man born blind and at once His enemies, the Pharisees, attack Him. They refuse to believe that the man had ever been blind. They call the parents of the blind man and they testify, "Yes, this is our son who was born blind." Again they question the blind man. But he is no longer afraid of them. With a charming simplicity and with complete frankness, and without respect to persons, he tells them with joy and gratitude of the wonderful things that had happened to him. He becomes a confessor of Christ and a teacher of truth, an apostle of Christ. Because he has acknowledged Christ the Jews cast him out of the Synagogue. But Christ accepts him. "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" The blind man asks, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" And Jesus answers, "Thou hast both seen him and it is he that speaketh to thee." The man, falling on his knees, confesses, "Lord, I believe."

"Blessed is the nation [the baptized] whose God is the Lord; the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance. By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of His mouth" (Gradual). And this same God has chosen us for His special inheritance. "O ye nations, bless the Lord our God, . . . who hath set my soul to live, and hath not suffered my feet to be moved" (Offertory).

"The Lord made clay from spittle and anointed my eyes; and I went and I washed, and I saw, and I have believed in God," the Church sings at the Communion of the Mass today. These are the fruits of Holy Communion: "I saw and I have believed." May this fruit be realized in us also.

PRAYER

O God, who dost vouchsafe to the just the reward of their merits, and to sinners pardon through fasting, have mercy upon Thy suppliant people that the confession of our guilt may have power to obtain for us forgiveness for our misdeeds.

May the ears of Thy mercy, O Lord, be opened to the prayers of Thy suppliants, and that thou mayest grant their desires to them that petition Thee, make them ask the things that are pleasing to Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

“Young man, I say to thee, arise”

1. It is appropriate that the story of the raising to life of the youth of Naim be told in the station church of St. Martin of Tours, for he also was gifted with the power to restore life to the dead. “Seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened; seek His face evermore” (Introit).

2. As Jesus was passing by the city of Naim with His disciples, they encountered a funeral procession at the gates of the city. A young man was being carried out to his last resting place. This young man had been the hope and the support of his widowed mother, who followed the bier in tears. Christ was moved with pity, and He approached the bier and commanded the dead man, “Young man, I say to thee, arise” (Gospel). The dead man sat up, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Yes, that is the heart of our loving Savior, full of understanding and sympathy. He restores to the sorrowing mother the son she had lost. How good He is! He provides us with joy, help, and happiness. His arrival at the city at the time of the funeral appeared to be mere chance, but it was not mere chance. He came there with the intention of saving this young man and of raising him from the dead.

What the Epistle and the Gospel relate of the past, becomes for the liturgy a reality of the present. For the liturgy the dead child of the Sunamite woman and the young man of Naim are

figures of the souls of men who, through original sin or actual sin, are without the life of grace. Our ill-regulated passions, our sloth concerning the things of God, are carrying us out from our city to bury us with the eternally dead in hell. Our passions, our pride, our avarice, our self-love, the world, the flesh, and the devil, all join in the procession that would lead us to destruction. We are yet young men and should be in the full vigor of life, but these enemies carry us out as one dead. Weeping and sorrowful, our mother, the Church, follows this sad procession. She knows the sad state of these souls, for she gave them life, and they were her hope and support, and she would have led them to eternal life. But now they are dead in sin. Then Christ appears. He beholds her tears, and these tears touch His heart. "Weep not." He approaches the dead soul in the sacrament of penance and commands the sinful soul, "I say to thee arise." "I absolve thee from thy sins." The soul lifts itself up, abandons the path of sin, and is given back to its mother. The mother rejoices particularly when these children are restored to her by their Easter confession.

3. This restoration of life is worked by the prayers and tears of the Church. The grace of repentance, the conversion from our evil ways, the forgiveness of our sins, have been obtained for us by the prayers, sacrifices, and works of penance performed by the Church. "She shed tears over each of her children, as if it were her only child. She suffers the most pain when she sees that her children fall victims to death through sin" (St. Ambrose).

The tears and prayers of our Holy Mother the Church have not been in vain. We rely upon the prayers of the Church when we intercede for those of our friends who have wandered from the straight and narrow path. Sin results in estrangement from God and induces death. The mouth is dead, for it is no longer open to prayer and conversation with God; the eyes are dead, for they no longer behold God, but only creatures; the hands are dead, for they work no longer for God, but against Him; the feet are dead, for they carry us not to God, but down the

path of destruction. There is only one who can help us, only one who can restore life to our members. In the fullness of His divinity He assumes human nature and becomes like unto us in all things except sin (Heb. 4:15). He is a second Eliseus, He lays His mouth upon our mouth, His eyes upon our eyes, His hands and feet upon our hands and feet. He who is the origin of all life puts on the appearance of death; He sanctifies the dead soul; He opens the silent lips so that they may praise God; He restores light to the failing eyes so that they may behold the glory of God; He reactivates the stiffened hands so that they may be lifted to defend the honor of God, and the feet, that they may tread the way of salvation. The soul thus restored cries out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Ps. 102:1). Jesus is for us the prophet Eliseus. How grateful we should be for our restoration to the life of grace!

The Church weeps for the sinner. With this holy mother we, too, grieve for our wayward brothers and sisters who through sin have died and are being carried slowly to their ruin. We share the anguish of the sorrowing mother, and join her in her impetuous prayer for their salvation. We, too, can share the redemptive work of the new Eliseus. We can take upon ourselves the burden of the sins, the errors, the blindness, and the perversity of our neighbors. With the prophet Eliseus we seek the dead man in his chambers and lay our eyes on his eyes, our mouth on his mouth, our arms on his arms, in heartfelt love and sympathy. We must not avoid him or despise him, for we see in him a soul sick unto death. We can offer for him our prayers, our sacrifices, our works of penance, with the intention of bringing him to salvation. We thus become all things to all men. "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. 33:11).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that chastened by the fasts of our devotion, the devotion itself may also gladden us so

that, with our earthly affections subdued, we may the more easily lay hold on heavenly things.

O God, the Creator and Ruler of Thy people, drive away the sins which beset them, that being pleasing unto Thee, they may be secure under Thy protection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

"I am the resurrection and the life"

1. Today in a festive spirit we assemble for Mass at the church of St. Eusebius. We are among the tombs where the ancient Romans used to bury their dead. In our midst is Christ, who is the Author of life, and who raises the dead to life. We offer Him our congratulations in the Introit of the Mass. "The meditation of my heart is always in Thy sight, O Lord, my helper and my Redeemer." Thou hast raised me from the death of sin, and on the last day Thou wilt raise me again to eternal life. "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of Thy hands," the miracles of the raising of the dead to life (Introit).

2. The raising of Lazarus to life was one of the most important miracles Christ performed during His lifetime. We are astonished at it. But St. Augustine teaches us:

If we are astonished at Him who worked this miracle, still we should rather rejoice than be amazed. He who brought the dead man back to life is the same who created him, the Son of the Father. What miracle is that if one should be restored to life by Him through whom so many daily are called into life? If He wished, could He not in an instant raise all the dead? But He has reserved this event for the end of the world. The hour will come in which all shall hear His voice, as the dead Lazarus once heard it, and will come forth from their graves (John 5:28). Through the miracle performed for Lazarus we should also be prepared for the great mystery of the general resurrection, so that we will rise to life and not to death.

Jesus is the one who raises the dead to life. What He does for Lazarus, He does for all of us spiritually in baptism and in

the sacrament of penance. In Holy Communion He plants in our bodies the germ of a future resurrection so that the poor body may also live eternally and enjoy the happiness of heaven. "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live" (John 11:25).

Jesus restores life to those who are spiritually dead. When Jesus saw the sister of Lazarus weeping, He was deeply moved and said, "Where have you laid him? They say to Him: Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said: Behold how He loved him" (Gospel). Why did the Lord weep, and why was He troubled? The liturgy shows us the meaning of this figure, through the mouth of St. Augustine:

The dead man, who lay in the tomb already four days, is a figure of the sinner, whom the burden of sins weighs down. Thus he gives an indication how you, too, should be troubled when a grievous sin weighs you down. If you acknowledge your guilt, if you say: I have done this evil thing, and God has had mercy on me; I transgressed, and God has spared me; I am baptized, and yet have fallen again into sin; where should I begin? Where should I go? Where can I flee? If you confess contritely, then the Savior weeps with you in sympathy.

"Where have you laid him?" He knows all things. Why then, does He ask? He asks in order to teach us that, when we have sinned, we are strangers. Sin has so disfigured us that He no longer recognizes us. We are cast off as a rotting, decaying corpse. "Come and see." He sees the misery of our sins and weeps over us. "Behold how He loved him." Then Christ draws near to the sinner with the sacrament of baptism, or with the sacrament of penance, and commands with authority, "Come forth." Break with death; leave behind all sin and corruption. "Come forth" to live the life of grace, the life of a child of God. Thus a resurrection from the dead occurs each time the sacrament of baptism or the sacrament of penance is administered.

3. Today we rejoice over the restoration of the dead; that is,

over the precious graces of baptism and penance. It is a time of earnest petition for the catechumens and for the many unfortunate sinners who are dead in their sins. May they receive the grace to come forth from the darkness of sin, and henceforth to walk steadfastly in the light of faith. Our prayers and sacrifices can obtain this grace for them.

This is also a day for firm resolutions. "Let us also go that we may die with Him," we resolve today with the apostle Thomas (Gospel). We shall have life if we die with Him. If we would achieve union with Christ, if we wish to devote ourselves entirely to the Father, then we must die to sin. The true Christian life and also the daily Mass demand that we die to sin. "So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). Our program for Lent also demands that we die to sin.

PRAYER

O God, who dost renew the world with ineffable sacraments, grant, we beseech Thee, that Thy Church may profit by Thy eternal institutions and not be lacking in temporal assistance.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that being conscious of our own infirmity and confiding in Thy power, we may ever rejoice under Thy tender care. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

"Receive ye the light"

1. This is a day of holy exultation. The catechumens have assembled in the sanctuary of the holy bishop St. Nicholas. Here they are to undergo their examination before baptism. After this examination they hear the invitation: "All you that thirst, come to the waters [of baptism]. . . . Come and drink with joy" (Introit). What will they obtain in baptism, in Christianity, in the Church?

2. In the sacrament they will find the Lord, the shepherd of their soul. "Thus saith the Lord [the Messias, the Christ]: . . . In the day of salvation I have helped thee, and I have preserved

thee and given thee to be a covenant of the people, that thou mightest raise up the earth, and possess the inheritances that were destroyed" (Epistle). The Father has delivered humanity, particularly the heathen world, to us and to His incarnate Son, not only that He may judge the world, but that He may also save it (John 3:16). The Savior thus sent by God calls all men to salvation. "Say to them that are bound: Come forth; and to them that are in darkness: Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be every plain. They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them; for He shall give them drink. . . . Behold these shall come from afar, and behold these from the north and from the sea, and these from the south country. . . . Because the Lord hath comforted His people and will have mercy on His poor ones" (Epistle). He has comforted us and has had mercy on us through the grace we received in baptism and which is now revived during Lent. May we make the proper use of these graces! Have we not good reason for rejoicing?

"I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Gospel). How wretched those who have not received the grace of baptism. Unfortunate, too, are those who having received baptism, relapse into sin and separate themselves from Christ, the light. Like the Jews of today's Gospel, they walk in the darkness of night, having turned away from the light. More and more each day the light was withdrawn from them. In a few days they will demand in their blindness the condemnation of their Savior from a heathen judge. They will reject the very one for whom their forefathers longed so eagerly, and whom their prophets had predicted so confidently. He in whom all their religious observance had been centered in the temple will be publicly ridiculed in the presence of a heathen judge.

When Pilate asks them whether he should release Jesus or Barabbas they will scream, "Away with him; and give us Barabbas." When he asks them what is to be done with the "king of the Jews" they will cry out, "crucify him, his blood be upon us and upon our children." "That which Israel sought [salva-

tion] he hath not obtained; but the election hath obtained it; and the rest have been blinded, as it is written: God hath given them the spirit of insensibility; eyes that they should not see; ears that they should not hear until this present day" (Rom. 11:7).

Could anything be more tragic than for a nation or an individual to be overtaken by spiritual blindness? How many there are today who are spiritually blind! How thankful we should be that we have learned to know Christ. How zealous we should be in leading others to Him by walking in His light ourselves. We indeed are responsible for our neighbor.

3. "I am the light of the world." Israel rejected this light. It was given to us who have been selected from among the Gentiles. Through holy baptism and through the Church, God "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins; Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:13 ff.). We have been incorporated into Him, and we live by Him. "I am the light of the world."

Do we truly walk in the light? Merely being baptized is not enough. We must live according to our baptism. An unmistakable sign of whether we are walking in the light is our earnest practice of fraternal charity. "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is no scandal in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness because the darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John 2:9 ff.).

PRAYER

Vouchsafe, O Lord, by Thy grace to make fruitful the fervor of our devotion; for the fasts we have undertaken shall profit us only if they be pleasing to Thy goodness.

O God, who dost choose rather to have pity on them that hope in Thee than to be angry, grant that we may duly lament the evils we have done, that we may deserve to find the favor of Thy consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Passiontide

PASSIONTIDE

Introduction

Today we enter a new phase of the season of Lent. From Septuagesima until now we have striven to purify our own lives. The liturgy has directed us toward this end during the last seven weeks. By curbing our passions, disciplining our senses, and through mortification, fasting, prayer and almsgiving, we have prepared ourselves for what lies ahead of us. "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God," that is, they shall see the holiness and the majesty of God that will be displayed before our eyes during the two weeks of Passiontide.

From today on we shall be principally occupied with the death and resurrection of the Lord. It is essential to our spiritual progress that we grow in the understanding of the mystery of the sufferings and death of Christ. In this way we shall share in the precious graces which this holy season is meant to impart.

During Passiontide the cross occupies the central place in the liturgy. We must learn to love, understand, and reverence the cross, for it is the source of our salvation. The tree of Paradise brought forth death, but the tree of the cross gives life. By means of the tree in Paradise, Satan overcame men; by means of the cross Christ overcame Satan (Preface of the Holy Cross). In understanding and loving the cross of Christ, we must learn also to understand and treasure our own cross. "If any man

will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it" (Matt. 16:24 f.).

"Behold, in the cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying; and there is no other way to life and to true interior peace but the way of the holy cross and daily mortification. The more one dies to self, the more one lives to God. If indeed there had been anything better and more beneficial to man's salvation than suffering, Christ would certainly have shown it by word and example."¹

The Liturgy of Passion Sunday

Today we see Christ beginning His sacrificial mission. With loving understanding the Church presses close to Him that she may accompany Him through the ordeal of His passion and death. She dons her mourning apparel; she hides the beauty of her ornate crosses and images, and even omits the *Gloria Patri* from the Mass. In the breviary the series of readings taken from the books of Moses are interrupted to make place for the writings of Jeremias, who gives us a vivid picture of the sufferings of Christ. Holy Mother the Church cries out repeatedly to the Father, "From the mouth of the lion deliver me, O Lord." She lives and shares intimately the suffering of her beloved Savior. This spirit must fill our heart during Passiontide.

1. The Introit shows us the high priest, Christ, at the foot of Calvary. We join Him as He cries out in anguish: "Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy" and that is trying now to destroy me. We who are faithful are not mere spectators, for we know that we are one with Him. We unite ourselves with Him and with the whole Church and make His distress and prayer our own. The result is the mighty plea for mercy which surges up to heaven through the somber strain of the Kyrie and the Collect.

¹*Imitation of Christ*, II, chap. 12.

2. Christ now turns His steps toward the altar of sacrifice. He does not walk now as the high priest of the Old Law, who brought only the blood of animals into the holy of holies, but He goes clothed in His own priestly robes, and offers His own blood to the last drop. He offers now, not an animal as a victim, but Himself as the unspotted and holy victim; He reconciles man with God and establishes a new race, a holy Church. The way is not an easy way, but a way of pain and sorrow. As we accompany Christ, we pray with Him the stirring words of the Gradual and the Tract: "Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies. . . . Often they have fought against me from my youth." In the Gospel we see His enemies surrounding Him, reviling Him and ridiculing Him. They take up stones to cast at Him; but "Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple." The incident is full of meaning. He forsakes the Synagogue, which despised and rejected His person and His doctrine, and turns to the Church of the New Law. This new Church gladly hears His word and shares His life. "If any man keep My word, he shall not see death forever" (Gospel). We are a holy Church, and we keep His word. We express our determination to do this in the Credo of the Mass. We believe and we will live as we believe. "I shall live and keep Thy words" (Offertory).

3. Christ approaches our altar to renew His redeeming sacrifice in an unbloody and mysterious manner. Spiritually and mysteriously we follow Him and take part in this redeeming act. With thankful hearts we await the coming of our pure, holy, and unspotted victim. We offer it to God with our thanks, our adoration and petitions, and as a satisfaction for our sins. But we do more. We do not allow Christ to offer Himself alone. We enter with Christ into the holy of holies to offer our own blood before the face of the Father. As the substance of the bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ, so we, too, are made one with Christ. We put off the old man and put on the new man; we think new thoughts, we strive for a new goal, we live a new life. We have been lifted up and out of the world, and now we belong to God. We have been crucified with Christ, and now we are dead to sin and evil; we have been

made an offering with Christ, and now belong to God (Rom. 6:11). It was for this purpose that the heavenly Father gave us His own Son in Holy Communion. By His strength we shall be able to accomplish the great work to which our sharing in this Holy Sacrifice binds us.

PASSION SUNDAY

The High Priest

1. "Judge me O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy. Deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man; for Thou art my God and my strength" (Introit). "Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies. . . . Often have they fought against me from my youth. . . . The wicked have wrought upon my back. They have lengthened their iniquities; the Lord who is just will cut the necks of sinners" (Gradual, Tract). Thus the Church prays from the depths of her heart, feeling the anxiety and suffering of her bridegroom.

2. "Brethren: Christ being come an high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation; neither by the blood of goats or of calves [as the high priest of the Old Law], but by His own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption" on the cross (Epistle). The animal sacrifices of the Old Law could not work justification; but "the blood of Christ . . . shall cleanse our conscience from dead works [the works of sin] to serve the living God. And therefore He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of His death, for the redemption of those transgressions which were under the former Testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Epistle). The high priest of the Old Law took the blood of animals into the holy of holies of the temple at Jerusalem; he himself suffered no harm through the offering of the sacrifice. Not so with Christ. He offers His own blood to the last drop. He endures shame and pain, indescribable

humiliation and torture; He suffers in the garden, at the pillar of the scourging, on the way to Calvary, and on the cross. He took upon Himself this suffering to purchase for us freedom from sin and an eternal inheritance.

“They took up stones therefore to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the Temple” (Gospel). The Jews were unable to seize Him, for He was more powerful than they. They were burning with hatred, and they misconstrued His words; yet He assures them, “I do know [the Father] and do keep His word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day; he saw it and was glad.” This assertion drives the Jews to distraction. “Thou art not yet fifty years old; and hast Thou seen Abraham?” He answers them: “Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am.” At this point they took up stones to cast at Him. But His time is not yet come, and they cannot injure Him. He quietly leaves the Temple, for they will apprehend Him, judge Him, and put Him to death only when He has determined to permit it, for He is to undertake His passion and death freely. “He was offered up because it was His own will” (Isa. 53:7). His power is supreme, and He knows the desires and the intentions of His enemies. His knowledge is infinite, and He knows all the details of His coming passion. He knows that by submitting to the defeat of the cross He will be victorious. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Christ faces His passion as a conqueror.

3. The passion and death of our Lord on the cross is not merely a human sacrifice, but a manifestation of the divinity through the sacrifice of the crucified body of the Savior. His death is not marked by groaning, hatred, or self-pity; there is only the quiet and peaceful assurance of His victory over the blindness, weakness, and passion of men. The heart of the Savior overflows with love. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The divinity achieves victory through the death of the God-man. “Indeed this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

"By His own blood," out of the depths of His love, He redeemed us. Today the Church veils the cross. Is it perhaps because we are not worthy to see it? Is it possible that we are His enemies, who wish to stone Him in return for His love? For our salvation He undertook the bloody ordeal in the Garden of Olives, the cruel scourging at the pillar, the ignominious crowning with thorns, and the death on the cross. Yet for the most part we have remained cold and indifferent. What do we do for the salvation of souls? It is true that we pray for one another, offer a few words of comfort, and do each other slight favors; but we do little more. Christ was more generous. He endured the crowning of thorns and dragged the heavy cross to Calvary. We pamper our bodies as if they were our last end. We prefer to have our heads crowned with laurels and roses. We are impatient and consider ourselves unfortunate whenever we are called on to carry a mere splinter of the cross of Christ. Are we one in spirit with Him?

Now, during Passiontide, we must begin to love and treasure pain and suffering. In the cross, in suffering, in our crucifixion with Christ, we shall find salvation. For Him and with Him we should bear all the slight injustices committed against us. For Him we should suffer freely and willingly the unpleasant and disagreeable things that occur to us. But our faith is weak. We flee from the cross instead of holding it dear, instead of loving it and welcoming it as our Savior did.

What St. Paul says of many Christians of his day is equally true of many in our time: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18 f.).

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, almighty God, mercifully look upon Thy family, that by Thy bounty it may be governed in body, and by Thy protection be guarded in mind. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

"It is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee,

O Holy Lord, Father Almighty and everlasting God. Who didst set the salvation of mankind upon the tree of the cross, so that whence came death, thence also life might rise again, and that he who overcame by the tree [Satan in the Garden of Eden] might also be overcome on the tree, through Christ our Lord" (Preface of the Holy Cross).

MONDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Crucified with Christ

1. Christ issues an urgent invitation today to become sharers of His passion in order that what is "wanting of the sufferings of Christ, [may be filled up] in my flesh" (Col. 1:24). Hence the liturgy takes us today to the holy martyr Chrysogonus, after whose example we should undertake to suffer with Christ.

2. "The rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). Those unfortunate rich are pictured in the Gospel today. They have heard of Christ, they have heard many things of Him, they have shown an interest in Him; but they find that they have no need for Him. He has nothing to give them, for they are sufficient in themselves and have all that they desire. They live happily without Him. He may even be a disturbance in their lives, a reproach, a thorn in the side, pricking their vanity and their pride. But eventually they find that one cannot ignore Christ nor take a neutral stand with regard to Him. Having made this discovery, most of the rich hate Christ. Today the rich, the rulers, the high priests, send out their minions to arrest Christ. Christ speaks to them thus: "Yet a little while I am with you; and then I go to Him that sent Me. You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me. And where I am, thither you cannot come" (Gospel). Such is the terrifying judgment on the wicked. They will have need of Him; in time of trouble they will seek Him; but they shall not find Him. They will be separated from Him forever, for, "Where I am, thither you cannot come." "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). That is a fundamental law of the Christian order of grace.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things." The Lord

turns from the self-sufficient Jews to the pagans. Even the inhabitants of Ninive are called (Epistle). Jonas the prophet came to them and preached penance. "Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed. And the men of Ninive believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. And the word came to the king of Ninive, and he rose up out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." He commanded that men and beasts should fast and "be covered with sackcloth, and cry to the Lord with all their strength."

The heathens thirsted for God. They believed the foreigner who called upon them to do penance and followed his advice. "And God had mercy on His people." This is a great symbol. The heathen people of Ninive, and those who hungered for God, did penance. So must we do penance. But we must not confine our penance to meditation on the passion of Christ. We must not limit ourselves to prayers and protestations of sorrow, but we must perform practical works of penance such as improving in obedience, in patience, in suffering, and in mortification. All this is implied by today's liturgy. We must share in the passion of Christ and that means sharing in His suffering. We must share in it willingly and not merely because there is no alternative, or because we are afraid of losing our souls. The Lord is seeking those who will look upon the cross and upon sharing it with Him, as a grace and a privilege. He is seeking courageous and valient martyrs such as Saint Chrysogonus.

3. Today in the sanctuary of St. Chrysogonus we begin the journey down the sorrowful path that will make us sharers of the passion of Christ. We are to help Him carry His cross and we shall be with Him all the day long, afflicted and trodden under foot (Introit). We shall persevere in this path and adhere to Christ with all our hearts, that we may be scourged with Him, unjustly accused and condemned with Him, and classed with criminals. With Him we shall hear the cruel mob crying out for our crucifixion. Daily in the Mass the

Christian follows the path trodden by His savior and is nailed to the cross with Him. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for man hath trodden me under foot; all the day long he hath afflicted me, fighting against me" (Introit). Thus Jesus prayed during His passion; thus the Church prays, and we pray with her. The Lord gives us the strength to drink the chalice of suffering. "The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory" (Communion).

"Jesus has many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but very few are they who carry His cross with Him. He has many who long for consolation, but few who long for suffering. All wish to rejoice with Him hereafter, but only a few wish to suffer something with Him. Many follow Him in the breaking of bread, but only a few share the drinking of His chalice. Many praise His wonderful deeds, but very few follow Him in the degradation of His cross."¹

Indeed there are so many Christians who are so engrossed in the things of this world that they no longer treasure what Christ and His Church have to offer, and no longer seem to need prayer, the Holy Sacrifice, and the sacraments. "The rich He hath sent empty away." With good reason did Pope Pius XII complain of the lassitude of the rich.

PRAYER

Sanctify our fasts, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and mercifully grant us the forgiveness of our sins.

Give Thy people, we beseech Thee, O Lord, health of soul and body, that by persevering in good works we may ever deserve to be defended by Thy protection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Daniel in the lion's den

1. The divine services today are held in the sanctuary of the martyr St. Cyriacus. He brought help and comfort to the Daniel of the New Testament, Christ, held captive in His

¹ *Imitation of Christ*, II, chap. 11.

members. He brought help and food to the prisoners of Christ, just as the prophet Habacuc brought help to Daniel in the lion's den in Babylon.

2. In Daniel the liturgy recognizes Christ, surrounded on all sides by unbelief, ridicule, and by the unfaithfulness of His brethren in Galilee, who go to Jerusalem earnestly seeking to put Him to death. Some of them say that He is a good man, but others say that He is a seducer of the people (Gospel). After a few days they will call upon false witnesses and drag Him before Annas and Caiphas; they will hand Him over to the pagan judge, Pilate, and seek His condemnation. They will help stir up the mob to demand His death. He is like Daniel among the lions. They are not satisfied merely with destroying Him; they must have Him put to death on the cross to satisfy their thirst for revenge. They will stand under His cross and in their hatred will deride and torment Him even in His disgrace and agony. They will shake their heads and say, "Vah, Thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thy own self. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. . . . He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him" (Matt. 27:40 ff.). He is like the innocent Daniel among the lions. He dies on the cross, and His body is laid in the tomb. Like lions guarding their prey, His enemies seal the tomb where they have laid Him.

"Distinguish my cause, O Lord; deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man" (Gradual). The enemies of Daniel believed that they had destroyed him, but he was miraculously saved. So, too, the enemies of Christ thought that they had destroyed Him; but God put them to shame. By His death He lays the foundations of His kingdom. He sends forth His apostles, and soon all nations flock to Him, to love Him and serve Him. Men leave father and mother, give up earthly possessions, earthly love and companionship, and embrace a life of mortification, privation, and labor for the love of souls. They give up all

things to follow Christ. "He humbled Himself; . . . for which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names." All creatures shall bow to His name and acknowledge that Christ has been glorified by God (Phil. 2:8 ff.).

Christ was sealed in the den of the tomb, and although He surrendered to death, God raised Him up to victory. He has triumphed through His cross. "Let them trust in Thee who know Thy name, O Lord; for Thou dost not forsake them that seek Thee. Sing ye to the Lord who dwelleth in Sion [in His Church], for He hath not forgotten the prayers of the poor" (Offertory).

3. Daniel in the lions' den is a figure of Christ persecuted by His enemies. His person, His doctrine, His commandments, His moral precepts, His holy sacraments, His Church with its supreme ruler, His bishops, and His priests are all attacked and slandered. So it must be, for Christ is like Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel is also a figure of the Church, persecuted and hated like its Master. Christ and His Church must suffer persecution and hatred and so enter into glory (Luke 24:26).

"Go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see Thy works which Thou dost," His brethren urge Him. "For there is no man that doth anything in secret, and He Himself seeketh to be known openly. . . . Manifest Thyself to the world" (Gospel). Thus is Christ advised by worldly men, even His friends and members of His own family, for the world has only ridicule and misunderstanding for Christ and His mission. With divine consideration Jesus answers them, "My time is not yet come; but your time is always at hand." They would have Christ seek a career of earthly honor; but Christ seeks only the path of humiliation. Exaltation and glory are His, but they are deferred to another time. "Lofty is the home; but lowly the way to it. . . . The home is Christ's repose (at the right hand of the Father); the way to it is by suffering" (St. Augustine).

"My time is not yet come." Thus we also speak, the mem-

bers of Christ's mystical body. If the lovers of this world tempt us, we answer, "My time is not yet come." When, then, will our time come? "When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). That indeed will be our time.

We shall therefore gladly follow Christ in His humiliation. His time came at Easter. Our time will also come in the blessed Easter of our eternal glorification. "Let them trust in Thee who know Thy name, O Lord; for Thou dost not forsake them that seek Thee" (Offertory).

PRAYER

May our fasts be acceptable to Thee, O Lord; may they atone for our sins and render us worthy of Thy grace; and may they lead us to eternal remedies.

Grant us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, persevering service in Thy will, that in our time the people that obey Thee may increase both in merit and number. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Christ's lambs

1. Today with the holy pope and martyr, St. Marcellus, we take part in the *scrutinium*, the examination of the catechumens. They are to be examined regarding the commandments of God, which fourteen days ago they were given to learn. This is a day of examination for us also. We must inquire of ourselves how we have kept the commandments which we vowed to keep at the time of our baptism.

2. "My sheep hear My voice, . . . and they follow Me" (Gospel). Christ is the shepherd; the Church is the flock. She listens to His voice, and for two thousand years she has conformed herself to His wishes. He commanded her, "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father" (Matt. 28:19). The Church has conscientiously carried out this command of the Lord. "This is My body. . . . This is the chalice of My blood. . . . Do this in commemora-

tion of Me." This commission she fulfills faithfully in the daily celebration of the holy mystery of the Eucharist. She receives His word, His teachings and admonitions, from the lips of His apostles through the Gospels. She accepts them in humble faith and obedience.

"My sheep hear My voice." Through baptism we become members of the flock of Christ, and as members of His flock we listen to His voice and follow Him. We follow Him in His commandments, in His love of poverty, humiliation, and suffering, and in His love of the cross. We should examine ourselves in all sincerity to see if we have listened to His voice in all things. We ask ourselves if we have been faithful to His will and His commandments, or whether we have been listening rather to the voice of the world and arranging our life according to its spirit, its principles, and its allurements. "My sheep hear My voice, . . . and they follow Me."

"And I know them." He is concerned about all His sheep, about all those who are baptized. He cares for them that He may not lose one of them, but that they may all have eternal life. "No man shall pluck them out of My hand" (Gospel). Christ's sheep are so dear to Him because they have cost Him so dearly. He won them by much toil, by terrible suffering, by immeasurable sacrifices. He sacrificed His life in order to win for them the grace of baptism. "I give them life everlasting" (Gospel). "I know them"; I love them. I give them My merits, My satisfactions, My blood, My life. "My deliverer from the angry nations, Thou wilt lift me up above them that rise up against me. . . . I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength; the Lord is my firmament, and my refuge, and my deliverer" (Introit). "I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast upheld me, and hast not made my enemies to rejoice over me" (Gradual).

3. Today is a day of earnest self-examination. "My sheep hear My voice." Do we listen to His voice? Are we numbered among His sheep?

Today the Epistle is applied to the catechumens and to us: "I am the Lord. . . . Thou shalt not calumniate thy neigh-

bor, nor oppress him by violence. . . . Respect not the person of the poor [to treat him unjustly], nor honor the countenance of the mighty; but judge thy neighbor according to justice. Thou shalt not be a detractor nor a whisperer among the people. . . . Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; but reprove him openly, lest thou incur sin through him. . . . Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself. I am the Lord. Keep ye My laws; for I am the Lord your God."

This is a day of thanksgiving. Christ knows us and gives us eternal life through the ministration of the sacraments of the Church. I "will compass Thy altar, . . . that I may . . . tell of all Thy wondrous works" (Communion).

This is a day of salutary fear in view of what the Gospel relates to us concerning the Jews. They see Christ and hear His words; they behold His miracles, His virtue, His holiness, His freedom from sin; yet they do not believe in Him but turn away from Him. We, too, can abuse the grace that is given us. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). Lord, protect us from the evil of the abuse of grace, from the evil of spiritual blindness, from the spirit of unbelief. Grant that we may always and everywhere listen to Thy voice and follow Thee, our true shepherd.

PRAYER

Enlighten the hearts of Thy faithful by this sanctified fast, O God of mercy, and in Thy kindness turn a pitying ear to the suppliants to whom Thou givest the spirit of devotion.

Give ear unto our supplications, O almighty God, and benignly grant the effect of Thy accustomed mercy to those whom Thou hast allowed to be confident in the hope of Thy good will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF PASSION WEEK

"Thy sins are forgiven thee"

1. On the last Thursday before Holy Thursday, the day of the reconciliation of penitents, we celebrate Mass in the church

of the holy bishop and martyr, St. Apollinaris. Today we are the sinner who sheds tears and confesses her sins in penance and contrition at the feet of the Savior.

2. "At that time one of the Pharisees desired Jesus to eat with him; and He went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner," learned that Jesus was in the house of Simon. She came to Christ, for her conscience was giving her no rest. She was not invited to this banquet; but she came in and in the sight of all present she cast herself down and washed Christ's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair; she then kissed His feet and anointed them with oil. Simon, the host, looked upon this scene with suspicion and said to himself: "This man, if He were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him; that she is a sinner," a fallen woman (Gospel).

The Lord knew very well the thoughts of His host and spoke a parable: "A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which therefore of the two loveth him most? Simon answering, said: I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said to him: Thou hast judged rightly. . . . Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much; but to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less." Then Christ turned to the sinful woman. "Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . Thy faith hath made thee safe. Go in peace" (Gospel). We, too, are like the sinner at the feet of our Lord. We acknowledge with tears of sorrow and love our many sins, and with the sinner of the Gospel we beg to be forgiven. "Deliver us not up forever, for Thy name's sake, and

abolish not Thy covenant. . . . In a contrite heart and humble spirit let us be accepted" (Epistle).

"Give glory to Thy name, and deal with us according to the multitude of Thy mercy" (Introit). The grace and mercy of the Lord work in the sinner the miracle of conversion. Through the mysterious working of His graces He opens the eyes of the unfortunate woman and allows her to see the baseness and shamefulness of her life. He implants in her heart the thought of changing her life, of seeking pardon, and of doing penance for her past offenses. He gives her the courage to brave the wrath of the Pharisee, and the humility to cast herself down and confess her guilt before all who are present. How graciously and lovingly Christ received her confession of guilt! He offers her no reproach, He uses no harsh words, but sends her away with the assurance, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . Thy faith hath made thee safe. Go in peace." How full of understanding He is! He longs to forgive us and make us happy. "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13), those who admit their guilt and are sorry.

3. Today we are penitent, like the sinful woman of the Gospel. We come with her to the feet of the Lord, in the congregation of the Church, to hear His consoling words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

"Because she hath loved much," Magdalen received pardon. "But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less." Precisely because his love is meager, little is forgiven him. The remission of sin depends on the degree of love. Perfect love, with a contrite heart, is capable of remitting all sins and the temporal punishment due to them, both here and in purgatory.

Magdalen brought with her a box of ointment to anoint the feet of Jesus. Previously she had used this precious ointment only for her own adornment, that she might please men. Today she lays at the feet of Christ that which she had formerly squandered on her body, on vanity, on sin. With perfect sincerity she sets aside her old life of sin. Her perfect conversion and repentance are a model for us also.

“Remember Thy word to Thy servant O Lord.” Thy words “Thy sins are forgiven thee”—“This hath comforted me in my humiliation” (Communion). We should be most grateful for the sacrament of penance.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that the dignity of humanity, impaired by excessive indulgence, may be restored by the earnest practice of healing restraint.

Be merciful, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to Thy people, that rejecting the things which displease Thee, we may rather be filled with the delights of Thy commandments. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF PASSION WEEK

The eve of the Passion

1. Eight days remain before we shall behold the spectacle of the God-man bleeding and dying on the cross. Today Good Friday already casts its shadow over us. We are led to the sanctuary of St. Stephen, the first martyr; today we should live with Christ the martyr.

2. Today the enemies of Christ have decided to put Him to death. The Pharisees have assembled, and they ask of one another, “What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him.” Christ therefore must die. “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not,” the high priest points out. “From that day, therefore, they devised to put Him to death” (Gospel). One week later they will have accomplished their wicked plan. In the Garden of Olives they will apprehend Him; they will produce false witnesses to accuse Him; they will abuse Him with their mockeries; they will drag Him before the tribunal of the Roman governor and demand His death. They will follow Him up to Calvary; they will gloat over His fall, taking a fiendish delight in His agony. They will abuse and mock Him even as He prays for them on

the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Too often we also place ourselves among the enemies of Christ. Is not every sin a rejection of Christ, a mockery of His commandments, and a condemnation of His principles? How often we allow our passions to overcome us and cause us to reject the commandments of Christ! We desert Him and adopt the attitude of the world and of the enemies of Christ. Lord, give me light that in the light of Thy passion I may recognize the malice and shamefulness of my sins and infidelities. Give me the grace of true sorrow for sin, and that I may never again make common cause with Thy enemies.

Christ knew all the plans of His enemies and knew exactly what the future held in store for Him. By the beatific vision, which He always enjoyed, He was fully aware of what awaited Him in His passion. He could foresee the treason of Judas and the denial of Peter; every detail of His suffering and His humiliation was ever present to Him and caused Him sorrow. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted; deliver me and save me out of the hands of my enemies and from them that persecute me. Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon Thee" (Introit). "O Lord, deliver me not over to the will of them that trouble me; for unjust witnesses have risen up against me" (Communion).

Now "Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews; but He went into a country near the desert, unto a city that is called Ephrem" (Gospel). In solitude and seclusion He prepares Himself for the task that lies before Him. The same spirit of self-surrender which characterized His entry into the world, He now brings to the struggle which will force Him out of the World: "Not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42). Everything He does, He does of His own free will and because it is the will of His Father. "I do always the things that please Him" (John 8:29). Second only to His love for the Father is His love for men, whose salvation He most earnestly desires.

After a few days of seclusion He will return to Jerusalem,

and men will rejoice. The hour is approaching when He will allow His enemies to exercise power over Him. But during this period of seclusion we should live with Jesus and share His silence and His prayer. In this solitude we shall find the strength and the light to accompany Him when the day of His suffering arrives.

3. In the church of St. Stephen we join ourselves to Christ to share His condemnation and His death with the entire Church, which is despised and persecuted on earth. With Christ we, too, shall be martyrs; we shall suffer and die. In our own name and in that of the whole Church we pray: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted. Deliver me and save me out of the hands of my enemies and from them that persecute me. Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon Thee. In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped" (Introit).

The more violent the persecution of Christ and His Church, the more faithful must be His friends. With the Epistle we say, "O Lord, all that forsake Thee shall be confounded; they that depart from Thee, shall be written in the earth; because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved. Behold, they say to me [in scorn]: Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come. And I am not troubled, following Thee for my pastor; and I have not desired the day of man, Thou knowest. . . . Let them be confounded that persecute me; and let me not be confounded. Let them be afraid, and let not me be afraid; bring upon them the day of affliction, and with a double destruction destroy them, O Lord our God." A ray from the sun of Easter already breaks through the night of Good Friday.

PRAYER

Mercifully pour Thy grace into our hearts, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that curbing our sinful propensities with voluntary chastisement, we may suffer in this life and not be condemned to eternal punishments.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who seek the favor of Thy protection, being delivered from all evils, may serve Thee with a quiet mind. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF PASSION WEEK

The divine seed

1. In today's Gospel we read about the triumphant entry of our Lord into Jerusalem. "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel." The bringing of Lazarus back to life had set the crowd on fire with enthusiasm for Christ. Even the pagans were flocking to see this wonder-worker. But through this thin veil of triumph, Christ sees the truth. The Jews will forsake Him, and the pagans will accept Him.

