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XXVI 7



SHORT SERMONS

FOR THE

LOW MASSES OF SUNDAY.

COMPRISING IN FOUR SERIES

A Methodical Exposition of Christian Doctrine.

BY THE

REV. F. X. SCHOUPPE, S. J.

Translated from the French, with the Permission of the Author,

BY THE

REV. EDWARD TH. MCGINLEY.

Second Edition.



LONDON:
BURNS & OATES,
GRANVILLE MANSIONS, W. .
1884.

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Imprimatur,

JOHN, CARDINAL MCCLOSKEY,

Archbishop of New York.

New York, July 5, 1883.



INTRODUCTION.

THE translator of the following pages is to be congratulated on the elegant and faithful version of Father Schouppe's work which he now presents to the Catholic readers of this country.

But the present work is far more than a translation; for in many instances it was necessary to make certain alterations in order to adapt the book more completely to the requirements of Catholics living outside of France and Belgium. These changes and improvements have been made after careful study and deliberation. Moreover, the work contains several important sermons sent in manuscript by the author to the translator, which now appear in print for the first time in any language.

Great pains have also been taken by the Reverend translator, while giving a free version, to reflect all the excellences of the author's style and manner, his brevity, simplicity, and clearness, but more especially his fervid and holy unction, thus obviating the often too well founded objection to written sermons in contradistinction to those falling from the lips of the living speaker, namely that they lie lifeless and buried in their coffins of leaden type. A brief glance will suffice to convince the reader that he is here receiving the sublime teachings of his faith, vividly and forcibly set forth, not as a mere set of dry propositions, but rather as an appeal that touches the tenderest yet strongest fibre of his heart's best affections.

Such collections of short, full, and thorough sermons are much needed in our day. Most of us can remember

the time when the high Mass on Sunday was the best attended service of the Church, when it was the family Mass to which all or nearly all Catholics went weekly with minds made up as a matter of duty to sanctify the Lord's Day by spending from two to three hours in public worship, including the regular formal sermon, seldom less than an hour in length. To-day the crowds are to be found only at our hasty low Masses. Whether this change is to be regretted or not, it has become plainly and painfully evident that unless some brief, pithy, pointed instructions be given at these early Masses, but a small proportion of the laity will know anything of their religion, or of the duties that it imposes upon them.

To meet this requirement the present collection of sermons is most admirably adapted; containing as they do a complete and exhaustive explanation of the Apostles' Creed and of all its depending tenets, together with their application to the every-day wants of Christian life and practice. In truth and fact they constitute an epitome of Moral Theology, and of Dogmatic Theology so far as the latter is connected with the Moral.

Each discourse will occupy from five to seven minutes in delivery, the least space of time that every Catholic should make it his duty to devote to his religious instruction on Sunday.

The book will be found valuable not merely to the priest who wishes to instruct a congregation of busy people pressed for time, but also to the people themselves for private reading. It must also be of great service to the Catechist, and more especially in the hands of the parent when discharging his imperative duty of teaching his children the principles of the true faith and their mode of practical application.

RICHARD BRENNAN.

ST. ROSE'S RECTORY, N. Y.

ST. JOHN'S DAY, 1883.

PREFACE.

These four series of short sermons for the low Masses of Sunday, form a complete course of dogmatic and moral instruction.

The first series, written in accordance with the wish of several venerable ecclesiastics, was simply an experiment, but it having received the approval of experience, we have been encouraged to publish the work in its present form.

In reading the first series it will appear that much pertinent matter has been left unsaid in reference to the subjects considered, but all that is necessary and useful for the faithful to know on these same subjects will be found as they again present themselves in the succeeding parts.

We have endeavored to proportionate the length of the sermons to the time which may be conveniently devoted to such instructions; but as this may vary from seven to five minutes, some may be too short and others too long.

If they are too short, it will not be difficult to extend them, either by developing some of the points,* or by

* The *Abridged Course of Religious Instruction* by the same author may be consulted for this purpose.

citing some example selected from the Scriptures or ecclesiastical history; if they are too long, those paragraphs which are considered least important, may be omitted.

May our Saviour bless the zeal of His Church in the great work of instruction, more important in our days than ever before ! May He also bless our efforts as, in accordance with His divine counsel, we strive to aid one another in a spirit of fraternal charity: *A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city* (Prov. xviii. 19).

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SHORT SERMONS

FOR THE

Low Masses of Sunday.

FIRST SERIES.

FIRST SERIES.

I. Man.

THE subject of our instruction to-day, my brethren, will be man's nature and dignity.

Indeed, the answer to the question, What is man? conveying, as it does, a knowledge of ourselves, naturally presents itself to us as a fit subject with which to introduce our course of religious instructions. The light of reason alone taught the sages of antiquity that the first knowledge to be acquired by man was a knowledge of himself. Hence this maxim, which they engraved over the entrance to their temples: *Know thyself*. This knowledge of ourselves we shall acquire in the consideration of man's nature and dignity.

What, then, is man? Our answer is familiar to you. Man is the noblest of all earthly creatures, and the one to whom God has given dominion over all the works of His hands. When I contemplate the innumerable beings with which the earth is inhabited, I comprehend that there is one who is master—man: man is exalted above all as the king of creation. His supremacy, I readily perceive, does not consist in his physical strength, nor in his agility, but in his intelligence—that noble attribute which distinguishes him from all earthly creatures, and likens him to the angels in heaven. What, again, is man? What is he considered in himself? You have

known it from your childhood: *man is a reasonable creature, composed of an immortal soul and of a mortal body.*

1. When we say that man is a *creature*, we point out his origin: he is the work of God, who has created him in His image and likeness.

Since God has created me, and without Him I would not exist, does it not follow that I am absolutely beholden to Him? that I belong to Him as his work to the workman? that I am subject to His authority more than the child to his father, or the slave to his master?

2. Man is a *reasonable* creature; that is to say, endowed with reason, with intelligence, also with the faculty of speech, the exterior complement of intelligence. Behold in this the munificent gift of God, which on the one hand separates man from the animal, and on the other affiliates him to the angels. He differs, however, from these pure spirits in the nature of his being, which is composed of a spirit and body, whilst the angels are pure spirits and have no bodies.

3. A creature composed of *an immortal soul and of a mortal body.* These two parts separate at the moment of death: then our soul begins a new life where there is no more death, and where it is happy or miserable according as its works merit. This separation is, however, but temporary: the soul and body shall reunite on the day of the resurrection.

Let us never forget, my brethren, the dignity of our nature: created as we are but a little below the angels, let us take care lest by sin we lower ourselves to the level of the animal.

2. The Christian.

Having considered the nature and dignity of man, we now propose to answer this question: Who is a Christian, and what are his duties? The name of *Christian*

is derived from *Christ* or *Jesus Christ*, because the Christian professes the holy religion established by Jesus Christ. St. Luke tells us that it was at Antioch, shortly after the Ascension of their divine Master, that the disciples of Christ were first called Christians.

Who, then, is a Christian? As you have already been taught, *a Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ, who, being baptized, believes and professes the true doctrine of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church.*

1. First, a Christian, we say, is *a disciple of Jesus Christ*. By disciple we mean one who professes to receive instruction from another whom he acknowledges as his master. Now, the Master of the Christian is Jesus Christ; that is to say, the Son of God made man: He who is the eternal wisdom has deigned to become our Master! His first disciples were those who heard Him preach, who were the witnesses of His miracles and of His glorious resurrection; these disciples multiplied and perpetuated themselves in every age: such are Christians.

2. *Who being baptized.* By Baptism we become disciples of Jesus Christ, children of God, members of the Church. Without Baptism we cannot be Christians, as in the old law without circumcision no one could be an Israelite.

3. *Who believes and professes the true doctrine of Jesus Christ.* The true faith and the profession of the *true doctrine* of Jesus Christ distinguish the true Christian from the heretic and the impious, who corrupt the doctrine of the divine Master, or scoff at it and wholly reject it.

4. *In the Catholic Church.* The true Christian is *Catholic*—that is to say, he acknowledges the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff; by this he is distinguished from the schismatic.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for the grace by which we are true Christians; for it is at once a great glory and a great blessing. A glory, because the Chris-

tian is a man elevated to the dignity of a child of God; a blessing, because God accords him the treasures of His grace on earth, and reserves for him the riches of His happiness in heaven.

3. The Christian.—His Symbol.

It is our happiness to be Christians: this is a grace and a privilege which has not been accorded to all men, and for which we owe God our gratitude. Christians have a symbol which distinguishes them from those who have not received that grace. I speak not of the interior and indelible character received in Baptism, which is visible but to God and the angels, but of the sign of the cross, which is exterior and visible to the eyes of men.

1. The term *cross* has various significations; it may be understood as signifying: (1) the instrument of the Passion of our Saviour—that is, the true Cross on which Jesus Christ died for us, and of which many fragments and relics are preserved; (2) the image of that instrument, which the Church everywhere places before our eyes, and which we should have in our homes—when the cross bears the figure of the crucified Saviour we call it a *Crucifix*; (3) the term *cross* is also used in reference to the trials and temptations which the Christian should bear in union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ; (4) finally, it indicates the sign which we make on ourselves when saying: *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* We know how to make the sign of the Cross; we must also understand its meaning.

2. When we make the sign of the Cross we profess our faith in two great mysteries of holy religion: the mystery of the Holy Trinity and that of the Incarnation; the first being expressed by the words we use, the second by the movement of the hand.

3. We should frequently make the sign of the Cross, and always with the greatest reverence. Practical Christians never fail to make the sign of the Cross before their principal actions, in the morning, at night, before and after meals, before and after prayer, in temptations and trials; because they find in it a protection, a source of strength and blessing. Indeed, the making of the sign of the Cross is not only a profession of our faith and a most efficacious prayer, but also a holy ceremony, possessing a divine virtue, by reason of the merits of Jesus Christ, to protect us, to instruct and to sanctify us.

The same may be said of the Cross or of the Crucifix, which by the merits of the divine Redeemer is enriched with an especial efficacy to protect, to instruct, and to sanctify those who make it the object of their meditation and veneration.

Let us have a Crucifix, my brethren, in our home, in our bedroom. Let us frequently make the sign of the Cross, always with reverence, and with confidence in the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The Foundation of a Christian Life.—Faith.

The Christian, to live Christianly, must (1) believe the holy religion of Jesus Christ; (2) know it; and (3) practise it.

The Christian religion, which we may also call *Christian doctrine*, is the aggregate of the dogmatic and moral truths which Jesus Christ made known to His apostles, which the Apostles preached, and which the Catholic Church continues to preach to the world.

Now this doctrine we must first *believe*; that is to say, accept as the infallible, immutable truth, since it is the word of God Himself.

This faith is the basis of a Christian life, the foundation and root of all justification.

1. The faith of which we speak is not that credence which we give to the word of a fallible man, which is not more than a human and changeable opinion, but it is that *Christian faith* which, based on the infallible word of God, enkindles in the soul a perfect certitude. It is an infused virtue which God communicates to the soul in Baptism, and which we may call a supernatural light, added to the natural light of reason. We say, *added to reason*, because that, far from being annihilated by faith, is only thus enabled the better to understand why we believe; in other words, *the motives of credibility*.

What are these? They are those external, visible facts which demonstrate that God has spoken to us and revealed to us the Christian religion, as the Catholic Church holds and professes it; namely, (1) the miracles and prophecies which we know of from history; (2) the miraculous and prophetic existence of the Church, of which we ourselves are witnesses. All these facts, which evidently bear the seal of God's approval, demonstrate that the Catholic Christian religion, to which they bear witness, must come from God. Indeed, these miracles—for example, the resurrection of Lazarus or that of Jesus Christ—are as inseparably united to the Christian religion as is the royal seal attached to the authentic letters which emanate from a king.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having given us with faith the evidence of these facts on which it rests; and let us ask Him to aid us in always preserving our faith pure and alive, since it is the foundation of a Christian life.

5. The Belief and Knowledge of the Christian Doctrine.

I. The first duty of a Christian is to firmly *believe* the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

We must believe the entire Christian doctrine; that is to say, all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches.

It is not, then, true (1) that it is sufficient to believe what one pleases of Catholic teachings; or (2) that there is more than one true faith; and (3) that each one can be saved in his belief and sect. For there is but one God, but one Jesus Christ, who preached but one Gospel, and established but one Church. *There shall be,* says He, *one fold and one shepherd;* and again: *And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.*

Therefore is it that we have this maxim: *Out of the Church, no salvation;* that is to say, no one can be saved who, knowing the Church, refuses to obey her.

II. The second duty of a Christian is to know his religion, the Christian doctrine.

In reference to this knowledge the Christian doctrine is divisible into two parts: the first is of necessity, the second of utility; for though we must believe the entire doctrine, we are not held to know in particular all its dogmas.

1. The part which is *of necessity* embraces all those truths which the faithful are obliged to know, and of which some are of *necessity as means*, others of *necessity by precept*.

2. The part which is of utility embraces all that the Church teaches us excepting what is absolutely necessary. They are useful to the soul, as riches and abundance are useful to the body; they enlighten the understanding, they console and fortify the heart, they powerfully assist us to persevere, without stumbling, in the way of a Christian life.

It may also be said, in general, the more one knows of his religion the more he loves it and the better he practises it.

Ignorance is the source of all vices, and especially of

irreligion. The impious blasphemes that of which he is ignorant, and the present impiety has not a more powerful support nor a more potent auxiliary than the absence of religious knowledge. This also proves that those who are indifferently instructed in their religion are exposed to the greatest of all evils, the loss of faith. Do we not see it? Alas! but too many examples.

Let us therefore, my brethren, be earnest in our own religious instruction, and be careful to procure the same for those for whom we are responsible. The ordinary means to accomplish this are: assisting at the sermons and instructions given by our Pastors, the reading of good books, prayer, and meditation; and for children, the Catechism and Christian schools.

6. The First Article of the Creed.—God.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

In the first article of the Creed we profess faith in one God, the true and living God who has created the world.

Independently of faith, we know by the light of reason that there is a God, an only God, who has made the heaven and the earth. Indeed, in presence of the spectacle which the universe presents to our view, reason says to every man, be he ever so little attentive, that if a house presupposes an architect, a watch a watchmaker, with far greater force does the order and architecture of the universe proclaim a God who has made it. What we thus know from reason faith distinctly teaches us by affirming the existence of an all-powerful God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Now, what is God? In harmony with reason, faith answers: *God is the Creator, the Master, and the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, the source of our salvation and our sovereign good.*

1. God is the *Creator*, because He has drawn out of nothing the heaven and the earth, and has given to all beings existence and life.

2. God is the *Master*, (1) because the universe belongs to Him as does his work to the mechanic; (2) because it is His privilege to command His creatures as does a king his subjects, and all are held to obey Him.

3. God is the *Supreme Ruler*, (1) because all lawful superiors have their authority from Him; (2) because He governs the world by His laws, to which all are bound to submit themselves; (3) because He will reward those who heed His laws, and will punish those who disregard them.

4. God is the *source of our salvation*, because He has created us to be saved—that is to say, for eternal beatitude—and offers us the assistance which we need to realize it. This assistance is called *grace*, which flows from the bosom of God, in answer to our prayer, as water from an inexhaustible fountain.

5. God is *our sovereign good*; that is to say, that perfect good which is the object of all the aspirations of our heart. We have an unremitting desire, a thirst for happiness, which we always seek to satisfy. But all the riches of this world are inadequate. God alone, for whom our heart is made, can satiate that thirst and fully gratify our desires. This is the beatitude or perfect happiness of which God gives a foretaste in this life to those who love Him, and in all its plenitude in the world to come.

Love God, then, with all your heart, serve Him faithfully, that you may finally realize that ineffable happiness for which He has created you.

7. The First Article of the Creed.—The Trinity.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

In the first article of the Creed, by saying *I believe in God the Father*, we profess not only one God, but one God in three Persons. This is the dogma of the Holy Trinity.

Let us first understand the meaning of the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and then what are the relations of a Christian to the Holy Trinity.

I. Faith teaches us that there are in God three distinct Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

These three Persons are eternal, consubstantial, equal.

1. They are *eternal*: the Son and the Holy Ghost, who have one origin or principle, are not less eternal than the Father, who has none; just as the light and heat which the sun emits are contemporary with that luminary itself.

2. They are *consubstantial*: that is to say, they have the same substance, nature, or essence, pertaining in common to each of them.

3. They are *equal*. Having but one and the same nature, common to all three, the divine Persons are equal in splendor and majesty; they have the same power, the same wisdom, the same holiness. Power is, however, especially predicated of the Father, because, being the principle from which the other two Persons proceed, He is considered as having produced the universe by His almighty power; wisdom is predicated of the Son, because He is born of the intelligence of the Father; holiness is predicated of the Holy Ghost, because He proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and the Son, and all holiness has its source in the love of God.

II. What are the relations of a Christian to the Holy Trinity? The Christian is dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and as it were marked with the seal of the three divine Persons from his Baptism to his death. At his Baptism, by the invocation of the Holy Trinity, he becomes the child of God the Father, the disciple of God the Son, the temple of God the Holy Ghost. During all his life, whenever he makes the sign of the Cross, he renews his baptismal dedication, since that sign is made with the invocation of the three divine Persons. At his death the Church commends him to the Holy Trinity, saying: *Depart out of this world, O Christian soul, in the name of the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee. . . . O God, she adds, recognize in this dying Christian your creature; admit his soul into the joys of your presence; for, though he has sinned, he has not lost his faith in thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but has believed in thee and faithfully adored thee.*

To please this Holy Trinity we must endeavor not to defile our souls with sin, but rather strive to imitate by our love for God the union of the three divine Persons: *That my disciples, says Jesus Christ, may be one, O my Father, as we are one in the Holy Trinity.*

8. The First Article of the Creed.—Creation.—The World.

What is the meaning, my brethren, of these words: *Creator of heaven and earth?* They mean that the world does not exist of itself; that it is the work of God; that God created the heaven and earth, with all that they contain.

To create is to draw forth from nothingness, without pre-existent matter, or, as is commonly said, to make

something out of nothing. Man builds a house, but he must have the material; the sculptor carves a statue, but he must have the marble; the farmer gathers the harvest, but he must sow the seed. Man, no matter how powerful, no matter how ingenious, cannot produce something of nothing: not a grain of seed, not a blade of grass, not the smallest insect that floats in the air. God alone summons into existence that which is not. He alone works in empty space and without need of material.

It is thus He created the world, when there was neither earth, nor water, nor sun, nor stars. What, then, was there at that time? God alone: infinitely happy in Himself, in His Trinity of Persons, in His eternal glory.

But, having determined to call into existence reasonable creatures destined to know Him, to love Him, to be participants of His happiness, He created the universe and all the beings that it contains, visible as well as invisible.

This work of His hands the Creator has marked with the triple character of magnificence, of beauty, and of goodness, to the end that it may proclaim the magnificence, the beauty, and the goodness of its Author.

To speak here only of the magnificence of the universe, let us consider, my brethren, the dimensions of the earth on which we live. It has a circumference of twenty-four thousand miles, and a diameter of eight thousand miles. Let us then look towards the firmament, and how vast the heavenly bodies which it exhibits to us. The sun is a million three hundred times larger than the earth, and is distant from it ninety-one and a half millions of miles: a distance so great that, supposing a road from the earth to the sun, it would take more than two hundred and sixty-one years for an express train, travelling forty miles an hour by day and by night, to cover it.

Again, the spaces of the heaven are peopled with a multitude of suns; for all the little stars which we see twinkling in the sky are suns like ours, not only as large, but far more vast in their proportions. The nearest of them is twenty trillions of miles distant from us, or two hundred and twenty-seven thousand times further than the sun. What the number of these suns is we may judge from this, that with the naked eye we can count as many as fourteen hundred, whilst with the aid of a telescope the number is innumerable. The vast luminous belt which spans the heavens, and which is called the *milky way*, according to the observations of astronomers is simply a dense mass of suns, which, even with the aid of the telescope, by reason of their great distance appear as the blended light of luminous points. Distinguished astronomers estimate that the milky way does not number less than eighteen millions of stars.

Knowing this, and remembering that these stars are so many suns millions of times larger than our earth, must we not acknowledge that the universe proclaims the magnificence of its Creator?

What are we, my brethren, in the presence of so great a God? How bold is man to dare commit sin, to offend that Imperial Majesty!

9. The First Article of the Creed.—The Angels—their Nature—their Fall.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

By saying: *I believe in God, . . . the Creator of heaven and earth*, we implicitly profess the creation of the angels, and all that faith teaches us concerning these exalted spirits.

A king ought to have a court, ministers, an army

obedient to his commands; and the greater his kingdom the more distinguished his ministers, the more numerous his army. God, the almighty Sovereign of the universe, ought therefore to have a most brilliant court, an army innumerable.

Now, the court, the ministers, the army of God, are the angels whom He made to inhabit heaven and to be the ornaments of His palace.

The angels are pure spirits, endowed with an intelligence, a will, a power and beauty far surpassing those of man.

1. They are called *pure spirits* because they have not been created, as our soul, to animate a body that may serve as their instrument or agent. Unlike us, they have no need of that material complement.

2. They are *endowed with intelligence, will, power, and beauty*: these are the natural perfections of the angels, which resemble those common to men; but the power, the beauty, and the other gifts of the most distinguished amongst men are but as a shadow of those of the angels. *I saw*, says St. John, *another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was enlightened by his glory* (Apoc. xviii. 1).

Besides these natural perfections, the angels have received from God the supernatural gift of grace. It is in this sanctifying grace which they received in their creation that above all their beauty consists. Some of them lost this grace, and with this grace all the beauty with which they were adorned, remaining naught but hideous monsters, horrible demons. The cause of this change was sin. God, in bestowing on the angels the riches of His grace, had destined them to enjoy the glory of heaven. But, as all other creatures, being held to obey Him, to acknowledge His sovereign dominion, He at once put their fidelity to a test. But, alas! some of them, heeding the voice of pride, dared to rebel

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against their Creator and to refuse Him obedience, saying, if not in words, at least in acts: *I will not serve thee* (Jerm. ii. 20). Such the sin and fall of the angels. A great multitude of these heavenly spirits—about one third of them, as some theologians believe—fell into sin, and by sin incurred the indignation of God, who precipitated them into hell, into everlasting fire, *prepared*, as says Jesus Christ, *for the devil and his angels* (St. Matt. xxv. 41).

Let us here learn, my brethren, what is the malice of mortal sin, since, for having committed only one, the angels of light were transformed into demons and condemned to eternal punishments.

10. The First Article of the Creed.—The Creation of Man.—Original Sin.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

God created heaven to be the abode of the angels, and the earth to be inhabited by men.

Man was created to love and serve his Creator in this life, and to possess Him eternally in the next. Such is the end of man, his remote and proximate end.

To attain his end, and to fulfil his great destiny, he was adorned with the most precious gifts. In addition to sanctifying grace, man received the felicity of God and immortality of the body. But Adam committed a sin. God had forbidden him, under the penalty of death, to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: notwithstanding this prohibition, at the solicitation of Eve and the serpent he ate of the forbidden fruit.

By this sin Adam incurred the anger of God, and lost sanctifying grace with all the other gifts which he possessed. Such were the consequences of his sin.

This sin of Adam is imputed to all his descendants, who are born heirs of his guilt and his punishment. In other words, all men are born in the guilt and taint of the sin of their first father. This is the dogma of original sin.

The Virgin Mary is alone an exception to this universal malediction, she having in no wise contracted original sin. This is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, declared in the salutation which the Angel Gabriel in the name of God addressed to Mary: *Hail, full of grace!*

This doctrine of original sin is an unquestionable truth revealed to us by God, and also an unfathomable mystery. Our reason cannot explain it; but neither can it discover anything in it impossible, unjust, or contrary to the divine perfections. The following parable will in a measure aid us to understand it: A traveller journeying across a desert unexpectedly discovers an isolated city, whose inhabitants only by the greatest toil obtain sufficient to support life. Entering a dwelling, he is told by an aged man that the whole colony is descended from one ancestor, who came there two centuries before. This ancestor had been the favorite at the court of a king, whose prime minister he had been, and who had loaded him with honors; but falling into disgrace, he had been banished and sent into this desert, where he died, leaving his children the heirs of his unhappy condition. "I pity you," said the traveller; "and I censure the king who was so cruel as to send into exile his prime minister, and to inflict this misery on him and his descendants." "It is true," replied the aged man, "our lot is sad but we have no reason to reproach the king. Our ancestor was guilty of high treason, and merited death; and if the king, instead of sentencing him to death, condemned him to exile, it was an act of clemency rather than of injustice; and we cannot upbraid a

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prince who had it in his power, by executing our ancestor, to deprive us all of existence."

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having given us existence and life; let us thank Him, above all, for having delivered us from original sin by Baptism.

II. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Incarnation.—The Man-God.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

In the First Article of the Creed there was question of God the Father, the first Person of the Blessed Trinity; in the Second Article and those that follow there is question of the second Person, who was made man for us.

The second Person of the Blessed Trinity is God the Son, also called Jesus Christ; but this second name was not given Him until His incarnation; that is to say, until He was made man for us, nineteen hundred years ago.

The name of *Jesus Christ* indicates at one and the same time the mission of the Son of God, and the character with which He was invested. Jesus signifies *Saviour*, because He came to save the world; this was His mission. Christ signifies *Anointed*, the anointed of the Lord by excellence, because He was anointed or consecrated king, priest, and prophet: this is the triple character with which He was invested.

By becoming man the Son of God did not cease to be God; for He is at once God and man; hence it is that He is ordinarily called the Man-God.

1. He is true man, like unto us; and as such we behold Him born at Bethlehem, living in Galilee and Judea, dying at Jerusalem.

2. He is also true God; and as such, though hidden under the veil of His humanity, we behold Him do works possible to God alone, and which manifest His

divinity. *We have seen His glory*, says St. John, *a glory which reveals the only Son of the Father*. In a word, He preached a doctrine evidently divine; He foretold the future; He commanded all nature; He healed all diseases; He called the dead to life; He rose from the sepulchre, and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. So that if His human nature is a veil, it is a transparent veil as regards His divinity. In conclusion, He expressly declared that He was God, the only Son of the Father. Before ascending into heaven He established on earth His holy Church, a perpetual monument of the divinity of her Founder. Beholding this Church, studying her history, every honest man must exclaim: This is a divine work: *A Domino factum est istud*.

Though no longer visible on earth, Jesus Christ always exists, living and immortal, in heaven, seated on the throne of glory, and on earth in the Holy Eucharist, in which He is pleased to dwell with the sons of men. On our part we should behold Him there with a living faith, and go to Him as the only source of our salvation and of every blessing.

12. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Incarnation.—The Blessings of Jesus Christ.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

Jesus Christ is called *our Lord* to remind us that He has conferred on us the greatest blessings, and that we owe Him supreme homage.

What are these blessings? What has He done for us, and what more is He to do for us in the future?

1. Hear what He has done for us.

(1) In the first place, He came to instruct us. The ancient world, buried in the ignorance and errors of pa-

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ganism, ever sought in vain true happiness, not knowing where to find it. The eternal Wisdom, personally descending on the earth, seated Himself on the mountain as on a chair of truth, whence He preached to all men for their instruction, and solved the problem of true happiness.

(2) He suffered death for us, for each of us, and by His death delivered us from the slavery of the demon; that is to say, from sin and the eternal punishment due to sin. For, let us ever remember, without Him, without the death of the divine Redeemer, we were all lost.

(3) He established the Church, where we find all the means of salvation, and instituted the Sacraments, those perennial fountains of grace. Of these Sacraments, there is one which includes all the wealth of His love and His blessings; namely the adorable Eucharist.

(4) Is it not to Him that we owe all that is good and enjoyable in modern society? Without Christian civilization would we not again lapse into the despotism and slavery of paganism?

2. Behold then what Jesus Christ has done for us! And what more is He to do for us? *What are His promises?*

(1) He will give us a second life, a life of untold happiness after death.

(2) He promises us the glorious resurrection of our bodies at the last day.

How shall we pay Him the homage which is His due?

1. We must adore Him, since He is our God.

2. We must honor in a special manner His five wounds, as also His sacred Heart, thus manifesting our gratitude for the blessings of which these divine objects are memorials. Let us then adore, my brethren, let us lovingly adore, our Lord Jesus Christ; let us devoutly honor His five wounds, His adorable Heart.

13. The Third Article of the Creed.—The Conception of the Incarnate Word.

Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

By these words we profess the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ. In the Second Article of the Creed we have considered the mystery of the Incarnation; in the third we set forth the manner in which this mystery was accomplished. The Son of God, willing to become man for us, was born of a virgin, of the Virgin Mary, taking to Himself human nature in her chaste womb by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is what we declare by these words: *Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.*

This great event, according to the most reliable chronology, was accomplished on the twenty-fifth day of March, six years before the present era, the fortieth year of the reign of Cæsar Augustus at Rome, and the twenty-fifth of that of Herod in Judea. *In the days of Herod the King of Judea, says St. Luke, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin whose name was Mary* (St. Luke. i. 26, 27). We commemorate this mystery on the feast of the Annunciation, the twenty-fifth day of March. Then, as the Gospel expresses it, *the Word was made flesh*; that is to say, the Son of God was made man in the virginal womb of Mary.

But, you may ask, could He not have become man otherwise than by being born? Most assuredly He could: it was within His power to form for Himself an adult body, and to appear on earth as a perfect man, as in the beginning was created and placed in the terrestrial paradise the father of the human race. But He did not so will. Choosing to be our true Brother, like unto us in

all things, He humbled Himself by taking a body in the womb of a Virgin, though His conception and His birth were miraculous.

What glory, my dear brethren, what glory for the human race to have had such a scion! But also how ardent should be our love for Jesus Christ, who so loved us as to become our Brother! *For he is our Brother and our flesh* (Gen. xxxvii. 27). How base our ingratitude when we offend Him by sin!

14. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—The Passion of Jesus Christ.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Jesus Christ *suffered* the torments of the Passion and death, the death of the Cross, for the salvation of the world, in atonement for our sins.

Faith teaches us that by the sin of Adam the entire human race lost the love and favor of God, and that all men are sinners. Now God, who might have punished us as He did the rebellious angels, willed to show us mercy and to pardon our sins. This pardon it was within His power to grant either gratuitously or by exacting as a condition a full satisfaction. It was this second manner He chose: He willed that sin should be expiated. To effect this a victim of infinite dignity was necessary; it was necessary that a Man-God should be immolated for the human race. This is the reason of the sufferings and of the death of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord *suffered under Pontius Pilate*; that is to say; while that Roman magistrate governed Judea as the viceroy of the Emperor Tiberius Cæsar.

He died on Good-Friday, the twenty-fifth day of

March, in the twenty-ninth year, or, according to other chronologists, in the thirty-third year, of our era.

The night before—that is to say, on Holy Thursday—He went with His disciples to the Supper-room, and instituted the sacrifice of the Mass, as a memorial of the bloody sacrifice which He was to offer the following day on the Cross.

From the Supper-room He went to the Garden of Olives, where He endured the anguish of the agony and suffered a bloody sweat. It was here He was betrayed by Judas and delivered into the hands of his enemies, who led Him bound to the tribunal of Caiphas. Before Caiphas he was falsely accused, condemned to death by the High Council of the nation, then spat upon, mocked, maltreated in every way.

From Caiphas He was led to Pilate, who immediately sent Him to Herod, the king of Galilee, residing for the time being at Jerusalem. Herod treated the Divine Prisoner as a fool, and, having put on Him a white garment as a mark of derision, sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate was convinced of His innocence, but did not liberate Him. Owing to the guilty weakness of this magistrate, Jesus was placed on a level with Barabbas, scourged, crowned with thorns, and finally condemned to the death of the Cross.

He Himself bore His cross to Calvary, where He was crucified and died for our salvation between two malefactors. It was three o'clock in the afternoon.

About five o'clock His body was taken down from the cross, embalmed, and laid in a new sepulchre, that was hewed in stone.

Thus it was that the Son of God suffered and died for us. How great is our debt of gratitude, Christians!

15. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—The Burial of Jesus Christ.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Our Saviour was buried on Good-Friday, towards the evening. It was a law of the Jews that the bodies of those who suffered the extreme penalty of the law on Mount Calvary should be removed before the Sabbath, which began at sunset on Friday. As the two thieves were yet living, their legs were broken in order to hasten their death. With respect to Jesus Christ this was unnecessary; He was dead. Yet a soldier pierced His side with a lance, and there flowed out a double stream of water and of blood.

What disposition is made of the dead body of the Saviour?

Providence holds in reserve two venerable men, who give it a worthy sepulture, such as becomes one which is to arise from among the dead.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, authorized by Pilate and provided with everything necessary for their holy work, take the divine body down from the cross, and, enveloping it in fine linen, they place it in a new sepulchre hewed in a rock, which they close with a great stone. This glorious tomb is to be seen even to-day, in the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, as it was when the body of Jesus was laid there.

Whilst these preparations were being made for the burial of Jesus His enemies were not idle; and as the result of their deliberations during the night they demand of Pilate a numerous guard which they station near the tomb, having previously affixed to it the seal of the High Council (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Such were the precautions they took to prevent the

disciples from removing the body of their Master; but in the eyes of God these were the means which His providence chose to prove by the very enemies of the Saviour the truth of His resurrection.

The burial of the Saviour is, my brethren, but the prelude of His glorious resurrection: He is buried only that He may rise. So also with us if our death be holy as was His : we shall go down into the grave only to come forth in a little while, living with a new life.

16. The Fifth Article of the Creed.—The Descent of Jesus Christ into Hell.

He descended into hell ; the third day He rose again from the dead.

These words, *he descended into hell*, signify that after the death of the Saviour His soul, united to His divinity, descended into that part of hell which is called Limbo, a sojourn wholly distinct from the hell of the damned and the prison of purgatory. It was in this place that the souls of the just of the old law were detained, waiting the day when the Redeemer would open for them the gates of heaven.

That day finally dawned, and Jesus Christ, having accomplished the work of the Redemption on the Cross, wished that He Himself should announce the glad tidings to that nation of saints who sighed for His coming.

This is why, freed from its body, and presently resplendent with glory and beatitude, the soul of our Saviour descended into Limbo, and manifested itself to the saints in the brilliancy of its beauty and the ineffable splendor of its divine nature. At His appearance all these souls were transported with the joy of the blessed, since they beheld face to face their Saviour and their God.

On His part the Saviour regarded with an incomparable love the cherished souls of all His servants, from Adam to Joseph, His foster-father—ay, even to the good thief whom He pardoned on the Cross. He announced to them that the gates of heaven were now open, and that He came to lead them thither; but that first He must rise from the dead.

These holy souls, who would have wished to entertain forever their divine Guest, seeing that He was to leave them to accomplish His resurrection, must undoubtedly have been glad to accompany Him, and to form for Him a guard of honor to the place of His burial.

Entering with the soul of Jesus the sombre tomb, the resting-place of His body, they must have beheld with untold grief that divine flesh, immolated for their salvation, stretched on the stone where it had been laid, when suddenly the glorious soul of the Saviour, renewing the mysterious link which death had broken, unites itself anew to that body and revivifies it with an entirely new life.

In what has just been said, there are three points which merit particular attention:

1. Before the coming of Jesus Christ heaven was closed even to the most holy souls; so, also, would it have continued for us had it not been for the death of the Redeemer.

2. The soul of Jesus Christ, separated from His body, was united to the Divinity; that is to say, it was, as it will eternally be, the soul of God the Son, the second divine Person, who, having taken to Himself a soul and a human body, will never part with them. On the death of the Saviour this body and soul were separated one from the other, but not from His divine person.

3. His soul, on its departure from His body, was at once the participant of the state of glory and beatitude, being emancipated from all its anguish, adorned with

an incomparable beauty and all its virtues as with so many precious stones, which shone with an inconceivable brilliancy in the eyes of God and the angels.

And our soul, my brethren, at the moment of death—what will be its state? It all depends on the care we now take to purify it of every defilement, and to share the Cross of Jesus Christ.

17. The Sixth Article of the Creed.—The Ascension.

He ascended into heaven; sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

Our Saviour had told His disciples that after His resurrection He would return to His Father; that is to say, He would ascend into heaven, to enjoy that glory which He had shared in the bosom of His Father before the world was created. Had there been nothing to detain Him on earth, He would have returned thither immediately after His resurrection, and from the tomb He would have ascended into heaven; but grave reasons demanded a delay. He must tarry yet a little while here below, (1) to attest beyond question the truth of His resurrection, and (2) to perfect the instruction of His Apostles in reference to the administration of the Sacraments, the organization and government of the Church. This is why the ascension did not take place until forty days after the resurrection.

During these forty days the life of our Saviour was that of those in heaven rather than of those on earth. He was the very same man He was before His death, but His state was no longer the same; it was the state of the blessed in heaven. Moreover, instead of dwelling constantly among men, as He had previously done, He hides Himself in God, and only at intervals does

He manifest Himself, making divine visits to His disciples, in which He speaks to them of the Holy Ghost and of the kingdom of God. And as the kingdom of God—that is to say, the Church—is founded on faith, He makes use of every means to confirm their faith: He partakes of their food, He exhibits to them His wounds, He invites the most incredulous to touch Him. *Come,* says He to St. Thomas, *and 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.*

Let us here observe, my brethren, that our Saviour risen from the dead retains in His glorified body the wounds of His passion; this He does to teach us that, would we have a part in His glory, we must share in His sufferings.

On the fortieth day our Saviour ascended into heaven in the presence of His disciples; thus teaching us the happy end to which a Christian life leads.

The forty days which preceded His ascension are the model of the life which His disciples should live. The life of a true Christian should be a heavenly life, hidden in God; not a wordly life, wholly engrossed in the things of this world. This is that Christian life which is terminated by ascension into heaven.

18. The Seventh Article of the Creed.—Judgment.

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

This article enunciates the dogma of the second coming of Jesus Christ and of the general judgment.

We distinguish two advents or comings of Jesus Christ. He came into the world to save it when He was born at Bethlehem: this was His first advent. He shall come to judge it at the last day: this will be His second advent. When we say that He shall come to judge *the*

living and the dead, these words have a double meaning: in the first, the living signify the contemporaries with the end of the world, and the dead, those who will have died before that event; in the second, the living designate the just, and the dead, sinners.

When and in what manner will the general judgment take place?

Jesus Christ has distinctly declared to us His coming, but not the precise time in which He will come: this is a secret which He has willed to keep to Himself. He has, however, indicated events which will precede and make known to us the near approach of that great day.

1. The Gospel will first be preached throughout the world.

2. Christian charity will have lost its warmth, and faith will seem to have become extinct in the world.

3. The Jews will be converted to Jesus Christ.

4. There will be great wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, and upheavals of the sea. The sun, the moon, the stars, will be darkened, or will no longer follow their ordinary course. The whole order of nature will be disturbed, and will announce an approaching destruction (St. Luke. xxi. 25 *seq.*).

5. There will appear a man of the deepest wickedness, called Antichrist; that is to say, opposed to Jesus Christ. He will lead astray the people; he will excite most cruel persecutions, and effect an almost universal apostasy. His domination, according to the words of the Scripture, will continue about three years and a half.

6. The prophet Elias and the patriarch Enoch will return to the earth to oppose Antichrist, to enlighten the Jews, and to sustain the constancy of Christians. These two powerful defenders of the faith will be put to death by Antichrist, who will himself be confounded and overthrown by the power of Jesus Christ (Apoc. xi.; Thess. ii *seq.*).

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7. There will descend a fire which will destroy all things on the earth: this is what is called the *final conflagration*.

A little while after this universal destruction will take place the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment.