2. A group of pagans comes to the apostles Andrew and Philip, and asks to be introduced to Christ. Jesus takes this opportunity to point out the glory that will come to Him through the conversion of the Gentiles. "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." But Christ must win this glorification through His suffering and death. "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Gospel). Jesus is the grain of wheat. He had to die, says St. Augustine, through the infidelity of the Jews, and rise through the faith of the pagans. "The death of the grain of wheat is therefore not its death; it is the development of its life and the creation of a new life. We, too, together with Jesus are the grains of wheat." "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal" (Gospel). We shall obtain the truth of Christ's passion and achieve glorification with Him in the measure that we are as grains of wheat with Him: "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Without apparent death the grain of wheat remains barren and sterile.

"Now [in the passion of the Lord] is the judgment of the

world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (Gospel). From the cross the crucified Savior will draw all things to Himself; He will overcome all opposition and will draw the spirits and hearts of all peoples to Himself. Generation after generation of the pagans will come to the crucified Christ, "unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:23 f.). All hasten to Him who was crucified, and confess, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Apoc. 5:9).

"It is truly meet and just . . . that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God; who didst set the salvation of mankind on the tree of the cross, so that whence came death [into the world], thence also life might rise again, and that he who overcame by the tree, might also be overcome on the tree, through Christ our Lord" (Preface of the Mass). At the foot of the cross spring up unceasing fountains of grace, the sacraments. From the cross we obtain enlightenment and inspiration. From the cross we obtain the grace for victory over evil, the power to perform good, hope for the pardon of our sins, and the assurance of grace in the future. In the cross we find consolation in trouble and suffering. The cross is the key to the kingdom of heaven.

O cross, our only hope, all hail!
 This Passiontide thy balm exhale;
 In loving hearts augment thy grace,
 The sinner's stains entire efface.

3. Through baptism "we are baptized in His death" (Rom. 6:3). Our sufferings, then, are joined to His and have the same meaning His had. They are made to serve the work of redemption. It is true that Christ's work of redemption was completed with the sacrifice of Calvary; but it must be continued

by us in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, and in the suffering undertaken by each man. By our sufferings we "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, . . . for His body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Our suffering has its purpose in the redemption of the world. Because we love men and the souls of men, we love the sufferings of Christ, which wrought their redemption.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." Many of the baptized become sick of soul, broken in spirit, and weak in faith when they are confronted with a cross. These are the weak Christians who refuse to allow themselves to be lifted up on the cross; they have failed to understand what it means to be allowed to "partake of the sufferings of Christ" (I Pet. 4:13). Neither do they understand Paul when he is filled with joy over his tribulations (II Cor. 7:4). For the good Christian, suffering on the cross means that he becomes fruitful, truly great in the eyes of God. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself," is true of us too. Even if life offers us nothing but toil and worry, let us be content. Even if we have showered love and care on others and receive nothing but ingratitude, let us not be overcome; we must lift ourselves above all these disappointments and above the fickleness and faithlessness of men. By accepting our daily crosses we draw down upon ourselves the grace and blessing of God. We must therefore embrace the cross that we may be drawn to Christ, and may in turn draw all things to ourselves. The cross is our salvation.

PRAYER

Let the people consecrated to Thee, we beseech Thee, O Lord, grow unceasingly in the spirit of loving devotion, that being taught by sacred rites, they may abound in more precious gifts as they become more pleasing to Thy majesty.

Let Thy right hand, we beseech Thee, O Lord, guard Thy suppliant people and duly teach those purified that by present consolation they may attain the good things to come. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of Palm Sunday

1. Today we stand at the threshold of Holy Week. In the stirring events of the next few days the most important event of all history will be enacted before us: the suffering and death of Christ. On Palm Sunday, Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem from Mount Olivet. As early as the fourth century the Christians, and particularly the Church at Jerusalem, celebrated the entry of Christ into the Holy City. They gathered on Mount Olivet and marched into the city singing and holding in their hands boughs cut from trees. The Roman Church borrowed this procession from the Church in Jerusalem. The church of St. Sylvester in Rome represented Mount Olivet, and here the Christians gathered on Palm Sunday. In this church the palm branches were blessed. Amidst the jubilant shouts of "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," everyone went to the church of the Holy Redeemer (the basilica of St. John Lateran). When the procession approached the Lateran basilica, the clergy and singers of this church came out to meet the faithful, and then all sang hymns. Afterwards they entered the church and celebrated Mass.

2. Today we perform a similar ceremony. The priest blesses the palms and gives them to us. The procession then begins. We, the faithful, form an escort for the priest, who represents Christ in our midst. We wave our palms and thus confess our belief in Christ, the King of martyrs, our victorious champion. Yes, we wish to be in the entourage of Christ. The palms in our hands indicate that we are prepared to follow Him to death if necessary. In holy joy we shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Let us sing this hymn with joy and with hearts filled with true contrition. "All glory, praise, and honor be to Thee, O King, Christ the Redeemer. . . . Thou art the king of Israel" (Hymn). Would that we had the faith and spirit of the martyrs and holy con-

fessors, our forebears in the faith! Put your heart into every word and every action that is performed in today's liturgy. Let all your actions in this holy ceremony be founded on a firm faith and an unshakable conviction. Let your spirit be like that of the martyrs, joyful and ready for any sacrifice.

After the procession of the palms is finished, the scene changes completely. The divine King, whom we have just greeted with a triumphal hosanna, is now cast into bitter sorrow and agony. He now sees Himself devoured by the jaws of the lion; abandoned by God; in His agony He cries out to His heavenly Father (Introit). He who cannot deceive or be deceived, He who confesses Himself equal to the Father, is now humiliated, trampled in the dust, loaded with the sins of His fellow men. He is about to atone for the pride and the rebellion of men, for which purpose He became obedient unto death, even to the painful and disgraceful death of the cross. But death, disgrace, and humiliation are not ends in themselves; they are only the means of His exaltation, glorification, and glorious resurrection (Epistle). For this reason the suffering soul finds these words of the Gradual so consoling, "Thou hast held me by my right hand; and by Thy will Thou hast conducted me, and with Thy glory Thou hast received me." The Tract speaks of the Easter light which shines in the darkness of tribulation.

And now we are shown the whole passion of the God-man. We see the accusers full of injustice and wickedness, the unjust judges, Barabbas, the murderer who is to be pardoned, and Christ, who is to be condemned. Deeply moved, we sink to our knees at the words, "And Jesus, again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." We see now what man can do. We hold the palms in our hands and proclaim that we are resolved to share the cross of Christ. We resolve to die to everything that is not Christ, and to live for Him alone.

3. At the Offertory we who have resolved to die with Christ unite ourselves to Him. In the bread and wine which we offer, we see a union of ourselves with Christ. We die to the

old man and enter into union with Christ in the Consecration, when He renews His death on the cross in a mysterious and unbloody manner. But without death there can be no life; without the cross there can be no salvation and no Easter.

We are joined with Christ in death when we receive Holy Communion. Then we seal our agreement to die with Christ. He is the victim and He draws us to Himself so that we share in His death and in His divine life. We are offered up with Him; we are crucified with Him, and for that reason we live for Him. With Him we now know only one thing: to do the will of the Father. "Thy will be done" (Communion).

PALM SUNDAY

The King of Martyrs

1. Today in the church of the Holy Redeemer (the Lateran basilica) we gather about our Savior. With our palms and olive branches in our hands we follow Him in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He enters today the great city that is to be the scene of His conflict, His passion, His death, His victory, and His resurrection. We know that we are one with Him, and we must not let Him enter alone.

2. Christ the King of martyrs. Today the Church blesses the palms and olive branches and gives them to us. "The branches of palms signify His triumphs over the prince of death, and the olive branches proclaim in some way the coming of a spiritual unction" (that is, the fullness of God's mercy). Palm and olive branches signify "that our Redeemer, compassionating the miseries of mankind, was about to fight with the prince of death for the life of the whole world, and by dying was to triumph. . . . And we humbly beseech Thee, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, that in Him and through Him, whose members Thou hast pleased to make us, we may become victorious over the empire of death, and may deserve to be partakers of His glorious resurrection" (Prayer for the blessing of palms).

The palm in the hand of the Christian signifies his desire to share the martyrdom of Christ. The Preface of the martyrs which is sung at the blessing of the palms, clearly declares: "Thy creatures serve Thee because they acknowledge Thee as their only Creator and God; and Thy whole creation praises Thee, and Thy saints [the blessed martyrs] bless Thee; for with fearless voice they confess the great name of Thy only-begotten Son before the kings and powers of this world." We take the palms in our hands to signify that we, too, are united to Christ and His martyrs. We acknowledge Christ before the powers of the world, and follow Him to martyrdom, victory, and resurrection. We are "the children of the Hebrews" and we sing to Him our hosanna. We sing to Christ our King: *Gloria, laus, et honor tibi sit* ("All glory, praise, and honor be to Thee, O King, Christ the Redeemer"). We rejoice today, for we know that this entry into Jerusalem merely foreshadows His victorious entry into the heavenly Jerusalem. We hurry to meet Him with palm branches in our hands, which represent the good works which we have performed, our victories over sin, the flesh, and the world. Seeing these, He will usher us in with Him into the heavenly bridal chamber to an everlasting betrothal. The cross, and only the cross, can open to Christ the splendor of heaven; neither can there be any other way of entry for us. Borne along by His strength, we take up the cross, confident that we will be glorified with Him.

The way of victory is the road of the martyrs. With deep emotion we follow the Church today in the words of the Epistle: "Brethren, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." Thus the liturgy gives us a vivid picture of the humiliation and the suffering of our Lord. The way of Christ is our way too. "My heart hath expected reproach and misery; and I looked for one that

would grieve together with Me, but there was none" (Offer-tory). We, too, must share His disgrace and suffering, as we have promised Him in our baptism. We attend the Mass now to accompany Him on the way of suffering that lies before Him. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." May that be our way too. The Mass will supply us with the courage and the strength to follow it.

3. Today Christ is greeted with a shout of joy; tomorrow He will hear the cruel mob cry, "Let Him be crucified." Today we receive the blessed palms in our hands, and the liturgy explains to us the meaning of this action. But too many of us lay aside the spirit of martyrdom when we lay down the palms that we have received. This is not the spirit of the true follower of Christ.

"I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none. I sought for one that would comfort me, and I found none." Few are they who love the cross; but many are they who hate Christ and His cross. He who loves not the cross cannot love the crucified One.

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, who didst cause our Savior to take upon Him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross that all mankind might imitate the example of His humility; mercifully grant that treasuring the lessons of His patience, we may deserve to have fellowship in His resurrection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

The anointing

1. Like the Master, the Church is maligned and persecuted by her enemies. "My face I did not turn away from those who struck Me and spit upon Me. For thirty pieces of silver I was appraised by them. Look, O Lord, to the lips of those who hate Me, and see what they plot against Me" (Antiphons at Lauds). Today the Church gathers her children for the celebration of the holy mysteries in the church of the holy virgin

St. Praxedes, who, with St. Prudentiana, devoted herself to the service of Christ in the poor. Mary anointing the feet of the Lord in the Gospel of the Mass represents St. Praxedes, who anointed the feet of the Lord in the person of the poor. Judas protests at this extravagance and at the waste of the precious ointment. The liturgy is moved by Christ's twofold offering of His body: to His enemies that it might be tortured, and to Mary that it might be anointed and prepared for burial.

2. "The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist; I have not gone back. I have given my body to the strikers and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me. The Lord God is my helper" (Epistle). With deep sympathy we watch Him as He offers His cheek to the traitor to be kissed. "Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48.) He offers His hands to those who come to the Garden of Olives to take Him; He offers His body to those who would scourge Him; He bows His head as they offer Him the crown of thorns. His hands and feet He extends willing that they may be nailed to the cross. His heart is bared for the soldier who lifts up his spear to pierce it. Now He has given up everything in obedience to His Father. "By His bruises we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, whom Christ had but recently raised from the dead in Bethany, brought precious ointment to anoint the feet of Jesus. For the liturgy Mary is a symbol of the Church and of us. The Church too presses forward that she may share the sufferings of Christ most intimately. At the moment He is about to be taken prisoner by His enemies, she presses forward to show her loyalty, and her eagerness to share His passion. With Mary, and with St. Praxedes, the stationary saint of the day, she anoints the feet of the Master. The feet of the Master are in this instance the poor and the needy. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40).

3. While Mary is anointing the Master "for His burial"

Judas is deciding to betray Him into the hands of His enemies. The one is motivated by a burning hatred, the other by an ardent love. The more we see Him hated, persecuted, and reviled today, the more we should cling to Him and love Him. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted" (Luke 2:34).

"I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them." With unshakable patience, without complaint, without becoming angry or impatient, Christ submitted to these indignities. His only word is the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29).

"But if doing well you suffer patiently; this is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps. . . . Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree; that we being dead to sins, should live to justice; by whose stripes you were healed" (I Pet. 2:20 ff.).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who in our many adversities faint through our own weakness, may take heart anew through the pleading of the passion of Thy only-begotten Son.

Help us, O God, our salvation, that we may celebrate with joy the memory of those benefits by which Thou hast deigned to restore us to a new life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Surrounded by enemies

1. Today we see the Lord surrounded by His enemies. Like a lamb He is led to the slaughter. His apostles have fled; Peter, the chief of the apostles, has denied Him. The Lord lifts His eyes to His Father, who must guide Him through the night of suffering to the light of the resurrection. "But it behooves us

to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Introit). We are happy that we are allowed to share His chalice and to carry His cross.

2. The enemies of Christ have surrounded Him. Christ knew perfectly well from the first moment of His incarnation that He was destined to suffer and die. His passion and His coming death were always before Him. "And I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim; and I knew not [I did not resist] that they had devised counsels against Me saying: Let us put wood on His bread and cut Him off from the land of the living, and let His name be remembered no more" (Epistle). Christ goes to His death like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. He makes no protest; He does not murmur or complain. Thus He allowed Himself to be taken prisoner by His enemies, to be condemned by the high priests and Pilate, to be scourged, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross. Through all this suffering He remains silent. He prays: "For to Thee have I revealed My cause, O Lord My God" (Epistle). The more completely He entrusts His affairs to the care of His heavenly Father, the more certainly the Father will bring to nought all the plans of His enemies. They will succeed in putting Him to death, but by this very death He will be victorious. Above all this injustice from Christ's enemies stands God, the Lord of hosts; "Thou who judgest justly and triest the reins and the hearts, . . . to Thee have I revealed My cause, O Lord My God" (Epistle). The cross thus becomes the way of salvation, the way to resurrection and glorification.

Even the faithful Peter denies the Lord. While standing in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter is accosted by a maid-servant with the words, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter vehemently denies this charge: "I neither know nor understand what thou sayest." Then he flees to the outer court, where he is again challenged by the maidservant, "This is one of them." Peter again denies this accusation; but "after a little while they that stood by said again to Peter: Surely thou art one of them, for thou art also a Galilean." Still Peter

denies: "I know not this man of whom you speak." Then the cock crew for the second time, and Peter remembered the words which Christ had spoken, "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt thrice deny Me." And He began to weep bitterly.

Peter never forgot during the rest of his life that he had once denied his Savior. Neither did he cease to worry about it, nor to confess it openly before the world and do penance for his sin. Peter himself in his preaching in the various countries he visited, told frankly what Mark reports in his Gospel. With touching candor and humility he confessed before all the great sin that he had committed and the kindness with which Christ had forgiven him.

3. The more closely the enemies press about Christ, the more confidently He turns to His Father. "My prayer shall be turned into my bosom. Judge Thou, O Lord, them that wrong me; . . . rise up to help me" (Gradual). "Keep me, O Lord, from the hand of the wicked; and from unjust men deliver me" (Offertory). "They that sat in the gate [in a public place] were busied against me; and they that drank wine made me their song; but as for me, my prayer is to Thee, O Lord" (Communion). Overwhelmed in the blackest night of suffering, surrounded by enemies on every side, Christ thinks not of His suffering nor of His enemies; He turns to the Father; He prays: "Keep Me, O Lord, from the hand of the wicked; and from unjust men deliver Me" (Offertory); that is, raise Me up from the dead on the third day, and exalt Me as the King and Lord of all.

"It behooves us to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Introit). We stand at the side of the crucified Lord and consider it true happiness to share in the cross of the Lord and to drink His chalice. "Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death," crucified with Him (Rom. 6:3)? If we were real Christians, we would rejoice that we are allowed to share in the disgrace of Christ's cross, to lead a life of sacrifice and self-denial, of privation and humiliation. Unfortunately we think of the passion of Christ

in a selfish manner and consider only the benefits that it conferred upon us.

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, grant that we may so celebrate the Lord's passion that we may deserve to obtain Thy pardon.

May Thy mercy, O God, purify us from every deceit of our old nature and make us ready to receive a holy renovation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Judas, the traitor

1. In St. Mary Major in Rome, we recall the passion and death of the Lord in company with His sorrowful mother. In a special way the Church reminds us of the treason of Judas. From ancient times the Church has set aside Wednesday of Holy Week to commemorate the betrayal, and she keeps a penitential fast in memory of this event. Six days have elapsed since the catechumens were examined. That is the reason for the two prophetic lessons which deal with the suffering of the Lord which are fulfilled in these days.

2. Judas approaches. The Garden of Olives was the foot of the altar where Christ prayed before He ascended the great altar of Calvary. He suffers unspeakable anguish of soul. So intense is His interior suffering that His blood is forced through His pores in a bloody sweat. He turns to His apostles, whom He has left at a short distance; "Arise, pray," He admonishes them. While He is yet speaking, the band sent to apprehend Him approaches. At the head of this motley crew is the apostle Judas. He approaches Christ and greets Him with a kiss. "Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" What a spectacle! Christ betrayed by one of His own apostles and handed over to His enemies. That act sounded the depths of ingratitude, hypocrisy, and baseness. The act was made more despicable by the fact that it was performed for money.

The Church suffers with Christ. She has suffered similar ex-

periences, for often in the course of her history many of her children have proved traitors to their Lord and Redeemer. This is as mysterious as it is terrifying—an apostle turned traitor. He who had been selected from among millions for the special love and esteem of Christ, sells his benefactor for thirty pieces of silver. He who stands, “let him take heed, lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). “Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26:41).

Christ sees the traitor approaching, and although He knows his foul plan, He does not withdraw. He offers His cheek to be kissed. He has feelings only of love and kindness even for this traitor. He even calls him friend. In effect He says: Even if you no longer love Me, I still love you and am prepared to forgive you the injury you are doing to Me. Christ shows no bitterness; He has no harsh reproach even for Judas. For this fallen apostle He has only sympathy. What did Judas gain? Thirty pieces of silver and the curse of God. He received a small temporal reward for his treachery and was burdened with a remorse of conscience that drove him to eternal damnation. This is the *mysterium iniquitatis*, the mystery of iniquity. Sin, the blindness and perversity of the human heart, is indeed a mystery. If the Lord were not so full of kindness and understanding, if He did not love us much beyond our deserts, what would become of us? Even an apostle can become a traitor.

3. The Church makes a recompense to Christ for the disgrace heaped upon Him by Judas. “In the name of Jesus let every knee bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; for the Lord became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father” (Introit). The Lord was humiliated by Judas, but out of that very humiliation grows His exaltation, out of the suffering of Good Friday is born the glory of Easter. Christ the Lord, the Savior, is in the glory of God the Father.

“Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour with Me?” With these words, spoken by Christ to Peter, the

Church calls upon us at Lauds not to leave the Savior alone in His suffering and humiliation. At least during Holy Week let us remain close to Christ. That this may be easier for us, we are led to St. Mary Major. Behold the mother. Behold how Mary suffers with Jesus. Mary represents the Church suffering with Christ. Each of us should imitate Mary in her suffering with her Son. With her we should follow Him with sympathetic hearts and stand under His cross on Calvary. May not Christ address to us the sad words, "Couldst thou not watch one hour with Me? . . . He does not sleep, but hastens to betray Me to the Jews" (Responsory at Matins). It is often true that the friends of Jesus sleep while His enemies are hard at work.

"But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, everyone hath turned aside into his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was offered up because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth; he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth" (Second lesson).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who are continually afflicted by reason of our excesses, may be delivered through the passion of Thine only-begotten Son.

O God, in order to expel from us the power of the enemy, Thou hast willed that Thy own Son endure the gibbet of the cross; grant that we Thy servants may not fail to obtain the grace of rising with Him. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HOLY THURSDAY

Love unto the end

1. At the Lateran basilica, the church of the Holy Redeemer, we are to witness today the readmission of the penitents into

the community of the faithful. They have been excluded from the Offertory procession and from Holy Communion. But the time of their penance is now ended, and they may again approach the altar with their gifts and receive Holy Communion. We share in their joy and gratitude. The prayer they say when they offer their gifts, we make our own. "I shall not die, but live" (Offertory). We recall today also the events of the life of Jesus that distinguish Holy Thursday. We commemorate this day Jesus' departure from Bethania, the Last Supper, the washing of the feet, the institution of the Holy Eucharist and of the priesthood, Christ's farewell discourse, the journey to the Garden of Olives, the agony in the Garden, the betrayal by Judas, and the apprehension of Christ. Holy Thursday is particularly dedicated to the memory of the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

2. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). He continues to love them in Holy Eucharist. His love was not satisfied by His suffering and death on the cross; He wished to remain with us always. Yes, he wished to do more: He wished to become the nourishment of our souls, to fill us with His own life, and to unite Himself to us. He is the vine, we are the branches. Christ loved His own to the end—the end of the cross; He will continue to love them until the end of time in the tabernacle. This is a love without bounds; this is our treasure in our poverty. This is the extraordinary good fortune of Christians, that Christ loves them with an infinite love. "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love" (John 15:9). We, too, must love Him with all our strength.

Christ gave the apostles an additional proof of His love in the washing of their feet. Today the liturgy closely associates the washing of the feet with the reception of Holy Communion; when Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful, she uses this prayer: "The Lord Jesus, after He had supped with His disciples, washed their feet, and said to them: Know you what I, your Lord and Master, have done to you? I have given you

an example, that you also may do likewise" (Communion). Daily Holy Communion and the love of our neighbor are complementary. "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us. . . . If any man says: I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" (I John 4:12, 20.) How can such a man receive Holy Communion worthily? On the other hand, the worthy reception of Holy Communion impels us to love the other members of the mystical body of Christ. The antiphons sung during the washing of the feet show this connection: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you, says the Lord. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." "If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, how much more ought you to wash one another's feet. Hear these things, all ye nations; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world. If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, how much more ought you to wash one another's feet." "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." The Holy Eucharist is a gift of love. Love becomes an obligation: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Let us examine ourselves to see if we really keep this commandment to love one another always.

3. "Where charity and love are, there God is." The love of Christ has brought us together. Let us exult and be joyful in Him. Let us fear and love the living God, and love one another with sincerity. Where charity and love are, there God is. Having assembled here to worship God, let us beware of divisions among ourselves. Let malicious upbraidings cease; let there be no wrangling. And may Christ our God be in our midst; for where charity and love are, there God is. "Together with the blessed may we also see Thy face in glory, O Christ God. . . . Through endless ages. Amen" (Antiphon at the washing of the feet).

The Holy Eucharist is the fruit of the cross. The more closely

we press to the cross, the more fully we shall profit by the reception of Holy Communion. "It behooves us to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Introit).

PRAYER

O God, who in this wonderful sacrament has left us a memorial of Thy passion; grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy body and blood that we may ever feel within us the fruit of Thy redemption. Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen. (Collect for Corpus Christi.)

GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus dies upon the cross

1. This is a day of mourning for the Church and for the faithful. The cross occupies the most prominent place in the liturgy of the day. It was on the cross that the Lord carried out the will of the Father to its last detail by giving up His life for our sins. He "loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

2. "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there; and the robbers, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But they, dividing His garments, cast lots. And the people stood beholding, and the rulers with them derided Him saying: He saved others; let Him save Himself if He be the Christ, the elect of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him and offering Him vinegar, and saying: If Thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And also there was a superscription written over Him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of those robbers who were hanged blasphemed him, saying: If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. . . . And it was almost the sixth hour; and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: Father,

into Thy hands I commend My spirit. And saying this, He gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:33 ff.). "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

"O Lord, who hath believed our report? [of the suffering of the Messiah]. And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? And he shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground. There is no beauty in him nor comeliness; and we have seen him and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him. Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity. And his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not" (Isa. 1:53 ff.). "O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. 1:12).

The holy body has been torn by the cruel scourge until it is one mass of burning and bleeding wounds. The terrible crown of thorns has pierced His head, and He is consumed by thirst. To this unspeakable physical pain is added an anguish of soul that is even more terrible. He hears the shocking cry of His blinded people: "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27:25). He hears the exultant yells of His enemies, and He looks into the future and sees that millions of men will repay His suffering and His love with the basest ingratitude and the cruelest indifference. Why do they act thus? They have no time to attend to Christ. The grace which He won for them with such prodigal suffering and with so much love they neglect or abuse, and thus run the risk of losing their immortal souls. The immense inheritance which He purchased by His blood they allow to slip through their fingers. How this ingratitude and blindness torture Him! With Mary and John we stand under His cross today to share His agony.

Christ died in our stead. "Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins; the

chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:4-6). No mortal man could satisfy for the insult offered to God by sin; not even the highest of the angels could make adequate satisfaction. "Search not for a man to redeem you; Christ the God-man alone can perform works of sufficient value" (St. Basil). He takes our indebtedness upon Himself and lifts it up to His cross. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (I Pet. 1:18 f.). The penalties which Christ suffered should have been our penalty. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

3. Christ has died for each one of us personally. The wages of sin is death. All the penalties of sin press upon us at death. God's justice has not prepared anything so frightening as the prospect of death. Every creature shrinks from the thought of it. Nothing is so surely a punishment for sin as is death. Death cuts the bonds that secure the body and soul to the earth, just as sin first severed the bond which bound men to God. Christ the Lord delivers Himself up freely to death for our sake. His love is "strong as death." His submission to this most terrifying of God's punishments is the highest token of His love. He chooses the most terrible prospect of death that He may give me the surest sign of His love.

In giving over His body to death, He destroys the body of sin and death on the cross. Having bathed mankind in His precious blood, He has provided humanity with a new and holy body. Men thus reborn are worthy to become the sons of God and merit eternal life and eternal glory.

Christ died for us on the cross. What a mysterious dispensation of God's providence! The unjust man commits the sin, but the Just One satisfies for it. The guilty one escapes the penalty

of sin, but the Innocent One pays the penalty. The Lord and Master pays the debts which were contracted by the servant. What a contrast between the wickedness of man, and the goodness and justice and mercy of God! God has done all this for us; what have we done for Him?

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O almighty God, to look down upon Thy family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ freely delivered Himself into the hands of sinners, and for whom He suffered the martyrdom of the cross. Who liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

O My people, what wrong have I done? When have I ever grieved you? Answer Me! I led you out of the land of Egypt: is this why you have prepared a cross for your Savior? Forty years I led you through the desert, fed you with manna, and then brought you into a fair and fertile land: is this why you have prepared a cross for your Savior? What more should I have done for you that I have not done? I planted you to be My very own and most choice vine, but you have borne Me bitter fruit: for with vinegar you have quenched My thirst and with a spear you have pierced your Savior's side. For your sake I scourged Egypt and its first-born: and you have handed Me over to be scourged. O My People, what wrong have I done you? When have I ever grieved you? Answer Me! I led you out of the land of Egypt: is this why you have prepared a cross for your Savior? I led you out of Egypt and drowned Pharaoh in the Red Sea: and you have handed Me over to the chief priests. I opened up the sea as a path before you: and you have opened up My side with a spear. I went before you in a pillar of bright cloud: and you have led me into the judgment hall of Pilate. I nourished you with manna in the desert: and you have rained blows and stripes upon me. I gave you life-restoring water from the rock to drink: and you have quenched my thirst with gall and vinegar. For your sake I struck down the kings of Canaan: and you kept striking Me on the head with a reed. I gave you a royal sceptre: and you have placed a crown of thorns on My head. I raised you up above all others by My mighty power: and you have hung Me on the high gibbet of the cross.

O My people, what wrong have I done you? When have I ever grieved you? Answer Me!

We answer this anguished cry of Our Lord with the words: "O holy God! O holy, mighty God! O holy, immortal God, have mercy on us."

GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus the King, and Son of God

1. Jesus is condemned to death and is crucified! Pilate, the representative of Rome in Jerusalem, presents Christ to the Jews as their king. But the Jewish people rejected Him on Good Friday and exchanged the rule of God for the rule of the Roman emperor. "We have no king but Caesar." With this rejection of Jesus the stricken nation has sealed its fate forever. No one can reject Christ without at the same time rejecting and destroying himself.

2. The people reject Christ as their king. When St. John gives us his account of the passion, he seems to be trying to portray the royal manner in which Christ enters upon His suffering, the princely dignity with which He bears His sufferings, and the kingly demeanor with which He reappears again after three days among His apostles. "Art thou the king of the Jews?" asks Pilate. Jesus answers, "My kingdom is not of this world." Then Pilate continues, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus replies, "Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth."

The soldiers then place a crown of thorns on His head and mock Him saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Pilate then sits upon the seat of judgment. "And it was the parasceve of the pasch [Friday] about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews, 'Behold your king . . . Shall I crucify your king?' And they answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.'" And it is as a king that Christ is displayed to the world on His cross. His title is inscribed on the sign they affix to his cross. "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Like a king, Christ cares for His own body. When the soldiers come to remove the two thieves who were crucified with Him, "they did not break his legs . . . but

one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side." This had been foretold by the prophet: "You shall not break a bone of him" (Ps. 33:21). We recognize today in the Crucified One, a King, our True King, and we adore Him.

"He hath made himself the Son of God." This is the accusation of the High Priest. This is the legal grounds on which they demand His death, that He had declared Himself to be the Son of God, which, they alleged, He was not. The High Priest Caiphas had bound Him by an oath to declare whether or not He was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered him, "Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). With this, the High Priest rent his garments and exclaimed: "He hath blasphemed God; what think you?" And they answered, "He is guilty of death." "Then they did spit in his face; and others struck his face with the palms of their hands, saying, prophesy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee?" (Matt. 26:63-68.) To show that He is truly the Son of God Christ allows Himself to be put to death. He bears witness to His divinity with His blood, and we believe Him to be the very Son of God. We accept without question the words of the Apostle: "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of man thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). God's own Son has given His life for me on the cross. Only a divine mind could have conceived it!

3. Turning our backs on the unbelief of the Jews we acknowledge: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Thou alone art the Lord, Thou alone art the Most High, Jesus Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit."

We have chosen the Crucified One to be our King and our Lord. For this reason we join Holy Mother Church today in

the adoration of the cross, (which symbolizes Him who died on it). "Behold, the wood of the cross; on it hung the Savior of the world. Come let us adore. O holy God! O holy, mighty God! O holy immortal God! Have mercy on us." "We adore Thy cross, O Lord, and praise and glorify Thy holy resurrection; for behold! By the wood of the cross joy came into the whole world."

PRAYER

Look down, O Lord, we beseech Thee, on this Thy family, for which Our Lord Jesus Christ did not shrink from being delivered into the hands of the wicked, and from suffering the torments of the cross. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY

"He descended into hell"

1. Joseph of Arimathea sought and obtained from Pilate the permission to obtain the body of Jesus for burial. "And Nicodemus also came (he who at first came to Jesus by night) bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now there was in the place where he was crucified, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand" (John 19:38 ff.). Today the Church commemorates Christ's mysterious sojourn in the grave. We meditate also on His so-called descent into Limbo. With Holy Mother Church and with Mary His mother we await eagerly the hour of His resurrection.

2. The body of Jesus was removed from the cross by His friends and buried in a sepulchre. The parasceve, (the day before the Jewish Easter feast, our Good Friday), has come to an end. The disciples take the body of Jesus from the cross and place it in the arms of His sorrowing Mother. She united her-

self with Him as He offered Himself to the Father on the cross. Standing at the foot of His cross, she therefore shares in His redemptive work. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have made all the necessary preparations for Christ's burial, and they place His body reverently in the tomb. There it rests, free now from the sufferings and the exertions of the work of redemption which had turned out to be so bitter. He rests in the grave of a stranger. Since He was free of all sin He had no need of dying as we have. Death is the penalty for sin, and although He was sinless, He embraced it nevertheless, for our sake. Actually Christ had no need of a grave of His own, for He has a throne in heaven which He will rise to possess after three days. So He is laid temporarily in a new grave, the grave of another. "Just as no other had occupied the womb of the Virgin before Him and none would occupy it after Him, so no one had occupied this sepulchre before Him and none would do so thereafter" (St. Augustine).

But the day of His triumph is already about to dawn. The Jews have lost possession of the body of Christ, and they are concerned now only to see that the grave is carefully sealed. They seek and obtain from Pilate the permission to set an armed guard over the tomb and thus unwittingly, and contrary to their true intentions, provide impartial and unimpeachable witnesses to the reality of His resurrection on Easter morning.

We are to understand that Christ's soul descended into Limbo while His body remained in the tomb. The souls of all the just of former ages are confined here, deprived as yet of the vision of God and of heavenly bliss. They have been awaiting the day of their redemption with intense longing. The soul of Christ enters the place of their detention immediately after His death to bring them the glad tidings of their redemption. They know now that the work of redemption has been completed, that the sins of mankind have been forgiven and that soon heaven will be opened to them. As He had promised the thief on the cross, He now promises them, "This day shall you be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). He now grants to them

the vision of God which He had earned for them by His death on the cross. Who can conceive the joy that possessed these souls at being admitted to the Beatific Vision? The soul of Christ also came to the souls in purgatory to console them and to bring them the hope of a speedy release and of their eventual admission to the heavenly mansions. This was characteristic of Christ, for wherever He comes He brings consolation, joy, divine blessings, and redemption.

The glorification of Christ begins with His descent into Limbo on Holy Saturday. Up until this moment His life has been one long, continual task of lowering Himself and emptying Himself. This part of His life reached its climax in the humiliation of His death upon the cross. His descent into Limbo is the first step in the glorification of Christ as the King and Lord of all creation. "And of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). The mighty work which His Father has given Him to do has been accomplished. The days of His humiliation, suffering, and death have passed. A new phase of His life is just beginning. He, who was so deeply humiliated, He who was rejected and cast out by His own people has been established by the Father as the Lord of the Universe. He is King and Lord, even according to His humanity. All that is in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bow before Him, and recognize Him as the Lord and Savior (Phil. 2:10). "All power is given to Him in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:20). "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them I heard saying: To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb, benediction, and honor, and glory, and power forever and ever" (Apoc. 5:12 ff.).

With joyful hearts we bear witness today to the glorification of the Lord. Quietly and unobtrusively He begins His reign today as the true King and Lord. And we acknowledge this saying, "Thou alone art the Lord, Thou alone art the Most High,

Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in the glory of the Father" (Gloria). After forty days He will ascend to heaven to take possession of His throne while heaven and earth look on. "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names" (Phil. 2:7). "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

PRAYER

O God, who in so wonderful a fashion didst create mankind, and didst even more wonderfully redeem it, we beseech Thee that by the power of the spirit we may resist the enticements of sin, so that we may attain the eternal joys. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY

O happy fault!

1. In the ancient Church the impressive baptismal services were performed during the night before the Easter services. In later ages these were transferred and anticipated on Holy Saturday morning. The recent reforms of the sacred liturgy instituted by Pope Pius XII have restored these services to their original position and they have thus regained much of their original significance. On February 9, 1951, the Church officially restored the Easter vigil and rearranged the ritual for Easter. A distinctive feature of the Easter vigil service is the blessing of the Easter candle. During the blessing of the candle the sign of the cross, the Greek letters alpha and omega, and the year are carved in the wax. Once the blessing is finished the clergy and all the faithful light their candles from the Easter candle. In the *Exsultet* the meaning and the glory of the Easter candle are explained.

The Church confesses her amazement at the relationship between the miracles of the Old Testament and the events of the New Testament. The miracles of the Old Testament were types of things that were to transpire in the New Testament. "For it would have profited us nothing to have been born unless we

had also been redeemed. O wonderful condescension of Thy mercy towards us! O inestimable affection of charity, that to redeem a slave Thou didst deliver up Thy Son! O truly necessary sin of Adam, which was blotted out by the death of Christ! O happy fault that merited so great a Redeemer!" (*Exsultet.*)

2. "O happy fault!" In the light of the resurrection of Christ (symbolized by the Easter candle), man finds a solution to a problem which had puzzled him for ages. Why has God allowed evil to occur when He could so easily have prevented it? Even though evil is entirely the work of man, it is still subject to the power and providence of God; He could prevent it. Why has He not done so? Because by overcoming evil, God manifests His power. By destroying evil in us, God demonstrates His love for us. His victory over evil is a more convincing proof of His power than all the works of creation. In this victory the various aspects of the divine essence are revealed to us. Without the existence of evil, we should never have known the depth of God's wisdom and mercy. It was the mercy of God that sent the Lamb to the sacrifice. Incarnate mercy offers itself as a sacrifice, and the sacrifice is accepted by the divine mercy. Thus in the death of Christ the greatest of all miracles was performed. Omnipotence itself made itself powerless; life was given over to death. God permitted evil in order to bring about a higher good, namely, the Incarnation, and through the Incarnation the kingdom of the redeemed. "O happy fault that merited so great a Redeemer!"

Both in Holy Scripture and in the teaching of the Fathers there is a foundation for the doctrine that Christ would not have become incarnate had not Adam sinned. This view is also defended by the majority of theologians. The Credo, which we sing at Mass as the avowal of our faith, teaches that Christ, the Son of God, descended from heaven and became man to redeem us from sin. Deeply moved by this manifestation of the love, mercy, power, and justice of God, we sing with the Church in the *Exsultet*: "For it would have profited us nothing to have been born unless we had also been redeemed. O wonderful

condescension of Thy mercy towards us! O inestimable affection of charity, that to redeem a slave Thou didst deliver up Thy Son! O truly necessary sin of Adam, which was blotted out by the death of Christ! O happy fault that merited so great a Redeemer!" Sin, the greatest evil performed by men, becomes the occasion for God's greatest work, the incarnation of Christ and the redemption of humanity. Evil must be made to serve God; and since it can be made to serve Him, He allows it to happen.

In the cross is salvation. Yet a single drop of Christ's blood, a solitary prayer, a single request for pardon and grace made by Christ, would have been sufficient for the redemption of men. "As much as the ocean exceeds a drop, so much does the merit of Christ exceed our sins" (St. Chrysostom). Even though the justice of God required full satisfaction for sin, it could not have demanded the passion and death of Christ for this purpose. Full satisfaction could have been given by a lesser act. But Christ undertook this excess of suffering that we might understand the extent of His love. The mystery of the cross and the existence of evil and suffering are hidden from the worldly man, but they should be perfectly clear to the Christian. If we understand Christ and His mission, we will understand that poverty, humility, misery, and suffering recommend us to the mercy and love of God. They are the sign and seal of His love; they are a pledge that He wishes us to resemble His Son.

Suffering is the gate of eternal life. Suffering cheerfully and freely borne is a proof of our surrender to God. Such suffering glorifies God. No love can be more sincere, no surrender more heroic and complete than that which manifests itself in voluntary suffering. Christ, our Lord and Master, embraced suffering instead of pleasure; but the spirit of the world cultivates pleasure, honor, and indulgence. Christ frees men from the bonds of the world, from the weaknesses of the flesh, and from self-indulgence. Whomever the Lord wishes to raise to sanctity, He raises on the cross. The soul, then, that wishes to be filled with grace must first be crucified. The most sublime form of knowl-

edge is that which is based on suffering. The truest and the greatest good fortune of man on earth is the privilege to suffer for Christ. By means of the cross the Lord places His seal upon us. The cross purifies and prepares the soul for the pure love of God. He who flees from suffering impedes the progress of love, for in the cross is salvation.

3. Wherever injustice raises its head, it will be subdued. He whom injustice thought to destroy and drive from the world, has raised Himself triumphantly from the grave. His Church must also be persecuted and tried. But when her enemies believe that they have destroyed her and are beginning to raise a funeral mound over her, she springs miraculously to a new life. From death comes life. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians."

"To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8:28). Those who love God may be hated and trampled by men, but in all this persecution God has His own designs, which are hidden from wicked men. The good Christian will await patiently the revelation of God's designs in the sufferings that are imposed upon him; for he is confident that "to them that love God, all things work together unto good."