Then will there remain naught of the riches, of the pleasures and vain grandeur of this world; nothing will be possessed by man but his works. Let us, then, labor, my brethren, with courage, to the end that on that day we may not have to bear a burden of iniquities, but a wealth of merits.

19. The Eighth Article of the Creed.—The Holy Ghost.

I believe in the Holy Ghost.

In the preceding articles there was question of the first two Persons of the Holy Trinity; the Eighth Article and those which follow refer to the third Person, to the Holy Ghost.

The doctrine relative to the Holy Ghost embraces three subjects: His person, His manifestations, His operations.

1. The Holy Ghost is a divine Person, in all things equal to the Father and to the Son: He must be adored and glorified equally with the Father and the Son, from whom He proceeds as from one principle. 2. The Holy Ghost manifested Himself on three occasions: (1) on the banks of the Jordan, under the form of a dove, the symbol of innocence; (2) on Thabor, under the form of a cloud, the symbol of faith; (3) in the Cenacle, or upper room at Jerusalem, under the form of fire, the symbol of charity. This third manifestation was the most solemn; it took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), and is every year celebrated by the Church.

The operations of the Holy Ghost consist in the sanctification of the faithful, by the effusion of charity and all the divine gifts. Whatever has reference to charity and the distribution of heavenly gifts is attributed to the Holy Ghost; thus, the Church, the communion of saints, the remission of sins, which is the resurrection of souls, the resurrection of the body, the eternal glorification of the saints, are so many gifts of the ineffable love of God, and for that reason are so enumerated in the Creed as to follow the article which speaks of the Holy Ghost.

Let us frequently implore, my brethren, the grace of the Holy Ghost, His light and His divine assistance, of which He has given us the pledge in Confirmation. Armed with that help from on high, we will triumph over all our enemies.

20. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Church is the great Christian society founded by Jesus Christ. He established it conformably to those solemn words which He addressed to St. Peter: *Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.*

The Church consists of the Pope, of the Bishops, of the priests, and of all the faithful who are their subjects.

1. We say, in the Creed, the *Holy* Church, because she is indeed holy and immaculate,—(1) in her origin, being the work of God the Son; (2) in her constitutive elements—that is to say, in her hierarchical power, her doctrine, her end, which is the salvation of souls, in her means to that end, which are instruction, the Sacraments, and works of mercy.

As regards the body of the Church, it is composed of

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saints and sinners. Its Head, Jesus Christ, is holy; but its members, who are those believing in the Church, are not all holy. Nevertheless they all aspire to be sanctified; that is, to triumph over sin, to live and die in sanctifying grace.

This is why we say the *Holy Church*.

2. We also say the *Catholic Church*, because she is everywhere to be found, and has within her fold faithful of every tongue and of every nation under the heaven.

3. We add, *the Communion of Saints*. We mean by this the union which exists for time and for eternity among the members of the Church incorporated in that body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, insomuch that they all share in a certain measure in the spiritual goods of each other.

Let us strive, my brethren, ever to live in the state of grace; then we shall be living members of holy Church, and we shall abundantly share in the spiritual goods of the whole body.

21. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Communion of Saints.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints are combined in the same article, as being two subjects most closely united.

Considered as one whole, the Church of Jesus Christ has three branches, or three incomplete Churches: the Church militant, the Church suffering, and the Church triumphant. The first is composed of the faithful on earth; the second, of the souls in purgatory; the third, of the blessed in heaven. These three parts form but one complete Church, one society, one mystical body, one spiritual family whose Head is Jesus Christ, and

whose members are all animated with the same spirit, linked by the same charity, and united by a mutual communication which is called the *Communion of Saints*.

The Communion of Saints consists in the *participation of all the faithful in the sacrifice of the Mass, the divine office, the good works and prayers of Holy Church*.

We may also define it as *the union which exists, for time and for eternity, among all the members of the Church, in virtue of which they share each other's spiritual goods, and each one in the spiritual goods of the whole body*. Thus, in the human body the members aid one the other, and when the body nourishes itself all the members profit by it. We may also compare the Church to a family in which all the children labor together under the paternal direction, and in which each one has a part in the common gain.

We say the *Communion of Saints*, and not the communion of *Christians*, (1) because the name of *Saints* is given in the Scripture to all the faithful; (2) because all have been sanctified by Baptism; (3) because all are called to a perfect sanctity, and there are many who have already acquired it.

It has been said in the definition that the Communion of Saints exists *for time and for eternity*, because the union among the members of the Church, no more than their union with Jesus Christ, is in no wise severed by death.

Thus, my brethren, when death takes from us our parents and friends, we are still united with them by prayers and good works. Let us then never forget them, in order that in our turn, after our departure from this world, we may merit the aid of those who will survive us.

22. The Tenth Article of the Creed.—The Remission of Sins.—The Means of Obtaining it.

The remission of sins.

We profess in this article (1) that we can obtain of God the remission of sins; (2) that Jesus Christ has given to His Church the power to remit the sins of men.

God alone can forgive sins, because He alone can pardon the injuries done Him. Now, God in His mercy has deigned to pardon the sins of men, but not without exacting an atonement: He willed that Jesus Christ should expiate them on the Cross.

Through the merits of the passion and death of Jesus Christ pardon is offered to all men, and the Church has received the divine power to remit, in the name of Jesus Christ, all sins, all iniquities, no matter what their number and enormity, provided sinners truly repent of them.

There are three kinds of sin: original sin, venial sin, and mortal sin.

The first is remitted by Baptism.

The second by prayer, penances, good works, and sacramental absolution.

As regards the third—that is to say, mortal sin—it is forgiven us (1) by the power of the priest in the Sacrament of Penance; (2) by perfect contrition, accompanied with a desire of receiving the Sacrament. This perfect contrition is the sole plank of salvation for those who, being in the state of mortal sin, cannot obtain the services of a priest at the time of death. We cannot, therefore, too forcibly urge all to make every night, before retiring to sleep, an act of perfect contrition.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having given to His Church the power of pardoning our sins; and, when we have the misfortune to offend the divine Majesty, let us go with confidence and sorrow to the tribunal of Pen-

ance to receive forgiveness. Let us never abide in the state of mortal sin: nothing is more hazardous, since death may at any moment surprise us, and precipitate us into hell.

23. The Eleventh Article of the Creed.—The Resurrection.—The Qualities of a Risen Body.

The resurrection of the body.

In the preceding article we professed the remission of sins, which is as it were the resurrection *of the soul*; in this we profess the resurrection of the body, saying, "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

We say the resurrection *of the body*, rather than the resurrection *of man*; because, strictly speaking, the body alone is recalled to life, whilst the soul, being immortal, only unites itself to its body from which it was separated by death. The meaning of this article is that all men, the just and the wicked, will rise again in their bodies.

How will this be accomplished? And what will be the qualities of the risen bodies?

1. The resurrection will be effected by the power of God, to whom it will be no more difficult to reproduce our bodies from their ashes than it was in the first instance to create them. At the end of the world, after the general conflagration, when all men will be dead, and the surface of the earth will have been purified by the fire, Jesus Christ, says the Gospel, *shall send His angels with a trumpet, and a great voice*: which means that the angels will be sent to proclaim in loud voice the commands of Jesus Christ. Their voice will resound as a high-sounding trumpet, from one extremity of creation to the other, proclaiming these words or others of like import: *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.*

At this divine command all the souls, those in heaven,

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those in purgatory, those in hell, will hasten to take again their bodies. All men will rise with the same body, as regards its substance, which they had on earth, and that body will have all that belongs to the integrity of its nature. Thus, children as well as adults, those who are infirm or deprived of some member as well as those who have preserved their bodies sound and whole, will all rise in a perfect state. The work of the resurrection will be, as was the work of the creation, in all its particulars worthy of God. Even the wicked will rise perfect as regards the members of their bodies.

2. As regards the qualities of the risen bodies, they will very much differ in the elect and the damned.

The dead, rising in divers and widely separated parts of the earth, will at once gather together, the just and the sinners, in one confused assembly. Without delay, however, the angels, ministers of the Supreme Judge, will separate them, and reassemble them in the place determined by God for the judgment.

In that last separation of the good and bad, to which of the two shall I be consigned? Is it not for me now to decide it? If I wish to be numbered with the good in the future life, I must sever myself from the wicked in this life.

24. The Twelfth Article of the Creed.—The Future Life.—Everlasting Happiness.

And life everlasting. Amen.

This twelfth and last article of the Creed teaches us (1) that after this short life there is another which will be without end; (2) that this future life will be the happy life of paradise, of which the just will partake, whilst the wicked will be enslaved in hell, according to these words of the Saviour: *These shall go into everlasting pun-*

ishment: but the just, into *life everlasting*. Thus we see that the eternal life of paradise is the opposite of the punishment of hell, which is eternal death.

The truth of the future life is made known to us (1) by faith, since God has revealed it to us, and the Church proposes it to us for our belief; (2) by reason, which argues the necessity of its existence. For often in this world the virtuous are afflicted and persecuted, whilst the wicked prosper and enjoy every temporal happiness; divine justice therefore demands that there be another life, where the good may be rewarded and the wicked punished, each one according to his works.

The eternal life reserved for the just—that is to say, the felicity of paradise—consists in the vision and beatific possession of God and of all the riches of God. The blessed shall partake of all the joys of the soul, of the heart, and of the senses, unalloyed by a sorrow of any kind, during all eternity.

This happy life Jesus Christ has merited for us by His death; provided, however, that on our part we render ourselves worthy of it. It is proposed to us as a recompense which is granted only to faithful servants, to observers of the commandments of God: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (St. Matt. xix.).

They enter heaven immediately after death who bear with them from this world no obstacle to their admittance. To understand this doctrine, we must remember that there are three classes of people who die. First, impenitent sinners who die in the state of mortal sin: these are condemned without delay to hell. Secondly, the just who die in the state of grace, but who have not as yet satisfied the divine justice for the temporal punishments due to their sins: these souls are committed to purgatory. Thirdly, the just who have nothing to expiate: these souls are at once received into eternal life.

We end the Creed by saying *Amen*, which expresses a

strong affirmation, to remind us that we must most firmly believe these divinely revealed dogmas of faith, and as a consequence make them the rule of our life. Ah! why is it that so many who firmly believe these dogmas fail to live as Christians?

Since eternal life is of greater value than anything else we can conceive, should we not at any price, my brethren, assure ourselves the possession of it? And since this can be accomplished only by living a truly Christian life, let us, before all things and above all things, strive to live as becomes Christians.

25. Laws.—The Natural Law.

Before speaking of the Ten Commandments which constitute the law of God, we shall say a few words in reference to law in general.

Law is the basis or the principle of the order which reigns, or which should reign, in the world, as well in the physical as in the moral world. If there is order in the physical world, in the course of the stars, in the succession of the seasons, it is because the physical world is obedient to its laws. If, on the contrary, there is frequently disorder in the moral world, in the hearts of men, in human society, it is because its laws are violated. If these laws were faithfully observed, the disorders would disappear, there would be perfect harmony.

The moral law of which we are speaking may be defined: *An obligatory rule, general, just, and permanent, decreed in the interest of a community by him who has right to govern it.*

There are two kinds of law, the *divine* law and the *human* law: the first emanates directly from God; the second, from human superiors invested with authority by God.

The *divine law* is *natural* or *positive* according as God promulgates it to us by the voice of nature or by an ex-

terior voice—by revelation. There is only one natural law, but there are two divine positive laws; namely, the Mosaic law and the Evangelical law.

By the *natural law* we mean the moral order which man must observe to accomplish his natural destiny, and which consists of all his obligations as a reasonable and social being towards God, towards himself and his fellow-man. The natural law is communicated to man at his birth; the Creator has engraven it on his reasonable nature.

The natural law admits of no dispensation, no change; founded on human nature, it is as invariable as that nature, and as the first principle from which all its sentiments proceed: *Honor God, and do to another what you would wish to have done to yourself.* Because invariable, it does not therefore follow that the natural law is not susceptible of perfection; for it has been, as a matter of fact, perfected by the divine *positive* laws, which are also called the *written* laws—the laws of *Moses* and the law of the *Gospel* promulgated by Jesus Christ.

The law, being the principle of order, is also the source of happiness and peace; whilst our passions, which are opposed to the law, are the fountain of disorder and of every misery. Should we not, then, my brethren, resist our passions to obey the law and to follow constantly the rule of our duties?

26. The Decalogue.

The last article of the Creed bids us to believe in an everlasting and happy life. But remember the condition on which we shall be admitted therein: *If thou wilt enter into life, says Jesus Christ, keep the Commandments.*

The Ten Commandments of God, also called the *Decalogue*, are the abridgment of all that we must practise to be saved.

The Decalogue, the summary of the natural law, is as ancient as man. It was imprinted on the heart of man on the day of his creation; afterwards given by God to Moses, engraved on two tables of stone; finally ratified and perfected by Jesus Christ, who has given it to His Church and to all the faithful as a fundamental law, saying, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments* (St. Matt. xix. 17).

All men without any exception are held to obey the Commandments of the Decalogue; and all men can observe them when assisted by grace, which God has promised to those who humbly ask it. With the aid of grace the observance of the Commandments is not only not impossible, but it is not even difficult, particularly when we learn to make them the rule of our life in early youth, and are actuated in so doing by a spirit of love.

The motives which ought to urge us to observe the Commandments are on the one hand the will of God, and on the other our own happiness; for the observance of the law of God is the sole source of man's true happiness in this life and in the future, according to these words of the Holy Ghost: *Justice exalteth a nation; but sin maketh nations miserable* (Prov. xiv. 34).

The Ten Commandments as formulated in our Catechism are:

I. I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

III. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

IV. Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

V. Thou shalt not kill.

VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VII. Thou shalt not steal.

VIII. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

IX. Thou shalt not covet they neighbor's wife.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

It is the duty of all the faithful to commit to memory these Commandments.

Parents should consider it a sacred duty to teach them to their children, and to have them daily recite them. Let us studiously endeavor, my brethren, to know and comprehend their meaning: the better we know them, the more particular we will be to observe them.

27. The First Commandment of God.—Our Duties Towards God.

I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.

What does the first Commandment command, and what does it forbid? It commands us to acknowledge the true God and worthily honor Him; it forbids idolatry, superstition, and every species of impiety.

To *acknowledge* the true God is to recognize His existence and His sovereign dominion over all men.

The *true God* is the living personal God, the creator of heaven and earth, whose existence the universe proclaims.

I say that the universe proclaims the existence of God; for it is not faith alone which teaches us there is *only one God*; reason itself asserts and demonstrates it. For, if ever so small a house argues a workman who has built it, and if it would be folly to ascribe it to chance, how far greater the folly to ascribe to chance the universe, so grand and so beautiful in all its parts and proportions, and not to acknowledge a workman, all-wise and all-powerful, to whom it owes its existence. Now, this workman, is God.

We are not only to acknowledge, but we must also

worthily honor, God. This worthy honor or suitable homage we render Him by faith, hope, and charity, which are the three theological virtues, and by the virtue of religion, which ranks first among the moral virtues.

By faith we render homage to the supreme truthfulness of God.

By hope to His goodness towards us.

By charity to His amiability and to His infinite perfections.

By the virtue of religion we render to God the worship which is His due. The more we exercise ourselves in the performance of the duties of religion, the better we observe the first Commandment. Men without religion do not observe it, and fail in the observance of their first duty, even when they fulfil all the others.

As regards ourselves, my brethren, let us honor the Lord our God; He is worthy of it by reason of His infinite perfections, and by reason of His favors and blessings. If we fulfil well this fundamental duty, we shall fulfil all others and we shall be blessed of God; for, says He, *I am the Lord thy God, showing mercy unto thousands of generations to them that love me and honor me* (Exod. xx. 6).

28. The Second Commandment.—Blasphemy.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

The second Commandment commands us to reverence the holy name of the Lord, and to speak with profound respect of God and of holy things at all times. We manifest this reverence and respect by pronouncing and by invoking either the holy name of God or that of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with sentiments of piety and veneration.

Such is the precept indirectly expressed in this Commandment, its direct declaration being a prohibition.

It prohibits all acts contrary to the respect which we owe to the holy name of God; such are, chiefly, blasphemy, perjury, and the violation of vows.

Blasphemy is speaking injuriously of God, discoursing or circulating writings against God. To constitute blasphemy, it is not necessary that our discourse be directly aimed at God; it suffices if it be either against the Blessed Virgin or the Saints, or against holy things—for example, the Church of Jesus Christ, her Sacraments, her ministers, and whatever else has reference to His holy religion—because an insult offered to God's Saints, or anything sacred, is offered to God who is the Author of these holy institutions and of all sanctity.

There are different kinds of blasphemy: (1) the blasphemy which exhausts itself in a vulgar oath, and the blasphemy of the continued discourse, or conversation in which blasphemous ideas are uttered frequently under the garb of a seductive and polished diction; (2) spoken blasphemy and written blasphemy; (3) the blasphemy of malediction and the blasphemy of ridicule or sacrilegious jesting. As blasphemies of malediction are to be classed those impious *imprecations* in which is invoked the vengeance of God on our own head or that of others.

Were it not, my brethren, a sorrowful reality, who could believe the possibility of blasphemy, could comprehend that man could reach that delirium of impiety, that degree of audacity, in which he dares to vomit forth outrages against his Creator? Ah! let us pray God for these wretched blasphemers, and let us beg Him in His mercy to preserve us from ever committing so heinous a sin.

29. The Second Commandment.—The Malice of Blasphemy.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

We have seen that the second Commandment forbids blasphemy. Blasphemy is a heinous sin, for which every Christian ought to have the greatest horror.

I do not intend here to speak of certain gross words, sounding badly and approaching blasphemy; but of blasphemies properly so called. Such are certain expressions of malediction against God and His holy name; such are, moreover, impious discourses, either written or spoken against Jesus Christ, His Church, His ministers.

*Why ought the Christian to abhor blasphemy? **

Because there is nothing more shocking than to curse God, and to curse Him with a tongue which has been sanctified by the body and blood of Jesus Christ in holy Communion.

Because blasphemy is the sin of the Jews, the executioners of Jesus Christ; the sin of the demons and of the lost in hell.

Because blasphemy is a scandal, and rapidly disseminates itself, especially among the young. (Woe to parents who blaspheme and so teach blasphemy to their children!)

Because blasphemy is a sin of pure malice, offering no inducement of profit or pleasure to him who commits it.

Because blasphemy draws down God's malediction on those who are guilty of it—on the blasphemers, on the homes, the workshops, where blasphemy is tolerated.

* *Vide Adjumenta oratoris sacri, Argum. VI. § 3.*

What is the remedy for blasphemy?

1. Prayer. Pray devoutly, pray frequently, and you will not blaspheme.
2. A good confession by way of reparation for the past.
3. A firm resolution as regards the future.
4. The imposition of a penance or a penalty for each offence.
5. Curbing anger and preserving silence when vexed.
6. Avoiding improper places and bad companions.

What must we do when we hear blasphemy?

We must at once check it if it be in our power; if not, we must petition God's pardon, and repair the injury done Him, saying: *Blessed be the name of the Lord! Praised be Jesus Christ! Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

30. The Third Commandment.—The Law of Rest.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

The sanctification of the Sunday includes two distinct obligations, that of rest and that of divine worship; in other words, to sanctify the Lord's day we must (1) abstain from servile work, and (2) exercise ourselves in works of religion.

We will now explain the obligation which refers to labor.

Labor is forbidden on Sunday, because it would thwart that worship which God exacts on that day, and because, continued without interruption, it would be injurious even to man's bodily well-being. God has commanded man to observe this holy rest for the welfare of both his body and soul.

The law of rest prohibits *servile* works, but not those which are known as *liberal* and *common* works.

Third Commandment.—The Law of Rest. 63

1. By servile works we mean those which are exercised principally by the body and with regard to its interests. Such are the works of mechanics, tradesmen, the various manufacturers, farmers, and those who work with the needle and other implements, even though they should not receive even the least recompense for their labor.

They are not only guilty of sin who work, but also those who require their servants and maids to work, or who permit those under their control to work. They are as guilty as if they themselves worked, and moreover are guilty of the sins of those whom they compel to labor, and of the scandal which they cause.

Besides servile works, the Church also forbids court proceedings, public sales, the displaying of goods, etc.

2. *Common* works are those which relate to daily necessities and to domestic duties. These are not prohibited any more than travelling, provided they do not expose us to the danger of missing Mass without reason.

Liberal works likewise permissible are those which require more the exercise of the mind than the body, and which directly tend to our mental improvement: as reading, writing, teaching, drawing, study, and all that belongs to the liberal arts.

The rest of Sunday is obligatory from one midnight to the next; consequently we sin by continuing to work after midnight on Saturday. Those who without a grave reason or necessity work for a considerable time—for example, several hours, consecutive or otherwise—are guilty of mortal sin.

There are, however, *causes which render licit* labor on the Sunday; among others, (1) necessity, as in the case of a fire or inundation; (2) dispensation which is granted for proper reasons—for instance, to gather in the harvest when threatened with destruction by unfavorable weather.

Would you have the blessing of God, my brethren,

even in your temporal affairs, then faithfully observe the rest of the Sabbath.

I know, has said a man of God, *two most certain means of becoming poor: to steal and to work on Sunday.*

There is no other precept which God has so forcibly urged as the sanctification of the Sabbath. He has ratified and confirmed it not only by words, but by severe chastisements. *They have*, says He, *violated my Sabbaths: and I said, therefore, that I would pour out my indignation upon them* (Ezek. xx. 13).

And why has He attached to it so great importance? Because when this precept is observed all the others will be observed.

31. The Fourth Commandment.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long on the earth.

This Commandment is the first of the second Table; that is to say, the first of those which affirm the duties we owe our neighbor: because, among those whom we are to consider our neighbor, our parents hold the first place.

We are to understand the term *father and mother* as including not only our parents, but all our superiors, spiritual as well as temporal.

These words, *that thou mayest live long on the earth*, contain the promise of a long and happy life followed by eternal happiness. This promise is often realized in this world, but not always, because it is but secondary to the eternal salvation of children, whom God often takes to Himself in their early youth, lest the wickedness of the world corrupt their heart. Then they receive their full recompense in eternity. Is not this a great source of consolation for parents whose children die young?

Fourth Commandment.—Duties of Children. 65

In all cases, either in this life or the next, filial piety is blessed of God. On the contrary, ungrateful children who forget what they owe their parents receive no blessing, and shall not escape punishment. God has given us a memorable example of this in the person of Absalom.

Since the fourth Commandment commands children to honor their parents, and inferiors to honor their superiors, it follows, by a natural reciprocity, that parents and superiors are held to merit the honor which is their due, by fulfilling their duties toward their children and inferiors.

The duties imposed by the fourth Commandment may therefore be classified under these three heads: (1) those of parents; (2) those of children; (3) the reciprocal obligations of other superiors and inferiors.

Would to God that the fourth Commandment were universally observed! What beautiful order, what sweet peace, would then reign in families and in society!

As for you, my brethren, strive with a new and firm determination to observe it. Children, love your parents; after the example of the Son of God become obedient. And you, parents, love your children in the Lord, by fulfilling in their regard the pre-eminent duty of Christian education.

32. The Fourth Commandment.—The Duties of Children.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long on the earth.

This Commandment determines the duties of children towards their parents. The sum of these duties is called *filial piety*, which embraces the love, the respect, the obedience and assistance which children owe their parents.

Indeed, were I to ask you what are the duties of children towards their parents, you would immediately answer: *Children ought to love, respect, and obey their parents, and assist them in all their needs.*

1. *To love our parents* is to cherish for them, no matter what they may be, during all their life a sincere and grateful affection, striving to please and to gratify them in all things. This filial love knows no dispensation; if our parents be poor and infirm, all the more devoted we should be; and even when they are wayward we ought still to love them, disliking naught but their vices and misconduct.

Fraternal love enjoins similar obligations, though less stringent, between brothers and sisters.

2. *Respect.* We ought to have for our parents a genuine respect, at once interior and exterior; considering them as holding the place of God, manifesting for them esteem, showing them honor, speaking to them with deference and kindness, receiving mildly their corrections, enduring, excusing, and hiding their shortcomings. It is a holy and a Christian practice to ask the blessing of our parents.

3. *Obedience.* To obey our parents is to do what they command; and to obey them in a Christian manner is to do so cheerfully and promptly *in the presence of God*, who wills that we obey them as we would Him. It is, indeed, a doctrine of our faith that our parents and all our superiors are invested with the authority of God, and that to obey them in all that is just and proper is to obey God Himself.

Children owe their parents this Christian obedience in all that is not contrary to the law of God; they owe it especially, as says St. Thomas, in all that regards their education, the formation of their moral character, and in all that relates to the good order and administration of the family.

4. *Assistance.* Children ought to assist their dear parents in all their needs, spiritual as well as temporal, particularly when they are old or sick and at the approach of death. Above all things, a child ought to see that his parents do not die without the consolations of religion. It would be an act of cruelty to neglect summoning a priest in due time to prepare them for that dread journey into eternity because we feared to disturb them or to augment their sickness. We ought to pray for them during their life, to pray and have others pray for them after their death, and in all things faithfully execute their last wishes.

How happy the Christian family where reigns filial piety! It is a reflection of heaven, where the angels are happy in loving God and accomplishing His holy will. It is a picture of the Holy Family at Nazareth, where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, though destitute of worldly riches, lived in the possession of the sweetest peace, objects of the complacency of the heavenly Father. They enjoy a similar happiness, parents who imitate Mary and Joseph, children who imitate the Child Jesus.

Let us, my brethren, have ever before our eyes our Lord Jesus Christ, that perfect model of obedience and filial piety, who even on the cross honored His holy Mother by a most solemn act. Let us generously give to our parents the proofs of a most devoted love, during their life, at the moment of their death, and after their death. Thus doing we shall be blessed of the Lord.

33. The Fourth Commandment.—Education.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long on the earth.

The all-important duty of education imposed upon parents by the fourth Commandment comprehends instruction, vigilance, correction, and good example.

1. Having procured for their children the blessing of holy Baptism, it is the duty of parents to communicate to them that Christian instruction in keeping with the baptismal character. Hence they ought to teach them, as soon as they are capable of knowing anything, the primary truths of religion : the sign of the Cross, the Lord's prayer, and all that a Christian is held to know. They ought to habituate them in early youth to the practice of virtue and piety by having them recite daily their morning and night prayers ; by accustoming them to go to church, to the Sunday-school ; to observe the law of abstinence, and to make betimes their confession ; by removing them from all that would prove detrimental to the purity of their soul, from all the snares laid for their innocence : such are wicked companions, sinful games, bad reading, godless schools.

2. It is, moreover, the bounden duty of parents to carefully watch the behavior of their children ; to admonish them when they do wrong, to reprimand them, to correct them, and even to punish them, when necessary to make them respect parental authority. If, however, chastisement is a duty, it should always be just and reasonable. Severity must always be tempered with tenderness ; it must be that firmness, that wise energy, which is the happy medium between violence and weakness.

3. In addition to their vigilance, advice, and instruction, parents must give good example, without which all their lessons will be of no avail. In the piety, in the words and actions of their parents, children must see a living picture of the instructions they receive.

Besides affording their children education, it is the duty of parents to interest themselves in their future by giving them a trade or applying them to such studies as will afterwards assure them an honest and becoming position in life. In the choice of this state they ought,

if it is necessary, to aid them by their counsels, consulting not purely human interests and preferences, but the order and vocation ordained by God, which they must endeavor to discover. To this end they ought to study the inclination and aptitude of the child; they ought to pray to God and consult wise, enlightened, and disinterested persons.

Thus acting they will provide for the future of their children as becomes Christian parents, without prejudice to the rights of God or of the children themselves. It would be an abuse of their authority to attempt to force a son or a daughter to enter into either the marriage state or into the sacerdotal or religious state; it would be to resist God to oppose the legitimate inclination of the child to a vocation prudently determined.

Dear parents, always give your children the example of a Christian life, and beg God to lead them into that state of life for which He has destined them.

34. The Fifth Commandment.—Corporal and Spiritual Murder.

Thou shalt not kill.

The fifth Commandment forbids murder: not only that which kills the body, but also that which kills the soul; that is, scandal.

Besides this *prohibition*, this same Commandment also embodies *precepts*; it obliges us (1) to pardon, after the example of Jesus Christ, those who have offended us; (2) to give good example; (3) to repair the evil we may have done our neighbor in his soul or body; (4) to assist him in his spiritual or corporal necessities.

By *corporal murder* we are not only to understand the crime by which one takes the life of another, but also the duel and suicide.

Moreover, the fifth Commandment forbids all that is akin to murder, or that may be the occasion of it; namely, (1) hatred, anger, and revenge; evil wishes and desires of revenge; quarrels, fights, all ill-treatment of our neighbor, and harshness towards the poor; (2) all that is injurious to ourselves, intemperance, those excesses which shorten life, as also rashly endangering our life.

Spiritual murder, which wounds and kills our neighbor in his soul, is *scandal*. We mean by scandal an act or omission which is either evil in itself or has the appearance of evil, and is therefore the occasion of our neighbor's falling into sin.

Scandal is a most grievous sin, and one which Jesus Christ has threatened with His most terrible anathemas. *Woe to the world*, He exclaims, *because of scandals! Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!* (St. Matt. xviii. 6. *seq.*).

The fratricide of Cain is less atrocious than that of the scandalous man.

Let us carefully avoid scandalizing our neighbor, especially by indecent words or stories; and let us endeavor at all times to give good example.

35. The Sixth and Ninth Commandments.—The Sin of Impurity.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

You know, my brethren, what the sixth Commandment forbids: *it forbids*, you tell me, *immodest words and actions, and all that would tarnish the holy virtue of purity.*

You also know that the ninth Commandment forbids all immodest thoughts and desires, and wilful pleasure in them.

Thus these two commandments proscribe everything

contrary to chastity: the one, exterior acts; the other, thoughts or interior acts.

The sixth Commandment forbids (1) every exterior act of impurity, such as immodest discourse, looks, touches, and other actions; (2) all the occasions which lead to impurity: bad companions, too frequent interviews and familiarity between persons of different sex, round dances, immodest dressing, immodest comedies and plays, bad songs, books, and papers.

The ninth Commandment forbids all interior sins; that is to say, thoughts and desires contrary to purity.

We sin by *impure thoughts* when we take pleasure in immodest imaginations and voluntarily entertain them; we sin by *impure desires* when we wish to commit bad actions and satisfy our passions, even though no exterior act should follow.

Every sin of impurity is mortal when there is full consent. A simple immodest thought constitutes a mortal sin when we voluntarily consent to it. On the contrary, if we in no wise consent to it and resist it, there is no sin. Hence the maxim, *the sin does not consist in experiencing the temptation, but in consenting to it.*

To resist immodest thoughts, we must at once turn our mind from them and have recourse to prayer, invoking, for example, the names of Jesus and Mary.

Chaste Christians cast away all evil thoughts on first observing them, as they would a spark of fire falling on their hand.

Let us have, my brethren, a profound detestation for this sin, the most revolting, the most abasing of all sins, the opprobrium of the Christian, the pest of souls, the triumph of hell: this detestation will be our safeguard.

And would you render this means fully efficacious, unite to it a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to her Immaculate Conception.

And besides, let those well remember who are unhap-

pily enslaved to this vice, that without sacrifices and generous efforts they will not break their ignominious chains, according to these words of the Saviour: *This kind of demon is not cast out but by prayer and fasting* (St. Matt. xvii. 20).

36. The Sixth and Ninth Commandments.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

We sin against the sixth or ninth Commandment by every immodest act, be it exterior or interior ; in other words, we sin against purity by thoughts, looks, actions, as also by obscene words and songs. This last form of impurity is called impurity of speech, immodest words. Let us to-day briefly consider it.

Immodest words constitute an abominable sin and are most disastrous to morality. *Evil communications*, says the Apostle, *corrupt good manners* (1 Cor. xv. 33).

It is an abominable sin with respect to God, since the very tongue which has been sanctified by the body and blood of Jesus Christ in holy Communion is employed as means of outraging Jesus Christ by the most foul of vices.

It is an abominable sin with respect to our neighbor, because it is the cause of scandal. The obscene tongue is truly an incendiary torch, kindling the fire of impurity in a multitude of hearts. The impure mouth is like unto an unclean cesspool from which issue forth deadly gases.

It is an abominable sin with respect to the sinner himself ; for, besides the sins of which he is guilty before God, he defames himself publicly before men. From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ; and by uttering or singing obscenities the libertine defiantly says, Behold me : I am an impure man.

Seventh and Tenth Commandments—Theft. 73

Now, my brethren, what is to be your sentiment as regards immodest speech?

Have always a horror of this abominable vice; never let words fall from your lips that are ever so little susceptible of an immodest interpretation.

There are some who say, "I hold such discourse, but without any malice, for amusement or for simple pleasantry." What! do you pretend to amuse by outraging modesty, by murdering souls? What would you say if one struck you with a dagger, saying that he did it only for amusement?

Fly, fly impure speech! it is a pest.

Fathers and mothers, watch; masters and mistresses, watch; know your duties and your responsibility. Do not permit licentious conversations or songs in your homes, in your workshops, if you do not wish to draw down on you the malediction of God in time and in eternity.

If there are any who have had the misfortune to commit this sin, let them sincerely repent, let them repair the scandal they have given, and let them cast themselves at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin to obtain the grace of never again falling.

37. The Seventh and Tenth Commandment.—Injustice and Theft.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

The seventh and tenth Commandments refer to the temporal goods of our neighbor, which they protect against cupidity and injustice. These Commandments forbid all unjust proceedings and desires, and command that at all times we give our neighbor his due. The *seventh* regards exterior acts; the *tenth*, interior desires and all covetousness tending to the acquirement of another's

goods by unjust means. This is clearly expressed in the words of the Catechism: *The seventh and tenth Commandments of God forbid injustice, and every act by which we injure or seek to injure our neighbor in his temporal goods.*

It is therefore forbidden to take, to retain, or to unjustly damage our neighbor's goods; to steal or to co-operate in a theft; to buy or to receive stolen goods; to defraud in business by using false weights and measures, by passing counterfeit money or offering bad goods as sound; to bring about unjust lawsuits; to pass or procure an unjust sentence; to injure the business of our neighbor; to unjustly prevent him realizing a fair profit; to appropriate what has been confided to our safe-keeping; to neglect the payment of our debts; to dissipate our property by gambling or dissipation, to the prejudice of our family and creditors; to exercise the duties of a public office without the necessary knowledge. Judges, lawyers, doctors, etc., are held by the seventh and tenth Commandments to qualify themselves for the befitting discharge of the duties of their profession.

Fly, my brethren, every form of injustice; be honest before everything. Probity is worth more than riches. The poorest man is respectable, provided he is honest, and can say, "I have not one cent which is not mine." "An infallible means of becoming poor," said a holy priest, "is to work on Sunday, or to unjustly acquire money." On the contrary, the just and honest man will be blessed of God.

When Jesus Christ is truly the Master of a man's heart, He not only causes him to give his neighbor what belongs to him, but also inspires him with charity and detachment from earthly goods. Witness Zacheus, who said: *Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold* (St. Luke xix. 8).

38. The Eighth Commandment.—False Testimony—Lying.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

What does the eighth Commandment forbid? As you have been taught, *the eighth Commandment of God forbids us to injure our neighbor by words, either in court or elsewhere.* This Commandment was written on the second Table of Moses in these words: *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.* It forbids, then, false testimony; but under this head must be understood all the wrongs we may do our neighbor by the abuse of speech.

The sins contrary to this Commandment are especially (1) false testimony; (2) falsehood and hypocrisy; (3) backbiting and calumny; (4) evil reports; (5) abusive language; (6) violation of secrecy; as also (7) rash judgment and unfounded suspicions, which are as it were interior words, injurious to the good fame of our neighbor.

False testimony is a deposition made in court, upon oath, contrary to the truth. This is always a mortal sin, since it includes perjury, which does not admit of lightness of matter.

To lie is to speak contrary to our conviction, to say what we believe to be false, knowingly and with a design to deceive. There are three kinds of lies: the *jocose* lie, which is told for mirth or sport; the *officious* lie, which is told to excuse one's self, to save one's self or others an inconvenience; the *malicious* lie, which is told to injure our neighbor. Words said in jest, whose untruth is apparent, do not constitute a lie; nor do certain forms of speech, false in appearance, but whose meaning is readily understood. The real lie is ordinarily a venial sin, but is mortal when it causes our neighbor grave injury in his good name or property.

Hypocrisy is also a species of lie: it consists in borrowing the appearance of virtue to attract the esteem of men. The Pharisees were hypocrites: their heart was corrupt, and they pretended to be virtuous and honest men because they preserved appearances. But Jesus, who read their heart, reproached in biting terms their perversity: *You are*, said He to them, *like to whited sepulchres* (St. Matt. xxiii. 27).

Let us avoid, my brethren, lying as a shameful vice and one which God holds in detestation. *Os bilingue detector*: *I abhor*, says He, *the double tongue*; that is, duplicity and lying. To lie is to imitate the demon, the father of lies. To speak but the truth is to imitate God who would deceive nobody, and all of whose words are truth

39. The Visible Head of the Church.—St. Peter and his Successors.

Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church (St. Matt. xvi. 18).

The Church of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as it is a society, a kingdom divinely established, should have a Head. Her invisible Head is Jesus Christ Himself; her visible Head is our Holy Father the Pope.

Who is the Pope? The Pope is the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ and His representative on earth, the Pilot of the bark of St. Peter, the visible Head of the Church, and the common father of all the faithful.

We say the Pope is the successor of St. Peter. By making the Apostle St. Peter the foundation-rock, the corner-stone, of His Church, Jesus Christ promised him successors until the end of time. For this immovable rock implies that Peter will be the perpetual Head of

the Church, and will be ever necessary to sustain and govern her. But how will Peter always govern the Church, being mortal as the rest of men? How will he yet govern her after his death? By his successors, who will be the heirs of his power, of his privileges, and also of his apostolic spirit. Peter, as say the fathers, is ever living, and will always live, in the person of the successors whom Christ promised him in these words: *Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.*

The promise of the Saviour has been fulfilled: Peter, having fixed his Pontifical See at Rome, has had as successors all the Roman Bishops or Pontiffs who have occupied his See in the course of the ages down to our day.

History unfolds to us this incomparable succession. It is a chain of gold held by the hand of Jesus Christ. Its first link is Peter, and we behold gloriously reigning the two hundred and fifty-ninth in the person of the august Leo XIII. After him the chain shall continue to lengthen until its final link is reached; that is to say, until the last Pope, who shall end his reign with the consummation of the ages.

This unbroken series of successors of St. Peter presents us men who differed in name, in time, in character; but they all occupied the same See, and held in their hands the same keys, which were committed by Jesus Christ to the Apostle St. Peter. In other words, they taught the same doctrine, possessed the same power and privileges; insomuch that if the Prince of the Apostles were to return in person to exercise the Pontifical authority, his powers and privileges would not differ from those of the august Leo XIII., the actual possessor of His immortal heritage.

The Popes may die; the Papacy neither dies nor changes.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having founded

His Church on the indestructible rock of the Papacy, and let us always have the greatest reverence and love for our Holy Father the Pope, the successor of St. Peter.

40. The Commandments of the Church.

To the Ten Commandments of God we must link the six *Commandments of the Church*, so called because they were enacted by the Church; that is to say, by ecclesiastical superiors, invested with the legislative authority of Jesus Christ.

The Commandments of the Church must be obeyed by all the faithful in the same manner as the Ten Commandments of God. We cannot infringe them without incurring the guilt of mortal sin and the penalty of eternal damnation. However, being of the nature of human laws, the ecclesiastical precepts do not oblige in the case of inability or of very great difficulty, and they admit of dispensation. With these lawful exceptions, we are held to give the same obedience to the Commandments of the Church as to those of God, since they emanate from those pastors who govern us in the name of God, and whom we are in duty bound to obey as God Himself, according to these words of the Saviour: *He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me* (St. Luke x. 16).