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, who art wonderful in the ordering of all Thy works, let them whom Thou hast redeemed understand that to have made the world in the beginning was a no greater work than to have immolated at the end of time Christ our pasch. Who with Thee liveth and reigneth forever. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY

Baptism and resurrection

1. The liturgy of Holy Saturday has been designed to introduce us to the mysterious operation of the grace of baptism, through which it becomes possible for us to arise with Christ. Following the lead of the sacred liturgy we are enlightened and experience the joy which fills the heart of the Church today.

2. The meaning and the importance of baptism are explained in the four lessons and in the ritual for the blessing of the baptismal water. We are rescued from the raging deluge of original sin through the ark, that is, the Church (Second lesson); unless we had found refuge in the ark of the Church through baptism we would have been hopelessly lost. Baptism is for us what the Red Sea was to the fleeing Hebrews. Just as Pharaoh and his hordes were swallowed up by the waters of the Red Sea, so Satan, the man of sin, is destroyed by baptism. We are rescued through the blood of Christ. We follow the Moses of the New Testament, Christ, into the Promised Land of heaven (Fourth lesson). Without baptism we should be like the dry bones in the vision of Ezechieh (Seventh lesson). The word of the Lord comes to these dry bones: "Behold, I will send spirit into you and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin. And I will give you spirit and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord. . . . And as I prophesied there was a noise and behold a commotion, and the bones came together, each one to its joint. And I saw, and behold the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and skin was stretched over them . . . and the spirit came into them and they lived. And they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. And He said to me: Son of man, all these bones are the house of Israel [the baptized, the Christians]. . . . Behold, I will open your graves and will bring you out of your sepulchres, O My people, and I will bring you into the land of Israel." Baptism means the resurrection of the dead to life. Through it we are rescued from the fiery pits of hell for which we were destined because of our sins. The story of the youths in the fiery furnace is a symbol of what baptism does for us (Twelfth lesson).

"If you be risen with Christ [as we are through baptism] seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ. When Christ shall appear, who is your life,

then you also shall appear with Him in glory." Indeed, "we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. . . . Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. . . . So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:4-11). The liturgy of Holy Saturday cries out to us to renew the promises we made at our baptism. This we do with all sincerity for we desire in all truth to become new men and to arise with Him to a new and better life.

3. By celebrating the Holy Sacrifice and by receiving Holy Communion, we are united to the newly risen and glorified Christ. This daily union with the risen Christ should have a marked influence on all thoughts and desires, and even on our bodies. Penetrated and enlivened by the reception of the Body of the Lord, the flesh will be subjected to the spirit and will already in a certain sense partake in the glorification of Christ. And thus we "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). We are dead to sin. Christ is our life, and we share in His life. This is what it means to be a Christian, to be baptized.

With hearts filled with gratitude we sing the *Benedictus* with which the night office closes. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people. And hath raised up an horn of salvation to us, in the house of David his servant. As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who are from the beginning. Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. To perform mercy to our fathers, and to remember his holy testament, the oath, which he swore to Abraham our father, that he would grant to us, that being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear, in holiness and justice before him all our days. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation to his peo-

ple, unto the remission of their sins. Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us. To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. To direct our feet into the way of peace. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen."

"These are the new born lambs, who sing alleluia. They have returned from the fountain [baptism]. They are filled with brightness, alleluia, alleluia. In the presence of the Lamb they are clothed in white garments and they carry palms in their hands" (Responsory at Matins). With joy and gratitude we hasten to meet the risen Lord to give ourselves to Him in love.

PRAYER

O God, who makest this most sacred night illustrious by the glory of the resurrection of our Lord; preserve in the new children of Thy family the spirit of adoption which Thou hast given, that renewed in body and soul, they may give Thee a pure service.

Pour forth upon us, O Lord, the spirit of Thy love, that by Thy loving kindness Thou mayest make to be of one mind, those whom Thou hast fed with these paschal sacraments. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Easter Season

INTRODUCTION

1. Easter is the Solemnity of Solemnities, the center and climax of the Church year. All the mysteries that we have commemorated from Advent until now have pointed toward Easter; all that we shall yet celebrate in the weeks that follow has its foundation in the mystery of Easter, and receives its meaning and importance from this mystery.

The resurrection of Christ is the consummation of the Incarnation (the Christmas mystery) and of the Passion. St. Paul reveals the meaning of Easter when he writes to the Corinthians, "And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:17 f.). Even the Incarnation and the Passion are not sufficient in themselves. "He was delivered up for our sins" the Apostle tells us (Rom. 4:25), that is, to deliver us from the death of sin. But it is not enough to be delivered from death. We stand in need of life, the full and everlasting life of God. It was that He might give us this life that He arose from the dead, "and [He] rose again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). He arose that He might communicate to us that perfect life that He had earned for us through His death, and which was first seen in Him, the "first fruits of them that sleep" (I Cor. 15:20). Through the paschal mysteries the Church and

mankind itself enter with Christ its head into the glorified life. We had been created for this life from the very beginning. But we lost our right to that life through Adam's sin. Through the resurrection of Christ we have regained our right to it. This is the source of all the joy of Easter and for the continual heartfelt alleluias. Mankind has been restored in Christ, has been delivered from all sin, and has regained possession of eternal life. By possessing this new life given us at Easter we already begin to participate in the eternal and unending life of heaven. The oration of the Easter Sunday prays: "O God, who on this day through Thine only-begotten Son hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; do Thou follow with Thine aid the desires which Thou dost put into our minds, and by Thy continual help bring the same to good effect." Over and over again the liturgy of Easter reminds us that in the present celebration of the Easter mysteries we begin to possess in truth the life of heaven. "I live, and you shall live."

The joy of Easter finds its natural expression in the joyous banquet of Holy Communion, the Easter banquet, the paschal meal. Holy Communion is the food upon which this new life is nourished. He who rose from the dead enters our soul in person, and illuminates it with the fullness of His new life. What He is, we are also; as He rose from the dead, so shall we rise. We now walk "in the newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

2. The spirit of Eastertide is a spirit of sincere gratitude to the risen Christ, through whom we possess eternal life. "I live, and you shall live." We should acquire this spirit of joy, a spirit which will lift us above sin and the world and death. The risen Christ will give us the strength to overcome the powers of darkness and death. We must have a spirit of hope. We shall, since Christ rose, most certainly rise on the last day, and our bodies shall be awakened to eternal life. "I shall not die, but live." We should have an unshakable faith, for Christ arose from the dead. His resurrection attests His divinity and the truth of His doctrine.

Easter sets a new task before us. We must now begin to live

the life of the new man. We rose with Christ in baptism. "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead [to the world, to sin, to temporal things], and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3). "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. . . . Let us feast, not with the old leaven . . . of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:7 f.; Epistle of Easter Sunday). Daily during the Easter season the liturgy reminds us, both in the Mass and in the Divine Office, of the words of the Apostle: "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more." He died to sin once for all; He lives now for God (Rom. 6:9 f.). Christ, the whole Christ (the Church, all of us), now lives for God.

We are the "Christ" who is risen. We died to sin in baptism. We live now for God. "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more." We have put an end to our sinning, and we live now only for God and for the performance of His Holy will. "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). We must acquire a spirit of self-denial, and be willing to carry the cross of Christ. We can share in the life of the risen Christ only if we have been willing to share His humiliation and crucifixion.

3. The time from Easter to Pentecost is merely an extension of the feast of Easter, forming a continuous, uninterrupted Easter feast. In various forms recur thoughts that deal primarily with Christ's resurrection and our call to share His new life with Him. "I live, and you shall live" (John 14:19).

The period from Pentecost to Advent also bears a close relationship to Easter. It will develop and perfect the life which was given to us at Easter. Christ lives in us, and we live in Him. He lives on in His members; and we, the members, share His life. He lives in our body as well as in our soul, for the body, too, shall rise and be restored to life and share the life of Christ in the blessed Easter of eternal life. "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen."

The Liturgy of Easter Sunday

1. Resurrection, victory, light, life—that is the joyous message of Easter. Christ rises from the dead first in His person and then in His members. The resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of His Church, too; His victory is a victory for His members. This doctrine is made clear to us through the close association of baptism with the celebration of Easter.

In ancient times there was no celebration on Holy Saturday. This day was a day of silent mourning for the dead. Only late in the evening, at dusk, the faithful and the catechumens assembled in the house of God. They proceeded at once to bless the light with which the church was illuminated (now the blessing of the fire). From the new light the Easter candle and the other lights in the church were lighted. Readings from Scripture followed.

The meaning of Christian baptism became clearer with the reading of the twelve prophecies from the Old Testament. The catechumens were to receive baptism at dawn. They watched with throbbing hearts as the water was blessed in the baptismal font. One after another they descended into the baptismal water, were submerged three times, and received the sacrament of baptism from the hands of the bishop. With Christ they had descended into the tomb (the baptismal water) and had obtained new life. They were now Christians, new men with a new faith, a new plan of life, and new ideals. They now had a new spirit and had obtained a new strength, for they had been reborn of the Holy Ghost. In their garments of light, their new, white baptismal robes, the catechumens participated in the Mass of the faithful and received Holy Communion for the first time. This is Easter, a time of resurrection, an experience of eternal importance.

2. Today we are assembled in the church of St. Mary Major, the church of the Mother of God, in which the Christmas mysteries were celebrated. On Christmas we celebrated the birth of Christ; now we celebrate His resurrection, which for the

early Christians was the rebirth of Christ. Two thoughts dominate the text of the Mass today: Christ's resurrection, and Christ, the Easter Lamb; in the background is the thought of baptism. The paschal lamb of the people of Israel found its fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ. This celebration recalls the redemption of the people from the slavery of Pharaoh (Satan), their deliverance from destruction in the passage through the Red Sea (baptism), and their entrance into the Holy Land (the Church, heaven, eternal life). In Him who rose from the dead we have the lamb that was slaughtered and at the same time gives life, redemption, deliverance, eternal life.

3. With the banner of victory in His hand, the risen Christ presents Himself to His Father in the Introit: "I rose up and am still with Thee." You laid your hand upon Me to strike Me with suffering and death, but You also helped Me, protected Me, and delivered Me. In Your divine wisdom You led Me through night to light, through death to life. The Church prays these words with Christ: "I rose up and am still with Thee"; that is, the Church rose through the death of Christ from the night of sin and was freed from the power of Satan. "I am still with Thee"; that is, I possess eternal life since I am united to Christ. "Thou has laid Thy hand upon me"; You still lay Your hand heavily on me, striking me with tribulation while protecting me and guarding me. Thy hand still leads me, the Church, through death to life, to victory over sin, the world, and death. In the Kyrie we beg for this Easter grace, for this new life, that it may flow out to all the children of the Church. "Lord have mercy on us."

Easter means new life. Before an Israelite could eat the paschal lamb, he had to rid his house of all leaven. The Apostle concluded that only he may eat the paschal lamb of the Christians who has put off the old man (Epistle). He must become a new man who feasts "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Only if he has overcome the darkness of sin can he gaze on the glory of the risen Christ, who appears in our midst in the celebration of the Mass. As Magdalen found Him in the garden

on Easter morning, so we find Him this morning in the house of God. Here on our altar He becomes our paschal lamb. We take Him into our hands and offer Him to the Father as our Easter gift, "a pure, holy, and unspotted host." But we know that this gift of ours, pure and holy as it is, can profit us only if we are united to it spiritually; that is, only in so far as we share in the life of the risen Christ, having overcome sin, the world, and the devil.

Easter reminds us not only of the paschal lamb, but also of our baptism. It commemorates not only something that happened to Christ, but also something very important that happened to us. By baptism we obtained a new life, the life Christ merited for us by His death; and we nourish it by the reception of Holy Communion. We are no longer what we were yesterday. We have been changed, we have risen from the grave of our sins, our negligence, our avarice, our selfishness, and our past life. We have died to sin once for all; and now we live to Christ. We lift ourselves above the purely natural thoughts and acts of the present to turn our attention to the "things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3:2). The proof of our union with Christ is in our reception of Holy Communion, by virtue of which we are "of one heart" with one another, and filled with the "spirit of Thy love." In the Postcommunion we ask that this spirit may be increased.

EASTER SUNDAY

He is risen

1. In ancient times the catechumens were baptized early Easter morning in the church of the Holy Redeemer (the Lateran basilica in Rome). For the celebration of the Easter Mass we accompany the catechumens to the church of St. Mary Major. Mary, to whom this church is dedicated, was bequeathed to redeemed humanity as she stood under the cross on Calvary. After greeting the risen Christ, we congratulate Mary: "Rejoice, O Queen of heaven, alleluia."

2. Christ rose from the dead, and He turns first to His heavenly Father. "I rose up and am still with Thee" (Introit). Thus He casts Himself in devoted and grateful love on the bosom of His Father. "Thou hast laid Thy hand upon Me" through the shame and humiliation I suffered during My passion. Now this same hand is held out to glorify Him and cover Him with splendor; "Thy knowledge is become wonderful" (Introit). Yesterday the humiliation and bitterness of the cross, today the splendor of heavenly glory!

We can have no doubt concerning Christ's resurrection. "The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34). Heretofore the divinity of Christ appeared only in His miracles; now it shines in its fullness. From Him who yesterday died on the cross, now come grace, life, and pardon. By the resurrection of Christ, God set the seal of divine approval on all that Christ had taught, on all that He had done, and on the Church which He had established. "This Jesus hath God raised again" (Acts 2:32; 3:13). Every word, then, that He spoke is infallibly true. Therefore men must submit to Christ and accept His commandments without question. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The Resurrection settles all our doubts and makes us inconceivably rich. How wonderfully God glorified Christ in the Resurrection! We must place all our faith in Him and rejoice from the bottom of our heart.

With Christ we, too, have risen. Christ not only redeemed us, the living, from sin; He redeemed also the dead. He "hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6). Our future is most intimately joined to that of Christ. He is risen; so we, too, must rise. Because we belonged to the race of Adam, we shared death with him. Because we now belong to the new Adam, we shall also share His resurrection to eternal life. "When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). "For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ

are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But every one in his own order; the first fruits, Christ, then they that are of Christ" (I Cor. 15:16-23).

The lessons of Holy Saturday and the blessing of the baptismal font announce the resurrection of the soul from sin. The entire season of Lent prepared the soul for this rebirth. The Church compares the emergence of the Christian from the baptismal font to the resurrection of Christ from the tomb. In this sense St. Paul declares: "If you be risen with Christ [that is, baptized], seek the things that are above, . . . not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead [to sin], and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1 ff.). Because you have risen with Christ, "purge out the old leaven [from your soul], that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened [new, reborn]. . . . Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (Epistle).

3. "I rose up and am still with Thee" (Introit). After His labors and His humiliations, Christ finds rest with His Father. "I am still with Thee." This is perfect beatitude. Through His cross He entered into the possession of eternal glory. Christ has gained the crown of victory; through Christ men also win their crowns of victory. Humanity was under a curse and subject to the wrath of God. Now that they have risen with Christ, their guilt has been destroyed. "I rose up and am still with Thee." The liturgy places these words in the mouth of the Church that she may pray them with Christ.

"The earth trembled and was still when God arose in judgment" (Offertory). The resurrection of Christ is the judgment and condemnation of those who have turned away from God. This judgment was prefigured by the angel who passed through the land of Egypt destroying the first-born of the Egyptians.

The Israelites marked the doors of their houses with the blood of the paschal lamb. We are the new Israel, and "Christ our Pasch is sacrificed" (Gradual). We mark ourselves with His blood, which we enjoy in the Holy Eucharist. We have been pardoned, we are saved, we shall live.

"He is risen." The resurrection of Christ is a pledge of our own resurrection. It is the foundation upon which our faith rests. It is the guarantee of our redemption and God's assurance that our sins are forgiven and that we are called to eternal life. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein. Give praise to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever. Alleluia" (Gradual). "Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. . . . The Lamb redeems the sheep. Christ, the innocent One, hath reconciled sinners to the Father" (Alleluia verse, Sequence).

PRAYER

O God, who on this day by Thy only-begotten Son hast overcome death and opened to us the gate of eternity, help us to attain the desires which Thou hast inspired in us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EASTER MONDAY

"The Lord hath appeared to Simon"

1. Today the neophytes are led to the stational church of St. Peter. Peter presents himself to them and to us as a witness of the resurrection. He has been commissioned by Christ to "preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead" (Epistle).

2. "In those days Peter, standing in the midst of the people, said: Men, brethren, you know . . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things that He did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom

they killed, hanging Him upon a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained by God; even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He arose again from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead. To Him all the prophets give testimony, that by His name all who believe in Him receive remission of sins" (Epistle).

Peter was an eyewitness of Christ's resurrection just as he was of the other events in Christ's life. The Church is aware of the value of Peter's testimony. Not all men can be eyewitnesses of Christ; all but a few must depend on the testimony of a few witnesses. For this reason today we come directly to Peter, an eyewitness, to receive his testimony. Today we join the uncounted millions who for centuries have believed so firmly in his testimony that they have been willing to give their life in support of it.

We believe that "God raised up [Jesus] on the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest . . . to witnesses preordained by God." Because of our faith in Peter's testimony, "we receive remission of sins" (Epistle). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

"The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon" (Gospel). The testimony which St. Peter gives us in the Epistle is supported by statements of the other apostles. Christ revealed Himself also to the two disciples who were making their way to the village of Emmaus. Overjoyed by this appearance of Christ, the two disciples hastened back to Jerusalem and "found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them."

Even before these two disciples could announce their marvelous experience, they are told by the apostles, "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." To Peter! If, then, Peter asserts, "Him God raised up the third day," there can no longer be any doubt. "The Lord is risen." If He has risen, then the

just and holy God has reversed the cruel judgment of the men who condemned Him. God has placed His approval on His life and on every word that He spoke. He, the crucified One, has been recognized by God as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Surely then, men must recognize Him, believe in Him, and unite themselves to Him through baptism. This may require of them humiliations and sufferings, but it will eventually lead them to glory, resurrection, and eternal happiness.

3. The Lord leads us by means of baptism to a land flowing with milk and honey. "May the law of the Lord be always in your mouth" (Introit); that is, announce all the great things which God has done to you, especially that He has led you to believe in Christ.

"The Lord is risen and hath appeared to Peter" (Communion). Christ appears to us today in the form of Holy Communion. With Peter, in whose house we celebrate today's mysteries, we are now witnesses of the resurrection. We shall bear witness to this resurrection by word of mouth, by our lives, and if it should be necessary, even by our blood.

PRAYER

O God, who by the paschal solemnity hast blessed the world with remedies, pour forth Thy heavenly gifts, we beseech Thee, on Thy people, that it may deserve to attain perfect liberty and advance toward life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EASTER TUESDAY

Christ is risen

1. During this period the Church is greatly concerned that the neophytes and the faithful be filled with efficacious faith in the risen Christ. "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:14, 18).

2. Christ is indeed risen. We hear the glad news today from the mouth of the Apostle of the Gentiles, in whose sanctuary we celebrate the sacred liturgy. He speaks to his brethren of

the race of Abraham. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did not recognize Christ as the Messiah; although they could find no fault in Him, they demanded His death. "But God raised Him up from the dead the third day; who was seen for many days by them who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who to this present time are His witnesses to the people" (Epistle).

The apostles were among the first to whom Christ appeared. The evening of Easter Sunday, "Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples and saith to them: Peace be to you. It is I, fear not. But they, being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do your thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have. And . . . He showed them His hands and His feet" (Gospel). The apostles are full of amazement and joy, and yet they do not fully believe. Then He consumes food before their eyes and gives them to eat from what remains of the fish and the honeycomb. He reminds them that He had already spoken to them about His passion and resurrection when He was still with them. Then He explains to them the Scriptures: "Thus it is written; and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day; and that penance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations."

The risen Christ stands in our midst today in the celebration of the Eucharistic mysteries. He salutes us, "Peace be to you." We are allowed to see Him, to touch His glorified body, and to take it in our hands to offer it to the Father. He is our pure, unspotted victim. He opens our understanding that we may comprehend the Scriptures, wherein we see that it was prophesied that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise again. He hands us the fish and the bread of Holy Eucharist. In the reception of Holy Communion He fills us with His spirit and His life. We have risen with Him, and now we seek the things that are above, where He sits at the right hand of God. We

think now of the things that are above, not of worldly things (Communion). "Lift up your hearts." Christ, the risen Christ, must dominate our thoughts, as He dominated the thoughts of the apostles in the supper room.

"See My hands and My feet." The Mass which we are attending is the repetition of His sacrifice on Calvary. When He comes to us at the Consecration of the Mass, He shows us His hands and His feet. Christ glorified suffering. For this reason He will bear His glorified wounds for all eternity. They will remind us that He has redeemed us from pain. Easter proclaims to the world: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come" (Rom. 8:18). The Easter joy causes the Christian to forget that he has carried the cross, for he knows that he has been redeemed. Christ "was obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names" (Phil. 2:8 f.). "See my hands and My feet," and know that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits us. "See My hands and My feet," and know that the chalice of suffering is the chalice of salvation.

3. Christ is indeed risen. Our faith, then, is certain. We are redeemed. In Him we have the pardon of our sins. He has won for us the grace of becoming the children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein. Let them now speak that have been redeemed by the Lord" (Gradual).

The words of the Introit are true of us: "He gave them the water of wisdom [baptismal grace] to drink; it shall be made strong in them [confirmation], . . . and it shall exalt them forever." This grace is the result of the death and resurrection of Christ, for which we offer Him our thanksgiving today. "Give glory to the Lord, and call upon His name; declare His deeds among the nations" (Introit). "The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High gave His voice; and the fountains of waters appeared, alleluia" (Offertory).

PRAYER

O God, who dost continually enrich Thy Church with new offspring, grant to Thy people that they may by their good life hold fast to the sacrament which they have received by faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF EASTER WEEK

Holy baptism

1. The liturgy today recalls the third appearance of Christ after His resurrection, when we gather with the neophytes in the church of St. Lawrence.

2. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world, alleluia" (Introit). With these words the Lord receives the newly baptized Christians as they present themselves at the threshold of the church of St. Lawrence. "Receive the kingdom" by reason of your membership in the Church, which is the kingdom of God on earth. In the Church, which the neophytes have entered by the gate of baptism, they receive supernatural gifts from heaven. Here they sing a "new canticle," the song of the baptized, the song of the beloved children of God who have arisen from sin. Here in the celebration of Mass the Lord appears to us. We are like the apostles fishing in their fragile boat, while He appears to us walking on the firm shore of eternity. In the fire of His passion He has prepared for us fish and bread, which He offers us in the form of the Eucharist. By this means we become new creatures, cleansed from sin, and the seed of immortality is implanted in our souls. "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, alleluia; death shall no more have dominion over Him, alleluia, alleluia" (Communion). We are now one with Him. By virtue of Holy Communion we share His immortality. Death shall no more have dominion over us. Death must release us when Christ calls us to eternity. Then we shall enter into the blessed kingdom of eternal life. "Come,

ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

"Ye men of Israel, and ye that fear God [among the heathens], hear. The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom you indeed delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate, when he judged He should be released. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer [Barabbas] to be granted unto you. But the Author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Epistle). We, the baptized, are also witnesses of this miracle. Baptism imposes on us the duties of a witness, a martyr for Christ. Therefore we celebrate the holy mysteries today with the holy martyr St. Lawrence. He reminds us of the fish and bread on the hot coals in today's Gospel. He is the patron and the model of the baptized, the living representation of the ideal for which we should all strive. Like St. Peter and St. Lawrence, we live among unbelievers and those who have gone astray. We are witnesses of the risen Christ. We have been inspired by His example and filled with grace by the reception of His holy body. We have become new men, risen men. We now have new ideals, new strength, and a new outlook on life. We are, as it were, a living testimony to Christ; He lives and works through us. We must bear witness to Christ's resurrection, not with empty words, but by the testimony of a holy life. "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

3. "Come, ye blessed of My Father." Baptism gives us the right to expect that Christ will address these words to us and that we shall stand at His right hand on the day of judgment. It gives us the right to expect that we shall enter heaven triumphantly with Christ. Do we appreciate the benefits of baptism and live worthy of so great a grace?

Baptism is not an empty ceremony. It is a call to martyrdom for Christ. Are we strong enough for this? Are we detached from the things of the world? Are our lives truly mortified? Can we

say with St. Paul: "I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having my justice which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ Jesus, which is of God, justice in faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection [that is, the glorious life which He now lives and which He imparts to His own] and the fellowship of His sufferings [that is, to suffer with Christ], being made conformable to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection which is from the dead" (Phil. 3:8-11)?

"Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, alleluia; death shall no more have dominion over Him, alleluia, alleluia" (Communion). In the mind of the liturgy, the mystical Christ, the Church, now dies no more. To be a good Christian, to receive Holy Communion worthily and frequently, implies the complete separation from sin. This idea is impressed upon us by the Easter liturgy. "If you be risen with Christ [through baptism], seek the things that are above. . . . You are dead [to sin], and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1 ff.; Epistle of Holy Saturday). "Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new paste. . . . Let us feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:7 f.; Epistle of Easter Sunday).

PRAYER

O God, who dost gladden us with the yearly solemnity of the Lord's resurrection, grant in Thy loving kindness that through the temporal feast which we keep we may be worthy to reach eternal joys. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF EASTER WEEK

Mary Magdalen

1. Eight days ago the penitents received absolution and were readmitted to communion with the Church. This reconciliation

took place in the church of the Twelve Apostles. In this same church we gather every ember Friday to weep over our sins with Magdalen, the penitent. The church of the Twelve Apostles has a close relationship with St. Mary Magdalen, for at the tomb of the risen Savior, Mary was made an apostle: "Go to My brethren [the apostles] and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father." The liturgy lingers about the tomb today with the penitent Magdalen, to whom Christ first appeared after appearing to His mother. At Mass the Lord comes to us as He came to Mary at the tomb.

2. "Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre; and she saw two angels in white. . . . They said to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus" (Gospel). St. Gregory thus comments on this touching incident:

Mary Magdalen, who had been a sinner in the city, by loving the Truth washed away the stains of her crime with her tears. . . . "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much" (Luke 7:47). She who formerly had remained cold in her sin, afterwards became fervent with holy love. . . . Of the disciples [who had come to the tomb] it is written: "The disciples therefore departed again to their home" (John 20:10). And then is added: "But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping." What a great love glows in the heart of this woman, who did not leave the tomb even though the disciples left! . . . She sought Him in tears, and inflamed with the fire of love, she burned with yearning for Him whom she thought had been taken away. Thus it happened that she alone then saw Him, she who alone had remained to seek Him.

The former sinner, the penitent, is the chosen one of the Lord. She is allowed to see Him because she has loved much and because she remained to seek Him. The sign of real virtue is perseverance. "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Would that we had such a longing for

Christ as Magdalen had! Would that we could love as she loved! Our hearts are filled with worldly desires, and we have little room left for Christ. We are so attached to the foolishness and emptiness of the world that we have no love for Christ.

"Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" Christ asks Magdalen. She thinks that it is the gardener addressing her, and she says to Him, "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith to her: Mary. She, turning, saith to Him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master)." She then casts herself at His feet, seeking to kiss and embrace them. Now she thinks she will never lose Him whom she has found. Christ does not permit this expression of her love. She has more important duties now. "Go to My brethren and say to them: I ascend to My Father" (Gospel). Mary obeys at once. She tears herself away from Him whom she loves and brings the glad news to the apostles. "Congratulate me, all you who love the Lord; for He whom I sought has appeared to me. And I saw the Lord as I wept at the tomb, alleluia, alleluia. Although the disciples went away, I did not leave, and glowing with the fire of love for Him, I burned with longing for Him. And I saw the Lord as I wept at the tomb, alleluia, alleluia" (Responsory at Matins).

3. Today the Lord appears to us in the Mass and calls us by name as He once called Magdalen. He called us by this name first when we were baptized. Today we should come to the Communion rail with a longing similar to Mary's.

When we have recognized Him and received Him in Holy Communion, we also become apostles. Our mission is to love our neighbor. By our zeal in the practice of fraternal charity we give testimony to the world that Christ is risen and that He continues to live and work in us, the members of His mystical body. Having done penance, Magdalen now knows only the joy of possessing Jesus. We must share her joy.

PRAYER

O God, who hast united different peoples in the confession of Thy name, grant that there may be one faith in the mind and

one piety in the deeds of those born again in the waters of baptism. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF EASTER WEEK

Jesus appears to His disciples

1. Today we are led by the neophytes to the church of St. Mary of the Martyrs. Here we behold Mary surrounded by a glorious group of martyrs. She is the same one whom we greeted a few days ago under the cross on Calvary as the Sorrowful Mother, the Queen of martyrs. Today we take part in spirit in the appearance of Christ which is related in the Gospel.

2. Jesus appears to His disciples. "At that time the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them; and seeing Him, they adored; but some doubted. And Jesus, coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Gospel). The disciples, following His orders, gathered there at the mountain which He had designated beforehand. They were rewarded by seeing Him. They recognized Him as the same Jesus with whom they had lived so intimately for several years, whom the Jews had rejected and put to death so cruelly. But now He is risen, and He lives. He speaks to them these consoling words: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." He has unlimited power, to which He is entitled not only as God, but also as man, for He is the Lord and shares the authority and the glory of the Father.

Christ passes His authority on to His apostles. "Teach ye all nations." The apostles and their successors, the bishops, are the official teachers of the Church, duly appointed and commissioned by Christ for that purpose. They are the custodians of the truth which He brought, and the guardians of His doctrine. "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you,

despiseth Me" (Luke 10:16). They have been sent to save men and to lead them to eternal life. For this work Christ gave them His authority and assured them of His continual assistance. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." The risen Christ lives in His Church. He to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth abides with His Church and guarantees her infallibility, integrity, and holiness. He is with His Church to defend her from all her enemies. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her" (Matt. 16:18). Storms will buffet the Church, but we must have confidence in her, for "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." We confess our faith in the Credo of the Mass.

Christ appears to us in the Church. Today in the liturgy we are the disciples whom the Lord is to meet at the mountain (the altar, the tabernacle). We received His command and followed Him to the mountain, and we shall be rewarded, for at the Consecration He will appear to us. We fall down and adore Him. This is indeed He whom we saw hanging on the cross in pain and agony, the man of sorrows. But He is risen, and from our altar He speaks to us: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." He has power over the elements, over all human ills, over the hearts of men, and over the evil spirits. He has power over the enemy of our salvation, over our passions, and over our self-love. "All power is given to Me." From the mountain of our altar He reassures us, "Behold I am with you all days." He is with us, for His love and His kindly providence accompany us everywhere. He is with us, for His strength helps us to overcome evil and to practice virtue. He is with us, enlightening us and inspiring us to virtue. What have we to fear? We may always come for help to the mountain He has pointed out to us. We believe in His readiness to help us, in His unlimited power, and His undying love. We are confident of His ability to protect us, and of His will to sanctify us.

3. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." When we receive baptism, we become subjects of the Church, and she has au-

thority to teach us all things whatsoever Christ has commanded her, and to require our obedience. She cannot make exceptions with regard to His laws and commandments. For if she did, she would cease to be the Church of Christ. We who have accepted baptism from her are subject to her rules and commandments as well as to those of Christ. We cannot appeal from the Church to Christ. We cannot withdraw from her authority or reject her teaching without withdrawing from Christ. "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." Christ and His Church are one. I am loyal to Christ in the measure that I am loyal to His Church. I can depend on His guidance and presence in so far as I submit to the Church.

"Going, teach ye all nations," the Communion tells us. We who have received the body of Christ are called upon to be apostles and missionaries; we are to be apostles of prayer, and missionaries through our work of expiation, our holy life, and our good example. We receive the grace to carry out our mission in Holy Communion, when He comes to us with the fullness of His power and fills us with His life. His power must go out from us to sanctify and enlighten others as often as we go to Holy Communion.

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, who in the covenant of man's atonement hast bestowed the paschal sacrament, grant that what we outwardly celebrate we may imitate effectually. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF EASTER WEEK

Laying aside the baptismal garments

1. In ancient times the neophytes gathered on this day in the Lateran basilica, the church in which they were baptized on Holy Saturday. In this same church they laid aside the white baptismal robes, which were then put away in the treasury of the church to be preserved as a pledge of the loyalty of those who had worn them, and to be produced as evidence against

those who proved unfaithful to their baptismal promises. The baptismal garment symbolized the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new.

2. "Laying away all malice and all guile, and dissimulations and envies, and all detractions" (Epistle). Thus also did the Lord at His resurrection leave behind Him the garments in which He had been wrapped. From the linens left behind, the apostles Peter and John recognize the place where He had lain, when they visited the tomb on Easter morning. "And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, and saw the linen cloths lying, but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkins that had been about His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapped up into one place. Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed" (Gospel). The liturgy wishes to tell us that we Christians must lay aside all malice and guile and evil detraction. When we have done this, the Church will acknowledge that we have laid aside the old man in the waters of baptism and have risen with Christ. The liturgy wishes us to be true Christians. It wishes us to prove our Christianity by deeds, "laying away all malice and all guile, and dissimulations and envies, and all detractions."

The Epistle describes in detail the characteristics of the new man which we must put on, the ideal Christian. "As newborn babes, desire the rational milk [of Christian doctrine and Christian principles] . . . that thereby you may grow unto salvation; if so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet. Unto whom coming as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen and made honorable by God; be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . The same is made the head of the corner; and a stone of stumbling and a rock of scandal to them who stumble at the word [the gospel of Christ], neither do believe. . . . But you are a chosen generation, a

kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people [by the death of Christ]; that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God." This is the ideal Christian. This is the new man who is incorporated in Christ through baptism. Would that we could shape our souls after the model given us in the Epistle! Would that we truly understood our dignity as Christians, the importance of our incorporation in Christ, the sublimity of our kingly priesthood! It is our vocation to declare His wondrous deeds and to proclaim that He has called us to His wonderful life.

3. Full of joy the Church greets the neophytes as they offer their gifts at the altar. "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord" (Offertory). To Him I consecrate myself; for Him I shall live. "He hath shone upon us, alleluia." We walk in His life. "The Lord brought forth His people with joy, alleluia; and His chosen ones with gladness, alleluia" (Introit). "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein, alleluia. Praise the Lord, O ye His servants" (Gradual).

"All you who have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ, alleluia" (Communion). For the liturgy the reception of Holy Communion is putting on Christ. We laid aside the visible baptismal garments; but in place of them we make our whole life an invisible garment that should never be laid aside. "You have put on Christ." As in baptism we have become a branch of the vine, so in the reception of Holy Communion this union is deepened and renewed. In virtue of this Communion we shall live the life of Christ and put on His manner, His virtue, His purity. "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). This new life the liturgy expects of the baptized.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who have kept the Easter festivities with veneration, may by them be found worthy to come to eternal joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of Low Sunday

1. The Masses of Easter week refer frequently to the newly baptized. Clothed in their white robes, the neophytes have been coming daily to the Holy Sacrifice. Yesterday, on Saturday of Easter week, they laid aside these garments, which are still preserved in a nearby room as mute but eloquent witnesses of their baptism and of the obligations thereby undertaken. Today, on what is known as Alb Sunday, they appear for the first time without the baptismal robes. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated in the church of St. Pancratius, the youthful martyr who sealed his baptismal vows with his blood. Pancratius died at the age of fourteen years. Those who gather in his church today see his image looking down at them from the walls of his church and feel his spirit hovering over them. All those who have just received baptism, and we also, should feel inspired to keep our baptismal vows as faithfully as Pancratius did his.

2. The Church addresses the neophytes today with motherly tenderness and thinks of them as "newborn babes, desiring the rational milk" (Introit) of the Holy Eucharist, the fruit of the Holy Sacrifice. This thirst is created in those who receive baptism, who long for the time of Mass that they may participate in the sacrificial meal of Holy Communion. From their lips breaks forth the song, "Rejoice to God our helper; sing aloud to the God of Jacob" (Introit). This should be our song, too, on Alb Sunday, when we renew our baptismal vows. Today, full of joy, we gather with the newly baptized and sing the Gloria: "Glory to God in the highest."

In the Collect we pray that we may keep faithfully and seal with our lives what was wrought in us by baptism and by Holy Communion. In baptism we receive the gift of faith, of whose power the Epistle reminds us today: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" We profess our faith in that doctrine when we receive baptism. We also have the means of strengthening us in the faith and the help to overcome the most powerful weapons of

the enemy. We receive the strength to overcome the temptations which weaken and crush other men. With St. Thomas the apostle we fall on our knees and confess Christ, "My Lord and my God." "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (Gospel).

3. Having professed our faith in the Credo, we are ready for the Offertory procession and for the act of sacrifice. We now approach the altar as the holy women approached the sepulchre on Easter morning. We bring as our gift our hearts filled with love and faith. The angel greets us. "He whom you seek is risen" (Offertory). In the Consecration of the Mass He will appear in our midst as the living God. As an expression of our faith in Him we sing the Sanctus, greeting Him as the Savior who comes in the name of the Lord.

As He greeted the apostles gathered in the upper room, He greets us now, "Peace be to you" (Gospel). He shows us His hands and His feet. Joyfully we confess Him to be the risen Christ, the source of all grace and all salvation. "My Lord and my God." Full of faith we take Him in our hands as our offering. At the altar we offer Him to God as our gift. "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him is to Thee, O God, the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory." Having become so perfectly united to Him, we may now pray with Him and through His lips: "Our Father, who art in heaven. . . . Give us this day our daily bread" in Holy Communion. In Holy Communion we touch the wounds of Christ with St. Thomas the apostle, and through this contact we receive divine life in proportion to our faith. Thus is satisfied the yearning for the rational milk, of which the Epistle speaks. With grateful hearts we answer the deacon's *Ite missa est* with a joyful *Deo gratias*: "Thanks be to God." Blessed are they that believe.

LOW SUNDAY

Our holy faith

1. Yesterday the neophytes laid aside their white garments, and today they appear for the first time in their ordinary clothes.

They are now full-fledged Christians. Their last stationary procession leads them to the sanctuary of St. Pancratius, the youthful martyr who sealed his baptism with his blood. Here they promise to keep their baptismal vows faithfully until death.

2. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (Epistle). In baptism we are "born of God." We must overcome the world; that is, we must stand aloof from the world. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). But we are born of God; we are of a divine race, of heavenly nobility. Therefore we must rise above what is earthly. Indeed we scorn the world and what it offers. We know that we are the children of God. God is for us; who, then, in the world can harm us? "If God be for us, who is against us? . . . Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? . . . In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us" (Rom. 8:31, 35, 37). What can the things of this world profit us? "He who knows that he is the child of God can have no regard for human greatness and immense wealth. He who admires anything less than God falls from the heights of his nobility" (St. Cyprian). Because we are born of God, we must lift ourselves above the world, its goods, and its interests. We must not let our ideals degenerate, and we must not lower ourselves from the lofty position which is ours as children of God. We have overcome the world; for "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (Epistle.) There are men who allow themselves to be led and directed by their senses; others are led by their reason. But neither of these know the sublimity and riches of the children of God. This can be understood only by those who have a lively faith in Jesus, the Son of God. Such men desire only what God desires. They know no higher

destiny than to follow in the footsteps of Christ, to follow Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). They love what Christ loves. They choose what Christ chose—voluntary poverty, suffering, privation, and the cross. To them Jesus is the Son of God, the infallible truth, the Wisdom of God. The deeper this faith becomes, the higher it lifts us above the transitory and trivial things of this world. "The just man liveth by faith" (Rom. 1:17). "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh; I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

3. The apostle Thomas could not believe that the Lord was truly risen and that He had appeared to the apostles. He insisted on seeing His wounds and touching them with his hands. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (Gospel). Eight days after this avowal by St. Thomas, Christ appeared again to the apostles, and calling to Thomas, He said: "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side, and be not faithless but believing" (Gospel). Thomas fell to his knees, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God." And our Lord replied, "Because thou hast seen Me Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." Christ demands faith. Only he who has a strong faith can conquer the world.

The Easter garments have been laid aside. Now the Church prays for the newly baptized and for us, that we may retain the graces we received at Easter, and practice them in our daily life. Easter is a feast that should not be allowed to pass away. We must conquer the selfish desires that come to us daily. Resurrection! To be risen means to be free, independent, and detached from the world and all it can offer. To be risen means to rejoice in the belief that He is risen to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth. To be risen means to share

the victorious power of God, and to be convinced that Christ is God. The prince of this world and all his minions are already judged and condemned. If we are risen, then we must remember that we have received pardon for our sins and that we enjoy the sonship of God. This sonship is the pledge of eternal life and an earnest of our heritage in heaven. Once we have risen, we must know that God is our Father and that His power rules the world. He knows every plot and every scheme that the impure evil one has concocted against the pure ones of the earth. If our Easter is to be perfect, it must transfigure our lives and soothe our troubles and cares.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who have celebrated the paschal solemnity, may by Thy bounty show forth its effects in our life and conduct. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

Our first Holy Communion

1. Today with grateful hearts we recall the joy and graces of our first Holy Communion. Our first Holy Communion was most intimately connected with our baptism. On Low Sunday we should renew our baptismal vows: "I renounce Satan, and sin, and the world with all its vanities." And "I believe in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, and in God the Holy Ghost, and in the Holy Catholic Church." For this great day the liturgy proposes for our consideration at Matins the words of St. Paul to the Colossians:

2. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust,

evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols. For which things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief; in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now [since you have been baptized] put you also all away: anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth. Lie not one to another; stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him. . . . Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another; even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also. But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts wherein also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God. All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. 3:1-17).

Come to me, O holy body of my Redeemer. Come, O burning coal, and purge my lips. In flame my soul with the love that impelled You to accomplish my redemption. Come, O precious blood which flowed forth from the sacred body, and envelope my heart with Your fire. O my Savior, this is truly Thy body which was so cruelly lacerated. Would that I might share each of Thy wounds with Thee! For through them Thou hast poured forth Thy blood for me. The world will have none of me, and it were much better for me had I nothing to do with it. We two are estranged, the world and I. Now I live for Christ, and He lives in me. At least it should be so. This should be the fruit of my Holy Communion. Alas, that I am yet so far from this ideal! (Bossuet.)

There is the tragedy. We receive Holy Communion so often, and yet offer to God and our Savior little more than a negligent, worldly life.

"May the peace of Christ dwell in your hearts." An unmistakable sign of whether or not we are reaping the fruit we should from our Holy Communion, and whether we are making the progress we should be making, is the effort we put forth to perform good works out of love for God. We should long to be of one heart and one soul with Christ. It is love that makes the difference.

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O Lord, that through the reception of Thy most holy sacrament we may be made into a new creature in Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

"Unless ye become as little children"

1. "As newborn babes, alleluia, desire the rational milk without guile" (Introit). Thus the Church addresses the newly baptized on Low Sunday; thus she speaks to those who communicate and to all the faithful. To the Church we are throughout our lives merely "newborn babes."

2. "Unless you . . . become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"; that is, you cannot reach perfection. Such was Christ's answer to the question proposed by the apostles: "Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:1-4).

The greatest man in the world is not the intellectual, nor the scholar, nor the performer of great deeds, nor the ruler, nor the man of wealth; but rather he who is in all appearances

the most unimportant, the most unassuming, the most childlike—he who remains most like what he was when he proceeded from the hands of his heavenly Father. The greatest accomplishment in the life of a man, and in the life of a Christian, is to become humble and childlike. God treasures not our great accomplishments, our pretentious plans, and our mighty undertakings, nor even our great works of self-denial and penance, nor our lengthy prayers, nor even our many pious works. In themselves all these things do not honor God. All these can easily be poisoned and ruined by our pride and ambition and self-will. What God prizes most and what makes us truly great in the eyes of God, what opens to us the gates of the heavenly kingdom of grace, virtue, and perfection, is the possession of a childlike spirit.

Not without reason God began the great work of redemption by becoming a child. All sound spirituality begins with the spirit of childhood, and is based on that foundation. For this reason the liturgy cries out to us: "As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile." "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven." This is the viewpoint of God, of Holy Mother the Church, and of all the saints. We, too, should choose for ourselves the way of spiritual childhood, the way of simplicity.

He possesses this spirit of childhood and humility who, recognizing his own limitations and weaknesses, submits himself completely to those who occupy God's place in his regard. Such a one desires to be small, dependent, and unimportant. In the spirit of simplicity he believes what is told to him by others. He executes without question the commands given him by his superiors, and does not inquire why a thing should be done. He carries out without question the tasks imposed on him. Since he is filled with the spirit of faith, he does not exhaust himself with worrying about ways and means of accomplishing his tasks. The spirit of childhood causes him to die to his own wishes and to forget himself completely. Our spiritual progress

depends largely on our ability to forget ourselves, not on our profound insight, lofty meditations, and great enlightenment. We advance in truth in the measure in which we renounce the world and even our own wishes and desires. Once we have reached spiritual childhood, we no longer view things with our own eyes. We abandon ourselves completely to the hand of Providence. We proceed on our way without bothering to observe whether the way is precipitous, stony, or smooth; we look only at the hand that leads us, and pay no heed to the question of where or how we are being led. We forget ourselves completely, and rest secure in the arms and on the heart of our heavenly Father, just as the child rests secure on the bosom of its mother. If we have really reached spiritual childhood, we seek no opportunity to display our striking virtues before others. In this state we follow with heroic fidelity and with self-sacrifice every inspiration of grace, every command of our superiors, every opportunity to undergo hardship, every occasion for mortification which God sends to us; we recognize the hand of God in everything that the day may bring, and we accept it all with complete and joyful self-sacrifice. For the sake of God we are filled with a spirit of kindness and friendliness no matter what our surroundings may be. God alone and what is pleasing to Him become our sole interest.

3. "Perfection appears easy to me. I see that it suffices to recognize one's own nothingness and to rest in the arms of God like a child. I rejoice in being small, for it is the children alone and those who become like little children who will be permitted to frequent the heavenly banquet."¹ "One need only love Christ, and need not give much thought to one's self or one's faults. One glance cast at Him and the consciousness of one's own deficiencies disappears."² So many pious people make a hell for themselves on earth through their restlessness, anxiety and worry. This is the result of their subtle cultivation of pride and of self will. In spite of their utter helplessness and

¹ St. Theresa of the Child Jesus.

² *Ibid.*

their unreliability they seek to advance in the supernatural life without the help of grace. All things must conform to their will. The plan God has made for them is not satisfactory. It is quite different with a soul that has reached true spiritual childhood. Such a soul is freed by the revelation of its own impotence from the perils of self-deception and purposeless self-incrimination and can devote itself to what it most needs—the knowledge of the boundless love and mercy of God. In this the soul puts its complete trust. It accepts humbly and endures patiently the trials that are sent to it, and it knows it can never rest satisfied with itself. Thus it rids itself of the restlessness and the anxiety which always plague the soul that has not discovered the way of true spiritual childhood.

In the state of spiritual childhood, God is everything and man is nothing. In such a soul God finds no resistance to His operations. Hence, our spiritual progress will depend largely on the spirit of childlike simplicity and submission to God's will. "God is more pleased by what He accomplishes in a soul that in its poverty gives itself up to Him humbly than He is by the creation of a million stars."¹

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who have celebrated the Paschal solemnity, may by Thy bounty show forth its effects in our life and conduct. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

Being reborn

1. "As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation" (I Pet. 2:2). This is a forceful admonition to us that we should grow in the spiritual life.

2. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, who liveth and remaineth forever" (I Pet. 1:23). As a consequence of our spiritual rebirth,

¹ *Ibid.*

St. Peter concludes: "Wherefore, laying away all malice and all guile and dissimulations and envies and all detractions, as newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation, . . . purifying your souls in the obedience of charity [that is, according to the prescriptions of the gospel], with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart, love one another earnestly" (I Pet. 2:1 f.; 1:22).

Rebirth in Christ eradicates in us the old man with his vices and self-seeking, with his malice and hypocrisy. It produces in us the new man, stifling self-love and implanting in our soul a love which binds us as brothers in Christ and unites us by an inner bond of charity. To the extent that we embrace this new life and let it operate in us, this rebirth makes us men of strength and heroism, men of patience, kindness, and stability, men who are considerate and helpful, who are zealous in the practice of fraternal charity. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35).

"As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile." The positive element in this rebirth calls for a growth in the life of grace. Just as newborn babes long for their mother's milk, so should we long with a burning desire for spiritual food through which the life of the soul is strengthened and nourished. It is not enough to be born or reborn; we are born and then reborn that we may achieve our salvation and holiness and reach the full stature of our being. The nourishment by which we achieve this growth is the "rational milk without guile," the word of God which is revealed to us in the gospel and is presented again continually by the Church. The more readily we accept this word of the gospel, the more certain and the more rapid is our growth to full spiritual manhood. Thus we attain our full perfection in heaven.

"Desire the rational milk without guile." Just as the child longs eagerly for its mother's milk, once it has tasted its sweetness, so you also will long for the word of the gospel "if so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet" (I Pet. 2:3). The re-

birth which we experienced through our baptism is nourished in the steadfast and living desire for the word of the gospel, and by means of the nourishment thus obtained, we shall grow in holiness.

3. How does this spiritual rebirth affect our lives? Negatively, it cleanses us from all self-seeking and from everything within ourselves that hinders the practice of fraternal charity; positively, it arouses in us the burning desire for inner growth and a persistent and ever-increasing thirst for the word of the gospel. These desires are increased daily through the celebration of the liturgy, through which the Church seeks to enlighten us by the gospel. Here we shall find the nourishment without guile, which will serve our spiritual growth. The strength gained from this nourishment made the early Christians strong and heroic, and prepared them to be always ready to sacrifice their lives for Christ and their faith.

“Desire the rational milk without guile.” Holy Mother the Church offers this milk of doctrine to us. To her Christ gave the commission, “Going therefore, teach ye all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19 f.). The doctrine of the Church consists in those things “whatsoever I have commanded you”; it is the uncontaminated doctrine of Christ. For this reason Christ gave her the assurance of His abiding presence: “Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world” (Matt. 28:20). For this purpose He sends the Holy Spirit, the “spirit of truth” (John 15:26): “But when He, the Spirit of Truth is come He will teach you all truth. . . . He shall receive of Mine and shall show it to you” (John 16:13 f.). “He shall abide with you and shall be in you” (John 14:17). Christ assures the Church that “He that heareth you, heareth Me” (Luke 10:16).

Error is rampant in the world. False doctrines and divergent schools of thought seek to lead men away from God, from Christ, and from the gospel. They alienate men from the Church and leave them miserable. We are assured that we are

in possession of the unadulterated truth as long as we cling to the Church, to her teachings, and her principles, and her liturgy. "Desire the rational milk without guile."

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O Lord our God, to make the most holy mysteries, which Thou hast given us to ensure our salvation, a remedy for us both now and in the future. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Postcommunion.)

THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

Our holy faith

1. During the second week after Easter the liturgy lays great emphasis on the virtue of faith. "And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith . . . [in the fact] that Jesus is the Son of God" (Epistle). In the Gospel the Lord reproaches the apostle Thomas for his unbelief. Thomas, falling on his knees before the Lord, confesses, "My Lord and my God." Jesus replies, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." The Communion prayer resumes the theme of the Gospel and calls out to us when we receive the Lord, "Put in thy hand and know the place of the nails, and be not faithless, but believing."

2. As newborn babes, yet wise by reason of faith! In the measure in which we acquire a childlike spirit, our faith becomes proportionately stronger and more perfect. Christianity is founded on faith. Faith is the beginning of salvation and the basis of all Christian thought. All Christian reasoning, all Christian values, all Christian undertakings, all Christian life, spring from the virtue of faith. Faith includes more than the mere conviction that God, the Supreme Being, exists. Faith requires that we accept and conform our lives to all those things which God has commanded us to accept. We must accept all His commands on faith, simply because God has spoken. By faith we make an offering of our whole being to God and subject ourselves to Him in the spirit of sacrifice. We

make a voluntary renunciation of our own understanding and accept all that God reveals, out of a deep veneration for His infallibility. It is indeed no small matter to consecrate oneself to God as a sacrifice, together with all one's thoughts and desires; yet we do this by our faith. We do even more. To believe in God means to make Him our highest and greatest goal, the goal upon which we center all our thought and actions, all of our strivings, our whole life. We make ourselves and our whole life completely dependent on Him, and strive with all the strength of our heart and mind to serve Him. To believe in God means that a man must give himself and all that he is over to God and serve Him with a service that can be rendered to God alone. Only he can believe in God in this manner who possesses the Christian faith; and he who possesses this faith must make God the center of all his thoughts and desires. He must subject himself to God, to His every word and command, to His inspirations and guidance. Do we have such a faith?

"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." But our faith in God has various degrees and stages of perfection. We should strive to attain to perfect faith, that "which overcometh the world." We have reached the first degree of faith when we live according to the maxims of the faith. "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself" (Jas. 2:17). He who knows the will of his master, but fails to carry it out, he who has the name of the Lord on his lips, but dishonors Him by his deeds, is worthy of greater punishment than he who has learned nothing of the faith. "Not everyone that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

To be joyful and free in our faith is the second degree of faith. He who lives by faith as the child in the house of his father, as the free man in his home, feels nothing of the burden of faith which the slave finds so onerous. The realms of faith become for him a familiar region, and he moves about in the light of faith with a naturalness and ease which others would

find difficult or impossible. Even the regulations of spirit and heart, which faith imposes, become familiar and do not become burdensome.

To live by faith is the third and final stage in our growth in faith. Faith lives in us, and we live by faith. "In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of my heart" (Ps. 39:9). Those who live according to faith need make no laborious search to discover the will of God. Without compulsion and, as it were, by instinct they sense God's presence and recognize the hand of God in everything that befalls them, be it sweet or bitter, welcome or unwelcome. They have no need of artificial means for placing themselves in the presence of God. They feel themselves in the presence of God even when they are engaged in the most absorbing work, or when they are surrounded on all sides by men of the world. Their life, both day and night, is a burning flame of love that consumes them in the service of God. Faith is no longer something exterior to them, but becomes the very soul of their life. It is this kind of faith that makes saints. Once we possess such faith, we readily overcome the world with its lusts and its self-love, and we allow ourselves no rest until we have complied with every law and every counsel which faith presents to us to arouse our love and our generosity.

3. Because we live by faith and according to the rules of faith, the world attacks us who are Christians. The world cannot endure the spirit which inspires us as Christians, because our world is in the realm of faith. The knowledge of it is not "found in the land of them that live in delights" (Job 28:13). The more we are misunderstood and abused by the world, the more we ought to thank God, for persecution is a good indication that God has endowed us with His spirit.

We must treasure and love the faith with which we were filled at the time of our baptism. We must not rest until it has pervaded our very flesh and blood, until we live by faith alone.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who have celebrated the paschal solemnity, may by Thy bounty show forth its effects in our life and conduct. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

The sacrament of penance

1. "At that time, when it was late that same day [Easter Sunday], the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (Gospel).

The sacrament of penance is the gift of the risen Christ to His Church. St. Jerome calls it a "second plank after our shipwreck," and Tertullian refers to it as "an arduous baptism." It is a marvelous means of salvation for those baptized.

2. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." Christ sacrificed even His life for the salvation of men. Could He have done more for us? Should not the remembrance of the crucified One and the memory of His death for us inspire us with so great a love that we could never sin again? We have, moreover, the strength and the grace provided by the Eucharist, through which He gives Himself to us for the nourishment of our souls. Does not the Eucharist have the power to sanctify us so that we can overcome all sin, so that sin can no longer have any part in us? But Christ, knowing the weakness and the wickedness of men, approaches His Church on Easter night and provides her with yet another means for the remis-

sion of sin, for the healing of the wounds caused by sin, and for strengthening us against sin. He gives us the sacrament of forgiveness, of mercy, of reconciliation, a means whereby we may regain peace with God and with ourselves. "Peace be to you." This holy sacrament is His Easter greeting to His apostles, to His Church, and to us. He thus provides a new proof of His love and solicitude for us. He wishes to enrich us with grace and grant us forgiveness, even when we have been unfaithful.

"Peace be to you." He sets no limits to the number of times we may receive this sacrament, for He knows only too well our weakness and our instability. Neither does He set any limit on His mercy in this sacrament. There is no sin, however frightful, which cannot be forgiven. Even venial sins and the daily minor failings of which we are guilty, are matter for this sacrament. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." Christ's mercy in giving us this sacrament shows us how concerned He is that we become incorporated in Him through baptism and the Eucharist. He wills that we be free from all sin and live as pure children of God. He desires that we begin a new life, free of all sin or infidelity to the Father. Would that we might carry out His designs!

Not only are the various mortal sins which we commit forgiven and destroyed by this sacrament, but also our venial sins and faults. Christ wills that through baptism and the Eucharist we become so firmly implanted in Him that we are freed from all sin and become children of God. He wills that we begin to live a new life that will be free from the slightest fault, and avoid even the smallest infidelity to His Heavenly Father. It is for this reason that the Church insists that all those who dedicate themselves to the quest of perfection such as priests and religious, receive this sacrament and its graces every week. She looks upon the "frequent" reception of this sacrament as an excellent means of acquiring Christian perfection. "By it genuine self-knowledge is increased, Christian humility grows, bad habits are corrected, spiritual neglect and tepidity are resisted,

the conscience is purified, the will is strengthened, a salutary self-control is attained, and grace is increased in virtue of the Sacrament itself" (Pius XII, Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, Part III, 88). If the Sacrament can accomplish all these things for us, how zealously we should use it.

3. We acknowledge with gratitude and faith the precious Easter gift which the Lord has given us in the sacrament of penance. We recognize the apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests, as having the commission and the power to forgive or retain our sins. They are, therefore, placed over us as judges of our conscience. Because of these Easter gifts we subject ourselves in obedience and with confidence to the priests who have been placed over us. From them we seek and receive the forgiveness of our faults.

Since the Lord receives us in the sacrament of His mercy with so much love and solicitude, it is fitting that we respond to His advances with a like generosity. Knowing the importance and the efficacy of this sacrament, we should be eager to use it for the salvation of our soul and the enrichment of our spiritual life.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who have celebrated the paschal solemnity, may by Thy bounty show forth its effects in our life and conduct. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

The spirit of faith

1. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Thomas must see to believe. The Lord deals with this weakness in His disciple with a condescension that is striking. Nevertheless He does not fail to admonish him, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (Gospel).

2. Thomas is the representative of that vast throng of men who refuse to accept the testimony of the gospel or of the Church. They accept nothing but that which they can see with their own eyes and touch with their own hands. Thomas is also typical of all those who, though they accept the testimony of the gospel and of the Church, yet in practical life never rise above a purely natural level in their thinking and in their outlook on life. They recite the Creed with the Church, but they lack the spirit of faith. Many Christians and many Catholics have such an attitude. They reason, judge, speak, and act in exactly the same manner as the world about them thinks and acts. Practically speaking, they have no higher ideal than any other man of the world. They are satisfied with health, prosperity, a livelihood, an interesting occupation, and amusing pastimes. When they encounter anything unpleasant or when they suffer hardships, they look about for a scapegoat, disclaiming all personal responsibility, and exhaust all the means at hand to escape from that which is hard or unpleasant. There is nothing supernatural in their point of view or in their manner of acting.

The majority of Christians and of Catholics who subscribe fervently to the creed of the Church, allow themselves to be governed by worldly considerations, by the opinion of their superiors, or by the claims of their worldly occupations, or the needs of their human career. Their actions are governed by human respect; they are swayed by any emotion; and they are covered with a mantle of self-love and pride. Even those consecrated to God and living behind the walls of the cloister are often ruled by purely natural motives far more than they themselves suspect. More than they are aware of it, their actions are governed by self-love in its manifold forms, rather than by motives of faith and the love of God. They live lives that are far from being supernatural. They do not live, as they should, by faith, with their gaze fixed on Christ, on God, and on His holy will. For this reason they experience so much unrest, so much uncertainty, such instability, weakness, and emptiness

in their spiritual life. "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

"Know also this, that in the last days shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasure more than of God; having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:1-5). We are tempted to believe that the evil times described here by St. Paul have already arrived. Even in the very strongholds of piety, many pious and spiritual persons have become worldly and exert themselves only in the search for pleasure. They measure life in terms of the senses. Theirs is a piety which is little more than a continuous interplay of sensations and emotions. Such piety naturally shrinks from difficulties, exertions, and self-sacrifice. It occupies itself with spiritual things, even with prayer and the sacraments, only as a means of satisfying its emotional needs. The soul is thus deprived of the benefits it should reap from these exercises. The reward of such effort is merely a desolate spiritual dryness and an enduring emptiness. "One encounters scarcely a single person," says St. John of the Cross, "who escapes this tyranny of the senses."

Such souls barely scratch the surface of life; superficiality rules their life of prayer, their work, and their fulfillment of the duties of their state of life. They cannot rise to God, for they are bound to earth by fetters of superficiality. They can never look into the depths, because their attention is always distracted by trivialities. They are warped and become such slaves of minor details that their condition is often ridiculous. They are cast about from side to side, and become continually weaker. They multiply their prayers, increase their efforts and their spiritual exercises; but all this serves merely to dissipate their strength and squander their energy. They have "an appearance indeed of godliness, but deny the power thereof." Such miserable, unfruitful souls have built their spiritual edi-

fice on feelings and emotions rather than on the spirit and the firm foundation of faith. Since they live without having fixed their gaze on God and His love, since they neglect His providence and His will, there is no depth to their piety, no strength or security or stability in their souls. "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

3. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith" (Epistle). The spirit of faith makes us consider everything we encounter in the light of God and His divine providence. It makes us accept everything as coming from His eternal solicitude and by His divine appointment. Faith gives us enlightenment, solidity, understanding, and peace. "Blessed are they that . . . have believed."

That new life which we received at Easter (that is, when we were baptized), we should strive to increase daily through the celebration of Mass and the devout reception of Holy Communion. We may enrich our spiritual life further by holy reading and the practice of other spiritual exercises. Even when we have done these things, we shall yet remain far from our goal, which is to live entirely by faith. Only when we have reached that goal will we be able to truly celebrate "the paschal solemnity" (Collect).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who have celebrated the paschal solemnity, may by Thy bounty show forth its effects in our life and conduct. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Second Sunday after Easter

1. Since the joyful return of the alleluia in the Mass of Holy Saturday, we have been celebrating the Easter season (*tempus paschale*). It is a period in which the Church rejoices in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and in the perfect redemp-

tion consummated by the descent of the Holy Ghost. In this holy season we consider ourselves as having risen with Christ. We are redeemed, freed from all sin and from all earthly servitude. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3:1 f.).

2. Formerly it was the custom of the Christians of Rome to assemble in the church of St. Peter on the second Sunday after Easter. This is the Sunday of the Good Shepherd, who, after His resurrection and before His ascension into heaven, appointed Peter to be the visible shepherd of His sheep and His lambs. In spirit we gather today in St. Peter's, safe under the protection of the Good Shepherd. In the Introit we sing His praise with grateful hearts, remembering all that He has done for us by His death, His resurrection, and by sharing His divine life with us through holy baptism. "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord. . . . Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just" (Introit).

The Prince of the Apostles, in whose church we assemble today, tells us what Christ did for us: "Dearly beloved: Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps. . . . [He] bore our sins in His body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice" (Epistle). To this prevailing thought of the Christian at Easter time, St. Peter joins the concept of Christ as the Good Shepherd, "by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (Epistle).

Christ introduces Himself in the Gospel as the Good Shepherd. "I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. . . . I am the Good Shepherd, and I know Mine, and Mine know Me. . . . I lay down My life for My sheep" (Gospel). We acknowledge gratefully Christ's description of Himself, as we recall what we have experienced during Holy Week. We acknowledge this blessed announce-

ment of Christ with a firm *Credo*: "I believe." He is indeed the true shepherd, the Savior of our souls. In the Offertory we cry out to Him, "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day," that I may be united to Thee; "and in Thy name I will lift up my hands." Thus in spirit we make our offering, and bring our gifts, and subject our will to Christ, the Good Shepherd, so that we may follow in His footsteps to the altar of sacrifice.

3. In the Consecration the Good Shepherd will be personally present on our altar with His self-sacrificing love. There He will renew in a mystical manner the offering of His life for His sheep, and will confer on them the benefits and the fruit of His death. "I lay down My life for My sheep." Here in the Mass these words are realized. "I know Mine, and Mine know Me." It is a recognition full of efficacious and life-giving grace. Through the instrumentality of this most sacred offering, all mercy, all grace, and all supernatural life come to us.

"And Mine know Me." In the Mass we renounce all false gods and all perversity, and join ourselves to Christ in a most intimate union, that we may become part of His sacrifice and thus become one with Him in spirit and in intention. Having been united with Him, we live His life and follow the path on which He has gone before us. Thus we shall be led to green pastures in the sacrificial banquet of Holy Communion. He is the Good Shepherd who nourishes us with His glorified substance and makes Himself entirely ours. "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My sheep, and Mine know Me" (Communion). Could He unite Himself to us in a more intimate and loving way than He has done?

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Jesus, the Good Shepherd

1. Easter, the day of the Lord's victory over sin and hell, the day of our resurrection to a new life (through baptism and penance), today receives a new meaning. The risen Lord is the

Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. With her heart filled with gratitude, the Church recognizes Jesus as the Good Shepherd. "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord, alleluia; by the word of the Lord [I baptize thee; I absolve thee from thy sins; this is My body, and this is My blood] were the heavens [the redeemed] made, alleluia, alleluia. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just [the redeemed, the Church]" (Introit).

2. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep; and the hireling flieth because he is a hireling and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine, and Mine know Me, as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for My sheep" (Gospel).

The mark by which the good shepherd is to be recognized is his selfless zeal for the welfare of the flock that has been entrusted to him. His zeal makes him willing to sacrifice his life for his flock. It is otherwise with the hireling, who works for a fee, for he is a hireling whose own the sheep are not. When he sees the enemy, the wolf, coming, he does not place himself on guard. He will not risk his own life; he assures first his own safety, for he lacks a personal interest in the flock. There is still another mark by which the true shepherd may be recognized. He knows personally each of the sheep committed to his care. For him the individual sheep is not just one among many, as would be the case with the hireling. There exists between the individual soul and Jesus a union so personal and so intimate and trusting, that the union of the Father and Son in the Blessed Trinity is mirrored in it. The mutual understanding and love of the Father and Son are reflected also by this relationship between the Good Shepherd and His flock. Blessed are we, the baptized, the children of the Church, who have been entrusted to Jesus, the Good Shepherd. He lays

down His life for His sheep. He guides each one of them, cares for them, and loves them with an intimate love, as though each sheep were His only care. What unquestioning faith and confidence we should have in the Good Shepherd!

“The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep.” As a matter of fact He is so concerned for our salvation that He descended from heaven, subjected Himself to suffering, and became obedient unto death for our sake. How zealously He has sought us out! He comes daily in the Mass in search of us; seeking us out, He enters our hearts each day in Holy Communion. He lives and prays for us unceasingly in the solitude of the tabernacle. He inspires us and enlightens us without ceasing, and is continually knocking at the door of our hearts with His grace. He consoles us, reproaches us, delights us, admonishes us, allows us to fall, and then raises us up; He protects us from ourselves and from our own evil inclinations, desires, and passions. “I am the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine.” This assurance sustains us; for He is the Good Shepherd of my soul, and I am His chief concern. He knows me, all that is in me, both the good and the evil. His eyes follow me wherever I wander. When my way is through briars or painful thorns, He helps me; when I am in need, when I am troubled or in darkness, He comes to me. His heart beats for me, and He is always near me, even when I am obliged to go forth into a hostile world, and when I cry out in vain for love and sympathy.

3. “I am the Good Shepherd.” He has risen; He, the Good Shepherd who seeks me so lovingly, lives. The man who possesses this living faith can never be poor, or homeless, or alone. There can never again be for him a sterile period, either in his heart or in his work. Let us live with the liturgy in the spirit of faith.

“I know Mine, and Mine know Me.” Where? In the offering of true love. Only the spirit of sacrificial love can build a bridge between the Shepherd and His sheep. Only when love has been purified of all selfishness, can a true interior and vital union,

based on perfect mutual understanding, be realized between the Shepherd and His sheep. No one can remain faithful unless he bears the imprint of the Lord's wounds in his heart. That is the mystery of the true shepherd, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

O God, who by the humility of Thy Son hast raised up a fallen world, grant to Thy faithful people abiding joy; that those whom Thou hast delivered from the perils of eternal death, Thou mayest cause to enjoy eternal happiness. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

Jesus, the Good Shepherd

1. "You were as sheep going astray. But you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (Epistle). What a wonderful Easter message!

2. "But you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls." Through baptism you have found your way back to the shepherd in the Church. You were without guidance, without suitable pasture, and destined for perdition. At Easter, through the holy sacraments of baptism and penance, you were restored to the Good Shepherd. He directs and guides you with divine wisdom and love; He leads you without error; He directs you with ineffable goodness and strength. How fortunate you are in having found your way back at Easter to the Good Shepherd of your soul! You are fortunate to be placed under His direction and guidance, for those who follow His direction and guidance cannot go astray or be lost.

He and He alone is able, by His divine power, to defend us against the enemy, however powerful that enemy may be. Neither hell, nor the world, nor the flesh can have any part in us as long as we are under His protection. Any other guide is uncertain and treacherous, and any measures we may take to protect ourselves against such false leadership will lead us to perdition. Only when we subject ourselves to Christ can we

proceed with perfect certitude and assurance. How deceived we are when we depend on any other guide, on our own judgment or our own personal desires, submitting to the rule of our passions! Rather, we must give ourselves to Jesus with complete confidence and with an unshakable trust in Him to whom we have been restored.

Jesus has already trod the path over which He leads His sheep. The Epistle points out the way for us. "Dearly beloved: Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not [to avenge himself], but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly; who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice; by whose stripes you were healed" (Epistle). The path is the way of self-sacrificing love, the way of suffering, the way of perfect submission to the will of the Father in heaven. By this path Jesus reached the glory of His resurrection and His exaltation in heaven. This is the way of salvation; there is no other way.

In the Gospel today Christ assures us that "Mine know Me." They know Him not only in prayer, in the celebration of the liturgy, in spiritual meditation, or in the momentary consolations and sensible graces they receive; they know Him also in practical life, with all its hardships and its many trials and tribulations. They follow in the footsteps of the cross-laden Savior; they follow the Lord who was unjustly condemned and humiliated; they follow Him "who, when He was reviled, did not revile, when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly" (Epistle). These are the true sheep of the divine shepherd.

3. "But you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls." Christ desires to be our shepherd. He guides us by means of His word and His commandments, which are given to us in the holy Gospels. He guides us by the example He gave us during His earthly life, and which He

continues to give unceasingly in the secrecy of the tabernacle and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He guides us by means of the Church, by means of her doctrines and her teaching office, by means of her laws and her commandments, and finally, by means of her priesthood. He guides us who are striving for Christian perfection through the spiritual directors which He provides for us. The more perfectly we submit ourselves to these directors and the more confidently we follow their direction, the more certainty we shall experience that He is "the Good Shepherd." "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke 10:16).

"I am the Good Shepherd." If our faith in Christ as the Good Shepherd, as our leader and protector, were only a living faith, we should live in the consciousness that He is guiding us and protecting us, that He is solicitous for our well-being every instant of our lives. If we could so live, how much more peaceful our lives would be, how free from solicitude! How confidently, how safely, we should pursue our way! How happy we should be knowing that the wisdom, love, and power of the Good Shepherd guide us to the goal of eternal life! Even in the darkest hours we should feel confident. But we are too concerned with ourselves, with our works, and with our miseries. Therefore we become pessimistic and dispirited. O Lord, increase our faith in Thee, our Good Shepherd.

PRAYER

O God, who by the humility of Thy Son hast raised up a fallen world, grant to Thy faithful people abiding joy; that those whom Thou hast delivered from the perils of eternal death, Thou mayest cause to enjoy eternal happiness. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

Jesus, the Good Shepherd

1. "I am the Good Shepherd, alleluia" (Communion). With these words of the Lord the liturgy distributes Holy Com-

munion to the faithful on the second Sunday after Easter: "I am the Good Shepherd, alleluia; and I know My sheep, and Mine know Me, alleluia." He knows and loves us, and we know and love Him in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist and in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

2. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. God could not have conferred on us a more marvelous gift than the Sacrifice of the Mass. In this sacrifice He gives us His very self, a priceless treasure, more desirable than all the riches of the world. By this sacrifice we can bring joy to an eternal and holy God; by it we are enabled to render God a perfect recompense for all that He has done for us. If we had not this holy sacrifice, how could we ever worthily thank and honor God for the forgiveness of our sins? Without it, how would we be able to obtain from Him the graces, the strength, and the light that we need? How could we ever reach our goal of eternal life?

To give us the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Son of God must first descend from heaven and assume our human nature. After thirty years spent in secluded preparation, He goes forth to seek us, to search out His wandering sheep, that He may rescue and redeem them. He accomplishes this redemption through fasting, prayer, sacrifice, and through hardships of all kinds, and finally through the sacrifice of His own body and blood. All this He does that He may leave us the Holy Eucharist. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1) through the institution of the Holy Eucharist. "This is My body. . . . This is My blood. . . . This do in commemoration of Me." The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass embraces the entire life of Christ: His suffering, His subjection to His Father, His love for us, His merits, and His prayers. All this is brought down upon the altar in the Holy Sacrifice and becomes entirely ours. We in turn offer it up to the heavenly Father as a sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, petition, and satisfaction.

"I am the Good Shepherd. . . . I lay down My life for My sheep." In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass I offer Myself up for

them with the same love, with the same intense longing for their redemption, with which I offered Myself up on the cross. "I am the Good Shepherd."

The sacrificial banquet of Holy Communion. "Alleluia, alleluia. The disciples recognized the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread." In this Alleluia verse the liturgy has in mind the two disciples who met our Lord on the way to Emmaus. While walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on Easter night, they are discussing the events of the last few days, and Jesus overtakes them on the way. He joins them, but they do not recognize Him. They do not know Him even when He explains the Scriptures to them. Only when they are seated at table and He takes bread in His hands, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them to eat, do they recognize Him. We are these disciples. We, too, recognize Him in the breaking of bread, in the reception of Holy Communion. Thus, by becoming the food of our souls, He shows His great love for us. He could not exercise His mission on earth as the pastor of our souls in a manner more perfect.

"I know My sheep, and Mine know Me" (Communion). They know their shepherd in the grace received in Holy Communion. Each day they receive the Holy Sacrament, and each day they do so with a purer and more fervent heart. Through the reception of Holy Communion they daily kindle in their hearts the fire of love for Christ. He becomes all things to them. They recognize Him and love Him in His person, in His sacraments, in His doctrines, in His commandments, and in His members. They recognize Him and love Him in days of prosperity as well as in days of adversity, trial, and suffering.

3. "I know My sheep." Yes, Lord, you know all things. You know me, not with a knowledge that is cold and impersonal, but with a love that is full of compassion and understanding. You love me with a heart that is loving, self-sacrificing, and filled with unspeakable condescension and goodness. You know me in the Blessed Eucharist.

"And Mine know Me." O Lord, that I might truly know

You, the Good Shepherd, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in Holy Communion, in Thy tabernacle! If I could only know You perfectly! If I could only bring myself to recognize You in Your pastoral mission and in the trials that each day brings! If only I could conceive You as the one great reality and allow myself to be completely governed by that knowledge! "And Mine know Me," and love Me, hearken to Me, look to Me for guidance, depend on Me, believe in Me, and offer themselves up for Me.

"O God, my God, for Thee do I watch at break of day; and in Thy name I will lift up my hands, alleluia" (Offertory). I fly to You and look up to You at the break of day, bringing You the offering of my prayers, my adoration, my works, and my sufferings. To Thee, the Good Shepherd, I subject all the powers and movements of my soul.

PRAYER

The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment. He hath converted my soul. He hath led me on the paths of justice for His own name's sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me, Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly it is. And Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days. (Psalm 22.)

WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

The Divine Goodness

1. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Introit). The sacred liturgy cries out today in admiration at the goodness of God. The very purpose and end of the creation of the universe was to communicate the divine goodness to creatures. No mere creature, of course, is capable of receiving the full measure of the divine goodness, and no mere finite being is capable of

reflecting all the beauty of God, yet "the earth is full of the goodness of God." But perhaps the goodness of God is more perfectly reflected by the diffusion of the infinite perfection of the Creator among many creatures. This would no doubt account for the staggering variety so evident in the universe. By the prodigal communication of His goodness to His creatures, the divine Artist gives them a faint notion of His infinite perfection and beauty.

2. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, alleluia; by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit). The story of the creation of the world is a beautiful story. Why the universe was created we know; when it was created we can only conjecture. Faith assures us that the world did not exist from all eternity; the world is not coeternal with God; it is His creature and came into being in time. Many modern scientific discoveries are taken by their discoverers as proofs from reason of the beginning of the world at some definite time. While it may be that the age of the universe is indicated by geological strata and similar evidence, this evidence is only an indication and not a valid proof from reason. Neither the eternity of the world nor its beginning in time, St. Thomas tells us, can be proved from reason. Since God's creative action was free, and since He existed from all eternity, He could have created from all eternity, or He could have created in time. Whether the world was created from all eternity or was created in time, does not change the fact that it was created, and that it was created to reflect the goodness and beauty of God. The sacred liturgy is not much concerned with the question of when the world was created; it leaves that to the scientist and the philosopher to discuss. It is fully occupied with the thought of the goodness of God in filling the world with His divine perfection. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

3. "I am the good shepherd." Perhaps no more striking figure could have been chosen to express the goodness of God as manifested in the incarnation of the Son of God, than that of the good shepherd. Our Lord was accustomed to choose figures of speech and illustrations which could be easily grasped by

the people to whom He preached. The picture of the shepherd caring for his sheep on the hills of Palestine was a familiar one to the people of that day. There is something very charming about the idea of a man caring tenderly for a group of foolish, errant, improvident animals such as sheep. The shepherd by his very nature is far superior to the animals he cares for. It is an act of great condescension for him to devote his time and his labor to the welfare of his sheep. But what our Lord was trying to tell us was that God is like that. He stands infinitely above His creatures, and yet there is no limit to the solicitude He has for them.

The extent of the solicitude of the Good Shepherd, Christ, for His human sheep, is outlined for us by St. Paul in the Epistle: "Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree: that we being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray: but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (Epistle). But solicitude on the part of the Shepherd is not enough. The sheep must respond to this solicitude with faith and confidence in His concern for their salvation. Even God cannot save us unless we cooperate with Him. This is true also of the bishops and priests appointed by Christ to carry on His work in this world. The bishops and priests too, are solicitous for the salvation of their flocks. But they must have the cooperation of the people or their efforts will be in vain.

PRAYER

May this holy oblation, O Lord, ever draw down upon us Thy saving blessing; that it may perfect in virtue what it represents in mystery. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

The Good Shepherd

1. "I am the good shepherd" (Gospel). In the homily for the third nocturn of the divine office for this Sunday, St. Gregory

tells us that "The good shepherd laid down His life for His sheep that He might change His body and blood into our Sacrament, and that He might satisfy with the nourishment of His own flesh, the sheep which He had redeemed" (Homily of the third nocturn).

2. Just why did Christ wish to remain on earth under the appearance of bread and wine? Certainly He did wish to nourish our souls with the grace received in this sacrament. But He also had other reasons. By means of the Eucharist Christ found a means of transcribing all time and all space. Through the mystery of the Eucharist He provided a means whereby He could go on living and working among men just as He had done during His earthly career. Through this sacrament Christ continues and repeats all the acts of His private and public life. Just as He was once born in a little stable outside the sleeping hamlet of Bethlehem, so He is reborn each day on His altars throughout the world. Christmas is repeated each day in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Perhaps one might say that the second important event in the life of Christ was His manifestation of Himself to the world in the visit of the Magi. We are told that these Holy Wise Men from the East came seeking the new born King whose star they had seen, and that they found Him in the manger where He had been laid by the virginal hands of His Blessed Mother. Filled with joy they entered the stable and offered Him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This event is repeated now too, a thousand times a day, for the wise men of the world still come in search of Him, and they find Him where He has been laid by the hands of a virginal Priesthood, in the tabernacles of our altars. The gifts that they bring Him are the same: the gold of their love, the incense of their prayer, and the myrrh of their repentent hearts.