The Commandments of the Church have for their end (1) to aid us in observing the Commandments of God and all the ordinances of Jesus Christ; (2) to make us practise the filial obedience, the respect and love, which we owe to our Mother the Church.

Among all the ecclesiastical laws and ordinances, there are six which regard in a special manner all the faithful, and which are called the *six Commandments of the Church*. They are the following:

I. To rest from servile work, and to hear Mass on all Sundays and Holy-days of obligation.

II. To fast and to abstain on the days appointed by the Church (that is, to *fast* in Lent, on the Ember days, on the Fridays in Advent, and on the eves of certain festivals; to *abstain* from flesh-meat on Fridays and other appointed days of abstinence).

III. To confess our sins at least once a year.

IV. To receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist at Easter or within the time appointed.

V. To contribute to the support of our pastors.

VI. Not to marry within the forbidden degree of kindred, nor to solemnize marriage within the forbidden times.

Besides these six precepts, there are many others, among which the most practical for our day is the prohibition to read bad books and bad papers. This prohibition, which finds its sanction even in the natural law, is found in the decrees of the earliest Councils of the Church, and is reaffirmed by the Council of Trent. Hence we find our Bishops assembled in the second Plenary Council at Baltimore addressing these earnest words to their clergy, urging them to condemn and to banish from the homes of those committed to their care bad literature: "As it is, therefore, our office to correct this evil [the circulation of bad literature], to repulse and avert this danger by every means in our power from the flocks entrusted to us, we earnestly exhort and beseech the individual pastors of souls that they frequently and zealously admonish those committed to them, and especially heads of families, to neither retain themselves nor permit in their homes whatsoever books breathe a spirit of irreligion or immorality, and to carefully watch lest they fall into the hands of their children or domestics; reminding them of the words of St. Paul in which he condemns negligent and indifferent parents of *quasi* loss of faith: 'If a man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he

hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' (1 Tim. v. 8). (Decreta Con. Balt. II., Tit. XI. Caput 1.)*

Let us take care, my brethren, not to despise the prohibitions of the Church; this would be to despise Jesus Christ Himself, according to His words: *He who despises you, despises me.*

41. The First Commandment of the Church.

To rest from servile work, and to hear Mass on all Sundays and Holy-days of obligation—Feast-days.

The Church, by virtue of the power which she has received from her divine Founder to regulate all that relates to divine worship, has instituted certain festivals — (1) in honor of the most holy Trinity, (2) in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, (3) in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and (4) in honor of the angels and saints.

The purpose of these festivals is, not only to render to God and to the Saints a worthy homage and a just recognition of their virtues and rewards, but also to obtain their protection, to encourage the faithful, to strengthen their piety and devotion, by placing vividly before their eyes the mysteries of faith and the example of Jesus Christ and the Saints.

The Church commands us to observe those festivals which are *of obligation* as we do the Sunday; namely, Christmas, the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Annunciation, the Ascension of Our Lord, Corpus Christi, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Feast of all Saints, and the Immaculate Conception.†

*This quotation has been substituted for the one cited by Fr. Schouppe from a Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Belgium.—THE TRANSLATOR.

†In some dioceses the following are not feasts of obligation: the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Annunciation, and Corpus Christi,

Let us faithfully observe, my brethren, this first Commandment of the Church, heeding the example of our Saviour, who in His childhood went with His parents to the temple at Jerusalem.

Let us always remember that those days are set apart to honor God and His Saints, and not for dissipation.

42. The Second Commandment of the Church.— Fasting and Abstinence.

To fast and to abstain on the days appointed by the Church (that is, to fast in Lent, on the Ember days, on the Fridays in Advent, and on the eves of certain festivals; to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays and other appointed days of abstinence).

This Commandment determines the law of fasting and abstinence.

Fasting consists in eating but one meal in the day; abstinence, in abstaining from flesh-meat, and also on certain days from white meats.

Which are the days of abstinence, and what their obligation?

Abstinence from flesh-meat is prescribed (1) on all Fridays of the year, except when the feast of Christmas is celebrated on that day; (2) on all fast-days, except those of Lent on which flesh-meat is allowed by dispensation.

Abstinence from white meats is prescribed in Lent, except when permitted by dispensation. Finally, for the details of the law of abstinence we are to consult the episcopal regulations of our different dioceses.

The Church has ordained abstinence on Fridays throughout the year, in memory of the death and burial of Jesus Christ.

The law of abstinence is obligatory on all the faithful who have come to the age of reason, when not lawfully

dispensed by ecclesiastical superiors, or exempted by reason of physical or moral inability. He is guilty of mortal sin who, without exemption or dispensation, eats forbidden meats, or is the cause of his children, servants, or workmen doing so.

Children or servants who cannot obtain the food which it is lawful to eat on these days from their parents or religiously indifferent masters, should consult their confessor or pastor, who will advise them as to what they are to do.

Observe faithfully, my brethren, the law of abstinence, and accustom your children from their earliest years to observe it. Let not human respect ever cause you to blush for it: let not too great anxiety for your health furnish you with excuses, perhaps unfounded. In doubt, consult your confessor.

43. Sin.—Its Nature.

Having explained the law of God and the different Commandments which it includes, we will now consider what constitutes the violation of that law, or sin.

The term *sin* is used sometimes for the act, sometimes for the state of sin. The *act of sin* is the transitory action by which God is offended; the *state of sin* the permanent condition of the soul of him who has offended God. That soul remains guilty, defiled, until the sin be remitted. It is of the act of sin that we are especially to speak.

You have long since been taught, my brethren, that sin is *any thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God*. By the law of God is here meant, not only the Commandments of the Decalogue, but every precept which emanates from a legitimate authority, and binds in conscience as the Commandments of God.

Sin is *contrary to the law of God*: it is therefore a diso-

bedience, a resistance to God and His holy law. Sin is also called a *transgression of the divine law*, but a *voluntary* transgression; that is to say, a transgression freely willed, freely accepted by the will.

This free acceptance of the will, by which an act is said to be *voluntary*, constitutes, strictly speaking, sin, which is in its nature an irregularity of the will, a wicked determination. *The will*, says St. Thomas, *is the principle of sin*; hence the maxim, *the will has sinned, the will must repent*.

It follows therefore that three conditions are necessary to constitute a sin; advertence, liberty, and consent.

1. There must be advertence; that is, the mind must be cognizant of the malice of the action. What if this be wanting? then we are said to be inadvertent. Inadvertence exculpates us, for example, when we commit a fault through ignorance or inattention. It would not, however, excuse us from sin, if the cause of our ignorance or inattention is culpable. For example, he who is ignorant of what he is in duty bound to know, and who, by reason of this ignorance, does what is forbidden, is truly guilty before God; likewise he who, neglecting to reflect or to keep a watch over himself, commits through this negligence transgressions of the law is guilty of sin.

2. There must be liberty; that is, the will must be free to do the act or not. We do not commit a formal sin when this liberty is wanting, as is the case when we are sleeping, and as may also happen in a sudden frenzy of passion which disturbs or dethrones for the time being our reason.

3. There must be consent; that is, the free act of the will accepting, directly or indirectly, the forbidden object which is presented to it: an acceptance which does not necessarily imply the formal intention of committing a sin or of offending the Divine Majesty.

If these three conditions, namely, advertence, liberty, and consent, are present when we transgress a law, then the transgression is voluntary, there is sin, and we are culpable.

Alas! who has not sinned? who must not strike his breast? We all, my brethren, more or less, have had the misfortune to offend God; let us all, with a humble and contrite heart, ask pardon of Him of our past faults, and the grace of never offending Him in the future.

44. The Capital Sins.—Drunkenness.

There are seven capital sins, namely, pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth.

1. Gluttony is an inordinate love of eating and drinking. When it refers to drinking, gluttony is called intemperance in drink, or *drunkenness*. Drunkenness is deservedly numbered among the capital sins, for it is the source of a multitude of other sins: impurity, blasphemy, quarrels, and all kinds of wickedness are its daughters.

The intemperance which is known as drunkenness is a mortal sin; *neither the impure, says St. Paul, nor idolators, nor drunkards, shall possess the kingdom of God* (1 Cor. vi. 9). Drunkards outrage God beyond measure by preferring their base passion to Him, and by making, as says the same apostle, *their god of their belly* (Phil. iii. 19).

It is a sin at once shameful and degrading; it reduces man to the level of the beast, and banishes him from all respectable society. We are told that the ancient Spartans, in order to inspire their children with a loathing for this vice, exhibited to them the horrible spectacle of a slave under the influence of drink.

It is a sin most deplorable in its effects. The drunkard brings untold misery on himself, for he loses everything—honor, money, mind, peace of conscience and

bodily health; misery on his wife and children, whom he robs of their bread, of their peace, and often of their virtue by his bad example.

It is a sin which easily degenerates into a habit, and into a habit most tyrannical, almost incorrigible.

2. The grace of God is, however, all-powerful; we can preserve ourselves, we can redeem ourselves, provided we employ the means and remedies. What are they?

To remember the gall and vinegar which Jesus Christ tasted on the cross.

To fly the occasion, the drinking-saloon, and all associations in which temperance is not esteemed and practised.

The fear of hell, and a true repentance with a firm resolution.

The frequentation of the Sacraments.

Prayer and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

My brethren, says the Apostle, be sober and watch. Particularly you who are young, so tempted to contract habits which will render you miserable all your life, "be sober and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8).

45. The Virtues.

It is not enough for the Christian to avoid sin: he ought also to practise virtue and do good works, according to these words of the Holy Ghost: *Avoid evil and do good.*

You know, my brethren, that virtue is *a disposition of the soul which urges us to do good.* In the same sense that vice is a wicked disposition of the heart, a bad habit, so virtue is a good habit, which disposes us to do what is conformable to the law of God and His holy will.

Virtue is man's perfection; it renders him pleasing and

perfect in the eyes of his Creator. Man has been created to practise virtue, as the tree to bear fruits, as the sun to emit its rays: virtue is the fruit which the reasonable creature ought to produce; it is his glory and his beauty. Without virtue, man is a barren tree, a star without light.

Hence it follows that the perfection of the human creature in the eyes of God and his true greatness consists not in riches, or in knowledge, or in any other exterior advantage, but in virtue; and that man is more or less perfect, according as he practises more or less of the virtues.

We call *Christian virtues* those which dispose us to do good according to the teaching of Jesus Christ; *human virtues* those which we practise in accordance with the light of reason alone, and for a wholly natural and worldly end: thus, to give alms for the love of God is a Christian virtue; to do so through pure compassion is human kindness or philanthropy.

We say that a virtue is *infused*, when it is the gift of the Holy Ghost to man, and accompanies sanctifying grace.

We call *acquired*, the virtue which man attains by his own efforts, and by the frequent repetition of the acts which it enjoins. The virtues are divided into theological and moral virtues.

The *theological* virtues have for their object God Himself: they refer immediately to God, and affect our morals only mediately, by the influence they exercise over our thoughts, sentiments, designs, and actions. There are three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, Charity.

The *moral* virtues have for their object to regulate our morals, to control our actions, and relate but indirectly to God. These are very numerous, and form four groups, which are classified under the four *cardinal* virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance.

Let us remember, my brethren, that the heart of a Christian ought to be a garden fruitful and fragrant of virtues, as was that of Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother. Let us then make it the labor of our every-day life to cultivate these beautiful virtues, and let us not cease to ask the helps of grace, which, as a teeming dew, shall cause them to grow and blossom.

46. *Grace.*

The law of God, which has thus far occupied our attention, is the way of salvation marked out by Jesus Christ, the way which the Christian must walk by avoiding sin and practising virtue. To do this, man, naturally weak, has need of assistance and of the means to acquire it. This assistance is offered him, an all-powerful assistance—the grace of God; and the means to obtain this grace are placed at his disposal—they are the Sacraments and prayer.

Grace is the fruit of the Passion of Jesus Christ: He has merited it for us by His precious Blood; and we may say that it flows from His sacred Wounds as from so many inexhaustible fountains. It is a gift which comes to us from God, sole Author of grace, and which is especially attributed to the Holy Ghost, who is called the Dispenser of graces and of all divine gifts.

The effect of grace is to transform the worldly man into a heavenly man, worthy to be admitted into heaven. Of this transformation we have a type in the Transfiguration of Our Saviour on Thabor.

What, then, is grace which produces in us such marvellous effects?

As regards the nature of this gift, we may say that it is a spiritual principle, which is in the world of souls what light, heat, sap, and life are in the world of bodies and visible nature. As the life hidden in a seed is the

principle of all its growth and of the fruits which it will yield; as the life circulating in the members of an animate body is the principle of its beauty and fecundity—so grace diffused throughout the body of the Church and all its members, that is to say in our souls, is the invisible principle of our activity, of our vitality, of our spiritual beauty.

There are two kinds of grace, which we must be careful not to confound—actual grace and sanctifying grace: the first is a *help* which God gives us; the second, a *spiritual life* which He communicates to our soul. He who possesses sanctifying grace is said to be *in the state of grace*. Grace being the most precious gift of God, we ought unceasingly to implore it in prayer, and to say with St. Ignatius: “O Lord, take all that is mine; I ask naught but your love and your grace: that treasure suffices for me.”

47. The Sacraments in General.

There are two principal means by which we obtain grace: the Sacraments and prayer.

The Sacraments are fitly called channels of grace. It is necessary that the divine water which we call grace, having its source in God and in the wounds of the Redeemer, should flow into our souls, and it must have channels to convey it thither; these mysterious channels are the Sacraments.

What is a Sacrament? To this question you answer: *A Sacrament is a sensible sign, instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, and indicating a special grace which it produces in our soul.*

To comprehend this definition we must understand the six different parts which it includes, namely: (1) A Sacrament is a sign; (2) it is a sensible sign; (3) a sign instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ; (4) a sign which indicates grace; (5) which indicates a special grace;

(6) a grace which the Sacramental sign produces in the soul.

1. By a *sign* we mean a thing indicating or representing something else : thus the Cross indicates the Passion of Our Saviour. Now, a Sacrament is likewise a thing which is indicative of something else : thus Baptism is an ablution, which indicates that the soul is cleansed.

2. A *sensible* sign.—We call *sensible* what is perceptible by the senses : for example, what we see with our eyes, what we hear by our ears. The water poured, the words pronounced in the administration of Baptism, are sensible things; the humble confession and repentance of a penitent in the tribunal of Penance, the absolution given by the priest, are likewise acts which are perceptible by the senses. To what is *sensible* is opposed what is *spiritual*. A spiritual thing is what we do not see with the eyes of the body, what we cannot touch with our hands. Such are the secret thoughts of our mind; such also is our soul, which thinks, which wills, which causes our body to move, but which is not visible as the body; such again is the image of God graven in our soul, and sanctifying grace hidden in our soul, when we are in the state of grace.

3. A sign *instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is to say, ordained by the Son of God in virtue of His divine power, to continue until the end of time, without any human power ever having the authority to abolish it. Our Saviour instituted seven Sacraments, namely: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Having instituted them He committed them to His Church, charging her to faithfully guard them, to add ceremonies to them, and to administer them to the faithful.

4. A sign *which indicates grace*.—As a bank-note indicates and represents a sum of money, so the Sacramental sign indicates grace, the spiritual wealth of the soul.

5. A *special grace*.—Just as corporal goods are many, and we note among them life, health, beauty, riches; so the spiritual goods of the soul, embodied in grace, vary with the different Sacraments. Each Sacrament confers at once sanctifying grace and particular actual graces.

Let us always consider, my brethren, the Sacraments as channels of grace, and as our principal means of salvation, since it is by the Sacraments the merits of Jesus Christ are communicated to us. Let us not be content with reverencing them as being what is most holy in religion; but, moreover, let us make a holy use of them according to the intentions of Our Saviour, who has given them to us.

48. Baptism.—The Administration and Effects.

Baptism is *the first and most necessary of all the Sacraments, that which, by exterior ablution and the invocation of the Blessed Trinity, effects the spiritual regeneration of man, and purifies him from all sins*. We call it the *first* of the Sacraments, because we could not receive any other of them unless previously baptized; the most *necessary*, because no man can enter heaven if he has not received Baptism, even though he should be deprived of it without his fault. This necessity is called *necessity as means*.

The administration of Baptism may be private or solemn. The first takes place in a case of necessity, the second in ordinary cases. In a *case of necessity* any person may baptize. It suffices that he have the intention of administering the baptismal rite of the Church, that he take natural water and pour it on the head of the child, at the same time pronouncing these words: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.

Baptism has three effects: (1) The remission of all sin, not only original, but also actual, and of all the

punishments due to sin; (2) the infusion of sanctifying grace, accompanied by the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, as also the other virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost; (3) the impression of the character, by which the baptized becomes an adopted child of God and His heir, a member of Jesus Christ and of the Church. The character of a child of God consists in his resemblance to the only Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

These effects of Baptism were typified in the healing of Naaman in the waters of the Jordan (4 Kings v.), and especially by the marvellous occurrences at the Baptism of Jesus Christ (St. Matt. iii. 6).

Since Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation, how great should be the anxiety of parents to procure it for their children! How grateful ought we not be to God for the blessing of our Baptism, especially when we consider how many are deprived of it! This gratitude we ought to show by a life truly Christian, and conformable to our baptismal obligations.

49. Confirmation.—Its Nature and Necessity.

Confirmation is placed second in the order of the Sacraments, because in the early ages of the Church it was conferred immediately after Baptism, of which it is the complement. Baptism gives spiritual life, Confirmation strengthens it; Baptism brings forth children of God, Confirmation causes them to grow, changing them into strong men and soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Confirmation is defined: A sacrament in which, by the imposition of hands, the unction of holy chrism and the sacred words, the baptized receives the strength of the Holy Ghost to firmly confess the faith which he has received in his Baptism.

The matter of Confirmation is *holy chrism*, a mixture of

the oil of olives and Eastern balsam, consecrated by the Bishop. There are three kinds of holy oils, of which use is made in different Sacraments, and which the Bishop consecrates on Holy Thursday: the oil of catechumens, the oil for the sick, and the holy chrism, the matter of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The unction is made by the hand of the Bishop, the ordinary minister of Confirmation. Hence this Sacrament is sometimes called the *imposition of the episcopal hand*, the Sacrament of the *Unction*.

The form is the words which the Bishop pronounces whilst making the unction on the forehead of those who are to be confirmed, namely: *I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

It is the duty of parents to have their children receive the Sacrament of Confirmation; not only because of the graces which accompany this Sacrament, but also because a Christian is obliged to receive it when the opportunity presents itself.

Finally, who does not comprehend the need we all have, but particularly the young, of being strengthened and armed, as soldiers in a hostile country? as the Apostles on the day of Pentecost? (Acts ii).

50. The Eucharist.—The Excellence of this Sacrament.

The Holy Eucharist is the most holy, the most august, the most admirable of all the Sacraments instituted by our Saviour. What the sun is in the world, the heart in man, the holy Eucharist is in the Church of Jesus Christ.

It is the centre of Catholic worship; the centre resplendent and divine, to which all the other Sacraments

refer. As in material temples there is one principal point, the altar, to which all other parts of the edifice are subordinate, and towards which all eyes are turned, so the Eucharist appears as the central mystery, towards which converge all the religious ceremonies of holy Church.

The Eucharistic mystery has a double character: it is at once a Sacrament and a Sacrifice. It is a Sacrament, when received by the faithful in Holy Communion or exposed for their adoration; a Sacrifice when offered to God in the Holy Mass.

The term Eucharist signifies *thanksgiving*. We thus designate this Sacrament, because in instituting it the Saviour gave thanks to His Father, and because we ourselves have in it the means of returning acceptable thanksgiving to God for the ineffable blessing of our redemption.