Perhaps nowhere does Christ so clearly demonstrate that He wishes to continue His role as the Good Shepherd as in His life in the Blessed Sacrament. One of the Evangelists says of Him, "He went about doing good." This would still be an

excellent summary of what Christ does in the Eucharist. Just as He once mingled with the crowds in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and the cities and towns of Palestine, so today he goes about searching out the halt, the lame, the sick, the sorrowing and the dying in the great cities and the small hamlets of the world. There is not a day of the year, nor an hour of the day when He is not being carried in the arms of His priests to visit the sick, the sorrowing and the dying. Sometimes at the favorite shrines of His Blessed Mother, such as Lourdes, Fatima, Sainte Anne de Beaupré, He still works the same physical miracles which He once worked in Palestine. But more often, daily even, He works spiritual miracles through His sacraments, restoring spiritual sight to those who have been blinded by the sophistries of the world, the power of spiritual hearing to those who have long been deaf to the voice of their uneasy consciences, and the power of contrite speech to sinners so that they can fall on their knees before His representatives and say, "Father, I have sinned before heaven and thee." Many a Magdalen still comes stumbling to His feet, disheveled and disillusioned, and is sent away with the same kind admonition, "Go now, and sin no more."

3. Principally, of course, the Eucharist is a representation and a repetition of His sacrificial death on the cross. The victim of this sacrifice is the same, and the principal Priest is the same. It is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, offering Himself again to His Heavenly Father. But we are assured in the Canon of the Mass that this sacrifice is offered "calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, and also His Resurrection from hell, and also His glorious Ascension into heaven."

For almost two thousand years now, men have been trying to bury Christ in a tomb of stone. But Christ will not stay buried, for through the mystery of the Eucharist He has found a means of rising from the dead. We may well imagine the chagrin, the surprise, perhaps even the despair of the Scribes

and Pharisees when they learned that Christ had actually risen from the dead. When they were seeking a charge on which He could be put to death, the High Priest had told them, "If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation" (John 11:48). They feared Christ would cause them to lose the petty marble palaces in which they were living; they feared He would cut off the tribute of gold and silver they were collecting from the poor; they feared that He would arouse the Romans and endanger their limited national sovereignty. And now they knew the truth. The only palace in which Christ had ever wanted to dwell was the palace of the human soul; and the only kingdom He had ever wanted to rule was the kingdom of the human heart; and the only tribute He had ever sought was the tribute of human love. Pontius Pilate and the Scribes and the Pharisees are gone now, and sometime soon, all those who are still trying to drive Christ from the world He created, and to bury Him in a tomb, will all be gone. But Christ will be here fulfilling through the Eucharist that promise He made so long ago, "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

PRAYER

O God, who in this wonderful sacrament hast left us a memorial of Thy passion, grant us we beseech Thee so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy Body and Blood that we may ever perceive within us the fruit of Thy redemption. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

Subjection to authority

1. "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (Epistle). Although St. Peter in the Epistle is urging all of his converts to be subject to legitimate authority, it is probable that he had in mind particularly the slaves who had been converted to Christianity. Slaves newly

converted to Christ were apt to misunderstand the Christian concept of liberty, freedom, and equality. Writing to the Galatians St. Paul had asserted that among Christians "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). But neither St. Paul nor St. Peter meant to deny that these differences did exist in fact. They meant that once a man was incorporated into the mystical body of Christ, he ought to act as if they did not exist when dealing with fellow Christians. But the apostles were realists, and although they may have felt that all men ought to be free and equal, and that there ought not be any distinction between masters and slaves among Christians, they knew that this principle might not always be easy to enforce. St. Peter was instructing his converts how they ought to react when the ideal of Christian equality and justice could not be enforced.

2. "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (Epistle). The Christian slave might complain that his membership in the Church had not alleviated the harsh conditions of his life. St. Peter points to the example of Christ who was in all things to be the model of the Christian. Christ, he says, did not deserve to suffer either, for "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," but nevertheless he was subjected to persecution and injustice. But the Christian is expected to be a follower of Christ, who "when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." If then Christians feel that they have not achieved the liberty and the equality they long for, they are to remember that Christ had come not to right all the wrongs and injustices in the world, but to give an "example that you should follow His steps."

Men often complain against God when they suffer what they consider undeserved misfortunes. They think that God ought to interfere and punish injustice and wickedness here and now. They are like the apostles James and John; they want to call down fire from heaven and destroy those who appear to them

to act improperly. This is the spirit of the world, but it is not the spirit of Christ. "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save" (Luke 9:55). Christ made it clear that all injustice will be rectified eventually, but that for the present He wishes to allow the cockle to grow among the wheat. When the proper time comes God will deal with injustice in His own way.

3. But it is not only the slave who is to be subject to authority, and to recognize that mistreatment patiently borne is a service acceptable to God and meritorious for man. Obedience to legitimate authority does not depend on the worthiness of the official exercising authority. Christ Himself had commanded His disciples to obey the officials of the Jewish Church, even though they might not be personally worthy of the office they held. He had Himself given the example. He was obedient first of all to His parents. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke 2:52). He observed the ritual and the laws of the Jewish Church, for He Himself had established them. He obeyed the laws of the Roman authorities and paid the tribute they demanded.

The Christian, then, is to follow in the steps of Christ. He need not expect that he will always be treated justly even by other Christians placed in authority over him. If he is not, following in the steps of Christ, and imitating His example, he is not to revile when he is reviled, he is not to threaten when he suffers unjustly, for "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps." If the Christian is prepared to imitate the humility of Christ, he may expect eventually to be delivered from the perils of eternal death, and to enjoy the endless happiness of heaven with Christ.

PRAYER

O God, who by the humility of Thy Son, hast raised up a fallen world, grant to Thy faithful people abiding joy: that those whom Thou hast delivered from the perils of eternal death, Thou mayest cause to enjoy endless happiness. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

Patience in suffering

1. "Who when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not" (Epistle). Patience in suffering and the disposition to forgive the persecutor, have always been the true mark of the great servants of Christ. St. Stephen, the first great martyr of the Church imitated Christ in begging for forgiveness for his murderers. He stood staunchly for the truth, even unto death as Christ had done; and although he knew that his assertion that he saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" would be used as an excuse for his murder, he would not deny the truth. Although he knew that he was being unjustly put to death, like his divine Master he could exclaim, "Lord, do not lay this sin against them" (Acts 7:60).

This disposition to forgive did not die with St. Stephen, but has continued to be one of the most characteristic virtues of the saint. We read in the life of St. Benedict as related in the Dialogues of St. Gregory, that he was continuously and severely persecuted by a delinquent priest who lived in the neighborhood of the monastery. Finally, in order to protect the virtue and the vocations of his disciples, St. Benedict decided to abandon the site of his monastery and move to another location. He and his monks had hardly left their monastery when word was brought that the persecutor had died suddenly. Contrary to the expectation of the messenger who brought the news, St. Benedict broke out in loud lamentations that his enemy had died suddenly and had not had an opportunity to repent. The saints see so much more clearly than we the relative unimportance of the hardships and injustices we suffer in this world, and the importance before all else of the sinner's being converted and repenting of his sins. How differently we act sometimes! How long and how persistently we harbor grudges in our hearts against those who have offended us. How difficult

we find it to forgive freely and from our hearts. Yet we proclaim ourselves to be Christians and to practice all the Christian virtues. Do we forget that our Lord told us that if we expect our prayers to be heard, and our sacrifices to be pleasing in the sight of God, we must, if our brother has anything against us, leave our sacrifice at the altar, and go first and make peace with our brother? (Matt. 5:23.)

Nor is the disposition to forgive our enemies peculiar only to the saints and martyrs of the ancient Church; nor should we expect it to be, for the truth Christ preached was eternal, and if His disciples were commanded to forgive their enemies in His day, that command is still binding. When the Jesuit martyr, Father Pro was executed in Mexico some years ago, he was asked by his executioner if he had anything he wished to do, or anything he wished to say before the sentence was executed. Father Pro said that there was; he wished to be given an opportunity to pray for his executioners and to give them his blessing before he died. During the persecutions in Spain during the late civil war, one of the religious who was to be put to death by the communists was led to his death with his hands bound. When asked if he had any final request, he too, asked to be allowed to give his blessing to the members of the firing squad. It is said that the officer in charge of the guard untied his hands, and then swiftly struck off the hands of the priest with his sword, and said, "Now, Priest, give them your blessing." The Priest, blood streaming from his mangled wrists, raised his right arm and traced the sign of the cross over the heads of his murderers. This is the true sign of the authentic martyr, the characteristic mark of the true saint of the Church.

2. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree" (Epistle). The redemption of man as accomplished by Christ might have been accomplished in other ways, but none of them would have been as perfect as the way Christ chose. God might have forgiven man outright without requiring any satisfaction for sin. This would have been a splendid manifestation of the

infinite mercy of God, but it would have ignored His infinite justice. God might have refused redemption and forgiveness altogether, and this would have been in complete conformity with His justice, but it would not have satisfied His infinite mercy. Perfect redemption required that both God's mercy and justice be satisfied. Man was in no position to help himself. Any act of satisfaction on his part would only have been of limited and finite value, and would not have been adequate. An act of reparation offered by a divine person would have been adequate, but it would not have been authentic, since it would not have been offered by the offending party. The only possibility of a perfect redemption was for the divine person to become incarnate. Christ, since He was God, could perform acts of infinite value; since he was a human being, He could act in the name of the human race, and offer an act of reparation which would be both adequate and authentic.

3. "By whose stripes you are healed" (Epistle). As when he was speaking of the duty of subjection to superiors, so here St. Paul seems to be addressing himself to the servants and the slaves of his time. Slaves were often cruelly treated by their masters in ancient times, and stripes from the scourge were familiar to every slave. The slave understood that the stripes he received from his master were in payment for some offense he had committed. He would understand then, that the debt that was due to almighty God for sin, could be paid by the stripes Christ received.

Since St. Paul points out to us that everything in Christ's life, and especially his conduct during His passion should be an example for the Christian, and that the Christian should follow in His footsteps, it might be well for us to remember that we can satisfy for our personal sins by bearing patiently the sufferings that come to us in this world. Much of the misfortune and the suffering we endure in this world is the result of our own foolishness and perversity. Nevertheless, we can offer all of the misfortunes that overtake us in reparation for our sins and for those of our friends and relatives. When sorrow and

suffering trouble us we should offer our trials humbly to God, thus making a feeble attempt to imitate Christ, "who suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (Epistle).

PRAYER

O God, who by the humility of Thy Son hast raised up a fallen world, grant to Thy faithful people abiding joy; that those whom Thou hast delivered from the perils of eternal death, Thou mayest cause to enjoy endless happiness. Amen.

*The Liturgy of the
Third Sunday after Easter*

1. The resurrection leads to the glorification of Christ and to His ascension. In His ascension the words of the Apostle are verified: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11). Likewise that mysterious pronouncement made by Christ after the Last Supper finds its fulfillment in the Ascension: "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). Christ is eager to assure us of His abiding presence among us. He sends us the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, through whom He can be near to us to lead us and guide us. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John 6:64). After the departure of Christ, the apostles and all those who have died and risen with Him in baptism, receive from the Holy Spirit the strength and courage to bear witness to Christ. Filled with this power and light of the Holy Spirit, they are able to overcome the world. They find it possible to endure persecution and

suffering without faltering, and to live in the world and yet to be not of the world. This is the fruit of Easter. The spirit of Easter is the spirit of resurrection by means of baptism. It gives us unconquerable faith in the new powers that are given to us. It makes us conscious of the fact that we are stronger than Satan and sin, stronger than the world, the flesh, and even our own fallen nature. This spirit binds us to Him who, as the victorious conqueror, sits at the right hand of the Father and operates in all those whom He has called to His kingdom. He frees us from all attachment to the world, and directs our thoughts and our desires to where Christ sits at the right hand of His Father and where He has prepared a place for us in the house of His Father. This Easter spirit fills our hearts, and guides and enlightens us in darkness and the necessities of our earthly life, thus preparing us for the baptism of the Spirit on the feast of Pentecost. The Mass for this Sunday must be interpreted in the light of this principle.

2. In the Mass of this Sunday the risen Christ announces for the first time His approaching departure. He is to ascend to His Father, but He must leave us behind in the world with all its dangers. However, the Easter spirit and the Easter light will guide us safely through the dangers and trials of our earthly life. Filled with this Easter spirit, we rejoice at the thought of the departure of Christ, and in spite of the certainty of our separation from Him, we break forth in a joyous Easter song, the Alleluia. "Shout with joy to God all the earth, alleluia; sing ye a psalm to His name, alleluia" (Introit). Ah, would that we were filled and vivified by this Easter spirit! For that grace we pray in the Kyrie and in the Collect: "O God, . . . grant to all those who profess to be Christians the grace to reject those things which are contrary to that name, and to follow such things as are agreeable to it." That is the spirit of Easter, the spirit of baptism, whose marvelous power the Epistle explains. Have we really acquired this spirit? Has Easter really created this spirit and this attitude in our souls? If it has, then the Alleluia verse can be applied to us: "The Lord hath sent

redemption to His people." Then we shall have no fear of that which must be true of every Christian: "It behooved Christ to suffer . . . and so to enter into His glory" (Alleluia).

Now Christ speaks in the Gospel: "A little while, and now you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me. . . . And you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." By means of the Easter spirit we are consoled in the suffering which results from our being thus left behind. Having the Easter spirit, we know that there will be an eventual victory and an eternal resurrection. Through darkness into light! Thus we courageously sing our Credo and our joyful Offertory song: "Praise the Lord, O my soul." Eventually we shall see Him face to face, and we shall possess Him for all eternity.

3. But even now we behold Him daily for a moment, living among us in a mystical manner. Not the senses of man, but only the eyes of faith behold the risen Christ living in our midst at the Consecration. Christ keeps a joyful reunion with us. He gives Himself to us as our offering; He lives and prays with us; He offers Himself to the Father for us and with us, and we offer with Him and through Him. He unites us in His unending sacrificial life, lifts us up in His pure hands, satiates us at Holy Communion with His risen life, and draws our hearts with Him into heaven. "A little while, and you shall not see Me, alleluia; and again a little while, and you shall see Me" (Communion). Indeed this is a blessed reunion which we experience in every Mass. And when the Holy Sacrifice is finished we speak our *Deo Gratias* with hearts filled with gratitude. We have seen the Lord, alleluia.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"A little while"

1. The liturgy already directs our attention to the ascension of the Lord. Still we are not sad at this departure of the Master. We have never felt that the earth was our true home, for our

true home is in heaven. "A little while," and we, too, shall follow Him and there we shall be with Him always.

2. "A little while, and now you shall not see Me" (Gospel). We are to remain on earth for only a short time as pilgrims and strangers. Woe to us, if the earth becomes our home! The more complete our resurrection with Christ, the more we shall find that all our desires are on "the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1); they are fixed on that which is eternal, on our heavenly home. The life which we received from Christ through baptism, penance, and the reception of Holy Communion, requires that we reject firmly but gladly all the pleasures, joys, and riches of the world. It requires of us a life of mortification and renunciation, a continual battle against flesh and blood, against the movements and desires of our fallen nature. It requires that we be continually crucified with Christ by sharing His poverty, His humiliations, and His sufferings. The man who is truly risen with Christ will no longer be understood by the world. His manner of acting, his deeds, his speech, will be misunderstood. Yes, even God Himself has prepared for him humiliations, misunderstandings, sufferings, dryness, bitterness, and sickness. Those who live with Christ find this world an unfriendly place; whereas those who never pray, who pay no heed to God or the Church, often acquire much of this world's goods. Such men laugh and enjoy life. But the Lord reassures us, "a little while." "And again a little while, and you shall see me." Easter and our resurrection with Christ are merely the introduction to our eventual ascension with Him. After our resurrection with Christ we shall return to Him in heaven, and there we shall see Him and share His life and His inheritance. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . You now indeed have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." Only a little while longer and death will come to call us to our home, where there will be no tears and no want. There we shall enjoy happiness, perfect happiness in the possession of God the Father, God the Son,

and God the Holy Ghost. This happiness will be eternal, enjoyed without the fear that anyone can ever take it from us.

3. "It behooved Christ to suffer . . . and so to enter into His glory, alleluia" (Alleluia verse). The law that Christ fulfilled must be fulfilled also by all those who are incorporated in Him. Christ is the key that makes it possible to understand our life. "For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Phil. 1:29). He whom God desires to free from this miserable world with its dangers and its deceptions, and to lead to the possession of eternal goods, must be prepared for privations, misfortunes, and suffering during the "little while" of his life on earth. "But your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

The life of the Christian here on earth is really a life of sorrow, a life of suffering and hardship, a life of renunciation of his own wishes and desires, a life of crucifixion with Christ. Woe be to us if we have no sorrows. How can our sorrow be changed into joy if we have no sorrow? Eternal joy is the daughter of the sorrow which is our portion here on earth. "A little while, . . . and your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

We approach now to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There we renew our resolve to embrace Christian sorrow. There we stir up our desires for sacrifice, for renunciation, for suffering, and for being crucified together with Christ, our victim on the altar. Holy Communion disposes us and gives us the strength to embrace Christian sorrow. The Eucharist is the guarantee of our reunion with Christ. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

PRAYER

O God, who dost show to them that are in error the light of Thy truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who profess to be Christians the grace to reject those things which are contrary to that name, and to follow such things as are agreeable to it. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

"A little while"

1. "Yet a little while," for you are only pilgrims and strangers on earth. The liturgy wishes to center our attention and our efforts on what is right and enduring, and on those things in which we can find true peace. That alone has permanent value.

2. "Yet a little while" (Gospel). Everything that exists on earth is temporal and passing. Our goods, our pleasures and our joys, our health, beauty, strength, youth, wealth, honors, friendships, even our suffering and misfortune, are of short duration and soon pass away. Man's life on earth is like a gust of wind, and his "days [are] measureable" (Ps. 38:6). "All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen because the spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it" (Isa. 40:6 f.). Every creature on earth bears this stamp on its forehead, "yet a little while." Why do we cling to the things of this earth? Why do we rely on them so persistently? What peace can we find in them? We are pilgrims on the earth for "a little while." He who can grasp this truth understands life. He who heeds this warning of our Lord, need fear no evil, for he can weather every storm. He is a pilgrim and a stranger, and is left undisturbed by the uneasy ebb and flow of life. We are "deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastised and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing and possessing all things" (II Cor. 6:8-10).

Only one thing is permanent, our faith and our hope. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you" (Gospel). The true Christian, the Christian who has risen with Christ, lives by faith and in the hope of those things that are to come. "I believe in life everlasting."

"But our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we

look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20 f.). Our Lord is already preparing Himself for His ascension into heaven. "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you; because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be. And whither I go you know, and the way you know. . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:1 ff.). "Heaven and earth shall pass, but My words shall not pass" (Matt. 24:35). "The word of our Lord endureth forever" (Isa. 40:8).

3. Our souls must meditate on our heavenly home that they may become strong. Only when buoyed up by such thoughts will they maintain the proper attitude and become strong enough to overcome the world, to despise worldly things, and remain true to their ideals. By virtue of this strength, Christians live for the future. They long for martyrdom, and with St. Paul they desire "to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). They rejoice at the privilege of being allowed to suffer for their faith. "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed; for that which is of the honor, glory, and power of God, and that which is of His Spirit, resteth on you" (I Pet. 4:14).

"But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ. . . . That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. If by any means I may attain to the resurrection which is from the dead. . . . Forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those things that are before, I press towards the mark

to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:7 ff.).

PRAYER

Grant, O Lord, by these mysteries, that we may learn to subdue our worldly desires and love the things of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Secreta.)

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

Redemption

1. "Alleluia. The Lord hath sent redemption to His people, alleluia." The Mass of the third Sunday after Easter is built on this theme; it is permeated by the spirit of gladness. "Shout with joy to God, all the earth, alleluia. Sing ye a psalm to His name, alleluia" (Introit). Easter, the resurrection of the Lord, is our awakening to a new life of grace. It brings us the promise that we shall one day awaken to a life of glory. "How terrible are Thy works, O Lord!" (Introit.) "Praise the Lord, O my soul. In my life I will praise the Lord" (Offertory).

2. "The Lord hath sent redemption to His people." This deliverance is first of all from the tyranny of the flesh. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul" (Epistle). "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. . . . The wisdom of the flesh is the enemy of God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither can it be. And they who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:12 f., 7 f.). Through the holy sacraments of baptism, penance, and the Eucharist, the Lord has made it possible for us to "refrain from carnal desires." Mary and Joseph are shining examples of unsullied purity and perfect chastity and virginity; they were perfectly detached from all inordinate worldly desires. They overcame the unruly tendencies toward pride, impatience, anger, envy, self-love, and self-seeking. Their lives were pure and devoted to the love of God and of Christ. Their one concern in

life was to do the will of God and what was pleasing to Him. They were victorious over the desires and the movements of the flesh. They were truly redeemed.

"The Lord hath sent redemption to His people." God has given us also the power to overcome our lower sensual nature, our passions and our evil inclinations. We are redeemed. Though by ourselves we are weak and helpless, we are yet able to overcome our evil inclinations and to conquer in the struggle for purity and holiness. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Ah, had we but the deep living faith so evident in the liturgy of today's Mass! "The Lord hath sent redemption to His people, alleluia."

"Have your conversation good among the gentiles." That is the admonition given by St. Peter in the Epistle. In truth, "you are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk, then, as children of the light" (Eph. 5:8). "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16); that is, may they learn to know God and Christ and be led to them. A holy mission indeed! "For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." The Epistle further commands us explicitly to obey our legitimate rulers: "Be ye subject, therefore, to every human creature for God's sake." Christian freedom does not release us from the authority of the state or the Church, or from the obligations of our state of life. Furthermore, this Epistle admonishes us to honor everyone and to practice fraternal charity: "Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king." Finally we are commanded to be subject to authority, whether that authority treat us justly or unjustly: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy." How diligently Joseph and Mary followed such a life of perfect submission! They feared God, prayed, rendered perfect obedience externally and internally to legitimate authority, were humbly subject to all men, often under the most trying circumstances. Such a life of

submission is the fruit of Easter, the fruit of baptism, of the Eucharist, and of the grace we received through our resurrection with Christ. Why should not this life be possible to me? "The Lord hath sent redemption to His people."

3. "The Lord hath sent redemption to His people." Therefore "shout with joy to God, all the earth, alleluia; sing ye a psalm to His name, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit).

Though man is weak and helpless, the Christian can become mighty. He has only to learn the secret of his strength and his greatness, which lie in the light, the grace, the power, the new life, which result from his incorporation in the risen Christ. We know that we have been redeemed, that we are living branches united to the vine and growing by virtue of this union with Christ in His Church. I am not an isolated branch, torn from the vine and choked to death by enveloping thorns; I am a living branch of a great, living organism which shoots its roots deep into the earth, and whose limbs reach upward until they touch the very throne of God. I am a member of that great community which comprises all the strong, pure, noble souls in whom Christ lives, and who share His strength, His spirit, and His life. Indeed, "The Lord hath sent redemption to His people."

How I should rejoice, thank God, and trust in Him! How I should pray and strive to conquer the tyranny of carnal lusts by becoming strong, holy, and perfect before God and men!

PRAYER

O God, who dost show to them that are in error the light of Thy truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who profess to be Christians the grace to reject those things which are contrary to that name, and to follow such things as are agreeable to it. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

Resignation

1. "Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake" (Epistle). While the liturgy of the third Sunday after

Easter emphasizes the thought that we have no permanent abode in this world, it reminds us that we must adjust our lives to the plan which God made for us while we remain in this world. "Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake" (Epistle).

2. When St. Paul tells us that we are to be subject to every human creature for the love of God, he does not imply that we should close our eyes to injustice, selfishness, and evil. The emphasis placed on a return to social justice by recent popes makes the mind of the Church clear on this point. We do indeed live in a vale of tears, and we know that we can never expect perfection in this world, but we can and must work toward an improvement of conditions in the world about us. While it is not easy, as Pope Leo XIII pointed out in his encyclical on the condition of labor, to define the relative rights of the rich and the poor, there are nevertheless certain definite principles which truth and justice dictate in controlling our relationships with our fellow men. The solutions proposed by the various forms of socialism are not and cannot be accepted by the Church, because under the specious garb of humanitarianism, they are, as St. Paul tells us in the Epistle, "making liberty a cloak for malice," and are not based on the principles of liberty and justice. Many of those who propose plans for the betterment of living conditions, look upon man as merely a part of animal creation, forgetting that he has not only a right to a reasonable amount of comfort and happiness in this world, but also a duty to bear the cross so that he may earn an eternal reward for his labor. Speaking of these false socialistic theories, Pope Leo XIII says:

What is of still greater importance, however is that the remedy they propose is manifestly against justice. For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own. This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation. For the brute has no power of self direction, but is governed by two chief instincts which keep his powers alert, move him to use his strength, and determine him to action without the power of choice (Leo XIII, On the Condition of Labor).

Any plan for the improvement of the life of man on earth must learn to look upon men "as servants of God." The reformer and the social worker must first learn to "honor all men; love the brotherhood, and fear God" (Epistle). While St. Paul has great respect for authority and commands us to "honor the king as excelling, and the governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil doers," he does not deify the state. It is a pernicious mistake to suppose that the civil government has the right, at its own discretion, to penetrate and pervade the family and the home. While the civil government does have the responsibility for caring for the welfare of its citizens, it does not have the right to control and dictate how they should live, as is being done in so many of the welfare states of today.

The Church is not content with pointing out the errors of socialism; she points to the true remedy for social injustice and applies it to actual conditions. It is her right to teach men and to train them through the instructions of her bishops and priests. Through her teaching office she diffuses her salutary teachings far and wide. She strives to influence the minds and the hearts of men, so that they may willingly yield themselves to be formed and guided by the commandments of God. It is precisely in this fundamental matter that the Church has a power peculiar to herself. The agencies she employs for the improvement of human life in this world, are given her for the very purpose of reaching the hearts of men, by Jesus Christ Himself, and they derive their efficacy from God.

3. "Shout with joy to God all the earth" (Introit). The earth ought to be a place of joy and happiness, especially now that our redemption has been accomplished. Man has been redeemed but he must allow himself to be regenerated through the grace of God. As long as men refuse to listen to the Church and refuse to apply the principles taught by Christ, there will continue to be social injustice, pain, and suffering in this world. It is futile to plan and establish world wide organizations for peace if we continue to ignore the will of the God of peace. Christ once stood on a mountain outside the City of Jerusalem

and wept over it. In spite of all that He had done to turn it from its evil ways, it had been deaf to His pleading. He could foresee that the day would come when not a stone would be left upon a stone in that beautiful city, and that it would be destroyed for its wickedness. "If thou hadst known and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Luke 19:42). So too, Christ must look down upon the world today, and upon that great temple we have built for the United Nations in our frantic search for peace and must say, "If thou hadst known the things that are for thy peace." All this elaborate equipment, all these detailed plans and negotiations are commendable, but it would be so much simpler if you would only learn to obey the Ten Commandments.

PRAYER

Hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the prayers of the suppliants and pardon the sins of those who confess unto Thee; that in Thy mercy Thou mayest give us pardon and peace. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

The glory of the Resurrection

1. "Alleluia. It behooved Christ to suffer . . . and so to enter into His glory" (Alleluia verse). "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9). Thus the glorified Christ stands before us and prays for us to His Father. "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me [as My brethren, as members of My body], that they may see My glory which Thou has given Me" (John 17:24).

2. The glory of the risen Christ. Christ gave us a glimpse of His glory through the three apostles whom He took with Him to Mount Tabor, where "He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow" (Matt. 17:2). Now, after the resurrection, the splendor of the victor becomes visible on Tabor. The soul of

Jesus, from the plenitude of the light of divine life with which it is flooded, sheds its heavenly beauty and strength upon His body also. Even though He was wounded, scourged, spat upon, and mocked, even though He suffered the pains and tortures of His passion, and was put to death and robbed of all beauty, yet He now shines with the brilliancy of the sun (gift of clarity). He can no longer suffer pain or death (gift of impassibility). He has shed all the defects of mortal human nature. The fulfillment of every wish and command follows the act of the will with the speed of light, penetrating all things like thought, like a spirit; He is like a spirit, yet possesses a true body (gift of agility). For the risen Christ, walls, towers, and locks are no longer an obstacle. On Easter morning the glorified body of Jesus rises from the grave and penetrates the door of the room where the disciples were gathered with the ease with which light penetrates glass. Such was the glory of the risen Christ. "Shout with joy to God all the earth, alleluia; sing ye a psalm to His name, alleluia" (Introit).

The glory of those who rise with Christ. "When Christ shall appear [on the last day], who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). Christ is risen, and we, too, shall one day rise from the dead. We are bound to Him by a most intimate union, for we have already risen with Him. The beginning of our resurrection is to be found in our baptism, by which we receive sanctifying grace, and in Holy Communion, by which we receive actual grace. This is the source of our eventual resurrection. "Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21). "Then shall the just shine as the sun" (Matt. 13:43).

All the noble and holy saints who have ever lived on earth will rise and live again, and they will be honored and acclaimed in heaven for all eternity. For them there will be no more wailing, no more sorrow, no more pain. "Behold, I make all things new" (Apoc. 21:5; II Cor. 5:17). This miserable body

which we now have will share in eternal life, in the glory and the immortality of the resurrection. "It is sown in corruption; it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body. . . . And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (I Cor. 15:42-44, 54 f.)

3. "A little while" (Gospel). If Christ is risen, then we, too, shall rise. After our residence on earth for a little while, the life "in My Father's house" awaits us (John 14:2). That life will not be an empty existence, a dull, shadowy life such as the pagans considered the afterlife; it will be a life full of activity, a full, eternal life spent in company with the blessed and with God, who is the fountainhead of all life and happiness. After this "little while" we shall experience complete satisfaction, we shall have every desire fulfilled, and be perfect in God. "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given Me may be with Me" (John 17:24). A future of perfect bliss lies infallibly ahead of me. What, then, are the momentary trials and difficulties I suffer now? Two things are absolutely certain: that life on earth is brief and transient; and that after a little while there will be an eternal life of glory (cf. Rom. 8:18). Indeed, they are inseparably connected. By means of this short life I earn my eternal glory. "These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? And whence came they?" John is asked in the Apocalypse. When he is unable to answer, he is told: "These are they who are come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the lamb" (7:13 f.). "Out of great tribulation." That is the surest pledge and the best guarantee of a happy eternity.

Should not our hearts be filled with joy and blessed hope? We are one with the risen Christ. This union is the source of all our good fortune. If we truly believed and had full confidence, we would exclaim, "I look for the resurrection of the

dead and the life of the world to come." The Christian may expect such a resurrection. "A little while . . . and I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

PRAYER

O God, who hast willed that Thy Son be crucified that we might be freed from the power of the devil, grant unto Thy servants that they may obtain the grace of the resurrection. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

"I go to the Father"

1. "A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father" (Gospel). The risen Christ must present Himself to the Father. He belongs, not in this world, but in the realm of heaven. Therefore He must "go to the Father."

2. The risen Christ, our head, stands before us. "I go to the Father." In Christ there is an inner sanctuary, a holy of holies, which none can approach except the Father. In the inmost depths of His soul He is free from all that is merely human, from all earthly things, and is consecrated exclusively to the Father. "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John 16:32). The life of Christ is one of complete preoccupation with the Father. He is one in heart with the Father; completely at rest with Him. In all things the eyes of Christ see the Father. His most urgent desire is to serve the Father, to live for Him, and to offer Himself up to the Father. With perfect devotion and love, with childlike trust and confidence, He abandons Himself to the will of the Father. In the Garden of Olives, He prays, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). "I go to the Father," and will be united to Him in an inseparable union of life and love. For this reason His soul is so full of confidence, so detached, courageous, calm, mild, and steadfast. "I go to the Father."

We, the baptized, are the members of the risen Christ. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that

are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). "Lift up your hearts." We answer, "We have lifted them up to the Lord." Christ has taken up His abode in the inmost sanctuary of our soul, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This, then, is our world, our entire inheritance, our sole good. There, in our soul, He listens to our petition and speaks to our hearts. In that sanctuary I can approach Him and speak to Him.

"I will go and see this great sight" (Exod. 3:3). This sanctuary is a holy place. Like Moses, we must first put off our shoes before approaching; that is, we must put aside all the inordinate desires of our hearts. We must leave all things behind, and seek nothing from this world; we must be truly spiritual, truly detached from all things of this world, no matter how much they may attract us. We must "salute no man by the way" (Luke 10:4), and be dependent on no creature. We must not be slaves either of our work or of our prayer. We must not be disturbed by what our neighbor does, nor become dejected when we are deserted by others or when others ridicule us. Humiliations and sickness must not dismay us. Even our own will we must renounce. Our petty thoughts and desires, our pride, and all self-love, self-conceit, and self-satisfaction must be suppressed. "I go to the Father," casting aside all things and leaving behind me all that is not of God, even if this renunciation cause me pain, and even if I feel myself most strongly attracted by the world. Our thoughts, our feelings, our desires, our ambitions, must all be centered on the Lord. We must let "the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22), and pursue our course courageously in the land of the living. We should not allow ourselves to become attached to anything, or to become dependent on anything. We must see through unworldly eyes, rise above all the vanities of the world, and free ourselves from that restless activity which is the driving force in the lives of worldly men. "I go to the Father." This is the mystery of our resurrection with Christ.

3. "I go to the Father" when I offer the Mass. There upon the golden paten I place all that this day may bring of labor,

or suffering, or hardship, and offer it all to the Father. This is the precious offering of love. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). "Thy will be done." Thus again at the beginning of the day we separate ourselves from the old man, the man of selfishness, the man who is attached to the fleeting things of this world. In this spirit of sacrifice we free our souls from every inordinate appetite and inclination, and beg the Lord that we may belong entirely to Him.

"I go to the Father" under all circumstances, and not merely in times of trial and difficulty. I go to Him even with the mistakes I have made. These mistakes should not make us uneasy, sad, depressed, or angry with ourselves. We should rather hasten to our Father and humble ourselves before Him, recognizing and acknowledging our own weakness and unworthiness. Then we should ask for forgiveness and for the strength to be more faithful and more circumspect in the future.

"I go to the Father" with a steadfast petition that He may liberate me completely from myself, and grant me to be truly poor in spirit, that He may grant me a deep and all-embracing faith, that He may grant me an ardent love for Christ, that He may grant me perfect conformity of my will to the eternal, divine will. This is the life that is proper to one who is risen with Christ. Such a Christian may look forward to a blessed ascension.

PRAYER

O God, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.)

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

"You shall lament"

1. "You shall lament and weep, . . . but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (Gospel). That is the lot of all those on

earth who belong to Christ and to the Church. "You shall lament and weep" on earth; that is, the Christian must expect suffering, for "it behooved Christ to suffer . . . and so to enter into His glory" (Alleluia verse). But what, after all, are the sufferings of this life compared to the glory to come?

2. This is the portion of the members of Christ: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Here on earth man can have no true good, no real good fortune, no authentic virtue or holiness, apart from a living union with Christ. "I am the vine, you the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The lot of Jesus on earth was one of poverty, lowliness, deprivation, misunderstanding, calumny, persecution, the cross, and death. Can the lot of the disciple of Christ be otherwise? If we consider our lives in the light of faith, must not such suffering of our present life make us like Christ, and must we then not look upon them as our highest and most precious possession? Would the Son of God, eternal Wisdom Himself, have chosen and sought out such suffering had it not been the highest good? Consider how ardently the saints have longed for suffering. They have even gone in search of it. "Suffering, not death." We, too, should look upon our lives in the same light.

"And if sons [of God], heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17). Let us suffer that we may be glorified with Him. The two are inseparably connected. "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure, exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20). Yes, it must ever be so. There is surely no more certain sign of predestination than our similarity to Christ, our crucified head. In this belief the liturgy celebrates during the Easter cycle the feasts of certain martyrs, who are the true disciples of the King of martyrs, Christ. By

His own suffering and death Christ exalted the crown of martyrdom, and in the same way He sanctified all suffering. Through their suffering and death for Christ, the holy martyrs merited eternal life and made their eternal salvation certain. Fortunate indeed, then, are they who suffer. Suffering corrects all spiritual blindness and makes us see the specious goods of this life in their true light. It cleanses the heart from all that is inordinate and worldly, from the love of gold, honor, and human praise, and from all self-love. Yet we all fear suffering and strive to avoid it. When a small suffering overtakes us, we cry out and complain. A harsh word, a small slight, a disappointment in something we sought, and we become dissatisfied, angry, and unhappy. Yet we know it is a disgrace to be a Christian if we are unwilling to be crucified with Christ.

3. In the naves of our Churches the cross hangs from an arch of triumph. Here the Christian comes to pray and seek consolation and strength. But what does he pray for? Very often that he and his dear ones may be relieved of their crosses. Is this the lesson taught by Him who gazes down from the cross on him who prays? We have not yet learned the true meaning of the cross. We see only the cross and not the resurrection that follows; we see only the sorrow, the poverty, the persecution, but not the glory given as a reward. "Blessed are the poor. . . . Blessed are they that mourn. . . . Blessed are they that suffer persecution" (Matt. 5:3 ff.). How we lack the true spirit of Christ! How poorly we understand!

When we participate in the Mass, we see Christ in His suffering and death. We believe with firm faith that by His suffering and death He redeemed the world, opened heaven for us, and earned for us the grace of eternal life. But once we have returned to our homes it seems that we forget all that we saw and believed during the Mass. We do not yet properly understand the mystery of the crucifixion and the resurrection. "O foolish and slow of heart, to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and

so enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25 f.) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Lord, increase our faith.

PRAYER

O God, who bringest blessings out of all things for those who love Thee, grant us to be disposed to love Thee with a love that is unailing so that no temptation may destroy the longing that Thou hast awakened in our hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Liturgy of the
Fourth Sunday after Easter*

1. The unfolding of the Easter mysteries presses forward with steady stride. Now already we catch a glimpse of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who will bring the Easter season to a close with an all-pervading baptism of the spirit. "It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you" (Gospel). He will come and complete the victory of Christ in the world, in the Church, and in the souls of men. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; He will make known all truth to the Church and to the faithful.

2. The Introit strikes a joyful Easter note: "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle, alleluia; for the Lord hath done wonderful things, alleluia. He hath revealed [by His resurrection] His justice in the sight of the Gentiles." He has revealed His justice by making complete satisfaction for us to the Father, and by having given new life through the sacrament of baptism. We are now justified, justified even in the holy eyes of God. We are now pure and clothed in the garment of justifying and sanctifying grace. We shine in the brilliancy of our divine adoption and in our supernatural holiness. This is the fruit of the Easter mysteries. Full of gratitude for all that Christ has done for us by His death and resurrection, we break forth in a joyous *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. After this joyous thanksgiving fol-

lows the petition: "Grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found" (Collect). Thus we pray united in spirit, each praying for the other in the spirit of true Christian brotherhood. This true Easter spirit for which we pray, is the "best gift," the perfect gift that comes to us from above. It is the result of the divine love and grace we share through our baptism. "Wherefore, casting away all uncleanness and abundance of naughtiness, with meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Epistle).

With grateful hearts we recognize what God has done for us by the mysteries of Easter and baptism; and therefore, after the Epistle we sing, "Alleluia, the right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength [by awakening us from the death of sin], the right hand of the Lord hath exalted me [by baptism and sanctifying grace], alleluia. Christ [and in Christ, the Church and all the baptized] rising again from the dead, dieth now no more. Death shall no more have dominion over Him, alleluia." Christ, and with Him the Church, lives as an eternal witness that the world sins terribly by its unbelief, that He is sinless and holy, for otherwise He could not go to the Father; He testifies that Satan, and with him all his followers, are already judged (Gospel). We, the members of the Church, place ourselves at the side of Christ and joyfully sing the Credo.

3. Just as Christ presented Himself to His disciples on Easter evening, so, too, He comes among us at the Consecration of the Mass. He abides with us. The offering which the Church, guided and enlightened by the Comforter, offers continually to God, is a positive witness that Christ lives, and that the world is convinced of sin if it refuses to believe in Him. It bears witness to the fact that Christ is pure and holy and that He has overcome the prince of this world in Himself and in His spiritual children.

This testimony of the Holy Ghost becomes more vital when

we are united with Christ in His sacrifice, in His life, and in His death. The Holy Ghost enables the Church, her priests, and her faithful to unite themselves to Christ in His sacrifice so that their wills and their lives are changed like the bread on the altar. Their manner of life and action is thus vivified by the life and action of Christ. Thus the world can see and know through their actions that Christ lives in them. Christ is a reality, and not a mere phantasy. He is pure and holy. He is stronger than death and sin and Satan. He overcomes evil in all those who become a sacrifice with Him, and who take on His spirit and life through the reception of Holy Communion. Thus they are transformed so that their lives become a witness of Christ and of His holiness and His victory. Thus at the Consecration is fulfilled what we heard in the earlier part of the Mass: Christ lives, and the Holy Ghost will bear witness to Him and glorify Him (Gospel). And the Holy Ghost will do the same for us who take part in this Holy Sacrifice. In the celebration of the Mass, He brings about a marvelous transformation. He brings Christ down upon our altars and makes His presence in the hearts of men a reality. He renews Christ, His real presence, His life, and His victory.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Christian spirituality

1. The glorification of Christ was not completed by His resurrection from the dead. He goes to the Father also as man, that He may take possession of His throne and, as the glorified Savior, share with God dominion over the world. "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle" (Introit). He withdraws His visible presence from His disciples and from His Church that He may send them the Holy Spirit in His place. But by means of the Holy Spirit, He will always remain with them invisibly and spiritually. "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (Gospel).

2. "I go to Him that sent Me" (Gospel). Jesus withdraws His

visible presence from His disciples and from His Church. They must free themselves from their attachment to His human form; they must give up the comfort and the solace of having Him physically near them and associating with Him. They, too, must become spiritualized. Then only can He send them His Holy Spirit and make them bearers of the Spirit. They must acquire the strength of the Spirit if they are to become the rulers of the world and comfort mankind in all its trials and difficulties. "I go to Him that sent Me." This is a call to become more spiritual, to become detached from all that is worldly.

In our piety we all too often act in a manner that is not spiritual, even with our Lord. We long for His sensible presence, for sensible devotion. We wish to have Him speak to us audibly and give us real visions or some tangible manifestation of His love; we long for sensible graces and consolations of many sorts. This is an unsound sort of spirituality, based on sensible devotion. But Christ tells us, "It is expedient to you that I go." We must become more spiritual: that is the lesson taught by the liturgy during the time before Pentecost. We are taught that we must lift up our hearts to the glorified, heavenly Christ, and free ourselves from all that is perceptible to the senses, and live for the life above. We must seek a spirituality based on the spirit of faith and on a determined effort to overcome all our selfish desires and tendencies. Our spirituality must be based on a love that attends to God alone and occupies itself entirely with what comes from Him and leads to Him. "It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you."

"I will send Him to you." Jesus leaves us; but since He is no longer bodily present, He sends us His Holy Spirit. He merited for us this greatest of all God's gifts, the Holy Spirit, through His sufferings and death. Now He ascends into heaven that He may send Him to us as our comforter to take His place. But the Holy Spirit has not come to protect us from all suffering and adversity, from temptation and difficulties. He comes rather to

fill us with the strength to live and work for Jesus under all circumstances; that is, to work in the spirit of truth and humility. He comes to help us live in voluntary poverty, humility, and suffering. In a word, the Holy Spirit comes to help us conform our lives perfectly to the life of Christ. The Holy Ghost induces us to live in Jesus and for Jesus. He makes us witnesses (martyrs), and in this spirit we gladly embrace ridicule, injustice, suffering, the loss of our possessions, and even the loss of our life. How much we stand in need of such a helper and comforter! How fervently we should pray during this week that God may send this blessed comforter to us and to His Church!

3. With the newly baptized we perceive the sensible presence of the Lord in the great festivities and symbols of Easter day. Now the liturgy seeks to lead us from the joy of Easter back to the struggle and the sufferings of the world. She seeks to anchor our hearts in heaven, to elevate them above attachment to the world and the love of mere temporal things. She seeks to lift our hearts to heaven, "where true joys are to be found" (Collect). For us who are Christians, a higher world, a world of eternity, is the one reality. To help us reach that world, the glorified Lord sends us the Holy Ghost. We long for His coming and cry without ceasing: *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*: "Come, Holy Ghost, and fill the hearts of Thy faithful."

The most effective means of acquiring true Christian spirituality is through participation in the Mass. We must renounce our personal, human, egotistical spirit, and rid ourselves of all that is worldly and transient. For this reason we receive the Holy Eucharist, which is the spiritualized and glorified flesh and blood of the Lord, who pours forth the wealth and the riches of the Holy Ghost upon us.

PRAYER

O God, who makest the minds of Thy faithful to be of one will, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing

things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

The perfect gift

1. In the Epistle, St. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, speaks to us. He addresses himself first to the Jewish Christians, then to all the rest of us.

2. "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man. But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" (Jas. 1:13 f.). Only that which is good can come from God. Whatever God can give and does give is always a perfect gift. Thus, "of His own will He hath begotten us [the baptized] by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of His creatures" (Epistle). This is the good gift, the perfect gift, which God gives us: the gift of rebirth by water and the Holy Spirit. We are first and above all the predestined, the consecrated children of God. Today we thank God for this perfect gift of His love and mercy. In humility we ask why God gives this perfect gift to us in preference to millions of others who were more deserving of it than we were. Why does He not tire of continually giving this precious gift to me, who am so unworthy? He renews this gift continually in the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and in many other channels of grace. It is His love that prompts Him to do this.

"Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God. Wherefore, casting away all uncleanness and abundance of naughtiness, with meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Epistle). "Be slow to speak and slow to anger"; be not easily aroused and easily vexed; become not easily embittered or irritated. What is pleasing to God cannot be produced in anger. This good gift of God produces

in each soul a love of silence and seclusion, so that the soul rests in God. It produces in the soul a meekness and a supernatural calm and peace which are far removed from all animosity and evil. It excludes and overcomes all impatience and irritation. This meekness springs from the fire of love, from self-conquest, from the peace that envelops the soul that is possessed and enlightened by Christ.

In such a soul the sensitiveness of the easily irritated, impatient man, with his degraded and unspiritual inclinations, is replaced by Christian meekness, which gives strength and mastery over one's evil tendencies, and victory over self-love and that sensitiveness so characteristic of the worldly man. Such heroic meekness is born of God; but anger, impatience, and sensitiveness are not born of God, nor of grace, nor are they the fruit of regeneration. Anger is a weakness which attempts to hide behind violent words or deeds, which are unworthy of one who is reborn through Christ. "Blessed are the meek" (Matt. 5:4).

3. With the liturgy of the fourth Sunday after Easter we recognize the "perfect gift," which comes down to us from the Father of light, to be the Holy Ghost, whose coming we await. Through His Word, God has made us His children. Through His Word, that is, through Christ, He gives us the Holy Ghost. On our part we must prepare our souls for His coming through prayer, through the practice of silence, and through an ardent longing for Him.

When we bring our gifts to the altar at the Offertory of the Mass, we repeat with grateful hearts the words of the Offertory prayer: "Shout with joy to God all the earth, sing ye a psalm to His name; come and hear, and I will tell you, all ye that fear God, what great things the Lord hath done for my soul, alleluia." Among the great things the Lord hath done for my soul is the regeneration of that soul. Then, too, He has bestowed on me the sonship of God, making me share the spirit of Christ; He has given me membership in His Church, and has sent to me the Holy Ghost.

PRAYER

O God, who makest the minds of Thy faithful to be of one will, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

He will convince the world of sin

1. "And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, . . . because they believed not in Me" (Gospel). Unbelief was the great sin of the Jews. In spite of the prophecies of the Old Testament which Christ manifestly fulfilled, in spite of His evident miracles, in spite of His resurrection on Easter morning, of which they themselves were the reluctant witnesses, the Jews refused to believe. Therefore, after our Lord's ascension into heaven, it was part of the mission of the Holy Ghost to convince the world that the Jews erred in not accepting Christ. This was their great sin: the sin of unbelief.

2. The Holy Ghost worked through the apostles. On Pentecost He descended upon the apostles and called them to act as witnesses of Christ's resurrection. Emboldened by the power of the Holy Ghost, Peter faces the multitude of people in Jerusalem and declares: "This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). The Holy Ghost brings about a complete transformation in the apostles. They had been timid, but now they are filled with indomitable courage and holy daring. They had been slow of understanding, but now they are filled with divine wisdom and speak a language which they had not learned. They had deserted their Lord and Master during His passion, and Peter had even denied Him; but now they are the intrepid teachers of His doctrine and the heralds of His resurrection. But the Holy Ghost assists them in other ways, too; for He gives them the power to work miracles, the reality of which no one can deny, and the significance of

which no one can misconstrue. Thus the Holy Ghost convinces the world that the failure to accept the Christ whom the apostles preach is a terrible sin. We stand amazed at these works of the Holy Ghost in the apostles, and rejoice for Christ, whom the apostles bear witness to by the power of the Holy Spirit. "This is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:11 f.).

The Holy Ghost operates in the Church of Christ. He gives her holiness and the gift of miracles. A Church which produces saints bears the stamp of God's approval. The Holy Ghost has placed this unmistakable seal on the Church of Christ, for He produces in the Church the heroism of perfect love for God and man. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35).

The doctrine of the Church is holy; her moral practices are holy; her sacraments are holy; her prayer and her liturgy are holy. The life of her children is saintly, and she has produced millions of saints for heaven. Many of her children on earth have reached a high degree of sanctity, and all of this holiness is due to the operation of the Holy Ghost. Every man must acknowledge this Church as the true Church, as the Church established by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

The second stamp of approval which the Holy Ghost places on the Church is the gift of miracles. Christ Himself refers to this gift of miracles and offered His miracles as a proof of His divine mission. They are a means by which men can recognize the true Church and distinguish it from others. "But they, going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working withal and confirming the word with signs that followed" (Mark 16:20).

The Acts of the Apostles and the history of the Church are little more than the fulfillment of this prophecy of Christ: "Behold, I am with you all days" (Matt. 28:20). The Church is the visible, ever-present, and easily understood proof of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the world, that failure to believe

in Christ is a sin. "And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin [the great sin of unbelief], . . . because they believed not in Me." We recognize and thank God with joy for the work of the Holy Ghost in the apostles and in the Church. We acknowledge with unshakable faith that our Lord is "Christ the Son of the living god, . . . the way, the truth, and the life" (John 11:27; 14:6). "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23).

3. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). There are so many men in our times who, like the Jews of old, refuse to believe in Jesus. They can hardly ignore the work of the Holy Ghost; in fact they can almost feel it with their hands. The holiness of the Church, her marvelous unity of doctrine, the miracles which even today are worked by the saints in the Church, all speak eloquently of the fruitful and living presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church. It is a sin and terrible oversight not to believe in Christ. We pity the poor, blinded people who have been cheated of their faith. We pray and intercede for them that they may come to understand that they sin if they fail to come to Jesus and to see that He is the only source of salvation.

The Church lives in each one of us. I, too, must bear personally the stamp of the Holy Ghost in my thinking, in my speech, in my action. I, too, must be a living and effective witness for Christ. Everyone must see in me what miracles of grace and holiness the Christian faith can produce in men; and through my life others must be forced to acknowledge that Jesus is the truth. This model life should be the result of my participation in Mass, the fruit of my Holy Communion, the result of my prayers and meditations.

PRAYER

Send forth from heaven, O Lord, Thy assistance to Thy people, that they may seek Thee with all their hearts, and may thus merit to obtain what they worthily seek. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

He will convince the world of justice

1. "And when He [the Holy Ghost] is come, He will convince the world . . . of justice, because I go to the Father" (Gospel). This is the second part of the mission of the Holy Ghost to the world.

2. Men of the world judged Christ as an unholy and unjust man, and crucified Him on the cross between two thieves. They cast Him aside and placed Him on a plane with a criminal, Barabbas; indeed, they preferred Barabbas to Him, as though Christ were the greater evildoer. They brand Him even today, no less than they did during His lifetime, as a liar and a tremendous impostor. They reject and condemn His doctrine even as they rejected and condemned His person. He still commands us to serve and love God, and our neighbor as ourself; the world preaches self-love and practices it even to the exclusion of God, and it ridicules all those who seek to serve God. Christ preaches submission to the will of God; the world urges independence and self-sufficiency apart from God. Jesus preaches humility; but the world teaches man to assert himself and recognize no power but his own will and no law but the fulfillment of his own desires. Jesus preaches poverty of spirit, meekness, and separation from all that is worldly and passing, and He demands the rejection of all the vanities and idle things of the world; He has pronounced those "blessed" who are pure of heart, who suffer hunger and want for the sake of justice, and who suffer persecution for His name. The world ridicules such principles and such ideals, and sets up her maxims in opposition to the doctrines of Christ; she takes the same attitude toward those things established by Christ: His Church, His priesthood, His moral code, the liturgical worship and the authority of His Church. What is the long line of heresies and schisms but a denial of the Church of Christ? Are they not degenerate deceivers who seek not the will of Christ and the

things of God, but are accompanied by a mad thirst for power and honor, and an uncontrollable greed?

"He will convince the world . . . of justice, because I go to the Father." How could Christ go to the Father and be accepted into the presence of God if He were the wicked, unjust, and sinful man the Pharisees of ancient times and the modern world would make Him out to be? "I go to the Father"; but when the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, is come, He will testify that Christ, who was crucified by men, cast off by the world, and branded as a deceiver, is actually with the Father. Christ has been received by the Father, elevated and crowned with glory; God has placed His seal of approval on Christ's holiness, on His justice, on His teaching, and on His life. Christ is acknowledged by God as His son, as the way, the truth, and the life.

God will also fulfill the promises made by Christ. "Everyone therefore that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). On divine authority rests the prophecy: "Heaven and earth shall pass, but My words shall not pass" (Matt. 24:35). Divinely approved, too, is Christ's teaching of voluntary poverty, humility, and self-denial, Christ's love for God and for souls, and finally, His complete self-effacement on the cross. It follows, then, that God must approve the Church which Christ founded, that He must endorse the dogmas it teaches and the moral standards it maintains; He must approve of its spirit, the saints it produces, and the interior and exterior life that it leads.

3. "He will convince the world . . . of justice." This justice is embodied in Christ, who "alone art holy." "Sing a new canticle to the Lord, alleluia, for the Lord hath done wonderful things, alleluia. He hath revealed [by sending the Holy Ghost] His justice in the sight of the Gentiles, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit).

The justice which the Holy Ghost brings is not the justice of the world. Christ has been acknowledged by God to be the only truly just one. In Christ alone can true virtue and true holiness be found; that is, true holiness is found only in Christ

and in those who live in union with Him, who live and grow by virtue of that union. True Christian virtue is found only in the Church which is filled with the Spirit of Christ.

Now we understand the liturgy when it sings the Communion chant: "When the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment, alleluia, alleluia." With each worthy reception of Holy Communion, Christ implants His spirit deeper in our souls. We leave the Communion table and return to our work, to our family, to our customary occupations, convinced of the heinousness of sin, and we hate it and condemn it. We are "convinced of justice," and we reason and conduct ourselves according to its dictates. We live according to the spirit which Christ has given us.

PRAYER

May the Holy Ghost penetrate our hearts, O Lord, and cleanse them. May He penetrate them to their depths with His dew and make them fruitful. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

He will convince the world of judgment

1. "When He [the Holy Ghost] is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged" (Gospel). The third part of the Holy Ghost's mission is to convince the world that the prince of this world, Satan, and with him his domain, the entire world, has been judged. The world is unjust; in Christ alone is there justice and truth.

2. Jesus has passed sentence on the prince of this world. This first sentence was given by Christ on the cross. "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John 12:31 f.). Christ allowed Himself to be unjustly sentenced and put to death by the world. Thus, fixed to the cross, He is a living judgment written in the blood

which poured forth from His wounds. The blood of this innocent victim stands as a contradiction to the judgment which Satan, the prince of this world, and his servants, Pilate and the Jews, passed upon the innocent, unspotted Son of God.

Christ has passed judgment on the prince of this world a second time by His resurrection from the dead, through which He has proved the falsity of the charges made against Him by the Jews. He was accused of being a blasphemer, of working His miracles and wonders with the help and by the power of the devil. These infernal lies are now unmasked. God Himself has proved through the resurrection that Christ was the Son of God. "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10 f.). Thus sentence has been passed on Satan and upon the whole world. The judgment of the world concerning Christ, the gospel, the Church, the Christian faith, Christian morals, the meaning of life, the value of material things, is thus proved to be false. "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31), that is, through the resurrection of Christ. Satan is dethroned. Justice is on the side of the Lord. The world is filled with lies, treachery, and falsehood. Grant me the light, O Lord, to recognize the world for what it is and to avoid it and all its abominations.

The Holy Ghost, too, passes judgment on the prince of this world. After Christ ascended to His Father, the Holy Ghost came to confirm the judgment passed by Christ on the world, and to maintain that judgment through the many centuries of the Church's history. The world mistakenly thought that with His burial, Christ's doctrines and teachings had been buried with Him. But the Holy Ghost came to supply for the crucified Christ. The gospel of Christ spread with incredible speed through the cities and towns of the empire, and captured the hearts and minds of the people. Although the Jews rejected the gospel, it was accepted by the Gentiles, who believed and were admitted to baptism. They rallied to the standard of Christ and made their abjuration of Satan. They renounced

Satan and the world with all its vanities, its specious maxims, its deceptive power. The Holy Ghost is to construct a new world founded on Christ. All who believe are to live in the greatest harmony. Men no longer consider their possessions their own; all is held in common. No longer are there any needy ones among them; all dwell together in peace. "And all they that believed were together, and had all things common. Their possessions and goods they sold, and divided them to all, according as every one had need" (Acts 2:44 f.).

The disciples of Christ were not troubled by covetousness, envy, and discord; harmony, charity, joy, and devotion to God reign in their midst. They were not proud or egotistical, but they submitted in all humility to the guidance of the apostles and of the Church. "The prince of this world is already judged." He has been judged and sentenced. Judgment had been passed upon his maxims, his spirit, his way of life, not only in the ancient Church, but in the Church of all times. This judgment has been accepted by millions of faithful Christians in the East and in the West, in the past and in the present. Moreover, the Church of Christ is never without its saints. Thus again the Holy Ghost passes judgment on the prince of this world. "For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof" (I John 2:16 f.). Satan has been judged, sentenced, and condemned; he has been proved a liar. We, too, pass this same judgment on Satan and the world, for we will have no part in them.

3. "The prince of this world is already judged." This is the song of the Church and of the Christian soul at Easter time. Satan has been overpowered and dethroned. But nevertheless the Lord has given him an hour of grace for our own good. He still wanders about in the world, using the hours given him by God with the greatest zeal, to deceive and mislead the world. He propagates his lies, which the world mistakes for pronouncements of truth. The hearts of many men, which should be raised to heaven, Satan manages to turn again to the earth.

Many Christians, having been deceived by him, turn to material and transitory things.

“The prince of this world is already judged.” He is judged, not only by the risen Christ Himself, but also by His members who are risen with Him. The condemnation of the prince of this world must be verified in us also, just as it is in Christ. We must condemn him with our thoughts, our words, and our speech. Each of our actions must pass judgment on Satan. We pass judgment on him through our faith in Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, and through the love which we manifest for Him “who loved me and delivered Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). We condemn him by our confidence in Christ, by our faithfulness to the vows we made at the time of our baptism, by the nobility of our ideals, by our opposition to evil, its influence, and its illusions.

“The prince of this world is already judged.” The fruitfulness of the work of the Holy Ghost in the Church, in the baptized, is also evidence of the judgment passed on Satan and the world. The Holy Ghost continually justifies, confirms, and glorifies Jesus in His members. He offers proof that Christ is the Son of God, that His words are true, that His virtue was genuine. His promises are not false but true. Through the power of Holy Communion, He will be glorified in me. He will form me and reshape me into a spiritual man, so that in my daily life I, too, may stand as a judgment against the world and Satan (Communion).

PRAYER

O Lord, who by the sacred communion of this sacrifice hast made us partakers of the one supreme divine nature, grant, we beseech Thee, that as we know Thy truth, so we may follow it by a worthy life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Secreta.)

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Fear and love

1. “O God, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest” (Collect). It is the command of the Church

that we love God and His holy will. In this manner the Church wishes the baptized to rise to a new life with Christ. This grace we implore for one another.

2. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 110:10). The fear of God forms the very foundation of the spiritual life. As long as we have to struggle with sin, the fear of the justice of God occupies the most important place in our spiritual life. The just punishments of God visited on sinners, the anger of God, the everlasting pain of hell, are ever before our eyes. We must never forget our moral weakness, the attraction of sinful actions, the ever-present possibility that we may fall. Nor can we forget that we are too little concerned about the graces of God, that we often act from purely natural motives rather than from supernatural ones. We know from experience that we are careless, easily provoked, impatient, and unpleasant toward our fellow men. We know that we are self-centered and have many faults. All these things should inspire us with a continual and secret fear of God. The fear of God should accompany us throughout our lives, influence all our thoughts and acts, and take a firm hold on us. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord" (Ps. 111:1). "Fear God and depart from evil. . . . The fear of the Lord hateth evil" (Prov. 3:7; 8:13). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

"Thou shalt love the Lord, Thy God" (Matt. 22:37). The fear of the Lord is necessary, but the proper basis and the chief motivating force of Christianity are love. Love alone is worthy of God, who is entitled to our love because of His infinite perfection and goodness. He deserves our love because of His many benefactions and the wealth He will bestow on us in eternal life. "Thou shalt love the Lord, Thy God," is the first and the greatest commandment. God demands all our love, and He alone deserves it. Love for God shapes our heart, disentangles it from the world, and turns it to God. Love alone can make our hearts big enough and strong enough to endure sacrifice in the service of God. Fear can cause us to avoid evil, but it cannot elevate us to the performance of good. Love effects both at

one and the same time. It draws us away from what is evil, or from what is only apparently evil, and inspires us to do good. It draws us from what is merely good to that which is better, and, in spite of all difficulties and hardships, from that which is better to that which is perfect. Fear causes us to think too much of ourselves; it cannot inspire us with generosity. It keeps us within the commandments, it keeps us faithful to our duty, and then feels that it has done enough. Charity is quite different, for it always gives beyond the measure of duty. It looks on all that it has done as nothing. Charity alone can understand the full significance of that saying of the Word, "So you also, when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do" (Luke 17:10).

When the Holy Ghost has endowed a soul with charity, He enlarges the heart also, so that it has room for a larger understanding of those things which are permitted. He implants in the soul the gift of piety, that is, the desire and the longing to please God and to fulfill His will. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John 4:34). Such a soul makes no distinction between the bond and the free, between what is merely permitted and what is perfect. Whenever an opportunity occurs for nourishing the flame of charity, that opportunity will be embraced by such a soul with a burning zeal. It no longer asks what its obligation is. It has discovered the secret; it does all that it can; then it is certain that it has fulfilled its obligation. It loves both the commandments of God and the will of God. Such a soul is free even though it is bound by the commandments. It does not live under restraint, it does not sigh under its burden as does a slave, it never tries to release itself even when it might do so. He who possesses charity says with the Psalmist: "O Lord my portion, I have said, I would keep Thy law" (Ps. 118:57). Such a soul knows itself to be a child of God, and therefore it tries to do much more than is required by the commandments, and thus gives pleasure to its Father.

3. The liturgy implores God for the virtue of charity for all the faithful. Charity is the greatest of the Christian virtues. It fulfills perfectly the commandments of God. "For this is the charity of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3). But charity keeps the commandments, not because of a fear of punishment, nor because of compulsion, as a slave keeps them, nor because of a desire for merit; but rather to please Him to whom the Christian subjects himself freely and joyfully at the time of his baptism.

Charity and the works of charity go hand in hand. Only those are perfect works which are done out of love. Charity is the soul and the root of all virtue. Works, such as the fulfillment of the law, are the food, the nourishment, the essential condition for the existence of charity. He who would fulfill the commandments perfectly must do so out of love. He who would acquire the virtue of charity must perform works of charity. He who would reach perfection must endeavor with all his strength to exercise himself incessantly in works of charity.

PRAYER

O God, who makest the minds of Thy faithful to be of one will, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Longing for eternity

1. "Grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found" (Collect). We should long to ascend to heaven and should be absorbed by the desire for eternity.

2. As our high priest our Savior recited this prayer: "Father,

I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me. That they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24). The Father promised that we shall be taken to that place where Jesus is in the glory of the Father. Through our baptism we have become the children of God, "and if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). The Lord has prepared a place for us in heaven, that "our fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3); that is, we are to possess and enjoy the life and the fruits of the three divine persons, to see God, to repose eternally in the presence of God, to love Him. The joy of God will then be our joy; the life of God will be our life. We shall share a perfect life, in which all our powers will find their most perfect exercise and complete fulfillment. If we could only perceive what things God has prepared for us, what great efforts we would exert to obtain this one thing necessary! Father, grant us to desire with all the powers of our soul the things which Thou hast promised us. Let us forget all worldly things, all that is temporal and passing, and exert ourselves to obtain those things that await us.

"Grant that our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found" (Collect). The baptized soul must linger here on earth, but he allows transitory things to pass by as if they were no concern of his. He possesses them and he makes use of them as if he possessed them not and used them not. All his powers and thoughts and endeavors are concentrated on eternity, on the world above the stars. He lives entirely for the things that are to come when this world has passed away. His mind is occupied with the consideration of future joys, and of the perfect and glorious happiness of eternity. He is assured of possessing it because he possesses the Holy Ghost, and because he has become the son of God through his baptism. It is guaranteed to him by the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, who is the head of the body into which he has been incorporated. "But God (who is rich in mercy), for His exceeding

charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved) and hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. That He might show in the ages to come the abundant riches of His grace in His bounty towards us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7).

What value can the things of this world have for him who is firmly rooted in a world that is above all transitory, temporal things? He can afford to wait, for the world can never give him peace or enjoyment. He exerts his energies and directs his impulses to rise to higher things, to obtain the one thing necessary, to obtain those things which have a lasting value. Earthly possessions, difficulties and hardships, pain and disappointments, cannot deter him. His treasure is buried in the field of heaven; He has discovered one precious pearl, and he sacrifices all else to purchase this field, this pearl, this blessed eternity. The thought of eternity gives him the strength to sacrifice and struggle, to pardon injuries, and to suffer in patience. He acquires a zeal for the salvation of immortal souls. He learns to sacrifice himself in works of charity, to acquire for his brothers and sisters in Christ the riches of eternal life. The thought of eternity gives him a driving force that is stronger than the memory of earthly joys, more insistent than the cravings of nature, more persistent than self, more enduring than death. "Grant to Thy people . . . to desire that which Thou dost promise."

3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . . Blessed are the meek. . . . Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice. . . . Blessed are the merciful. . . . Blessed are the clean of heart" (Matt. 5:3 ff.). These are the true Christians, heroic souls who are firmly fixed on heaven.

The worldly man delights in "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). Unfortunately so many Christians are completely occupied with the things of this world. Easter should find them new

men, risen from the dead, with their hearts firmly set on heaven, men of heroism. And yet they will still be lost in the abyss of the old man, spiritual weaklings, worldly men. Thus with the liturgy we pray for them from the depths of our souls, that "our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found."

Before we approach the sacred moment of consecration at Mass, the priest admonishes us, *Sursum corda*: "Lift up your hearts." And we answer, *Habemus ad Dominum*. Have we indeed lifted up our heart to the Lord? Or have we lifted it up only to earthly affairs, good health, or worthless trifles? Let us consider all things in the light of eternity and ask ourselves under all circumstances: "Of what value is this for eternal life?"

PRAYER

O God, who makest the minds of Thy faithful to be of one will, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise; so that amid the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Fifth Sunday after Easter

1. In a few days the paschal season, taken in the narrowest sense of the word, will come to a close with the feast of the Ascension. What wonder, then, that the liturgy for Easter and for the Ascension are combined in the Mass for this Sunday.

2. The Introit of the Mass rings with the joy of Easter. It is as though our gratitude for our resurrection with Christ through baptism would well up again to the very heavens in all its splendor and power. "The Lord hath delivered His people [through baptism], alleluia." And as we pour forth our thanks for having risen with Christ in baptism, we pray also

that the graces of Easter may remain with us when the season itself has passed. This petition we make as we recite fervently the Kyrie. The Collect for the day expresses this sentiment even more clearly and forcefully. "O God, from whom all good things proceed, grant to Thy suppliants that by Thy inspiration we may think what is right and with Thy guidance carry out the same" (Collect). Lent and Easter have given the faithful a vivid realization of their duties, but this knowledge must be carried out in their lives. "Dearly beloved, be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Epistle). Thus the apostle James admonishes us in his earnest and matchless way. That is the obligation laid on us by our baptism, by our celebration of Easter. We must live according to our belief. "Religion pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world" (Epistle). We must practice charity and break away completely from the world. The task which Easter places upon us is not an easy one.

Our obligation to renounce the world is emphasized by the Gospel: "I go to the Father." We, too, must go to the Father; we must withdraw from the handicaps and the restrictions imposed on us by original sin. That is the real significance of Easter and of the baptism which we have received. He who now is about to go to the Father, goes not for His own benefit alone, nor to reap all the profit for Himself. There He is to act as our intermediary, and by praying in His name we may expect to find salvation. Through Christ, our intermediary, our prayers and desires also ascend to the Father.

When we sing the Credo, we ask resolutely and confidently for the grace to act always in the spirit of Easter. We express our faith in the Credo, and our consciousness of victory in the Offertory: "O bless the Lord our God, ye Gentiles, and make the voice of His praise to be heard; who hath set my soul to live, and hath not suffered my feet to be moved."

3. "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father." What is here said in the Gospel becomes a reality in the Mass. During the Consecration of the Mass He descends into the world as God, mystically and sacramentally. We greet Him joyfully by singing, "Holy, holy, holy. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Now we take the place of the disciples in the Gospel, and receive with joy the comforting message of the Lord: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name." Hitherto, that is, before you received baptism, before it became possible for you to pray with Him and through Him in the Mass, you had not asked anything in His name. But now the prayer of the sacrificing Christian becomes one with the prayer of Christ in the Sacrifice of the Mass; it becomes substantially united to that of Christ. Just as the bread is changed by the prayer of Christ, so our prayer is changed into Christ's prayer and carried by His pure hands to the throne of the Father. For this reason the Father, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, pours forth the love which He bears for Christ upon us also who sacrifice with Him. The Father carries out the promise made by Christ: "The Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me" (Gospel). Therefore after the Consecration we can say with childlike confidence: "Our Father, who art in heaven." Thus we can lay aside and forget all that is earthly and unimportant, and arise with Christ to a new life; and when He offers Himself, we, too, can daily "go to the Father."

Through Christ and in Christ we become children of the Father and of His love. "The Father Himself loves you" and gives proof of this love, not only in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, but also in Holy Communion. "Sing ye to the Lord, alleluia." Holy Communion is God's answer to the prayer we offer in union with Christ, His Son. It is His reply to our resolve: "I will go to the Father." "The Father Himself loveth you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God" (Gospel).

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"If you ask anything in My name"

1. "Declare it with the voice of joy and let it be heard, alleluia; declare it even to the ends of the earth: The Lord hath delivered His people, alleluia" (Introit). From the Christian point of view the most important of all truths is the fact that men have been redeemed and that they are the children of God. Now heaven has been opened again to us, and so, too, the heart of the Father. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you" (Gospel).

2. "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name." It is true that the apostles had asked the Lord: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), and He had taught them how to say the Our Father. And indeed, they had asked Him for an increase of faith. But as yet they had not prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus, basing their request on the fact of His death or on the merits of the blood that He had shed. This was not possible for them, since it was necessary that the Lord first pour forth His blood and sacrifice His life on the cross. It was necessary that He first, as the high priest of the New Covenant "having obtained eternal redemption" by His own blood, enter once into the holy of holies (Heb. 9:12). The Lord begins to exercise His office as our intermediary at the time of His ascension. Thus previous to that time the apostles could not ask in His name.

Only after His death and resurrection and ascension, only after the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, only then did they begin to understand that no one can pray in the name of Jesus unless he bases his prayers on Christ's merits, on His suffering and death, and offers his prayers to the Father through the merits of the blood of Christ. Only he can come to the Father who is one in spirit with the crucified Christ. Only he can expect to be heard who, like the Lord, is willing to be obedient even to death, and who can say with Jesus, "My meat

is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John 4:34). Only when we have acquired the spirit of Christ, His point of view, conformity to the will of God, can we actually pray in the name of Jesus. Then our prayers will be united to His prayers and incorporated in them, to be acknowledged by Him as His own and offered by Him to His Father. Such prayers will certainly be answered.

"Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full" (Gospel). Our Savior has given the solemn promise, in His own name and in the name of His Father, that "whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, that will I do" (John 14:13). In prayer we have an unfailing means for obtaining light, power, and grace from God. "For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Luke 11:10). He who fails to ask, will not receive; he who asks little, shall receive but little; while he who asks much, will receive much. This divine rule in the order of grace is borne out by experience and by the history of the Church. It is the law that "to the humble [God] giveth grace" (I Pet. 5:5); and "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). In prayer we abandon ourselves and go to the Father. Why? We become conscious of our own nothingness and misery; in all humility we acknowledge our nothingness and our insufficiency; we humbly confess that we are unable to help ourselves, that we cannot live by ourselves, and that of ourselves we can accomplish nothing. For this reason we lift our hearts to God, for "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17). Thus we throw open the doors of our being to the infinity of God, that His light and power may stream in.

Prayer is the respiration of the soul; the soul exhales its own nothingness and inhales God. Prayer is the abandonment of self and a dedication to God. If we would preserve and nourish the life of God which we received in baptism, then we must breathe forth ourselves into God and inhale the

light and the power of God. This we do in prayer. There is no grace without prayer. Only he who casts himself down in humility, only he who can abandon himself and his own nothingness, only he who absorbs God—only he can be helped. Only those who ask shall receive.

3. "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you" (Gospel). We ask the Father in the name of Jesus principally when we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the proper spirit. This we do by taking into our hands His sacred body and His precious blood, the price of our salvation, and offering them up to the Father. "We Thy servants [the priest], and also Thy holy people, . . . offer up to Thy most excellent majesty, from among Thy gifts and presents, a pure victim, a holy victim, a spotless victim, the holy bread of life everlasting and the chalice of eternal salvation" (Canon). Here His sufferings, His blood, and His death speak for us. Here He acts as our advocate and makes our needs the object of His priestly prayer, a prayer which is all-powerful with God. He is our intercessor and intermediary. Now His promise is fulfilled: "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Then the Lord who was sacrificed for us comes into our hearts at Holy Communion. Our hearts now become His dwelling place, where He lives and prays. He elevates our prayers with His own and makes them a part of His adoration, His thanksgiving, His praise. The small grain of incense which is our prayer He puts into the thurible of His praying heart. Thus it becomes a part of His own perfect prayer and rises up to the Father like the smoke of incense. "Through Him and with Him and in Him" the Father receives from us also "all honor and glory."

"Alleluia, I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and I go to the Father, alleluia" (Alleluia verse). He is our advocate with the Father, He has opened heaven to us again and made our approach to the Father possible. Now since we are children of the Father, we are free to speak and say, "Our Father." Christ, who is our

elder brother, prays with us and in us. We pray with Him and in Him and in His name, basing our claims on His merits. Thus our prayer becomes all-powerful, but only under one condition: "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world" (Epistle).

PRAYER

O God, from whom all good things proceed, grant to Thy supplicants that by Thy inspiration we may think what is right and with Thy guidance carry out the same. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Catholic prayer

1. Today we observe the first of the three rogation days which immediately precede the feast of the Ascension. In the mind of the liturgy our petitions are to accompany the Lord when He ascends into heaven. Christ in His ascension is our emissary, our messenger, our advocate. With this thought in mind the Church holds her rogation processions. "Arise, O Lord, help us and redeem us for Thy name's sake" (Processional antiphon). "Lord have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us." May all the saints pray for us that we may obtain forgiveness and protection from our enemies and from the enemies of the Church; that there may be concord and harmony among all peoples; that there may be but one fold and one shepherd; that all men may be saved. The Church places these petitions on the paten, in the hands of the Lord, who is about to offer Himself up to the Father with her and for her.

2. "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). The prayer of the Christian is necessarily a catholic (universal) prayer, made with and for the rest of the community. He who

has once learned to pray in the spirit of Christ, knows that his prayer belongs to the whole Church. He knows that nothing is so foreign to the spirit of Christ and to a child of God as a narrow isolationism. "Woe to him that is alone" (Eccles. 4:10). The Christian knows that when he prays he is supported and abetted by his brethren. If he loves God with all his heart, he means not with his own heart alone, but with those of all his brethren. He feels that Jesus, Mary, the saints in heaven, and all earnest Christians on earth have but one heart, the heart of Jesus. By virtue of the power of the Holy Ghost, they have but one soul. When he prays, he knows that all the blessed in heaven and the baptized on earth pray with him, joining in one "Our Father," in one "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost"; all join in the same "Hail Mary." When he prays, he has a deep consciousness of these others praying with him, and he joins his prayers to those of the community. Even when he is physically alone at prayer, he is ever conscious of the fact that no one can approach the Father as an isolated individual; he can come only if he is of one heart and one soul with his brethren. Otherwise the Father can have no pleasure in him. Men must approach the Father together, and present themselves as one body before Him.

He who prays alone is narrow, egotistical, and isolated. Separated from the community, he cannot ask "our Father" to "give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses." He has failed to understand that this promise has been made only to the community of men, praying with one another and for one another. "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," supporting their petition, supplementing it, and presenting it to the Father.

"No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). Only in communion with Him and through Him can we gain admission to God with our prayers. He leads us, since we are joined to Him, into the sacred presence of God. Through Him we have become the children of God and may now gain admission to the Father. Through Him and in Him we live, we

feel, we work as children of God and fulfill the duties which are ours by reason of our being members of the family of God. We perceive also our obligation of approaching God as children when we pray.

In truth we can be said to be really praying only when we do so with Christ and through Christ. He must be in our midst. Wherever two or three are assembled in His name, there He is to be found among them if they are of one soul and one mind, united by mutual love. They are one in the measure in which they are one in their prayer, in heart, and in spirit. He stands in the midst of those who pray as their leader and guide. Now the Father hears the voice of His Son mingled with the prayers of the community. For this reason our prayers are answered. Through this union of prayer we established contact with Christ and with His prayers. He assimilates and unites the entire Church with Himself. God does not look with pleasure nor bestow His grace on those separated from the community, but only on the Church and on those in communion with the Church. The individual can hope to receive from Him only in the measure in which he unites himself to the community and to the Church. The more intimately we associate ourselves with the community, with the Church, with our parish, with our family, with the various religious families, the more pleased God will be with us, and the more fruitful becomes our prayer. "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

3. But what if we should be living at odds with our brethren? What if we are given to hatred and are guilty of a lack of charity both in word and in action? Can our prayer then be truly a prayer of the community, made in the name of Christ? It could hardly be so.

During the rogation processions the Church prays the Litany of the Saints. The Church militant unites with the Church triumphant, with Mary, the Queen of all saints, with the holy angels, with the apostles and martyrs, with the confessors and

virgins. This union provides a vast multitude of holy souls praying as one. Joining her prayer to those of the saints, the Church cries out to the Lord, "be merciful," "deliver us from all evil," "we beseech Thee, hear us." Then she adds many prayers addressed to the Father. All these she offers to God through her intermediary, Jesus Christ. "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." How fruitful these rogation processions must be, for the Church is sure to be heard! "He heard my voice from His holy temple, alleluia" (Introit).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who in our affliction confide in Thy mercy, may be ever defended by Thy protection against all adversity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

The need of prayer

1. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Gospel). This solemn promise was made by the Lord to those who pray. Confiding in this promise, we join in the rogation procession and the Mass.

2. "The continual prayer of a just man availeth much. Elias was a man passible like unto us; and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (Epistle). Thus we see how efficacious and how fruitful were the prayers of the just man Elias. And the Lord has also promised us in the Gospel: "Ask, and it shall be given you." How great, then, must be the intercessory power of the Church! How great must be the power of that prayer if all members of the Church and the saints in heaven lift their hands to the Father in supplication! The Church prays incessantly through her priests, through her religious, through the saints, through Mary, the most powerful of all intercessors, and through her

Head, who is Christ Jesus. Christ is with the Father; He is also in our tabernacles, "always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). We join our prayers to those of the Church, and we have the assurance: "Ask, and it shall be given you." We place our trust in the intercessory power of the Church, of which we are living members. We also place great confidence in the power of our prayer, because of the fact that we are supported and abetted by the prayers of many holy and God-fearing brothers and sisters in Christ. What a precious possession such prayers are! How we should prize and treasure them!