The Eucharist, considered as a Sacrament, is defined *the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ*; in other words, it is the Sacrament which contains really and substantially, under the appearances of bread and wine, the body and blood of the living Jesus Christ; that is to say, which contains Jesus Christ Himself in His integrity, in His humanity and His divinity, such as He is seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father.

Were the Sacramental veil uplifted, we would behold Jesus Christ as the Blessed Margaret Mary saw Him in 1673.

Therefore, my brethren, we have Jesus Christ in the midst of us! What a treasure for those who have faith! Let us excite then, let us revive our faith in reference to this most holy Sacrament; and when we are in its presence, let us devoutly adore our Saviour hidden therein, praying Him to increase our faith more and more.

51. Holy Communion.—Its Excellence and Fruits.

Our Saviour, in His ineffable love, has instituted the Holy Eucharist, to give Himself, to give His body and His blood to nourish our souls: this is the Holy Communion.

The reception of Holy Communion is the most sublime act of a Christian. Each one ought, therefore, to know how to receive it, and what are the necessary dispositions for its worthy reception.

You know, my brethren, that the essential condition is to be in the state of grace. Besides, we must observe the sacramental fast, and make with fervor the proper preparation, and the thanksgiving after Communion. The more perfect our dispositions, the more abundant will be the fruits of our Holy Communion. These fruits are inestimable. *In general*, the Eucharist produces in our soul all the effects which the most nutritious food produces in our body: it preserves it from death, it renews its strength, it heals its lighter wounds, it augments its virtue, and communicates to it a sense of sweetness and joy.

In particular, the effects of Communion are the following: (1) An increase of sanctifying grace and of the virtues, particularly that of charity, which intimately unite the soul to Jesus Christ, and in a certain sense transform us into Him; (2) actual graces which preserve the life of the soul, which moderate the fire of concupiscence, and which invite us to the practice of every virtue, especially of charity and chastity; (3) peace and spiritual joy; (4) the remission of venial sins; (5) preservation from future falls into sin; (6) immortality and a glorious resurrection, of which the Eucharist deposits the germ in our body.

Would we receive these fruits in all their abundance,

we must communicate frequently, according to the advice of our confessor, and prepare for it with all the fervor of which we are capable. A religious of St. Francis, one day ravished in ecstasy, saw Our Lord holding in His hand a vessel of crystal, in which sparkled a liquid which appeared as if living. It was a life-giving beverage which Jesus Christ was offering to mortal men. Of those who drank of it, some became beautiful as angels, radiant as the sun, strong as lions thirsting for the combat. The others, on the contrary, became faint, black, deformed, hideous as demons. This was a figure of the effects produced by Holy Communion. For those who receive it unworthily, it is the cup of death; for those who receive worthily, it is the chalice of strength and eternal life.

When we receive Holy Communion, Our Lord dwells within us as regards His *humanity* as long as the sacramental species remain; when they have ceased to exist, he continues with us as regards His *divinity*, unless we have the misfortune to banish Him by mortal sin.

Let us hearken, my brethren, to the sweet voice of the Saviour who invites us to His holy Table; let us take part in this divine banquet, but let us participate therein with the most holy dispositions.

52. The Mass.—The Nature of this Sacrifice.

The Holy Eucharist, inasmuch as it is a Sacrifice, is called the Mass.

The Mass was instituted by Jesus Christ at the last Supper, simultaneously with the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The table of the Supper-room was the first altar on which the Saviour celebrated the first Mass and distributed the first Communion: it was there that He elevated His Apostles to the dignity of priests of the new Law, saying to them: *Do this for a commemoration of*

me; that is to say, celebrate as I have done the holy sacrifice of the Mass in memory of my Passion. The Mass has three principal parts: the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is substantially the same as that of Calvary, but differs from it as regards the manner of its immolation.

1. It is the same in substance, since there is the same Victim and the same principal Priest: Jesus Christ, the priest visible on Calvary, invisible and hidden in the minister at the altar; Jesus Christ, the victim visible on Calvary, invisible and veiled under the Sacrament of the Altar.

2. It differs from it as regards the manner of immolation: for, (1) on Calvary Jesus Christ was immolated in a bloody manner; on the altar in an unbloody and mystical manner by the separation of the two species, which, being consecrated separately, represent the blood of Jesus shed and separated from His body. In the Mass, Jesus Christ is in the eyes of His Father what He was on the Cross: His wounds and His blood cry for mercy. (2) On the Cross Jesus Christ offered Himself without the ministry of any other priest; on the altar He offers Himself as the principal Priest, but by the ministry of a secondary priest. (3) On the Cross He immolated Himself visibly; on the altar invisibly under the appearances of bread and wine. (4) The Sacrifice of the Cross was offered as the price of our redemption; that of the altar as the means of applying to us that redemption. (5) The Sacrifice of the Cross was offered but once; the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered every day, and shall continue even to the consummation, to the end of time.

What would not have been our happiness, my brethren, if, knowing Jesus Christ as we now know Him, we should have been with the Blessed Virgin, when the Saviour immolated Himself on the cross for the salvation

of the world! And this is our happiness every time we devoutly assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass. Let us, therefore, redouble our fervor and devotion at its principal parts, especially at the Elevation; then, with the eyes of faith, let us behold Jesus Christ raised on the cross and spilling His blood in love for us.

53. The Sacrament of Penance.—Its Nature.

The Sacrament of Penance or Confession is the fourth of the seven Sacraments instituted by our Saviour. The Fathers of the Church call it, not without reason, *a second plank of salvation after shipwreck*.

The term *penance* designates sometimes a virtue, sometimes a Sacrament.

Considered as a virtue, penance is a supernatural disposition, which leads a sinner to detest his sins, and to punish himself as a reparation for the injury he has done to God. The acts of this virtue are interior or exterior. The interior act is called contrition, or repentance; the exterior acts are the punishments, or the corporal penances which we impose on ourselves as a satisfaction for our sins.

The virtue of penance has always been necessary *as a means* to obtain the pardon of sins. *Without penance there is no pardon*; and if we are guilty of mortal sin, *without penance there is no salvation*.

Penance as a virtue differs from penance as a Sacrament; but it is a part of the latter, in the sense that the interior act of the virtue of penance, that is to say contrition, must form part of the Sacrament.

Considered as a Sacrament, *penance is that Sacrament of the Church in which the sins committed after Baptism are remitted, by the absolution of the priest, to those who penitently confess them*.

Two persons concur in the consummation of this Sac-

rament: the priest and the penitent. (1) The priest, who is the minister, must judge of the dispositions of the penitent, and if he find him worthy of absolution, he must give it to him, after having imposed on him a salutary satisfaction. (2) The penitent, who receives the Sacrament, coöperates therein by three acts, which are called the three parts of Penance, namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The most important of these is contrition, without which it is impossible to obtain pardon of our sins. True contrition includes two elements, namely, a sincere sorrow for our sins and a firm purpose of never again committing them.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having given us, in the Sacrament of Penance, a so powerful means of salvation, and a remedy so healing for the wounds of our soul. Let us not neglect to frequently receive it with the proper dispositions.

54. Extreme Unction.—Its Nature.

Extreme Unction, so called because it is the last of the unctions which the Christian receives, is the complement of Penance, as Confirmation is that of Baptism. It is a Sacrament which is conferred by the holy unction and the prayers of the priest, for the spiritual and corporal comfort of the sick.

This Sacrament, which our Saviour instituted probably after His resurrection, St. James the Apostle promulgates to the faithful in these words: *Is any man, says he, sick amongst you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.* The matter of Extreme Unction is oil of olives, consecrated by the Bishop on Holy Thursday. The minister is the priest; he anoints

with the holy oil the organs which are the principal instruments of sin, namely, the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the hands, and the feet.

The form consists in the prayers which the priest recites whilst making the unctions. These prayers are: *By this holy anointing, and through His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing*—and so of the other senses. *Amen.*

This Sacrament is to be received by all who have come to the use of reason and are dangerously sick. It is in no wise necessary that the sickness be of a fatal character, it suffices that it be serious of its nature.

When we are in danger of death, we must not defer Extreme Unction; for, besides thus exposing ourselves to the risk of dying without its reception, or of receiving it without sufficient knowledge and without fruit, we deprive ourselves of the graces of a Sacrament so necessary to surmount the temptations, to quiet the fears, to brighten the gloom of that supreme moment of life.

The doctors and friends of the sick are in duty bound to have this Sacrament, as also the others, administered in due time; and they commit a grave sin when by their negligence the sick die without their reception.

As regards us, my brethren, knowing the beneficial effects of the last Sacraments, let us be watchful in procuring them for our sick friends and neighbors; and when we ourselves are sick, let us not hesitate to demand them; inasmuch as, received in time, they restore bodily health.

55. Holy Orders.—Its Degrees.

Holy Orders, also called the *imposition of hands*, is a Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ, to confer on its recipients ecclesiastical powers, as also the grace to **worthily and fruitfully** exercise them.

This Sacrament was the means chosen by the Saviour to perpetuate in His Church the priesthood, with which, at the last Supper, He invested His apostles by saying to them: *Do this for a commemoration of me.* By these words He created them at once priests and Bishops, and gave them the power to consecrate other Bishops and to ordain other priests.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders includes seven degrees or partial orders, which are divided into *major* and *minor orders*. The major orders are: the Priesthood, the Diaconate, and the Sub-Diaconate; The minor orders are those of the Acolyte, Exorcist, Lector, and Porter.

The Priesthood is subdivided into two degrees, the Episcopate and the simple Priesthood.

The *Episcopate*, the plenitude of the Priesthood, confers on its recipients the power to administer all the Sacraments, and the grace to properly govern the Church. Bishops are of divine right the superiors of priests: they hold the first rank in the sacred hierarchy, as princes of the Church, judges of faith, and successors of the Apostles, inasmuch as these were Pastors of the Church.

The *Priesthood* confers the power to exercise, under episcopal authority and direction, the same functions as Bishops, with a few exceptions, such as the administration of Holy Orders and Confirmation.

2. The *Diaconate* confers the power to serve the Priest in the solemn celebration of the holy Mysteries; the *Sub-Diaconate*, that of serving the Deacon at the altar.

3. The *four minor orders* relate likewise, though in a more remote manner, to the holy sacrifice of the mass.

The degrees of Bishop, Priest, Deacon, Sub-Deacon, and the other sacred ministers, form the *hierarchy of Orders*. Besides this, there is another gradation, which is called the *hierarchy of Jurisdiction*: it includes the Pope and Cardinals, Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops. As regards the Cardinalate, it is a *dignity*

superior to the episcopal dignity, though Cardinals need not necessarily be Bishops. It constitutes in a manner a venerable Senate, whose office is to assist the Pope by its counsels in important affairs; and when the Pope dies, it is the Cardinals who elect his successor.

We call Bishops, Priests, and other clerics who belong to religious Orders recognized by the Church the *regular clergy*; those who do not belong to these Orders are known as the *secular clergy*.

Let us appreciate, my brethren, the sublime power which Jesus Christ has bestowed on the ministers of the Church: let us pray that they may worthily exercise their high functions; and let us always have the greatest respect and deference for the august character with which they are invested.

56. Matrimony.—Its Nature and Impediments.

Christian marriage is a Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ. It may be defined: The legitimate contract of Christian spouses, adopted by our Saviour as a Sacramental rite, to represent the union of Christ with His Church, and to confer on the contracting parties the grace to fulfil the duties of spouses and of Christian parents.

The Sacrament consists wholly in the legitimate contract. The mutual consent and acceptance of the contracting parties being the form and matter which constitute the Sacrament, as the ablution and words constitute Baptism.

You know that marriage was instituted by the Creator at the beginning of the world, when God Himself united as spouses our first parents. From that time until the advent of Jesus Christ, marriage was a sacred and indissoluble contract, but in itself a *purely natural contract*;

but Our Saviour has made it *supernatural* by elevating it to the dignity of a Sacrament of the new Law.

Resolving to institute a Sacrament to sanctify spouses, the divine Founder of our holy religion chose the natural contract of marriage, and without adding to it any other rite, proclaimed it a Sacrament: consequently as such He has committed it to His Church as He has the other Sacraments, with power and authority to regulate what relates to it, and to administer it in a holy manner. As the Sacrament of Matrimony consists in a *legitimate* contract, it must be ratified by those who are capable of making such a contract, between whom there are no *impediments*, that is, conditions which incapacitate them from marriage.

Of the impediments which render a marriage null and void, unless removed by dispensation, the principal are: (1) Natural relationship or consanguinity, in the direct line in all its degrees, and in the collateral line to the fourth degree inclusively; and (2) marriage relationship or affinity which annuls the marriage of a widower with the relations of his deceased wife, or of a widow with the relations of her deceased husband, likewise to the fourth degree inclusively.

That a marriage may be licitly contracted, it must be celebrated according to the precepts of the Church regarding the publication of the banns and the time. The *time* or day of the marriage, except an episcopal dispensation be granted, must be outside of the *forbidden time*, established by the Council of Trent. This holy Council has prohibited the solemn celebration of marriages from the first Sunday of Advent to the Feast of the Epiphany inclusively, and from Ash Wednesday to Low Sunday inclusively. (Sess. 24, cap. 10.)

Pray God, my brethren, to know the state of life to which He has called you, and the grace to embrace it as becomes Christians. If you believe that you are called

to the marriage state, prepare carefully to worthily receive that Sacrament which is to establish you in that state, and to be the pledge to you of God's blessing.

57. Prayer.—Its Necessity.

Besides the Sacraments, we have another all-powerful means of obtaining God's grace, namely, *prayer*.

Speaking of prayer, St. Alphonsus has deservedly called it *the chief means of salvation*; and St. Augustine, *the Key of Heaven*.

What then do we understand by prayer?

Prayer is a conversation with God, in which we render Him our homage and ask His favors.

1. Prayer is a *conversation with God*: what can we imagine more sublime and more advantageous? 2. By prayer we render God our *homage*, namely, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, proofs of our love and attachment. By prayer we ask of God His *favors*: the pardon of our sins, the necessary grace to live well, and all the blessings we need for our body and soul.

Prayer glorifies God's perfections, His power, His wisdom, and His goodness; it unites us to God, elevates and sanctifies our thoughts; it strengthens us against temptation, encourages us to do good; it consoles us in our afflictions, it obtains for us every grace, even the supreme grace of final perseverance.

Prayer is of necessity by precept and also of necessity as a means; or, in other words, it is at once obligatory and necessary for salvation for every Christian who has come to the use of reason. (1) Prayer is of necessity *by precept*, because God has commanded us to pray; (2) of necessity *as a means*, since we cannot observe the divine law without the aid of grace, and this we cannot ordinarily obtain except by prayer. God has willed to bestow His gifts, as a rule, only on those of His creatures who humbly

ask them. This is why Jesus Christ, not only by precept but also by example, has so urgently recommended prayer, and has gone so far as to say that *we ought always to pray* (St. Luke xviii. 1).

Let us heed this precept of our Saviour, my brethren, and *let us pray without ceasing*; that is to say, let us pray morning and night, never neglecting it; and also during the day let us frequently raise our heart to God, offering Him our work, our trials, and our joys.

58. The Feasts and Ceremonies of the Church.— The Meaning and Beauty of these Feasts.

Besides the Sacraments and prayer, the Christian has also a powerful means of salvation and sanctification in the feasts, the ceremonies, and religious exercises of the Church.

The Church, always inspired by the Spirit of her divine Spouse, has instituted feasts and sacred ceremonies, (1) to render worship more solemn and worthier of the divine Majesty; (2) to instruct and edify the faithful, aiding them by these attractive and easy means to comprehend and to love religion.

Christian ceremonies are the outward forms, the religious observances, and, in general, all that formality with which the Church publicly honors the Majesty of God. It consists either in actions, as genuflections, signs of the Cross; or in words, as prayers, hymns, chants; or in objects presented to the eye, as sacred vestments, ornaments of the altar. All the ceremonies which belong to any one particular service are called a *rite*: for example, the rite of the Mass, the rite of Baptism; the sum total of all the rites of religion is public worship, or the Christian *liturgy*.

With these special ceremonies the Church celebrates her feasts. Each feast has its particular character, its

ceremonies, and its color. There are five *liturgical colors*: white, red, green, violet, and black. White, the symbol of innocence, of grace and of glory, is used on Easter and the other feasts of Jesus Christ, of His blessed Mother, as also on the feasts of saints who are known as Confessors and Virgins. Red, the color of fire and of blood, is reserved for Pentecost and the feasts of Martyrs. Green signifies hope. Violet, penance. Black, mourning and prayer for the dead.

By these different colors we are thus enabled to understand the character of the festivals which the Church celebrates, as they give to each its proper appearance.

The ecclesiastical year is as it were a series of feasts, which present by turns to the eyes of the Christian the principal mysteries of his faith, the dearest objects of his love. This series of feasts and solemnities begins with the holy season of Advent, towards the end of the month of November.

With Advent begins the ecclesiastical year. Let us endeavor, my brethren, to accompany the Church in the celebration of her feasts: thus let us sanctify, not only the whole year, but our whole life.

59. The Last Four Things to be remembered.— Death.

We must also speak of the last things which relate to man, that we may keep them always before our eyes; for it is a most efficacious means to excite in our heart hatred of sin and love of virtue. *In all thy works*, says the Holy Ghost, *remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin*. We call the *last things* the last events in which all men are interested. They are four: death, judgment, hell, and heaven. The first two are the inheritance of all men; hell, of those who die in the state of mortal sin; heaven, of those who die in the state of grace.

Death is the separation of the soul and the body. The soul being immortal, passes to a new habitation, to which the Creator assigns it, according to its merits. The body remains here below, decomposes, corrupts, and changes into dust which mingles with the earth. Faith teaches us: (1) that all men must once die; (2) that the day and hour of death are uncertain; (3) that death brings to an end the time in which man may acquire merit, and irrevocably determines the eternal lot of each one according to the merit of his works; (4) that death is the punishment of original sin; (5) that Jesus Christ by His death on the cross has vanquished death, and merited for us a future resurrection.

Faith presents death to us as *the punishment of sin*; it is true that man is mortal of his nature, independently of sin; but God, by His grace, rendered him immortal in the person of Adam, who was to transmit immortality with innocence to all his descendants. Adam, by his sin, forfeited the privilege of immortality; God punished him with death, him and all his descendants. In death, then, we suffer the punishment of sin.

Relative to death there are two truths which we should never forget; namely, that no one shall escape death, and that it may overtake us when we least expect it. God has left us ignorant of the hour of our death, in order that we may always be prepared to appear before Him, according to these words of Jesus Christ: *Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour.*

60. Hell.—Its Torments and Eternal Duration.

Faith teaches us that there is a hell; that is, a place of eternal punishments prepared for the impenitent.

In vain would words describe the horror of hell; it surpasses all we can imagine. To suffer its torments for one brief hour would be more painful than to pass a

hundred years on earth in the exercise of the most austere penance.

Its punishments are the same for all the damned, as regards their nature, but not as regards their intensity. Each one suffers in proportion to his sins. The nature even of the punishments corresponds with the nature of the sins which have provoked them. *By what things a man sinneth*, says the Scripture, *by the same also he is tormented* (Wisdom xi. 17). *As much as she hath glorified herself, and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her* (Apoc. xviii. 7). As regards the damned themselves, they will preserve their natural faculties, memory, understanding and will; and after the resurrection they will have all their members and all their senses; but this will be only to expiate the abuse they have made of them.

The body and the senses, which have been the instruments of sin, will be chiefly tormented by a devouring fire. "Which of you," says Isaias, "can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Though the thought of these torments is enough to make us dread this awful abyss, yet what adds to them all the horrors of despair is their eternity, their interminable eternity. And there is no dogma more forcibly affirmed in the Scripture and tradition, than the eternity of these punishments. On the last day Jesus Christ will thus address the wicked: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. . . And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life* (St. Matt. xxv. 41, 46). *It is better for thee*, says He elsewhere, *to enter into life, maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished* (St. Mark ix. 42, 43). *Those*, says St. Paul, *who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction* (2 Thess. i. 9). This doc-

trine of the eternity of the pains of hell is in keeping with the divine justice. For mortal sin, containing as it does infinite malice, deserves a punishment infinite in duration. Moreover, the sinner, by committing mortal sin, abandons God for the creature, and consents thereby to be forever the enemy of God. If he die in that state, there he remains, for the time of conversion is spent. He will remain eternally the enemy of God, and as such shall be treated eternally.