"Ask, and it shall be given you." What the Church wants today, above all else, is souls devoted to prayer. All of us in some way share a responsibility for our fellow Christians. God wishes the salvation of all men. But if this goal is to be realized, men must themselves desire salvation and work to obtain it. Moreover, men must will the salvation of their fellow men and work to accomplish it. Every man is master of his own destiny. But even so, each one of us is in some measure the master of the destiny of others. Modern science has taught us that we cannot split one atom without starting a chain reaction that destroys millions of other atoms. Much the same is true in the world of the spirit. We all contribute to the good fortune (or ill fortune), the salvation and eternal destiny, of our fellow men. Because we are all branches of the same living vine, Christ, our lives are intertwined. Necessarily, therefore, we can and do promote or hamper the progress of other branches of the vine. There is no such thing as a neutral position.

To a certain extent even the eternal salvation of our fellow men lies in our hands. This responsibility we discharge by means of our example and our prayers. By means of our prayers we prevent the just wrath of God from being visited upon His people. The sins of men in our day call out to heaven for vengeance. How frightful are the sins of unbelief! How horribly men revile God; how rashly they deny Him; how foolishly they blaspheme against Him and His Church! The

world is drenched in sins of hatred—hatred between nations, hatred between social classes, hatred between individuals. For that reason we are admonished in today's Epistle: "Dearly beloved, . . . pray one for another that you may be saved. . . . If any of you err from the truth and one convert him, he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

To save souls through the power of prayer is the great occupation of the Church during the rogation days and at other times also. She prays that souls may be saved, and that is the purpose of our prayer also. We pray with the tenacity of the beggar mentioned in today's Gospel: "If he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." We must pray much, pray diligently, and pray without ceasing. "Ask, and it shall be given you."

3. We place too little trust in the promise that has been made to us and too little dependence on the value and the power of prayer. That is why our prayers lack confidence and zeal. And yet, precisely to those who possess zeal and confidence the promise has been made: "All things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive" (Mark 11:24), and "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:22). Moreover, the closer our union with the Church, the more effective our prayers will be. This union with the Church will manifest itself in the firmness of our faith, in our obedience to her commands, in our devotion to her service, in our participation in her prayer, in our sharing of her sacrifice. Under these circumstances our prayers will have the quality that every effective prayer must have: they will be devout, zealous, unceasing, childlike, and persevering. Therefore pray with the Church.

"Ask, and it shall be given you." Today the liturgy associates this admonition with our reception of Holy Communion, for

at that time we are most intimately bound to Christ the vine, to the other members of the community, and to the Church herself. At this most holy moment Christ, who has sacrificed Himself for us, prays with us and for us, together with the whole Church, to which He is intimately united; and we pray with Him and through Him. Then we shall receive, we shall find, it will be opened to us.

PRAYER

Kindly grant our prayers, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that while we receive Thy gifts in tribulation, we may increase in love for Thee through our consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Post-communion.)

THE VIGIL OF THE ASCENSION

Before the gates of the Father

1. Today we live with our Lord and Savior. The thought that concerns Him most today is the realization: "I come to Thee," to the Father. The Son knocks at the door of the Father and begs admission for Himself and for His disciples.

2. "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. . . . I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; and now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world was" (Gospel). Christ asks His Father to let His human nature share in that glory which He possessed as the Son of God from all eternity. How completely He has humbled Himself! Although He was God, at the moment of His incarnation He took on our lowly human nature and "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7 f.). By a life of poverty, humility, and suffering, and by complete subjection to the will of the Father, He has fulfilled the task which was given to Him. Now He returns to the Father, and we share His feelings and His joy. We join in His prayer to the Father: "Father, . . . glorify Thy

Son" as He has glorified Thee. Give also to His humanity the glory that is justly His. Exalt Him above the world and above the highest heavens. Take Him to Thyself and set His throne at the right hand of Thy majesty. Let the scepter of His power extend to the ends of the earth. Let Him rule in the human nature He has assumed as King and Master, and let every knee bow to Him, "of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). Let His name and His gospel be made known to all mankind. Let all men be incorporated in Him, that they may feel the power of His salvation and may be saved through Him. Prepare for Him a spouse pure and spotless, a holy and blessed Church. Make that Church holy, universal, mighty, and invincible. Give Him power over souls, over hearts, over peoples, and over all ages. Let all offer sacrifice to Him, and may He extend His sway over all men. May He save all men and give them life, that they may possess it in its fullness.

"I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world. Thine they were, and to Me thou gavest them, and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given Me are from Thee; because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them; and they have received them, and they have known in very deed that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; because they are Thine and all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine" (Gospel). We belong to Him as the members of the body belong to the head. He cannot go to His Father without us. He desires that we, His brothers, share in His eternal inheritance. "I pray for them . . . whom Thou hast given Me." He prays for us because we have been united to Him through our baptism, through our daily Holy Communion. How shall we measure this ineffable love of the Savior? How intense is His desire that the gates of heaven be opened to all men, and that in the mansion of His heavenly Father a place be prepared for us! O Lord I believe in You, and I trust and confide entirely in You.

3. "Declare it with the voice of joy and let it be heard, alleluia; declare it even to the ends of the earth: The lord hath delivered His people, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit). We have been delivered. He will take us with Him to His Father. "Shout with joy to God, all the earth, sing ye a psalm to His name; give glory to His praise. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost" (Introit). The Lord has delivered His people. He goes now to prepare a place for them in heaven, and very soon we shall join Him there. "It is truly meet and just, right and profitable to salvation, to extol Thee indeed at all times, O Lord, but especially with the highest praise to magnify Thee at this time, when Christ our Pasch was sacrificed. For He is the true lamb who hath taken away the sins of the world. Who by dying hath overcome our death, and by rising again hath restored our life" (Preface for Easter). We have been delivered.

"Sing ye to the Lord, alleluia; sing unto the Lord and bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day, alleluia, alleluia" (Communion). Praise Him from day to day for the work of salvation which He has accomplished for us, and which He will one day bestow on us at our entrance into heaven.

PRAYER

O God, from whom all good things proceed, grant to Thy supplicants that by Thy inspiration we may think what is right and with Thy guidance carry out the same. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

The Glorified Christ

1. On this day Christ's triumph is complete. The victory which He gained by His resurrection from the dead is today made perfect. The Lord, together with the human nature He assumed, has ascended to the Father. He now shares in the dominion of heaven and earth; He now rules all hearts and all souls.

2. Forty days have elapsed since Easter. During this period it

was the intention of divine Providence that our faith in the resurrection of Christ should be confirmed and strengthened. The disciples had been bewildered by the fact that their Master had died on the cross. He had breathed forth His spirit, and His body had been buried. All this had weakened their faith and aroused doubts in the minds of the dejected disciples. During the forty days that followed, the apostles and disciples acquired such a firm and steadfast faith that they were not saddened by our Lord's ascension, but were rather filled with joy.

And indeed the Ascension was a cause for joy. Human nature had been exalted above the highest heavens and placed above the angels and archangels. It had been allowed to approach the very throne of God. The apostles knew now that they would be allowed to share in the glory of Him whose nature they shared.

Since the ascension of Christ is our exaltation, and whither the glory of the head has gone first, there the hope of the body is also called, let us rejoice with gladness and delight in giving thanks. For today not only have we been confirmed as the possessors of paradise, but in Christ we have even penetrated the heights of heaven, having gained far more through the ineffable grace of Christ than we had lost through the malice of the devil. For those whom the virulent enemy cast down from the happiness of their first state, these the Son of God has placed as one body with Himself at the right hand of the Father, who lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Ghost for all eternity. Amen.¹

3. Christ, our head, "hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6). We are "heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), called to share the inheritance of Christ. "Now you are the body of Christ, members of member" (I Cor. 12:27), "For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church" (Eph. 5:29). Now the members and the body share in that which belongs to the head. Thus we possess even today the riches and glory and exaltation of the ascension in Christ our head.

¹ St. Leo the Great; lesson at Matins.

Christ's victory and triumph are not His personal victory and triumph, but belong to the whole Christ, to the entire Church. When He died on the cross He embodied the whole of mankind, and the whole of mankind shared in His death. As the second Adam, He includes the whole of mankind also in His resurrection and ascension. He won the victory and has triumphed, not only for Himself, but for us also, for the whole Church. Our head has been taken up into heaven, where He reserves a place also for us. That place already belongs to us and is secured for us by Christ. That does not mean that God will one day take us to Himself in heaven, but rather that God has already brought us to heaven in Christ.

“And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be. And whither I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:3 f.).

How could we do anything else but rejoice, at least to the extent of our belief? Our joy as Christians on this occasion will be in direct proportion to our faith.

What must we do that we may be certain to share in the ascension later on? We need do only one thing, remain united to Christ. How can we remain united to Him? By becoming members of His body, His Church, and by living in harmony with its teachings.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who believe Thy only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, has this day ascended into heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit on heavenly things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

Perfect happiness

1. Today we ascend the Mount of Olives (the stationary church of St. Peter) with Peter and the other apostles to witness

Christ's ascension. "And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up into heaven. And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy. And they were always in the Temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:51-53).

2. Today we rejoice with Christ, who, after His many trials and hardships on earth, can now take His repose. Today He "sitteth on the right hand of the majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3) and takes possession of the glory, dignity, and power that belong to Him properly as the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God and the "Lord of glory" (I Cor. 2:8). Today the man Jesus takes possession of His royal power and assumes jurisdiction over all the goods and riches of God; today He begins to exercise His supreme authority over all creatures, both living and dead. Today He is crowned King of kings. Today He receives authority to judge the living and the dead. Today He is made a "quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). Henceforth Jesus does not belong to one nation, as He did heretofore. He now belongs to all nations and to the Church in all her parts and members. He embraces all men, filling them with His life and His spirit. Today He transfers the capital of His world-wide empire, the Church, from earth to heaven; He begins to give His "gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8). Do we not have good reason for rejoicing with Him today? Should we not congratulate Him on His ascension? Should we not submit to Him and choose Him for our King again? Should we not place all our trust and hope and love in Him?

We rejoice also in our own good fortune. Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father, but He has not deserted us; He thinks of us with love. He has gone, but He has gone "into heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24); He lives there always "to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). He knows our nothingness, and He is solicitous for us. He does not allow us to wander from His eyes even for a moment. He makes our business His business, our

needs His needs, and He is our surety before the Father. "But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just" (I John 2:1). He is our high priest, sacrificing Himself always for us. He offers His body, the blood which He poured out on the cross, His most Sacred Heart, His adoration and veneration of the Father. He offers His love in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, substituting for us and supplying for what is lacking in our service. He is our head, and He draws His members after Himself by the power of His example, by His inspirations, by His exhortations to good, by His grace, and by His surpassing goodness. All this He does, that where the head is, the members may also be. He goes "to prepare a place" for us (John 14:3). The place He prepares for us is with the Father in His eternal home in heaven. He sends us the Holy Ghost, the Consoler, from on high, that He may fill us with grace, strengthen us, sanctify us, and prepare us for our return to the Father. Do we not, then, have good reason for rejoicing today?

3. Now we approach the altar for the celebration of Mass. While we are thus assembled the risen Christ appears in our midst. We are like the apostles gathered around Peter. The Lord comes to strengthen our faith. He says to us, as He said to them, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Gospel). He gives us strength to resist all that might endanger our salvation, and He draws us after Him into heaven. "Sing ye to the Lord, who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east, alleluia" (Communion).

By means of Holy Communion, Christ the head unites all the members of His mystical body to Himself and draws them after Him. The reception of Holy Communion is our assurance and, as it were, the first stage of our eventual resurrection, ascension, and glorification. Alleluia.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who believe Thy only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, has this day ascended into heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit on heavenly things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE FRIDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Christ the Lord

1. "The Lord is in Sinai, in the holy place" (Alleluia verse). "Let us praise the King of kings" (Antiphon at Lauds). The feast of the Ascension is a day of triumph for Christ. He is the Lord.

2. Christ is the Lord, the *Kyrios* (Phil. 2:11). He has accomplished man's deliverance from sin, and has taken His seat "on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels hath He [God] at any time said: Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee. . . . Sit on My right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool" (Heb. 1:3-5, 13). It was not to the angels that He subjected the world of the future (the Church of the New Testament), but to Christ, His Son. "What is man that Thou art mindful of Him? Or the son of man that Thou visitest him? . . . Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honor [through His ascension]. . . . Thou hast subjected all things under His feet" (Ps. 8:5 ff.; Heb. 2:6 ff.). If it is said, "Thou hast subjected all things under His feet," then there is nothing that is not subject to Him (Heb. 1:2). He Himself had assured us: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). When we sing the Gloria we joyfully acknowledge His dominion: "Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou alone art holy; Thou alone art the Lord; Thou alone, O Jesus Christ, art most high, together with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father." We firmly believe that Christ, God Incarnate, is the Lord. We thank God that He has thus exalted our Lord and that He has subjected all things to His dominion. We, too, will be subject to Him, to His will, to His commandments, to His Church and its ministers.

The reign of Christ gives Him the right to rule over all that

has been made subject to Him, in heaven and on earth, in time and eternity. Men and angels and all created things, both now and throughout all eternity, must obey the will of the Father and of His risen Son, our Savior, and honor Them. "Thou alone art the Lord." Christ is the Lord, not only of the Sabbath, but of all days; not only of a part of the day, but of the whole day; not only of one locality, but of the whole world. All our internal and external acts, all of our actions and deeds, must be performed to serve Him and promote His honor; they must preach Christ and be subject to His will and pleasure. Our most personal desires, our most secret ambitions, our very essence and being belong to Him. "Thou alone art the Lord." He is the absolute Master of all things. His is a supremacy to which all else is subdued. God has made us completely and entirely dependent on Christ in all our desires and actions. This dependence embraces not only individuals, but the whole community; it includes all nations and all races. Today heaven and earth and hell must all confess, now and forever, that Christ is the Lord (cf. Phil. 2:10 ff.). We willingly accept this domination of Christ over us, over all mankind, over all creation. We pray that all may be subject to Him and confess Him as their Master. "Thy kingdom come."

3. "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12). He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names. That in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. 2:7 ff.). We may often feel that Satan is still the true lord of the world. Often we are faced with the baffling riddle of sin, and are overawed by the overwhelming power of Satan, by the infidelity, evil, and sin we see about us. Yet our faith in the power and dominion of Christ over sin remains firm, even though it is not apparent. We place our trust entirely in His strong arm, in His

wise providence, in His love which moves Him to work for the salvation of all men. We cannot comprehend the secrets of His wisdom any more than we can understand the love, power, and wisdom of God. "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who believe Thy only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, has this day ascended into heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit on heavenly things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal Monarch, King most High,
Whose blood hath brought redemption nigh,
By whom the death of Death was wrought
And conquering grace's battle fought.

Ascending by the starry road,
This day Thou wentest home to God,
By heaven to power unending called,
And by no human hand installed.

All glory, Lord to Thee we pay
Ascending o'er the stars today;
All glory as is ever meet,
To Father and to Paraclete.

Amen.

THE SATURDAY AFTER ASCENSION

"Behold, I am with you"

1. "After He had spoken to them, He was taken up into the heavens, and sitteth on the right hand of God" (Gospel). The period of Christ's visible residence on earth has been completed. Nevertheless He remains among us through His word: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

2. "And they, adoring, went back into Jerusalem with great

joy. And they were always in the Temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:52 f.). Although the Savior had departed, the disciples were not saddened, but were rather filled with joy. One of the greatest and most inspiring joys of the Church is the knowledge that now, even though the Master has withdrawn His visible presence, she is united to Him by a more intimate union. She is now joined to Him in the unity of the mystical body as the members are joined to the head. From this moment on, she realizes that the words of the Master apply to her: "I am the vine, you the branches" (John 15:5). Now He lives in us and among us. We in turn live by Him as His members, as the branches live by the vine. During the time of His visible presence on earth, Christ completed the work of redemption. But He still continues with this work and perfects it in each one of us, although He Himself is sitting at the right hand of His Father in heaven.

By Christ's death on the cross we were enabled to become members of His body; but we have been incorporated, not in the physical body which He possessed on earth, but in the glorified mystical body which became a reality with His ascension. He found it necessary to withdraw from us in order to get closer to us, in order to live in us, to be one with us, to share with us the fruit of His life on earth and of His death on the cross. Of what advantage for us would the death of Christ be, or His teachings, or the example He gave us, or the exertions He underwent for us, had He not risen and ascended into heaven? Of what profit would all these things be to us, if He had not been exalted, if He had not ascended on high that we might share His glorified life with Him? He is the head of the mystical body, and we are the members. Why, then, should we be grieved by His departure? "It is expedient to you that I go" (John 16:7). "And He hath subjected all things under His feet, and hath made Him head over all the Church, which is His body, and the fullness of Him who is filled all in all" (Eph. 1:22 f.). His body possesses the fullness of all gifts and graces, which He acquired at the time of His ascension. "He that de-

scended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10). Thus Christ's ascension is not a day of sadness for us, but rather a day of joy. So, like the infant Church, which was a witness of the ascension, we return from the memory of the ascension "with great joy, . . . praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:52 f.).

"Behold, I am with you all days." He looks after us and cares for us, and even returns to us in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Had He not been glorified, had He not ascended into heaven, had He not been given a place at the right hand of the Father, we should now have no Sacrifice of the Mass, no Holy Communion, no sacrament of baptism, no sacrament of penance, no priesthood, and no Church. But now that He sits at the right hand of the Father, He finds a way to be present among us in body and soul, to return to us as God and man, to truly give Himself to us under the appearance of bread and wine, to be at once the priest and the victim of our sacrifice. The whole community gathered about the altar is united with Him and offers itself also in the sacrifice, thus becoming with Him a holocaust to the Father. Love, devotion, and the spirit of sacrifice stream from that altar and envelop the sacrificing, praying community. Here at the altar men gain the courage and the strength to suffer their daily cares and difficulties. Here, through the reception of Holy Communion, during those moments of silent adoration at the steps of the altar, they gain the courage and the strength to endure the burdens of their state of life and the hardships imposed on them by the obligations of family life and fraternal charity. Here they feel the enlivening, consoling presence of the glorified Lord. "Behold, I am with you all days."

3. "Sing ye to the Lord who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east, alleluia." Thus the Church today bursts forth in joy at the time of Holy Communion. He who ascended in glory and sat at the right hand of the Father, now descends again to earth and comes to us in Holy Communion, and nourishes us with His glorified flesh and blood. In this manner He

plants in us the seed of the resurrection of the body, and prepares us for the resurrection which we confidently expect.

Christ the risen Lord reposes now with His human nature in the bosom of the Father. And in a sense we also repose there with Him, for, "ascending on high, He hath led captivity captive" (Alleluia verse). Thus He freed us from the captivity of sin and the devil.

Where the head is, there the members must also be. And although our Head is in heaven, He is simultaneously on earth at all times. He lives, prays, works and suffers in the baptized, in us who are His members. "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). He lives among us in the Blessed Sacrament, loving us, coming close to us, nourishing our souls with His life. "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11:28).

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who believe Thy only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, has this day ascended into heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit on heavenly things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sunday after Ascension

1. Christ ascended into heaven to enter into His glory. The Church which He left behind on earth gazes fondly after Him and longs to see again and be united with the one to whom her heart and her love belong. Without Him she is desolate and lonely, for she still lingers here on earth.

2. This mood causes her to cry out to her absent bridegroom in the Introit of today's Mass: "I have sought Thy face, Thy face, O Lord, I will seek; turn not away Thy face from me, alleluia, alleluia. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Introit.) It is we, the Church, who prays thus.

Each of us says, "I have sought Thy face." Our incessant search for the absent Lord is expressed eloquently in the repeated Kyrie; the same idea is expressed in the Collect. Our life should be the expression of our devotedness to God, and of our longing for purity of heart and for freedom from all that may displease Him. "Thy face, O Lord, I will seek" in earnest prayer, in patient and merciful love, in selfless devotion to others, in loyalty to the Church, in zeal for souls, and in the quest for the grace of God (Epistle). "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). Thus the longing of the Church and of Christians for heaven will draw down the grace of God and of Christ upon the world. When a soul is fired by such a noble aim, it will not seek the face of Christ in vain. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18) in the person of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, "whom I will send you from the Father" (Gospel). We receive this promise gratefully and profess our belief in Him in the Credo.

In the Offertory we are reminded of the triumphal entry of Christ into His sanctuary in heaven. This triumphal entry symbolizes the approach of the eternal high priest to the heavenly altar, upon which Christ offers Himself for our eternal union with the Father (Offertory). Together with our gifts of bread and wine we also offer to God ourselves; our wills, our inclinations, all our faculties, and all our actions. We make an all-embracing holocaust of ourselves, we make our action a living *sursum corda*, imitating the ascension of Christ.

The moment of consecration approaches. What Christ has promised now becomes a reality: "I will come to you." What a blessed coming! "I have sought Thy face." Now He descends among us, enters into a most real and intimate union with us, a union of prayer and spirit, a sacrifice offered to God. Here in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass He unites us to Himself in His sacrificial mission. Just as He, through the almighty power of His word, changes the substance of the bread into that of His body, so, too, if we allow Him to make of us a holocaust, He

will penetrate our inmost depths with His life and His spirit. Thus through an intelligent and active participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, our lives become ever a more certain expression of the spirit of Christ in us. If we participate in the Holy Sacrifice in spirit and truth, if daily we die and rise with Christ, we shall become living and invincible witnesses of Christ, a personified testimony of Him (Gospel). That is the prime fruit of the sacrifice of the altar.

3. The daily devout celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass emphasizes ever more and more, not only the opposition between the Christian and the "old man" within him, but also between the Christian and the world about him, between the Christian and the enemies of the cross. "They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God" (Gospel). But the devout participation in the Mass makes the Christian not only a heroic witness to Christ, but also a victorious hero with Christ. "I will come to you" in Holy Communion.

"I pray, not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world" with its illusions, its deceptions, its mockery, and its persecutions, "but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil" (John 17:15). This is the noble fruit of sacrifice and of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We are given the grace to persevere, to conquer the world and sin and hell. "I will come to you again, and your hearts will rejoice."

THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Love and suffering

1. The Lord has ascended into heaven. The Church gazes fondly upward and promises, "Thy face, O Lord, I will seek" (Introit). But the Church does not forget the commission given her by the Lord: "You shall give testimony [to Me]" (Gospel). The Church bears testimony to Christ by the fact that she loves Him and suffers for Him.

2. The Church loves. Her very being and existence consist

in her accomplishment of this task of fraternal charity assigned to her by God. Because the Church is the kingdom of God on earth, it is an organism of fraternal love. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35). By this same characteristic it will be clear to all men that she is the Church of Christ. "Dearly beloved, be prudent and watch in prayers. But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covereth a multitude of sins. Using hospitality one towards another without murmuring; as every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak the words of God. If any minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth; that in all things God may be honored, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Epistle). What more noble vocation could one have than that of giving testimony to Christ? We fulfill this vocation to the degree that we practice charity in our thoughts, in our words, and in our works.

The Church suffers. "And you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning. These things have I spoken to you that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God. And these things will they do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the hour shall come you may remember that I told you of them" (Gospel). The Church indeed suffers. She shares the lot of her bridegroom. "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

St. Peter was crucified; St. Paul was beheaded. Uncounted thousands, champions of Christian faith and virtue, have given their lives in testimony of Christ. Bishops, priests, deacons, laymen, young men and old men and virgins, young boys like St. Pancratius, and young girls like St. Agnes have sacrificed all

to be witnesses to Christ. The Church suffered ten severe persecutions during the first three centuries. In the centuries which followed, great heresies arose, and these caused new sufferings for the Church. New enemies arose, new martyrs were born. The kings and the mighty ones of earth demand that the Church abandon her position on the sanctity of marriage and allow the passions of a fallen human nature to control our actions. But the Church continues to give testimony to Christ and His law even though whole nations abandon her. Modern ideologies and modern theories are born and demand a hearing. They ask that the Church accommodate her dogmas and her teachings to the spirit of the times. But the Church will not compromise; she clings to Christ. She is denounced, and her name is dragged down into the mire; but she suffers patiently, giving testimony to Christ and the immutability of His laws. O holy Church, thou hast been faithful to the commission given thee by thy departing bridegroom: "You shall give testimony [of Me]." Thou surely art the true Church of Christ. I cling to thee, and by my loyalty to you I also give testimony to Christ. This I shall do, even at the cost of worldly honors and esteem, even at the cost of my life.

3. "You shall give testimony of me." Christ has ascended into heaven but He continues to live in His Church on earth, and in us, just as a vine lives in its branches, and gives its life to them. In me and in other members of His mystical body on earth, He will be visible on earth, and will continue to influence, through the love, suffering, and sacrifices of Christians.

Through love. "Dearly beloved, be prudent and watch in prayers. But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves . . . using hospitality one towards another without murmuring; as every man hath received grace ministering the same to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (Epistle). Are all my thoughts, are all my desires, are all my actions informed by Christian charity?

Through suffering and sacrifice. "The hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God"

(Gospel). We do not anticipate any other treatment and we would not have it otherwise. "I have told you that, when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them" (Gospel). And we cannot doubt that the hour will come when we must bear witness to Christ before the world, that the world may know that the power of Christ operates in us, and that Christ is risen from the dead and lives in us. "O foolish, and slow of heart to believe. . . . Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25.)

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, grant that our will may be ever devoted to Thee, and that we may serve Thy majesty with a sincere heart. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY OF THE WEEK BEFORE PENTECOST

Christ the High Priest

1. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we take part in a worldwide procession which follows Christ's ascension into heaven. "God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet, alleluia" (Offertory). He enters heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father. His function as high priest, which began with His assumption of human nature, is to continue and to be fruitful for all eternity. "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at My right hand. . . . Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109:1, 4).

2. Christ's heavenly priesthood is not a mere repetition or summation of His sacrifice on the cross. It is the perpetuation of that sacrifice, continued out of His zeal for the honor of the Father and for the salvation of souls. It is the eternal, efficient, representation of the sacrifice of the cross. As long as there remain souls on earth that are in need of salvation and to whom the salutary merits of Christ's work must be applied, He continues to exercise His priesthood on their behalf. This He does in a twofold way: first of all, through His continuous sacrificial prayer. He is like another Moses praying with out-

stretched arms while His people fight against their adversaries. If Moses lowered his hands, Amalec overcame; and when he lifted them up, Israel overcame (Exod. 17:11). Likewise Christ is "always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). "Christ Jesus that died; yea, that is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34).

He also exercises His priesthood through His sacrificial life in the Eucharist on our altars. There the divine high priest offers Himself through the hands of His ordained minister. In the midst of His people He offers His body and His blood, His life with its inexhaustible merits, His acts, His adoration, His praise, His obedience, and His love. "This holy and unspotted victim" He places in the hands of His Church at the offertory, that all those who are in heaven and on earth may have an offering to make to the Father which is entirely worthy of Him.

"Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109:4). Not after the manner of the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament is He a priest, but after the manner of the unbloody sacrifice of the New, after the manner of the mystical priest-king, Melchisedech, who offered bread and wine. Christ, the divine high priest, by means of His omnipotence transforms the bread and wine into His sacred body and His most precious blood. The Eucharistic sacrifice celebrated by the divine high priest becomes the foundation on which His kingdom is established and extended here on earth. This is the source of the efficacy of the life-giving waters of baptism and of the graces furnished by the other sacraments. It is the eternally pulsating heart which circulates the streams of life and light and love throughout the members of the mystical body. By means of this offering the high priest makes the most complete satisfaction for sin, the most adequate return for benefits received from God, the most effective intercession for further needs, the worthiest adoration for all creatures. Through this holy sacrifice the priestly spirit of Christ is stirred up in all His members. By means of the Mass, Christ lives in His Church, in His members on earth, being persecuted in

them, doing penance in them, accomplishing good through them, and adoring His father by means of them. By means of this offering He unites those whom He has redeemed more closely to Himself, incorporates them in His own sacred offering, and offers them to the Father, a "holy and unspotted victim."

3. "The Lord will send forth the scepter of Thy power out of Sion. Rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies. With Thee is the principality in the day of strength, in the brightness of the saints. . . . Thou art a priest forever" (Ps. 109:2 ff.). Through the power of Your holy priesthood You rule over the powers of darkness and of evil. Rule the hearts of men, make them Your own. Make them to be with You at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass a pure, holy, and unspotted victim to be offered to the Father. Fill them with the power and the spirit of Your own sacred priesthood.

How fortunate we are to have such a divine high priest! We will "go in to the altar of God" and pray "through Christ our Lord." We shall celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass with Him, and allow ourselves to become part of His offering. He is able to redeem us completely and to sanctify us through His prayer and sacrifice.

An eternal high priest! The sacrificial intention of Christ is eternal. Eternal, too, is that divine compassion which sympathizes with the poor, fallen nature of man with its infirmities, for He is like unto us in all things except sin (Heb. 4:15). Through His eternal saving Christ continues to live His temporal life forever. His self-denial, His tears, His sufferings, His labors, His humility, are continued in this way; for He is the sacrificial lamb, the victim offered by the high priest. Rich indeed are those who live on earth according to the spirit and poverty of Christ.

PRAYER

O Lord, having been filled with Thy holy gifts (the Holy Eucharist), we beseech Thee to grant that we may always persevere in giving thanks to Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Postcommunion, Sunday after the Ascension.)

TUESDAY OF THE WEEK BEFORE PENTECOST

Christ, the King and Judge

1. "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son. . . . As thou hast given Him power over all flesh" (John 17:1 f.). The Father heard this prayer of His Son and glorified Him through His ascension into heaven. "Sit Thou at My right hand" (Ps. 109:1). Now He shares in the dominion and the glory of the Father. To Him "all power is given . . . in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). He has been given the power to rule and to judge.

2. The power to rule. Behind the gentle sweetness of the gospel there stands also the royal power of the lawgiver. Christ does not preach merely to edify; He states the law. He supports His laws with sanctions of eternal happiness or eternal damnation. "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Gospel). Under the law of Christ there is no distinction of persons, no privileged persons, no one against whom discrimination is made, but only the just and the unjust. No one has power over the law of Christ, not even the Church, and everyone must accept it with respect and humility. No earthly lawgiver, no parliament, no king, no minister, no science, can dispense from the law of Christ nor ignore it with impunity. He has made His law known through the gospel and through His Church so that no one can excuse himself on the plea of ignorance; and this applies especially to those who belong to the Church. "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." This power extends to me also, to my body and my soul, to my very life. I gladly acknowledge His power over me, His law, His command.

The power to judge. "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). To Him He has given the power to inflict punishment on the

whole race, on individual peoples and states, on individual persons, on false science, on passing whims and notions, as the history of mankind testifies. He "hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honor the Son as they honor the Father" (John 5:22 f.). Every soul must appear before Him as its judge as soon as it has left the body. It must give an account to Him; it must answer to Him who knows its most secret thoughts, its hidden motives, its every action, both good and bad. An account must be given to Him whose sentence is eternal. Later all must appear again before the Judge of the world. Then He will separate them as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. To the former He will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father"; and to the latter, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. . . . And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting" (Matt. 25:34 ff.).

Jesus, who was condemned by the council of the Jews to be crucified, is the Judge of the world. Before Him must bow all who "are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). Even those who now deny Him or reject Him will have to confess and acknowledge Him. Christ will eventually triumph and put all His enemies to silence. How we shall rejoice that we have lived for Him! How happy we shall be when He says to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:23)! How glad we shall be that while on earth we lived according to the teaching and example of Christ, that we have loved poverty and humility, that we have clung to the cross and despised the world! How great will be our joy when we shall hear the sentence of the judge: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34)!

3. Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, has been enthroned at the right hand of the Father as Master and Judge. He cannot and will not be our Redeemer if we fail to accept His laws and to subject ourselves to them. The more perfectly we conform

to His law, the more certain we become that He is truly our Redeemer.

Today we pay Him homage on His high throne in heaven. We honor Him by our faith in Him. Even though we may not understand all that He has revealed, we nevertheless submit to the spirit and the letter of everything that He has said. We pay Him homage by the submission of our will when we fulfill His commandments faithfully. We pay homage to the glorified Redeemer by our love. He wants our hearts and our love. He will not accept the cold, enforced service of the servant or the slave, but insists on the service of a voluntary and holy love. To fear the command of Christ is good, but to love it is much better. We honor Him by our life. Whatever befalls us each day in our work, whatever problems confront us, whatever obligations are imposed on us, we should accept them as the will of the Lord. Our motto should ever be: "Thy will be done."

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, grant that our will may be ever devoted to Thee, and that we may serve Thy majesty with a sincere heart. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect, Sunday after the Ascension.)

WEDNESDAY OF THE WEEK BEFORE PENTECOST

The Holy Spirit and the spirit of the world

1. The Lord has ascended into heaven. The apostles return from Mount Olivet into the city of Jerusalem. In the upper room, the room of the Last Supper, we find "all these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). Thus the Lord "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). During these days the Church also, with Mary and the apostles and the holy women, awaits the promise of the Father, the coming of the Holy Ghost.

2. But an unholy spirit of the world lives and works in us,

in spite of the religious exercises which we undertake, in spite of the prayers we say, and in spite of our confessions and our daily Holy Communion. A more dangerous enemy than the world, the flesh, or the devil is the so-called human spirit, our own spirit. This spirit is the enemy of all those who try seriously to practice piety or make progress in the spiritual life. It is full of treason and treachery and falsehood. It is unstable, curious, restless, and destroys all repose and tranquility. Sometimes our spirit appears to be completely subdued and subjected to God, but it is merely masquerading under the guise of righteousness and a pretended zeal, and is really directed by a satanic spirit. Pretending to promote the honor of God and to strive after perfection, it is really just hiding its own selfishness and narrowness. It inspires us to act out of purely human and natural motives, to act apart from the movements of grace and independently of the will and intentions of God. It cries out for peace, that is, for ease and untrammelled freedom, and unceasingly strives for bodily comfort. It seeks itself even in religious matters, although often under the pretense of searching for perfection. When it strives against evil, or when it serves God or attempts to save souls, it is really only seeking itself. This natural, human spirit still lives and works all too powerfully in us.

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of true life. He gives light and faith; He inspires noble ambitions and undying hope. The fire of the Holy Spirit warms the soul and creates enthusiasm. It consumes all that is ignoble and evil, and suppresses the spirit of selfishness and worldliness. It directs all our actions to God and passes a condemnatory sentence on everything in us that is common or ordinary. It sharpens our ability to detect evil in ourselves, and removes all drowsiness from our members and from our soul. It gives us freedom of spirit that detaches us from all that is transitory, and binds our hearts firmly to God. It helps us to face life with a holy indifference and a noble simplicity, and gives us a freedom that is satisfied with the bare necessities of life. It uses the goods of the earth and of the world,

even the advantages of culture, only to bring the life of the soul to maturity. We stand very much in need of such a spirit. During these days, in company with Mary and the apostles, we beg that we may receive this spirit. *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*: "Come, Holy Spirit; fill the hearts of Thy faithful and inspire them with the fire of Thy divine love."

3. "Come, Holy Ghost." He will come to us in the measure in which we desire Him and long for Him. Our desire and our longing for Him will increase as we become conscious of the degree to which we are slaves to the spirit of worldliness. How little true spiritual freedom we possess! How small our degree of living faith! How purely natural our manner of thinking, of judging, of deciding our problems. How little insight we possess in spiritual matters! How can we be lifted up to the level of spiritual men? Certainly not by our own effort and desire. Only the grace of God and the power of the Holy Ghost can do this. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Ps. 80:11). The more we desire and ask for, the more we shall receive. "For everyone that asketh, receiveth" (Matt. 7:8). He that does not ask will not receive. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53).

"And I send the promise of My Father upon you; but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). That is the command of the Father for these days which precede Pentecost. We continue in prayer with Mary and the apostles. Even while we are occupied with the duties of our state of life and the care of our families, we can keep our hearts fixed on God and free to commune with God in prayer. We wish to be prepared when the Holy Spirit descends from heaven at Pentecost and seeks admission to our souls. God grant that He may not pass us by.

PRAYER

O God, our refuge and our strength, who art the Author of all true piety, give ear to the pious prayers of Thy Church, and grant that we may in truth receive what we so earnestly seek. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE WEEK BEFORE PENTECOST

"Lift up your hearts"

1. "Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who believe Thy only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, has this day ascended into heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit on heavenly things" (Collect). In this prayer which the Church offers to God she seeks to make our life harmonize with our faith.

2. *Sursum corda*. We must lift up our hearts to dwell in heaven in spirit. We are to live with the glorified Christ, who is our head, our exemplar, the way and the truth. All our hopes and expectations should be placed in Him. We must concentrate only on what is yet to come, on what is eternal. *Sursum corda*. The incidents of our lives, the misfortunes we suffer, the men with whom we associate, the works we perform, the duties we must fulfill, the sufferings we must undergo, should all be considered in the light of eternity and through the eyes of God and our glorified Redeemer. To dwell in heaven means to accept all our misfortunes and difficulties after the example of Him who was unjustly condemned to death, who was executed in the most shameful manner, and whom the Father exalted above the highest heavens. It means not to wish to be acclaimed and honored by men, but to submit our deeds and omissions to Him who sees all our actions from heaven, and provides that nothing we do with the proper intention is ever lost or without its proper reward.

He who dwells in heaven in spirit considers all his actions in the light of his eternal destiny. He is not, however, shiftless or disinterested. On the contrary, he takes a more intense interest and uses greater insight than others. He lives in the peace of God and does not pass from one excitement to another. He lives on a higher plane of life and works quietly and in peace with his eyes fixed on heaven. He takes misfortunes as coming from the hand of God, and follows faithfully in the footsteps

of Him whom he knows to be now in heaven sitting at the right hand of the Father. "In your patience you shall possess your souls" (Luke 21:19). Such a man uses the temporal things for his eternal salvation. This is the true wisdom which confounds all worldliness, lifts us up from the mire, rescues us from the narrowness and selfishness of our fallen nature with all its vanity and confusion.

"Draw us after Thee." "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given me may be with me; that they may see my glory which Thou hast given me, because Thou hast loved me before the creation of the world. . . . And I have made known Thy name to them and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me, may be in them and I in them" (John 17:24, 26).

This consoling promise has been made by Christ to those on earth who are united to Him in spirit and will. "I will that where I am, they also may be." In heaven we shall see His glory and shall share it with Him. The Father will love us for all eternity with the same love He has for His Son. We who are mere dust of the earth will be sharers of the blessed life and love of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "Father, I will that where I am, they also may be with me." That is the purpose of all our striving here on earth.

3. "That they may see my glory which Thou hast given me" (John 17:24 f.). Our bodies too are to share in this glory. "Thou hast loved me before the creation of the world." Thou hast given me all that is Thine so that I can share it with them. "And for them do I sanctify myself." They were once children of wrath, but I have taken their place. But I am holy and dedicated to Thy Divine majesty, and in union with me they shall also be sanctified and offered up to Thee. "For them do I sanctify myself." Once I did this by my cross and my death; now I do it daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This Mass they offer with me, and so they, too, are consecrated and sanctified.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we who believe Thy only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, has this day ascended into heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit on heavenly things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE WEEK BEFORE PENTECOST

Be prepared

1. "Almighty and eternal God, grant that our will may be ever devoted to Thee, and that we may serve Thy majesty with a sincere heart" (Collect).

2. A submissive will. If the grace of the Holy Spirit is to be fruitful in us, as it was in the apostles, it is not enough that we merely pray for His coming. It is also necessary that we prepare the soil of our souls to the best of our ability. We do this by renouncing ourselves, and by rejecting all that is contrary to God's will and honor. Above all we must have charity: "If any one love me he will keep my word, and we [The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] will make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Our task is to acquire a submissive will. We must prove ourselves.

Purity of heart. Purity of heart is opposed to sin, to faults, and to imperfections. We know that before the Holy Ghost will enter the heart of man, it must at least be free from sin and from willful imperfections and faults, or it must at least have the sincere desire to achieve such purity of heart. The greater the graces God gives, the more purity of the affections required of the soul. The soul should possess something of that purity of heart which Mary possessed when she was congratulated by Elizabeth and raised her eyes to Him from whom she had received so much grace: "My soul doth magnify the Lord . . . He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. . . . He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (Luke 1:46 ff.). Mary is elevated too far above the motive of selfish love to become proud over the distinction that has been given to her. She re-

joices only in what God has wrought in her; she sees only Him and not herself. She possessed perfect purity of soul and was ready for the reception of grace. But how different it is with us! How great is our secret pride! What idle self-complacency we indulge in when God gives us grace! How often we take foolish pride in the graces we receive, and think ourselves something great because of them. The honor and the good pleasure of God are seldom our primary motive in our quest of holiness. Our thoughts and actions and designs are often primarily concerned with ourselves. Our selfish pride instills a subtle poison into all our actions and infects even our love of God, so that what we should do purely for the love of God, we do for ourselves. We have, then, good grounds for asking God: "Grant that our will may be ever devoted to Thee, and that we may serve Thy majesty with a sincere heart" (Collect).

3. Pentecost will be fruitful in graces. But a perfectly pure and unselfish heart is required to profit by them. Not without reason Mary met with the apostles in the upper room. She is the exemplar of all those to whom God gives great graces; we must imitate her example. She teaches us that we should not long for special favors; that we should not believe that we have been given any special graces because of our own worthiness and excellence; that we should not ascribe to our own deserts any of the graces which we receive; that in matters of the spirit we should be humble; that we should never undertake works of piety or self-abnegation in order to obtain sensible consolations. All such things are based on self-love and only hinder the work of God. Such motives turn the gifts of heaven into a deadly poison.

To approach God we must efface ourselves and understand our own nothingness. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, grant that our will may be ever devoted to Thee, and that we may serve Thy majesty with a sincere heart. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE VIGIL OF PENTECOST

Baptized with the Holy Spirit

1. In ancient Rome those who for some reason or other had not been able to receive baptism at Easter, received the sacrament on the vigil of Pentecost, which is similar to the vigil of Easter. It expresses the idea of our baptism by the Holy Ghost.

2. The Epistle relates that St. Paul came to Ephesus and found there certain disciples who had already been baptized, and he inquired whether they had received the Holy Ghost after their baptism. They, however, said that they had not so much as heard of the Holy Ghost. Paul concluded from this reply that they had not received the baptism of Jesus, otherwise they would have received the Holy Ghost. As a matter of fact, they had received the baptism of John; that is, the baptism which John had given at the Jordan, and not the sacrament of baptism established by Christ. Then "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." We are bearers of the Spirit, filled with the Holy Ghost.

The Introit applies to us: "When I shall be sanctified in you. I will gather you together out of all the countries [into the fold of the Church], and I will pour upon you clean water [baptism] and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness." There can be no doubt that we have received the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, together with the Father and the Son in the inseparable unity of the divinity, has come to us to abide in us. He is most intimately bound to our souls in a living union. "The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him, shall abide with you and shall be in you" (Gospel). He lives and works in us who have been incorporated in the body of Christ.

"He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (Gospel). With what

a love He has loved us! He has loved us with that same love which binds the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost together in the Blessed Trinity. We Christians can boast that the love with which the Father and the Son love us, and with which we love them, is God. "God is charity" (I John 4:8). It is the Holy Ghost, the Love of God, who binds the Father and the Son together and completes their love. It is the same Holy Ghost who binds us to Christ, as head and members, so that as one we love, work, pray, suffer, and adore the Father. Through His miraculous entry into our souls and His marvelous union with them, He effects our union with Christ and binds us to the fountainhead of all grace. We are incorporated in Christ through the Holy Ghost, who lives in us. And the Holy Ghost, the Love of God, dwells in us because we are incorporated in Christ.

3. How unfortunate that we should always merely skim the surface of our souls! Into the inner sanctuary where You reside, O Holy Ghost, we seldom penetrate. O God, at Pentecost give us a view of those unfathomable depths in which You dwell. From this day on let our gaze be fixed on Thee. Draw us away from the turmoil and distractions of our daily life into the depths of our soul where the Holy Ghost lives and works, that we may listen to His inspirations and live by His spirit.

We dissipate our energies by distractions and allow ourselves to become slaves to our duties and obligations. We allow ourselves no moments of silence and meditation in which we might be led to the Holy Ghost, who lives in us. We forget His presence entirely. He lingers in the dark recesses of our soul and waits in vain for a glance or a word from us.

PRAYER

O almighty God, grant, we beseech Thee, that we who keep the festival of the coming of the Holy Ghost may ever burn with the desire of heavenly things, and ever thirst after the waters of life eternal. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

1. "But I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). When Christ ascended into heaven, He went to His Father. Today He fulfills His promise of sending to His apostles and to His Church the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost. This coming is further proof that He has been glorified and that He sits at the right hand of the Father.

2. At Christmas, God became incarnate; He came to share with us His participation in the divine life and in the grace of God. Easter is the feast of the resurrection of the soul from sin and of the incorporation of man in the mystical body of the glorified Christ through the sacraments of baptism and Holy Eucharist. Pentecost is the feast of the visible mission of the Holy Ghost to the apostles, to the Church, to each Christian family, and to each individual soul. By virtue of His death on the cross, the Lord has merited the grace of the sending of the Holy Ghost. Now that He is in heaven He prays for and effects the coming of the Holy Ghost, that we may grow in grace and holiness, that we may be strong and firm in faith, that we may reach perfection and share in the inheritance of Christ our head.

During His life on earth, and even in His mortal human

body, Christ possessed the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But after His resurrection and ascension into heaven He is so completely united to and informed by the Holy Spirit that St. Paul speaks of Him as being made into a "quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). Since we are His members He lives and works in us to the extent that the Holy Spirit lives and works in Him. Thus, for St. Paul "to live in Christ" means the same as "to live in the Spirit." "Baptism in Christ is baptism in the Spirit." For this reason St. John can say, "In this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us; because He hath given us of His Spirit" (John 4:13).

We have been elevated to the divine life by Christ; but the Holy Ghost also took part in this operation. Where the Holy Ghost is not operating, there can be no body of Christ. "The faithful become members of the body of Christ when they attain life through the Spirit of Christ," the Holy Ghost (St. Augustine). The divine life is always given through Christ, the incarnate God. When we allow Him to do so, He always sends us the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love. This Spirit always binds us again firmly to the Father, so that we long and strive with all our strength to be true children of the Father and to attain to perfect love. Therefore the life of Christ which was implanted in our souls by baptism (Easter) cannot be made perfect without the coming of the Holy Ghost (Pentecost).

Pentecost is the complement and the completion of Easter. Easter gives us the beginning of supernatural life and incorporation in Christ. But this new life must unfold; it must be strengthened and enkindled into a burning fire which can resist all things; it must be imbued with a love which is stronger than death, so that we are prepared to suffer all things for Christ, even the sacrifice of our life. This strengthening of our spirit is brought about by our baptism with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The spirit of Pentecost is the spirit that makes the confessors and martyrs. It gives light, power, and unconquerable strength. This effect is visible in the apostles, who "went

from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:41).

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church and of Christianity, the beginning of the New Dispensation. Man, having been touched by the Spirit, no longer lives according to the flesh, according to the principles and ideals of fallen human nature; he lives in the Spirit. He is filled with the light of truth and is guided by the Spirit of truth Himself, the Holy Ghost. The new generation of men now sees all things in their proper place in the plan of divine providence and in their relationship to eternity. In the spirit of truth and love the new generation is called to act for good and upright motives, to do only what is pleasing to the Father. It is a generation of spiritual men. Since they "live in the spirit," they must also "walk in the spirit" (Gal. 5:25). They belong to Christ, and with Him they crucify their flesh, together with its passions and lusts. They are not envious of one another, but practice mildness, patience, and charity (Gal. 5:26 f.). "The fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity" (Gal. 5:22 f.).

In the baptism of the Spirit, which the Church receives at Pentecost, she is washed clean in the blood of Christ; she arises with Him; she is imbued with the fullness of new life. Today she stands with the divine dowry which Christ earned for her and gave to her. She is bright with the glow of eternal youth and fertility as she stands at the side of her heavenly bridegroom. Now she has been prepared for that arduous life for which she is destined upon earth. She has been prepared to share the life of her bridegroom and to remain faithful to Him in spite of all that may befall her; she is prepared to represent Him under all circumstances, and joyfully to bring forth new generations of children. The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love and truth, dwells within her and operates in her. He is the soul of the body of the Church. He guides her and leads her to her

eternal nuptials with her divine spouse, Jesus Christ. That is the meaning of the mission of the Holy Ghost and of the feast of Pentecost.

3. The feast of Pentecost is a day of thanksgiving for the foundation of the Church, in which are contained all the treasures of supernatural riches, and through which all grace and redemption are given to men. Pentecost is a day of thanksgiving for the coming of the Holy Ghost and for the establishment of the sacrament of confirmation. It is a day on which we place a joyful and grateful trust in the operation of the Holy Ghost within us, and thank Him for His inspiration and guidance. On this day we again place ourselves in the hands of the Holy Ghost with complete confidence. He should be the soul of our soul; He should reign in us, amid the ruins of our own fallen nature. Pentecost is a day of petition, a day on which we should implore the Holy Ghost for a full measure of His graces and gifts. With the Church we pray:

Come, Thou Holy Spirit, come,
And from Thy celestial home
Send Thy light and brilliancy.

Come, Thou father of the poor,
Come, Thou source of gifts secure,
Come, our heart's true radiancy.

Thou, of all consolers best,
Thou, the soul's most welcome guest,
Sweet refreshment constantly.

In our labor, rest most sweet,
Grateful coolness in the heat,
Solace in adversity.

O Thou light most pure and blest,
Shine within the inmost breast
Of Thy faithful company.

Lacking Thy divinity
Nothing good in man can be,
Nothing but iniquity.

What is sordid, make Thou pure,
What is wounded, do Thou cure,
Slake now our aridity.

What is rigid, gently bend;
What is frigid, warmly tend;
Strengthen what goes erringly.

Fill Thy faithful who confide
In Thy power to guard and guide,
With Thy sevenfold mystery.

Give them virtue's sure reward,
Give them Thy salvation, Lord,
Give eternal felicity. Amen.

The Liturgy of Pentecost Sunday

1. The brilliant sun of Easter, our Lord Jesus Christ, rose to the highest heavens at the time of His ascension. Just as at Pentecost the natural sun has normally reached the highest point of its orbit and begins to pour forth the full force of its rays upon the earth so that the earth may bring forth its fruits, in like manner Christ sends forth His rays from the heavenly heights upon His people and warms them with the glow and the fire of the Holy Ghost. Just fifty days after Easter, on that day when the Jews celebrated the feast of their deliverance from Egypt and the reception of the law on Mount Sinai, the Church is perfected through the power and the strength of the Holy Ghost.

2. The infant Church was gathered together in the supper room at Jerusalem; today the supper room is the great basilica of St. Peter, which now encloses men of all languages and of all races. At the third hour the Holy Ghost descended upon

the apostles in the form of tongues of fire, thus completing the first step in their sanctification, thus bringing them to spiritual maturity. The Holy Ghost excludes no one. Men of all nations and of all peoples unite to confess: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, alleluia; and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice, alleluia" (Introit). He lives in the hearts of those who will receive Him. He is the source and the bond of unity, of mutual understanding and reciprocal love. Sin and its author, the evil spirit, breed disharmony and strife and contention. Therefore we pray in the Introit, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered." This plea for action on the part of God is continued in the Kyrie and in the Collect of the Mass. The Epistle gives us the historical account of the events that occurred on Pentecost. But the work begun on Pentecost is not yet complete and must be renewed and repeated in us. Therefore we kneel after the Epistle and sing: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love" (Alleluia verse). Then we rise to our feet and sing:

Come, Thou Holy Spirit, come,
And from Thy celestial home
Send Thy light and brilliancy.

Come, Thou father of the poor,
Come, Thou source of gifts secure,
Come, our heart's true radiancy.

The Holy Ghost comes to us to dwell in our hearts with the Father and the Son, truly and personally. He is our teacher; He brings peace.

3. At the Offertory we sing psalm 67, which sings of the victory of Christ and His Church. We join in this victorious procession, decked out in the royal livery of Christ (through baptism and confirmation). Having conquered evil within ourselves and in our surroundings, we proceed like glorious victors to the "temple which is in Jerusalem," that is, to the altar.

We pray that God may confirm and perfect in us what we received at Easter through baptism, and that it may be renewed and strengthened by the Holy Ghost (Secreta). In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the wonderful things related in the Epistle are re-enacted in us. As we offer our sacrifice, we turn from self-love and offer our own souls to God. Thus we make room for the entry of the Holy Ghost. We receive Holy Communion and thus receive a new and more perfect incorporation in Christ. We will become more perfectly united to the body of Christ than ever before if we live by the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost. This thought is presented to us in the Communion chant, for if we devoutly receive Holy Communion, we shall be "filled with the Holy Ghost."

PENTECOST SUNDAY

The testimony of the Holy Spirit

1. Seven times seven days, a complete jubilee octave, have passed since Easter. Now the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the eternal expression of the mutual love of the Father and the Son, comes to us. He comes with the sound of a mighty wind, appearing to the apostles in the form of tongues of fire which rest upon each of them. Made bold by this baptism of fire, they go forth into the world and proclaim by word and deed, even by the sacrificing of their lives, that Christ the crucified One is truly risen.

2. The first Pentecost. The historical event of Pentecost is related in the Epistle. The apostles and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are gathered together in one place. About the third hour (about nine o'clock) they hear a mighty rush of wind as if a storm were approaching. Then tongues of fire appear above the heads of each of them. They are all filled with the Holy Ghost and begin to speak in various tongues, according as the Holy Ghost inspired them. Outside the house a great crowd of people has gathered, who cannot imagine what has happened. Then they hear the disciples and the apostles speaking in vari-

ous languages, and each one, in the language in which he was born, hears of the wonderful things which God has done. A new Pentecost! In ancient times God confirmed His covenant with Israel to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning. But the law He gave was the law of fear, the law of severity, the law of servitude. This is a new Pentecost, a Pentecost that fills the hearts of men with love, freedom, and holy joy. The Holy Ghost appears with a mighty wind, penetrating and filling the hearts of the disciples. They are freed from their former timidity and hesitancy. The Holy Ghost enlightens men, guides their thoughts, provides for their needs, controls their desires, inspires their affections, adjusts their motives, and elevates them to the kingdom of the spirit. He teaches them a new manner of life. He gives them courage, strength of character, stability, inexhaustible patience, a readiness for sacrifice, a will to suffer for the sake of Christ. They are indeed a new creation.

Our Pentecost. In the mind of the liturgy, Pentecost is not merely the commemoration of a past event; the wonders related in the Epistle are repeated today in us. We also gather in one place during the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and unite in prayer, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost. For this reason we pray at the end of the Epistle: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love." When the glorified Savior appears in our midst at the Consecration of the Mass, He will bring the Holy Ghost with Him. In our reception of Holy Communion the events of Pentecost will take visible form. The Holy Ghost comes to each of us and fills us with His fire and His power. He does not come to us in the form of fiery tongues, but in the form of a fragile host which is the glorified body of Christ and contains also the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost. When we receive Holy Communion, we receive again the baptism of the Spirit. Having been filled with the Holy Ghost, having become bearers of the Spirit and apostles of the Lord, we announce the marvelous works of the Lord. During the distribution of

Holy Communion the Church sings: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking the wonderful works of God, alleluia, alleuia." Pentecost has been repeated in the present.

3. "If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him" (Gospel). Thus our Lord describes the love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the love which binds us all together. God is never very far from us; He is actually within us. This is the joyful message of Pentecost: God is within us! The Father loves us, not only for today or for tomorrow, but for all eternity. God is within us and we are filled with light and warmth. We must let His rays shine into our hearts; we must let Him come and make His abode within us. We are filled with His power and fire, which will consume all evil and all sin within us. This fire is our holy zeal to serve God and our Savior.

Pentecost is the seal and the perfection of the mystery of Easter. If Easter is baptism, Pentecost is confirmation. Easter gives us a new birth; Pentecost brings us to maturity. At Pentecost we reach our full stature, we are brought to man's estate, to perfection by the power of the Holy Ghost. The baptism of the Spirit prepares us for heroic deeds, sanctifies our thoughts, purifies our motives. It makes us perfect Christians.

PRAYER

O God, who hast this day taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Ghost; grant that by the same Spirit we may always be truly wise and ever rejoice in His holy consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PENTECOST MONDAY

Our Holy Faith

1. Today the Church addresses herself to the newly baptized and the newly confirmed, and also to the rest of us who re-

new the grace of our baptism and confirmation. She calls us together at the church of St. Peter in Chains.

2. St. Peter once had a vision in which he saw a great linen sheet, as it were, being let down from heaven, which contained all kinds of beasts of the earth and birds of the sky. A voice from heaven addressed him saying: "Arise, Peter: kill and eat. But Peter said: Far be it from me, for I never did eat any thing that is common and unclean" (Acts 10:13 f.). But while he was thinking of these things, legates came from a Roman officer, Cornelius, begging him to come to Cornelius, who was a pagan. Now Peter understood the meaning of the vision, for God showed him that no man may be called common or unclean. Even the pagan has value in the eyes of God. Cornelius informed Peter that he had been bidden in a vision to summon the apostle. Then Peter preached the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. And while Peter was yet speaking, the Holy Ghost came down upon all those who listened to him, upon Cornelius and the heathens who were with him (Acts 10:44 f.). The Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter were astonished that the Holy Ghost had been given also to the Gentiles, and Peter ordered that the heathens be baptized (Epistle). The Holy Ghost will be given also to the Gentiles who come to the Church. The Spirit of God makes no distinction between Hebrew and Gentile, nor between nation and nation. "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (Gospel). We are invited today by the liturgy to thank God that we have been called to Christ, to the Church, to baptism and confirmation.

"He that believeth in Him is not judged; but he that doth not believe is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (Gospel). Baptism gives us the gift of faith. We are saved by faith, for "whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." In so far as it depends on Him, the divine physician comes to heal the sick. But those who will not follow His instructions take

their lives in their own hands. Those who will not allow Him to save them are responsible for their own damnation. "He that believeth in Him is not judged; but he that doth not believe is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

"He is already judged." The judgment hath not yet appeared, but the judgment has already been made. For the Lord knew who were His; He knew who would persevere unto a crown and who would continue unto the flame. He knew the wheat on His threshing floor, and He knew the chaff. He knew the grain and He knew the cockle. "He that doth not believe is already judged." Why judged? "Because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."¹

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6).

3. "He fed them with the fat of wheat, alleluia; and filled them with honey out of the rock, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit). This is the thanksgiving song of the baptized, and it is also our hymn of thanksgiving. We have been fed with the wheat of the Eucharist and filled with the honey from the rock of Christ. His flesh and His blood, His love, are all ours as the result of our baptism. "Rejoice to God our helper; sing aloud to the God of Jacob, alleluia" (Introit). The Lord hath done great things for us; now we must make some return to Him.

In Holy Communion, God gives us the Holy Ghost and an increase of sanctifying grace. "The Holy Ghost will teach you," the Communion prayer tells us. The more devout our reception of Holy Communion, the more the Holy Ghost will increase our faith and strengthen it and make it live. "But he that doth truth, cometh to the light" (Gospel); that is, he will acquire an active and vigorous faith. The more truly Christian we make our lives, the deeper and more pure and more active will be our faith.

Today we gratefully recall our baptism and confirmation. The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High gave His voice [at the descent of the Holy Ghost], and the fountains of waters appeared, alleluia" (Offertory).

¹ St. Augustine; lesson at Matins.

PRAYER

O God, who didst send the Holy Ghost to Thy apostles, listen favorably to the prayers of Thy people, that Thou mayest bestow peace upon those to whom Thou hast given faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PENTECOST TUESDAY

The fullness of life

1. The glory of the Church was perfected by the descent of the Holy Ghost. In the sacrament of baptism her children received the "fullness of life." Therefore the Church calls out to the baptized and the confirmed: "Receive the joy of your glory, alleluia; giving thanks to God, alleluia, who hath called you to a heavenly kingdom, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit). She also warns us with maternal solicitude not to squander the riches we have received in baptism and confirmation. "Attend, O My people, to My law; incline your ears to the words of My mouth" (Introit).

2. "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (Gospel). When the apostles received word that Samaria had accepted the Gospel, they made haste to confer the Holy Ghost upon those who had been baptized. Peter and John were sent into Samaria and both apostles prayed over the baptized. "Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Epistle). In the normal course of events, the sacrament of baptism is completed by the sacrament of confirmation. The new life given by the sacrament of rebirth must be strengthened, confirmed, and completed by the sacrament of the Spirit, the sacrament of confirmation. That life must develop into a vigorous maturity, untroubled by the violent turbulence of human passion, and characterized by the quiet, harmonious, overwhelming power of the divine Spirit.

The soul which is to be called and prepared by the sacrament of confirmation for deeds of Christian heroism, rises by a gradual and steady growth to the heights of Christian per-

fection. It acquires perfect detachment from the world, a pure and holy love of God, of Christ, and of its neighbor. It is prepared to practice heroic virtue, humility, patience, sacrifice, and daily suffering. Baptism alone restores supernatural life to the soul, and is sufficient for salvation. Through baptism the soul is reborn; but it is the will of God that this life be brought to perfection through the sacrament of confirmation. The Lord desires heroic and perfect Christians. It is His will to give us not merely life and a precarious escape from sin and eternal death, but also the fullness of life, as He says, "I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly." This fullness of life is attained through the descent of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the apostles were so zealous in seeing that the faithful received the Holy Ghost through the reception of confirmation: the sacrament of growth and strength, the sacrament of religious and moral maturity, the sacrament which completes baptism and brings the soul to Christian perfection.

Jesus is the shepherd of those who have been baptized and confirmed. "To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he hath led out his own sheep he goeth before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice" (Gospel). Christ is likewise the gate for all His sheep, the only gate by which the sheep can enter into the fold to spend the night in the enclosure. Anyone who would seek to lead and pasture the sheep of Christ without His authorization "is a thief and a robber," who leads the sheep to destruction. He who comes to the sheep through Christ and with the proper authorization will be saved. He will find the best pasture for the sheep, since he acts in the name of Christ and by His authority. Only in Christ and through His properly authorized minister may we find life and find it more abundantly. Such life can be had only from him to whom Christ said, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them

to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20). Such life can be had only from Christ living in His Church, in His apostles, in His bishops, and in His priests. "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. 18:18).

3. The life given by baptism must grow; it is strengthened and brought to perfection by the reception of confirmation. By means of this life we are incorporated in Christ and in the living organism of the Church. Nowhere else and in no other way can we find life, experience growth, or achieve perfection. Everywhere else we find only empty pretense, evil, and death. How fortunate we are to be members of the true Church of Christ, and to be under the protection of the shepherds appointed by Christ! How thankful we should be! But we should also pray and offer the Holy Sacrifice for all who remain outside the fold of the Church, and we should act as apostles to all who are in the hands of those who have not entered the sheepfold through the right gate. Our own spiritual riches oblige us to practice charity toward those who are spiritually destitute.

"The Lord opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna upon them to eat; He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of angels, alleluia" (Offertory). Baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist provide us with the abundance of life.

"The Spirit who proceedeth from the Father, alleluia; He shall glorify Me, alleluia, alleluia" (Communion). At the time of Holy Communion Jesus pours forth the Holy Ghost into our hearts. He is the Spirit of life, of love, of strength, of sanctity. He forms us very much in the same manner as He did the apostles at Pentecost. Our life, guided and formed by the action of the Holy Ghost, becomes holy and virtuous, and thus we glorify the glorified Christ who sent the Holy Ghost to us. By the devout reception of Holy Communion, "the Holy Ghost renews our souls" (Postcommunion). How care-

ful, then, we should be to receive Communion as worthily as possible.

PRAYER

Grant we beseech Thee, O Lord, that the power of the Holy Ghost may abide in us; may it mercifully cleanse our hearts and defend us from all danger. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EMBER WEDNESDAY IN PENTECOST WEEK

The work of the Holy Spirit

1. Gathered at the feet of Mary (the stational church for the day is that of St. Mary Major), we contemplate the fruitfulness of the Holy Ghost in the Church of Christ. "O God, when Thou didst go forth in the sight of Thy people, making a passage for them, . . . the earth was moved, and the heavens dropped [manna], alleluia. Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Him flee from before His face" (Introit). This Introit gives us a picture of the power and the efficacy of the operations of the Holy Ghost among the Israelites of the Old Testament as they wandered through the desert to the Promised Land.

2. The visible works of the Holy Ghost in the Church. On the feast of Pentecost the prophecy made by the prophet Joel was fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass after this that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. . . . And I will show wonders in heaven; and in earth, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and dreadful day of the Lord doth come. And it shall come to pass that everyone that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:28 ff.).

At Pentecost God poured forth His Spirit upon the Church, and He continues to send forth the Spirit at all times and in all ages, as has been visibly manifested by the miracles which have been worked in the Church from the beginning even un-

til now. This visible manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost is described in the Epistle. "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest no man durst join himself unto them; but the people magnified them. And the multitude of men and women who believed in the Lord was more increased; insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that when Peter came, his shadow at the least might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities. And there came also together to Jerusalem a multitude out of the neighboring cities bringing sick persons and such as were troubled with unclean spirits, who were all healed" (Acts 5:12-16).

The Church has never lacked miracles. They are a continual witness of the presence and of the fruitfulness of the Holy Ghost in the Church. There is much human weakness in the Church, many faults and many scandals; but in spite of this human element with its imperfections and sins, we find everywhere the effects of the work of the Holy Ghost. We can place our full trust and confidence in the Church in which the Holy Ghost lives and works, in spite of all the faults and the mistakes of its human members.

The invisible work of the Holy Ghost in the Church has been described by the Lord: "No man can come to Me except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him" (John 6:44). The essential element in the work of the Church is the grace of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost who unites the Father and the Son; He also joins us to the Son and, through the Son, to the Father. Everything depends on His operation in us. The more fully we allow ourselves to be drawn and guided by the Holy Ghost, the closer we shall come to Jesus and His mysteries and His graces. The Holy Ghost must draw us to every good thought and word and deed. Every act of faith, of hope, and of love for God requires the inspiration and the help of the Holy Ghost. If our virtues and our deeds are to be truly per-

fect and worthy of God, they need the special and continual touch of the Holy Ghost. Even though we are endowed with all the supernatural virtues, we still remain mere apprentices in the spiritual life. We know what we must do; and yet lack the virtue and the faculty to perform these things with ease. The Holy Ghost must guide us. He must seize our intellect and our wills and guide us in prayer, in work, in the decisions we have to make, and in the difficulties we encounter every day. He must share with us His manner of seeing, of loving, of thinking, and of working.

Our works and our conduct will be perfect only when the Holy Ghost has taken complete possession of us. Therefore, in addition to the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, charity, justice, fortitude, temperance and wisdom, He gives us also His seven gifts. Thus He equips the tiny boat of our soul with sails upon which He Himself, the Spirit of God, blows. Our progress across the sea of life is then no longer slow and painful. We are propelled and guided by the Spirit. If the Spirit of God breathes upon the sails of our boat, then our journey will be a happy one. Then through the work and the help of the Holy Ghost, who lives in our soul, we shall come to the Father. But woe to us if we prefer to work alone, if we withdraw from the help and guidance of the Holy Ghost, and place our trust in our own efforts and abilities. We shall then certainly fall behind and be lost.

3. "Everyone that hath heard of the Father and hath learned, cometh to Me" (Gospel). We come to Christ through faith. But we are called to come to Him in a much more perfect manner than our all too human and imperfect way of doing other things. But we can come to Him in this perfect manner only through the strength of the Holy Spirit, and through the perfect development of the graces received in confirmation. How far we have fallen short of realizing the perfect Christian life! Even many priests and religious fall far short of the ideal to which they are called. They remain halfhearted, imperfect and mediocre; they are not fervent in prayer, nor fruitful in

good works, nor joyful in suffering. Is this failure due to the Holy Spirit? Certainly not. It is because we ourselves are not sufficiently attentive to the urging of the Holy Spirit. We are absorbed by external things and not the things of the spirit. With such an attitude the Holy Spirit cannot operate fully and accomplish His work in our souls. Ah, if we only had the vision to see and understand this!

3. We pay too little heed to the approach and the knocking of the Holy Ghost. We do not live in the spirit, and therefore the Holy Ghost cannot operate perfectly within us. If we only had eyes to see!

If the Holy Ghost is to work successfully in us, He must find in us a great purity of heart, a simplicity and humility of soul, an active love of recollection and prayer, and finally, a burning love of God and of one's neighbor. But actually He finds us careless about venial sin, about certain infidelities and imperfections. We neglect inward and outward mortification, and refuse to be completely detached from our worldly works and actions. Our heads are filled with curiosity and are occupied with other people. We are too solicitous about our honor, our temporal progress, our relatives, our health, our spiritual progress, our former life. We are not yet completely detached from ourselves. How, then, can the Holy Ghost work unhindered in our soul and draw us to the Father? "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love."

"O blessed Light of Life Thou art
Fill with Thy Light the inmost hearts
Of those that hope in Thee.

"Lord, wash our sinful stains away,
Water from heaven our barren clay,
Our wounds and bruises heal."

PRAYER

May the Holy Comforter, who proceedeth from Thee, enlighten our minds, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and lead us into all truth,

even as Thy Son hath promised, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee for all eternity. Amen.

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty and merciful God, that the Holy Ghost may come to us and make us the temple of His glory. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY OF PENTECOST WEEK

The Spirit of Christ

1. Philip the Deacon (Epistle) and the apostles (Gospel) wrought great signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Ghost, whom they had received. We also have received the Holy Ghost, and we still receive Him daily. We must therefore be spiritual men, men who work, not in their own way, but in the spirit of Christ and the Holy Ghost.

2. The spirit of independence, the human spirit, judges all things and thinks in a purely natural and earthly way. It considers those blessed who possess and enjoy great riches. It calls those great who possess worldly wisdom and enjoy the respect and esteem of their fellow men, who occupy positions of rank, and who wield great power and influence. It seeks always its own interests; it knows well the art of making profit at all times and under all circumstances; it is a master at carrying out its own designs and serving its own interests. It usurps a large part of the life even of pious and spiritual persons. Under the pretense of serving God, it is continually seeking itself and its own natural desires, its own comfort, its own honor. In all matters of the spirit it follows the prudence of the flesh and preaches moderation and mediocrity. It is one of the chief causes of negligence, and is a fruitful source of quarrels, disputes, coolness towards others, envy, and of an unwarranted solicitude for its own good reputation. It destroys tranquility, peace of soul. It gives men an exaggerated sense of their own importance. With good reason the masters of the spiritual life have called it "the greatest evil" on earth. What a host of men there are who are ruled by this tyrannical spirit of independence!

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ, and He has communicated Himself to the soul of man with all His gifts and graces. "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Wherefore He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart" (Luke 4:18). By the "spirit of Christ" we understand especially the principle that moved and motivated His will and His judgment. All of His actions were controlled by His burning desire to accept the will of His Father and perform it at all times. He was driven by the urge to overcome all things and accomplish all that was necessary for fulfilling the will of the Father and for redeeming mankind. In Christ the head and in us the members, the "spirit of Christ" is the spirit of love for the Father, the spirit of humility, of obedience, of recollection, of prayer, of suffering, and of sacrifice. This spirit causes the Christian to live and act according to the eight beatitudes, to rejoice in God, to desire to be as nothing in the eyes of the world, to be spurned and rejected by the world. This spirit inspires us to desire a life of renunciation and detachment, and complete union with God. It makes us seek only God's will and honor. This is the Spirit "whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him" (John 14:17).

3. "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, alleluia" (Introit). The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, will take possession of us, guide us, inspire us, and direct us. He will give us the treasures of His light. He will give our wills a Christian nobility, an unconquerable strength, and the stability which we will need in order to live a life of virtue. He will overcome the resistance of our self-will, and subdue our rebellious nature. He will make us the willing instruments of the will of God and the salvation of souls. How foolish of us to refuse to lay aside the treacherous spirit of worldliness! "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful."

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," with the Spirit of Christ (Acts 2:4). The spirit of Christ must live in us. We Christians, especially the priests and religious, must con-

form ourselves to the great concepts of Christ as laid down in the gospel.

PRAYER

May the outpouring of the Holy Ghost cleanse our hearts, O Lord, and may they be made fruitful by the intimate sprinkling of His dew. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EMBER FRIDAY IN PENTECOST WEEK

Penance and forgiveness

1. In the church of the Twelve Apostles, the church of the penitents, the Mass for ember Friday is celebrated. It is a day of penance and a day on which to give thanks for the remission of sins.

2. "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Gospel). Today we celebrate the Mass in the church in which on Holy Thursday the penitents were reconciled with the Church after having been absolved from their sins. During Easter time we have received rich and powerful graces. Have we fully cooperated with them? Must we not still reproach ourselves for our many sins, our infidelities, negligences, faults, and imperfections? Today we attend the Holy Sacrifice to express our contrition, to make amends, and to do penance. We are like the paralytic mentioned in the Gospel, and we need "bearers" who can carry us up to heaven. "Through their help we are carried into the presence of Jesus and through their aid His gaze is drawn to us. Learn, O you who are ill, to seek help. If you are concerned about the forgiveness of your sins then seek the intercession of the Church. She will pray for you. The Lord will grant to her what He was able to withhold from you" (St. Augustine, explaining today's Gospel in the lessons at Matins). Come to the Church. Let the Church intercede for you. It is through the intercessory power of the Church that we shall have forgiveness: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

"O children of Sion, rejoice and be joyful in the Lord your God; because He hath given you a teacher of justice and He

will make the early and the latter rain to come down to you as in the beginning. And the floors shall be filled with wheat, and the presses shall overflow with wine and oil. And you shall eat in plenty and shall be filled; and you shall praise the name of the Lord your God, who hath done wonders with you. And My people shall not be confounded forever. And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel" (Epistle). This prophecy of Joel has been fulfilled in us. He is the teacher of justice. "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John 14:26). He lives in our soul and leads us to an upright, God-fearing life. He is given to us as the love which joins the Father to the Son, the Son to the Father, and us to both of Them; He elevates us so that we can have a certain participation in the life of the Holy Trinity. He is the fructifying rain which brings forth in us a multitude of spiritual and supernatural goods. Have we not good reason for rejoicing? Today we have seen wonderful things. "Praise the Lord, O my soul; in my life I will praise the Lord; I will sing to my God as long as I shall be, alleluia" (Offertory).

3. "Alleluia, alleluia. O how good and sweet is Thy Spirit, O Lord, within us, alleluia. Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love."

By a devout participation in the Holy Sacrifice, we receive, as the fruit of our work, the forgiveness of our sins and the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. As an assurance of the forgiveness of our sins and of the graces and the help we are to receive, the Lord personally enters into our souls. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you again, alleluia; and your heart shall rejoice, alleluia."

"And your heart shall rejoice." This is the characteristic mark of the Christian; he is ever joyful and thankful to God, who has done such great things for him. He loves us, and as a guarantee of His love and forgiveness, He pours forth His Spirit into our soul. "Praise the Lord, O my soul; in my life

I will praise the Lord; I will sing to my God as long as I shall be, alleluia."

PRAYER

O merciful God, suffer not Thy Church, gathered together in the Holy Ghost, to be troubled by any assault of her enemies. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EMBER SATURDAY IN PENTECOST WEEK

Redeemed!

1. Today we assemble in the church of St. Peter. Just as the Christians of an earlier age offered tithes of their crops in thanksgiving to God for a bountiful harvest, so we, too, during the final days of the Easter cycle offer our thanks to God for the rich harvest of spiritual fruits we have received.

2. In retrospect. "Brethren, being justified by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God" (Epistle). We are saved; we have been justified. The first result of our justification is the fact that we are now at peace with God. We can now approach God with ease and confidence, because we know that He loves us and that nothing can separate us from Him. We have been reconciled to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Heretofore we were the children of wrath; but now we are His friends, members of His family, members of the elect.

The second fruit of our justification is the fact that through the death and resurrection of Christ we have received and now live a life of grace. By virtue of the grace we have received, we share the life of God, a life of unspeakable blessedness and riches. The "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I Cor. 2:9). We are made "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). By reason of the grace we

possess, we have an assurance and guarantee of the glory which we anticipate even now as children of God.

The prospect of the future. "And not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not" (Epistle). Such hope is possessed by the Christian who has lived through Easter and Pentecost in the spirit of the Church. He rejoices even in the trials and tribulations of life. He knows that tribulation gives him an opportunity to practice patience. By suffering patiently he will gain strength; his virtue will be tried and proved, and he will acquire a firm hope, which will not deceive. This hope is the third fruit of the justification which Christ won for us through His suffering and resurrection. With it we find joy in the tribulations and afflictions of life, for we know that they effect our eternal reward. The unbeliever, the pagan, is a pessimist. He flies from tribulations and curses them. We, however, rejoice if we are allowed to suffer. We do not look on affliction as an evil, but rather as the path to eternal glory. For us suffering carries in its bosom eternal salvation.

Certainty. "Hope confoundeth not; because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Epistle). We are certain of the life that awaits us. This confidence rests on our awareness that God loves us. This is the sweetest mystery of Christianity: God loves us with a divine love. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father through the Holy Ghost. This Holy Ghost is the love through which and in which God loves Himself. Nor does He reserve this love entirely for Himself. He pours it into our hearts also like a healing, nourishing, strengthening oil. In the Holy Ghost we love God in the way that is most pleasing to Him and most fitting for us who are the children of God; that is, we love Him with the love of the Holy Ghost, whom we possess and through whom we return the kiss of paternal love. Could our hope betray us, since God sees the image of the Holy Ghost in us, and therefore loves Himself in us? Must not

the promise of Christ be fulfilled in us, "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you" (John 15:9)? Joyfully aware of God's love, the liturgy sings: "Hope confoundeth not; because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Epistle).

3. These are the priceless gifts of the Easter season which closes today: We are saved, we are justified, we have been reconciled with God, and are at peace. We possess sanctifying grace and share God's life with Him. We rejoice in tribulations because they unite us to our crucified and risen Savior, and give us the hope of attaining to the glory of the children of God in heaven. And in addition to all this, we possess within our souls the Holy Ghost, the infallible guarantee of the things we hope for. Why should we not rejoice? Should we not have great confidence? Are we not immensely rich in God and in the Church?

"Alleluia. By the word of the Lord the heavens were established" (Second lesson), i.e., the souls of the baptized. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His Holy Name" (Introit).

The Easter cycle ends with the Mass today. "Jesus rising up out of the synagogue, went into the house of Peter" (Gospel). The night has already begun, and people begin to bring their sick and infirm to Him. He heals them, and toward dawn He leaves the house of Peter. This is a figure of what is performed before us today. We are in the house of Peter attending the nocturnal services. The divine services draw to a close at dawn. "And when it was day, going out He went into a desert place." The Easter season is closed, and we recall with grateful hearts all the graces and blessings this holy season has brought us.

PRAYER

We beseech Thee, O Lord, mercifully pour into our souls Thy Holy Spirit, by whose wisdom we were created and by whose providence we are governed.

May the Holy Ghost enkindle in us, O Lord, that same fire which our Lord Jesus Christ sent down upon earth and willed should fiercely burn in our hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Continued from front flap)

Christ's Church is the city of light
the faithful enter through participation in
her liturgy. Liturgical piety is the sure
way to the contemplation of the brilliance
of Christ. His teaching is mirrored in the
liturgy, in the feasts of the Church and in
the missal. The liturgy provides a
rich background for personal prayer. At
the same time is a bulwark and an aid
to the development of the perfect Christian
life.

In the whole of the liturgy nothing is
more inspirational than the Mass formulas.
Their spiritual food content is inexhaust-
ible. Hence the author places greatest
emphasis on the Sunday Masses, to which
he devotes a more detailed liturgical treat-
ment. The meaning of the Sunday Mass
thus provides a pattern of spirituality which
pervades the ensuing weekdays. There fol-
low meditations for each day of the week,
in which the thematic spiritual doctrine of
the Sunday Mass is extended and applied
to the practical needs of individual spiritu-
ality.

Such is the versatility of Archabbot Baur
that his liturgical meditations are not re-
stricted to any group of the faithful. They
are of immense help to the directors of
souls, to priests, religious, and to layfolk
for private meditation. More and more
the children of Christ are being brought
back to the realization that in order to live
a supernatural life, a life with Christ and
in Christ, we must participate in His litur-
gical life. The unfailing source of inspira-
tion is the daily Mass. Here the power of
the Master flows into every member of His
mystical body and directs them infallibly
to the climax of Christian perfection.

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