The state of the damned resembles that of a man who, having voluntarily deprived himself of sight, would be eternally blind were he to live forever.

How great the misfortune, my brethren, to fall into hell! It is an irreparable misfortune. And let us well remember that mortal sin certainly leads to it. Then let us fly sin as the only evil we have to fear.

61. Heaven.—The Beatific Vision.

Paradise, or heaven, is an abode of eternal felicity, where God rewards in God His faithful servants.

The felicity of heaven is ineffable, that is to say, we cannot express it, recount or describe it, as says the Apostle: *The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love Him* (1 Cor. ii. 9).

The blessed contemplate God face to face, in all the splendor of His glory, and possess in Him an ocean of goodness. They are perfectly happy, and all their desires are abundantly satisfied; yet their glory is proportionate to their merits. They differ from one another, says St. Paul, as star differeth from star in glory.

There is, however, a special glory in heaven reserved for martyrs, doctors, and virgins, which is called the *aureola*. The aureola of the martyrs, doctors, and virgins is a distinctive halo of glory which shall encircle their

brow in recompense of the victories they have gained; the martyrs over the world, which persecuted them; the doctors, over the demon, the spirit of darkness and lying; the virgins, over the flesh, which they have crucified with its passions and irregular desires.

Besides the ineffable happiness of the beatific vision of God, the elect shall have two other sources of pleasure, namely, (1) the sweet company of the angels, of the saints, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Jesus Christ in His humanity; (2) the assurance that their happiness shall know no end, that it shall continue through eternity, which thought of itself shall cause unspeakable joy.

As long as the world and the Church militant endure, the souls alone of the blessed will enjoy beatitude, whilst their bodies will slumber in the grave; after the universal resurrection, they will resume their bodies, which will share forever their glory and their happiness.

Ah, my brethren, should not the thought of this untold glory inflame us with a holy ambition? No, nothing in this world, neither sufferings, nor labors, nor privations, nor cares, nor anything else shall be considered too severe or too protracted, when there is question of securing the eternal joys of heaven.

SHORT SERMONS

FOR THE

Low Masses of Sunday.

SECOND SERIES.

SECOND SERIES.

62. Man.—The Immortality of the Soul.

The first lesson of the Christian Catechism is an explanation of man's nature, the basis of all moral instruction.

You have been told, my brethren, that *man is a reasonable creature, composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body.*

Man is then composed of two parts, the soul and the body. The soul is the principal part, the body the secondary part: the body is naught else than the vesture of the soul and the instrument by which it acts.

What then, is our soul? Our soul is an immortal spirit, endowed with understanding, memory, free-will, and destined to animate a body.

1. Our soul is a spirit, that is to say, an immortal substance, imperceptible to our eyes, resembling the angels, with this difference, that it is destined to animate a body. We say that a spirit is a substance, that is to say, a something which exists in itself, as a stone, and not in another, as the color of a stone. The souls of animals are not spirits, because they are inherent to the body, and being like unto color or warmth, they could not subsist of themselves.

2. Our soul is immortal. When the body dies, it is not extinguished as a flame, but departs as a man from his home, to return again.

The immortality of the soul is one of the truths ad-

mitted by all people, which not only faith, but also reason, distinctly affirms. Hear the voice of reason:

1. Since our soul is a being which thinks, it is a spirit, for matter cannot think: and every spirit is indestructible, immortal by its nature.

2. The human soul, urged by the craving of its own being, aspires to a good which is not finite: as a consequence, it must be immortal to attain the object of that desire inherent to its nature.

3. On earth many crimes remain unpunished, many virtues unrewarded; but as the justice of God requires that each one receive according to his works, there must be, as a consequence, another life, where justice will be meted out: this supposes the immortality of the soul. Such is the judgment of reason. Faith most positively teaches us the same truth. Jesus Christ has told us not to place the same value on our *corporal life*, as on the *eternal life*, the salvation of our soul: *Fear ye not, says He, them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul.* At the last day, after the sentence of the Supreme Judge, *the sinners shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.* Finally, Christ has risen from the dead, that in His person we may have ocular evidence of the future eternal life.

Since then, my brethren, our soul is immortal, and after this short life we begin another which will never know death, should not all our care be expended on that future life, and every effort be made to make it happy?

63. The Christian.—The Good and Bad Christian.

The Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ, who, being baptized, believes and professes the true doctrine of Jesus Christ in the holy Catholic Church.

1. There are two kinds of Christians: the good and bad Christians.

The good Christian is he who lives a Christian life, who fulfils the obligations he contracted in his Baptism.

The bad Christian is he who is only nominally a Christian, and who neglects his duties. The first alone will receive the promised recompense; the second renders himself unworthy, and brings about his condemnation. Jesus Christ will not recognize him as His disciple (St. Matt. vii. 17 *seqq.*). Among good Christians there are many degrees of perfection.

2. The reward of the Christian. The reward promised by Jesus Christ to His faithful disciples is peace in this world and eternal life in the next. The true Christian is happy in this life, because he possesses the calm of a good conscience, resignation in his difficulties, the paternal protection of God who hovers over him, the light of faith, sweet conformity to the will of God, and finally the glorious expectation of one day entering heaven.

3. The duties of a Christian. To realize these rewards, the Christian has three great duties to fulfil: he must (1) believe in the holy religion of Jesus Christ, (2) he must know it, and (3) he must practise it. To fulfil these duties is to be faithful to the obligations contracted in his Baptism and to live as a Christian.

Let us always live, my brethren, as good Christians faithful to our Baptismal promises, and God, on His part, will keep His promises: *You shall receive*, says He, *an hundred times as much, now in this time: and in the world to come life everlasting.* In other words, if we live as good Christians, we will have every possible happiness in this life, notwithstanding our crosses and our sufferings, and we will enjoy an ever-blessed eternity in the future.

64. The Duties of a Christian.—Faith.

Faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and in the divinity of His Holy Religion, is the foundation of a Christian life.

Faith is a grace and a light, which, far from extinguishing the light of reason, endows it with a new power to perceive and understand what we call the *motives of faith*.

By the *motives* of faith we mean, (1) the historical truth of the Christian revelation, and (2) the infallibility of the Church which promulgates it to the world. This two-fold truth may be expressed in these words: The teachings of Jesus Christ are the word of God, and this Word is accurately taught us by the Church.

Let us examine the proofs of these two truths.

1. *The historic truth of the Christian revelation.*

The doctrine which Jesus Christ has taught is truly of God, and is consequently a divine revelation, if it is true that Jesus Christ was the ambassador of God: now Jesus Christ was truly the ambassador of God. He announced Himself as such. He frequently affirmed it, and His affirmation He verified by His prophecies and His miracles, especially by the great prophecy and miracle of His resurrection. Jesus Christ is then the ambassador of God: His doctrine is therefore divine, and must be accepted under the penalty of condemnation. His prophecies and miracles are to be read in the Gospels: they are historical facts, not to be disproven.

The Christian doctrine is then a true revelation, a law given by God to man. This great fact is evident to us, even more than it was to the Apostles and contemporaries of the Saviour, who heard His words and saw His miracles; because, by the testimony of history and its monuments, we know as they, not only the teachings of Christ and His miracles, but moreover the uninter-

rupted confirmation they have received in the events of now nearly nineteen hundred years.

2. *The infallibility of the Church.*—The Church accurately proposes to us the teachings of Jesus Christ, if that divine Ambassador established a depository and an infallible interpreter of His doctrine, solemnly promising her His divine assistance until the end of time. And the Church was established under these conditions and accorded His divine assistance, that she might be the pillar of truth.

To be convinced of this, we have only to open our eyes to patent facts. The existence of the Catholic Church and her activity throughout the world are as unquestionable as the existence of the sun; her origin and the promises of perpetuity received from her divine Founder are so distinctly stamped on her history and universal monuments, that we are more positively convinced of them than when beholding a lofty tree we are convinced of its roots, or when seeing a royal palace we are satisfied of the solid foundations on which it rests.

The words by which Jesus Christ founded His Church are these: *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.* (St. Matt. xvi. 18). *Feed my lambs; feed my sheep* (St. John xxi. 15). Hear also the words by which He conferred on her infallibility: *The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; behold, I am with you, inasmuch as you teach, even to the consummation of the world* (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). *He that heareth you, heareth me* (St. Luke x. 16). *Whosoever will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen and the publican* (St. Matt. xviii. 17). *I will send you the Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever* (St. John xiv. 16).

What a blessing, my brethren, to have such evident proofs of the truth of our faith! Let us thank God, who has given them, and let us endeavor to live conformably to our faith.

65. What a Christian must Know.

The first duty of a Christian is firmly to believe in the holy religion of Jesus Christ; the second, to know it.

In reference to this knowledge, the Christian doctrine is divided into two parts: the first is of *necessity*, the second only of *utility*. The necessary part embraces those truths which all the faithful are held to know, and of which some are of necessity as *means*, others because of *precept*.

Of necessity as means signifies that those truths are so indispensable, that if an adult be ignorant of them, even without his fault, he could neither receive the Sacraments nor be saved. *Of necessity because of precept* signifies that those truths are so far obligatory, that an adult cannot wilfully neglect to learn them without incurring mortal sin; but an involuntary ignorance does not render one incapable of justification and salvation.

The truths which are *of necessity as means* are these four:

1. That there is only one God.
2. That there are three divine Persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.
3. That God the Son, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, became man for us, was crucified, died, and rose again from the dead.
4. That God will reward the good and punish the wicked; in other words, that we have an immortal soul; that there is a heaven to recompense the just, and a hell to eternally punish sinners who die in final impenitence.

The truths which are *of necessity because of precept*, which it is of obligation to know, at least substantially, are these six:

1. The Lord's Prayer.
2. The Angelic Salutation.

3. The Apostles' Creed.

4. The Commandments of God and of the Church.

5. The Sacraments, those at least which each one ought to receive.

6. The duties proper to our individual state of life; in other words, we must know the obligations we are bound to fulfil in virtue of our state or profession: thus parents are held to know the duties they must fulfil with respect to their children.

Take good care, my brethren, never to permit the truths of religion, whether they be of necessity as means or because of precept, to fade from your minds; be earnest in teaching them to your children in their earliest childhood. As for the rest, would you never forget these essential truths, then adopt this easy and efficacious means—pray devoutly to God morning and night.

66. Christian Doctrine.

The first duty of a Christian is to firmly believe and to know the Christian doctrine.

Now, the Christian doctrine, considered as one great whole, forms a beautiful totality, which may be compared to a temple, built on a divine plan, and in which we distinguish three great parts: 1st, the foundation; 2d, the walls with their columns; 3d, the dome which crowns it. The house of God, says St. Augustine, is founded in faith, built in hope, and perfected in love. The foundation is faith and all that refers to it; the columns and dome of the edifice are hope and charity, with all that relates to these virtues.

We may also compare it to a vast panorama, which embraces the entire universe, visible and invisible, presenting to our view the two vast objects which constitute the universe: God and His works, the Creator and the creature.

This vastness of the scope of revealed religion, and the symmetry of its parts, proclaims the immensity of God and the wisdom of the infinite intelligence from which it emanates. It may be considered in general and in particular.

Considered in general, the Christian doctrine is all the truths contained in the Sacred Scripture, and the divine Traditions. The Scripture and Traditions are the double depository of the word of God.

1. The Sacred Scripture is the Holy Bible, or the books of the Old and New Testament, which were written under the inspiration and with the particular assistance of the Holy Ghost. It is the *written word* of God.

2. The divine or apostolic Traditions are the truths of faith not contained in the Sacred Scriptures, but which, having been taught since apostolic times, have been transmitted from age to age. It is the *unwritten word* of God.

Now, Holy Church, our Mother, is the custodian of this double treasure; thence she draws all she proposes for our belief. All that is taught us in the Church flows from these two divine sources. Let us then, my brethren, have a deep reverence for the Sacred Scriptures and the apostolic Traditions which holy Church proposes to us; let us listen as if God Himself spoke, since, indeed, they are naught else than the word of God.

67. The First Article of the Creed.—The Eternity, the Immensity, of God.

To fully understand the first article of the Creed, we must have a knowledge of the *attributes* of God. According to our manner of conception, the divine nature is endowed with attributes as the sun with its light.

Among these attributes, which are numberless, we note *eternity* and *immensity*.

1. God is *eternal*, because He has neither beginning nor

end, past nor future. Creatures are not eternal, because they all have a beginning; but some of them are immortal, namely, the angels and human souls; these last will communicate the same immortality to their bodies on the day of the resurrection.

Eternity, strictly speaking, pertains then only to God. But, generally speaking, we also call eternity the everlasting existence in the future life of immortal creatures, be it happy or miserable.

There is no proportion between time and eternity. The longest period of time, a million of ages, is not an hour of the interminable day of eternity. Time is a river which flows by, whilst eternity is an immovable rock. Suppose a million of ages, and yet that rock will not have advanced an inch. God is sitting on that rock, and beholds the ages roll by at His feet, bearing with them creatures.

2. God is *immense*, because no place could contain Him. He is everywhere physically present, as a king in his palace or on his throne: He fills with His presence heaven and earth, as the ocean fills with its waters a sponge plunged into its bosom. However, if that sponge sink, it would touch at the bottom; if it move in another direction, it would come to the shore or the surface; but the immensity of God is a sea without surface, without bottom or shore. We are then, my brethren, everywhere in the presence of God, under His care and in His hands. Should not this thought inspire us with the fear of offending Him, and, on the other hand, animate us with the most abiding confidence?

68. The First Article of the Creed.—The Holy Trinity.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

In the first article of the Creed we implicitly profess

the dogma of the Holy Trinity; namely, that there is only one God, and in that God three divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Though God is a pure spirit, we however represent the three divine Persons under a visible form, namely, God the Father as an aged man, God the Son as a man, God the Holy Ghost as a dove. This we do, because the prophet Daniel, in his prophetic visions, saw God the Father, whom he calls the Ancient of days, under the form of an aged man; because God the Son was made man; and finally, because the Holy Ghost appeared under the form of a dove.

The Holy Trinity is a profound mystery, which we must humbly believe without striving to measure and understand it. We have, however, in nature semblances of this dogma which aid us in our conception of it; the principal of these are, 1st, the sun, the central body of the solar system, which is one great whole of fire, light, and heat, three forces closely united, yet most distinct; 2d, our soul, endowed with three different faculties, will, memory, and understanding, with which it seems to be blended. These present to us as it were a shadow of the nature of the Trinity, without, however, adequately disclosing the depth of this mystery, whose abyss no human intelligence could sound.

We ought not only believe in, my brethren, but adore and glorify the Holy Trinity. There are two easy means of doing this: 1st, the pious practice of the sign of the Cross; 2d, the frequent recitation of the doxology of the Church: 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, world without end. Amen.

69. The First Article of the Creed.—Creation.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

The Sacred Scripture tells us that God created the world in six days, and on the seventh day He rested; but it determines neither the nature nor duration of these days.

When He called the world into existence, it was at first confused in one vast chaos and buried in darkness. The Creator separated the different elements, fecundated them by His almighty power, and formed of them the world as we now see it.

The first day He made light.

The second day, the firmament.

The third day, the sea, the earth, and plants.

The fourth day, the sun, the moon, and stars.

The fifth day, the fishes and birds.

The sixth day, the animals of the earth; and finally man, whom He formed in His own image and likeness.

Having completed His work in six days, God rested on the seventh; that is to say, He ceased to create new species of creatures. These six days, followed by a day of rest, are the type of the weekly period, composed of six days of labor, and crowned by a day of rest, which God appointed from the beginning to be consecrated to His worship.

The all-powerful God had no need of six days for the work of creation: a moment, an act of His will would have sufficed; but He willed to give man a model to imitate, and to teach us by His example to sanctify our life by laboring six days, and resting on the seventh to praise the Lord.

Let us always regard, my brethren, the sanctification of the Sunday as a most sacred obligation: on that day let us be present in the house of the Lord, prostrating

ourselves before the great God who has created heaven and earth. Oh! how insignificant we are in the presence of that awful Majesty! Recognizing our insignificance, let us humble ourselves as creatures before the Creator; then will we be the recipients of His mercy: *For God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace* (1 St. Pet. v. 5).

70. The First Article of the Creed.—The Angels.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

As there are men on earth, so are there angels in heaven; for heaven is inhabited as well as the earth. The inhabitants of heaven are the angels, creatures worthy, by the dignity of their nature, to abide where God Himself makes His dwelling.

1. The number of angels is beyond computation. Daniel, in his prophetic visions, saw millions and thousands of millions of them about the throne of the Most High. It is believed they outnumber all the descendants of Adam; of which more than one hundred thousand millions have been born since the Deluge. A most admirable order prevails among this multitude of blessed spirits. They are divided into nine choirs, forming three hierarchies: the first including the angels, the archangels, and principalities; the second the powers, the virtues and dominations; the third the thrones, the cherubim and seraphim. Three angels are known to us by name, namely, Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel, and Saint Raphaël.

2. The *demons* are fallen angels, who by reason of sin were changed into hideous beings, and hurled into the abysses of hell. All, however, are not confined in this place of torment; many of them travel the earth, bearing with them their punishments. Animated with hatred not only for God but also for man, they seek to injure

him in soul and body; hence temptations and diabolical possessions. Notwithstanding, however, their ill-will and power, they can do nothing beyond that which God permits them, as we know from the history of the holy man Job.

3. The office of the good angels is to adore and praise the Divine Majesty, to execute His orders, to guard the interests of men. The angels, *adorers of God*, surround the throne of God in heaven, and the Eucharistic Altar on earth; the angels, *ministers of God*, are His messengers to men; the *guardian* angels are our friends and chief benefactors.

Let us often think, my brethren, of the presence of our guardian angel at our side, and let us remember to invoke Him every day. When in Church, let us not forget that the altar, where reposes the Holy Eucharist, is surrounded by adoring angels; and let us unite with them in acts of homage to Jesus Christ hidden under the Sacramental veil.

71. The First Article of the Creed.—The Creation of Man.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Having created the universe, God peopled it with intelligent creatures: He made the angels for heaven, man for the earth. Having considered the creation of the angels, it remains for us to speak of the creation of man.

1. God created man in His own image and likeness, to serve his Creator in this life, and to share His happiness in the next. Adam, the first man, was endowed with sanctifying grace, and enriched beyond measure with other precious gifts, which he was to transmit to his children; but he sinned, he forfeited these gifts, and incurred

the divine indignation, he and all his descendants, with the single exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. We have said that God created *man*, that is to say, *all men*, the whole human race: they were all created in the person of Adam, who was constituted the father of all the others, the single source of all humanity. It is a dogma of our faith that all peoples, no matter how different in language, color, and race, originally descend from the one father and the one mother. All men are brothers, all have the same nature, being created in the image of God; all have sinned in Adam, all have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

3. In what consists the image of God which has been impressed on man? It consists, (1) in the nature of his soul, which is an immortal spirit, endowed with will, memory, and understanding; (2) in the nobility of his presence, which reflects the dignity of his soul; (3) above all, in the sanctifying grace with which his soul was adorned.

Let us admire, my brethren, the greatness of our origin and the nobility of our nature. *O Lord, my God, exclaims the Royal Prophet, what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor; and hast set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet (Ps. viii.).*

72. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Personality of Jesus Christ.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

Jesus Christ our Lord is God the Son made man for us.

When I contemplate the Son of God clothed with our humanity, I distinguish in Him only one person and two natures.

1. His person is one, as is that of each of us; but it is divine: when I behold Jesus, the son of Mary, I see the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, though hidden by the transparent veil of human nature.

2. The one person of Jesus Christ has two natures, which are substantially united to it and rightfully belong to it: after this manner belongs to us our human nature, composed of our body and soul, and united in one person.

The two natures belonging to God the Son are: (1) the divine nature, which He has had from all eternity; and (2) the human nature, which He has had only from the day of His incarnation.

1. He has the divine nature; that is to say, this Jesus apparently so weak, so poor, is the eternal, all-powerful God, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, has created the world and given life to all that breathe. In vain, then, do the impious wage war against Christ, since in His person they attack the all-powerful God.

2. He has the human nature; that is to say, this Jesus, the all-powerful God, is also true man, having a body and soul like ours.

(1) His body during His life on earth was subject as ours to sufferings and death; after His resurrection it became immortal, impassible, glorious, and in every respect heavenly.

(2) His soul, endowed as ours with intelligence and a free will, was susceptible of joy, pain, and grief, but was not subject to ignorance or sin. On the contrary, it was enriched with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and sanctity; in a word with the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Of this plenitude or fulness of spiritual life we should all partake. Let us then go to Jesus by prayer, by the Sacraments, to receive of Him Christian life, an abundance of life.

73. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Divinity of Jesus Christ.

And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, our Lord.

By these words, *and in Jesus Christ, His only Son*, we declare the divinity of Jesus Christ; we believe that the man whom history calls Jesus Christ, who outwardly appeared like unto other men, was, and is yet, the true Son of God, equal to God the Father. The divinity of Jesus Christ (1) is proved by the teaching of the Church, which we have demonstrated to be infallible; (2) by that of the Apostles, who have clearly taught this fundamental dogma. *The Word was God*, writes St. John; *all things were made by Him: and He was made flesh, and dwelt among us: He, Jesus, of whom John the Baptist gave testimony* (St. John i.); (3) by the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself: *I and my Father, says He, are one; I am in the Father, and the Father in me* (St. John xiv.). *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth* (St. Matt. xxviii.). *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth life: so the Son also giveth life to whom He will* (St. John v.).

Therefore, my brethren, according to the words of St. Paul, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth corporally in Jesus Christ (Coloss. ii., 9). This Jesus, born at Bethlehem, dead on the cross, apparently so weak and poor, is true God: He is God the Son, in all things equal to the Father; He is the eternal and all-powerful God, the Creator of the world; He is wisdom itself, goodness, and the supreme beauty; finally, all that can be predicated of God is predicable of Him.

The most of the contemporaries of the Saviour, even those who were the witnesses of His miracles, though regarding Him as a Prophet and an envoy from God, had no knowledge of His divinity. This is evident from the answers of the Apostles, when, on the plain of Cesarea

Third Article of Creed.—The Virgin Mary. 129

Philippi, He asked them *who do men say the Son of man is* (St. Matt. xvi.). The Apostles themselves knew the mystery only in an obscure manner until the day of His resurrection, or rather until, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were filled with the knowledge of all the truths of faith, and knew without the shadow of a doubt that the wonderful man with whom they had associated was the true Son of God, the second Person of the most Blessed Trinity.

The divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is, my brethren, the fundamental dogma of our faith. Let us believe it with all our heart. Yes, Jesus Christ, thou art the true Son of God. I firmly believe it in life, in death. Augment, maintain, revivify in my heart that divine faith which is the source of eternal life.

74. The Third Article of the Creed.—The Virgin Mary.

The Mother of Jesus Christ was the Virgin Mary, and as He is true God it follows that the Virgin Mary is truly the Mother of God, as the Church has always named her.

Faith, moreover, teaches us that this august Mother was a virgin most pure, and always remained a virgin, after as before the birth of her divine Son. Justly, therefore, do we call her Virgin of virgins, the Queen of virgins.

Sacred Scripture and tradition give us this too imperfect history of this most favored of creatures. Mary, of the royal family of David, was, according to St. John Damascene, the only child of SS. Joachim and Ann. Full of grace from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, this child of benediction was born, to the great joy of heaven and earth, on the eighth day of September, about the twenty-second year before the Christian era.

When three years old she was presented in the Temple, which event the Church celebrates on the twenty-first of November. She remained in the house of the Lord for twelve years, and there made a vow of perpetual virginity.

God, in His wisdom, willed she should take as her husband the chaste Joseph, like her, of the family of David, and predestined to be the guardian of her virginity and the foster-father of the incarnate Word.

She was yet young in years, but already mature in sanctity, when she received at Nazareth the heavenly message of the Archangel Gabriel, and became the Mother of the Redeemer.

We know it was at Bethlehem she gave birth to her Divine Son. Forty days after, she presented Him in the Temple, according to the law. Then followed her flight into Egypt with her heavenly child, where she remained until the death of Herod—a period of about six years.

Returning to Nazareth, she continued, aided by Saint Joseph, to lovingly care for Jesus, she followed Him into His public life, she is near Him at the nuptials of Cana, and, in His passion, she accompanies Him even to Calvary, standing at the foot of His cross. It was there Jesus gave her to us as our Mother.

St. Luke gives us a last glance at our Blessed Mother in the upper room at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. After this she is not again mentioned in the Sacred Scripture; but ancient traditions tell us that, having been confided by Jesus to the care of St. John, she followed the well-beloved disciple to Ephesus, where she remained until the last days of her life.

Then, they further add, knowing her end was approaching, she returned to Jerusalem, the place where Jesus died. There she also died, at the age of seventy-two years, and was buried at the foot of the Mount of Olives where her tomb is still to be seen.

Fourth Article of Creed.—Garden of Olives. 131

The tomb of Mary, as that of Jesus, is vacant because, like Jesus, by His power she rose from the tomb and ascended into heaven, being taken up, both body and soul, amidst the acclamations of angels. This we commemorate on the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

Let us love, my brethren, let us love Mary as our mother; let us be her worthy children, always remembering the maxim of the Saints, *a child of Mary can never be lost.*

75. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—The Garden of Olives.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

The fourth article of the Creed announces the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ for the salvation of men.

The passion of our Saviour was a series of many tortures, which had for their scene by turns the garden of Olives, the house of Caiphas, the palace of Herod, the pretorium of Pilate, and Mount Calvary.

On Holy Thursday night, after the Last Supper, about ten o'clock, Jesus proceeded towards the garden of Olives.

Arrived at the entrance of the garden, He left there His disciples, with the exception of three, with whom He walked to a retired spot. At that moment, bowed down by a weight of woe, He said to his companions: *My soul is sorrowful, even unto death. Stay you here, and watch with me.* Then, withdrawing away from them a stone's cast, He prayed three times to His Father; and being in agony, the terror of which caused blood to gush through the pores of His body, He prayed, until an angel descended from heaven to comfort and strengthen Him.

About one o'clock at night, having approached near to His disciples: *Rise*, said He; *let us go: behold, he is at hand that will betray me.* While He was yet speaking, the clamor and noise of an armed mob was heard. At their head was Judas, who advanced and betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Our Saviour, addressing the multitude, asked whom they sought. He then manifested to them His power by throwing them on their backs by His only word, and by healing the ear of Malchus. The hardened Jews persisted in their wicked purpose, and Jesus delivered Himself into their hands.

If our Saviour, my brethren, suffered an agony which caused Him a bloody sweat, we know the reason of it—our sins. Jesus is sorry for them, even unto death; He bitterly bewails them: and I, do I grieve with Him for my sins?

76. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—Calvary.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

The last scene of the passion of our Saviour was Mount Calvary, or Golgotha: let us to-day consider what took place there.

Hardly had Pilate pronounced the sentence of death against our Saviour, when the preparations were made for its execution; and without delay, Jesus, burdened with the instrument of His punishment, accompanied by two malefactors, likewise condemned to the death of the cross, moved forward through the streets of Jerusalem towards Mount Calvary.

In the mean time the executioners, seeing their victim faint beneath His burden, lay hold on Simon of Cyrene, and oblige him to take up the cross and carry it after Jesus. Subsequently, the Saviour, beholding some compassionate women bewailing His sad plight, addressed

to them salutary words; and finally He reached the summit of Calvary about the hour of noon.

Immediately, after they had, according to their custom, offered Him a drink of wine mixed with myrrh, they stripped Him of His garments, and crucified Him between two thieves, having placed above His head an inscription bearing these words, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*.

The cross being raised aloft and placed in an upright position, the soldiers divided among themselves the garments of the Victim, and the Jews looked on only to insult Him. It does not seem, however, that they long continued their blasphemous language; for the sun having hid itself, this terrifying wonder must have imposed silence on the insulters.

Whilst all this was going on, Jesus on the Cross spoke at intervals these admirable words, which we call the seven words spoken on the Cross: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.—Woman, behold thy son. Behold thy mother.—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?—I thirst.—It is consummated.—Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.* Finally, at three o'clock in the afternoon, all things being now accomplished, bowing down His head, He gave up the ghost.

At that moment the darkness in the heavens was dissipated, and the sun shed its light on the earth; but other wonders succeeded: the earth trembled, the rocks were split, the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom, the tombs were opened, and many of the dead arose, appearing in Jerusalem.

Nor is this all: there were also miracles of another kind; the centurion was converted, and a multitude of Jews descended from Calvary, striking their breasts as a mark of repentance.

And we, my brethren, remembering that a God died for our sins, let us also strike our breasts in true repentance, and let us resolve to die rather than sin again.

77. The Fifth Article of the Creed.—The Resurrection.

He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead.

The blessed soul of our Saviour, having descended into hell, that is into limbo, the sojourn of the saints of the Old Law, remained there only until the third day after His death; because he had foretold that He would rise again on the third day.

The aurora of the third day had not shed its first rays, when the glorious soul of the Son of God, having united itself anew to its body, communicated to it with a new life the qualities of a glorified body: luminosity, subtilty, agility, and impassibility. How sublime, at this moment, must have appeared the majesty of the King of Glory in the eyes of the angels who beheld this miracle! The resurrection took place then on Easter Sunday, a little before dawn, about half-past four o'clock in the morning. The tomb, surrounded by the soldiers who guarded it, was still firmly closed and sealed; but the divine charge committed to their keeping was no longer there: Jesus has risen. His body, endowed with a glorious subtilty, has come forth without displacing the stone, penetrating it as a ray of light does a crystal. Soon after He appeared full of life to His holy mother, to the holy women, to St. Peter, and all His disciples.

But what are the guards doing? They are at their post, having seen nothing, having heard nothing, and believing they still hold possession of the trust confided to their vigilance. But soon, at daybreak, upon a sudden the earth violently quakes, and an angel of terrifying appear-

ance, descending from heaven, rolls back the stone which closes the tomb and sits upon it. Struck by his appearance as if by lightning, the guards are frightened almost to death. Recovering themselves they disperse, seeking in their fright some temporary hiding-place; and when the day is advanced, they hasten to give an account of these strange events to the priests and Pharisees.

Hearing it, these wicked men were confounded, disconcerted, but not converted. They are determined to persevere, even though, in their hatred for Jesus, they have recourse to the most absurd means to disprove His triumph: they give money to the soldiers; they instruct them to say that they were sleeping, and that during their sleep the disciples of Jesus came and took away His body. Ridiculous falsehood, which has deceived nobody, but which proves the Pharisees to have been men like too many in our own day: they see the truth and they reject it; notwithstanding every proof, they obstinately refuse to believe. Alas! their incredulity seals their damnation.

As regards ourselves, my brethren, ah! let us believe with our whole heart; and, in presence of the resurrection of our divine Master, let us exclaim with St. Thomas, *My Lord and my God* (St. John xx. 28).

78. The Sixth Article of the Creed.—The Ascension.

He ascended into heaven; sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

Our Saviour ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection, that is to say, on the Thursday, which fell, as is believed, on the fifth of May of that year. Appearing to His disciples for the last time in the Cenacle, He again promises them the Holy Ghost and sits at table with them. After the repast, He leads them by the way of Bethania to the summit of the Mount. Standing there,

surrounded by about one hundred and twenty of His disciples, His countenance beaming with an expression of the most tender love for them, He lifts His hands to bless them. Whilst receiving this blessing, they behold Him rising towards heaven, not in rapid flight, but slowly, as a cloud of incense rises before the altar, delaying with the tenderness of a father who is being separated from his children, ascending with the majesty of a king who is returning victorious to his Kingdom.

The enraptured disciples follow Him with eager glance, beholding as they do so a luminous cloud enveloping itself around Him, and concealing Him little by little from their view. This cloud, true car of triumph bearing the King of Glory, moves upward, disappearing in the realms of space, whilst the disciples continue to gaze with uplifted eyes, as if in ecstasy. Then two angels in human form appear to them, saying: *Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.* At these words the disciples retrace their steps to Jerusalem, and conformably to the instructions of our Saviour, betake themselves to the Cenacle, where they remain, persevering with one mind in prayer, and awaiting the promised coming of the Holy Ghost.

By ascending into heaven, the Son of God made man has gone in His humanity to sit *Himself at the right hand of God the Father.*

This sitting should be understood in a figurative sense, and attests the triumph, the peace, the empire of Jesus Christ, who, at the same time that He partakes of the supreme glory merited by the Cross, governs His Church from on high in heaven with the ease of one whose power is almighty. The ascension of our Saviour in the presence of His disciples was prefigured in the ascension of the prophet Elias, who was taken up into the upper re-

Seventh Article of Creed.—Last Judgment. 137

gions of air in a chariot of fire, in the presence of his disciple Eliseus (4 Kings ii. 11).

Our Saviour, according to the testimony of St. Jerome, confirmed by other writers and a multitude of travellers, left the imprint of His feet marked on the stone whence he ascended into heaven. On this spot St. Helena built a Basilica surmounted by a cupola which always remained open above these sacred footmarks, so as to mark the way by which the divine Master mounted to heaven. That way, my brethren, the Christian should always keep in view: the remembrance of heaven aids us to bear our cross with courage, and likewise with happiness: *Be glad and rejoice in your sufferings, says Jesus Christ, for your reward will be great in heaven.*

79. The Seventh Article of the Creed.—The Last Judgment.

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

This article enunciates the dogma of the last judgment. Faith teaches us that there are two judgments: the particular judgment, which each one must undergo immediately after death, and the general judgment, which will take place at the end of the world, and where each one will be judged in the presence of all mankind.

When the terrifying events prophetic of the approach of the last day will have taken place; when the earth, by reason of the general conflagration, will be covered with one vast winding-sheet of ashes, and all men will have ceased to live, an all-powerful voice will resound, calling all the dead to life, and summoning them to judgment.

The place of this last judgment is not defined by faith, and we are not certain it will be the valley of Jehoshaphat, situate near Jerusalem. It is, however, not improbable that these places, once the witnesses of the

mystery of the Redemption, will be also the witnesses of the mystery of God's justice.

When all men, answering the call of the angel, will again live and be gathered together in one great and solemn assembly, there will appear in the heavens the sign of the Cross, the glorious standard which will precede the King of creation. Then the Son of God Himself, in view of the whole human family, will descend from heaven on a luminous cloud, with great power and majesty.

Innumerable hosts of angels, in a visible form, will accompany Him; and all the just, clothed in their glorified bodies, at His approach will bound from the earth into the heavens to form His train.

Christ will seat Himself on a throne to judge the living and the dead, the good and the wicked. *Then, says St. John, every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him (Apoc. i. 7).* All eyes will be fixed on Him: we shall see the Man-God who has redeemed the world by His blood; we shall see that humanity, now hidden to the eyes of men; we shall see His wounds. The good will see them, and the wicked also will be constrained to look upon Him whom they have pierced.

Then will be fulfilled the words which He spoke in the presence of Caiphas: *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. (St. Matt. xxvi. 64).*

Then we shall see He is the King of creation.

When the Magi adored Him in the manger, they believed, but did not see His majesty. The disciples who were with Him on Thabor saw some rays of His glory; now the whole world beholds it in all its splendor.

Then we shall see verified the words of St. Paul, saying, *in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. ii. 10).*

These words were far from being accomplished when written.

Then will He place the elect at His right hand, and the condemned at His left.

At which hand will we be placed, my brethren? Ah! this is for us now to decide. Do you wish to be at the left hand with the impious, with blasphemers, with the impure? Do you wish to assure yourselves a place at the right hand? Lead the life of a true Christian, be numbered in this life with those who serve God.

80. The Eighth Article of the Creed.—The Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

As God the Father is called in a particular manner, the Creator, God the Son the Redeemer, so also the Holy Ghost is named the Sanctifier, because He sanctifies us by infusing His gifts into our souls. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are sanctifying grace, the theological and the other Christian virtues, seven of which are in special manner called *the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost*: namely, Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and the Fear of the Lord.

The gift of wisdom teaches us to despise the things of this world, and gives us a relish for the things of God.

The gift of understanding teaches us to comprehend and to penetrate the truths of faith.

The gift of counsel, or prudence, teaches us the way of salvation, and the difficulties we have to contend with therein.

The gift of fortitude gives us courage and strength to surmount every obstacle in the work of our salvation.

The gift of knowledge, the knowledge of the Saints, acquaints us of our duties here below, manifesting to us the will of God.

The gift of piety inspires us with love for God and His glory, animating us with a filial affection for our Lord Jesus Christ, His holy Mother and the Saints.

The gift of the fear of the Lord causes us to hate sin and all that displeases God. That we may partake of these precious gifts, my brethren, let us carefully purify our heart of every sin, let us frequently invoke the Holy Ghost, let us follow with docility His inspirations.

81. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Communion of Saints.

The Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints.

Holy Church is a mystical body, whose members are in spiritual communication with one another and with their Head, who is Jesus Christ: this is what we call the *Communion of Saints*.

What are the effects of this Communion of Saints?

The members of the Church militant, that is to say, we, my brethren, and all the faithful living on earth, communicate (1) with one another (2) with the souls in purgatory (3) with the saints and angels in heaven.

1. They communicate with one another, as children of one and the same family (1) by professing the same faith and cherishing the same hope (2) by participating in the same worship and the same Sacraments (3) by acknowledging one and the same visible head, who is the Pope; and, finally (4) by a community of spiritual goods.

The spiritual goods of the Church, such as the sacrifice of the Mass, prayers and good works, are common to all the faithful; without prejudice, however, to the personal merit of those who perform the works. The faithful share in the goods of the whole body; but all do not equally participate, but each one receives according to

he measure of his faith and love. He who is in the state of mortal sin, being as it were a paralyzed member, receives the smallest share. The nominally excommunicated, heretics, schismatics, being separated members of the body of the Church, are entirely cut off from the communion of Saints.

2. The faithful on earth communicate *with the souls in purgatory*, by the paternal love they bear them, by the aid they procure them through the holy sacrifice of the Mass and indulgences; and, reciprocally, by the gratitude of which they are the object on the part of these souls who pray God for their benefactors.

3. They communicate *with the saints in heaven*: (1) by the honor and veneration which they pay them, and, reciprocally, by the favor of their intercession with God in their behalf; (2) by participating in their superabundant merits, which they share by indulgences.

What a blessing it is, my brethren, when we are poor, to have rich brothers, who will share with us their wealth!

This is the blessing we have in holy Church, provided we be living members and qualified to partake of the goods which our brethren wish to convey to us.

82. The Tenth Article of the Creed.—The Forgiveness of all Sins.

The forgiveness of sins.

In this article of the Creed we profess that, by the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may obtain in holy Church the forgiveness of all sins.

We can be guilty of two kinds of sin—mortal sin and venial sin; now, by means of a sincere repentance, we obtain of the divine mercy the pardon of both one and the other. When we receive pardon of mortal sin, God infuses into the soul sanctifying grace, which justifies it

from its defilement, renews its life, and makes it pleasing in His eyes and worthy of His love. The change which then takes place in the soul, is called *justification*. We have a figure of it in the resurrection of Lazarus, and that of the other dead who were restored to life by Our Saviour.

When we receive pardon of venial sin, God infuses into the soul an increase of sanctifying grace, which, by wholly effacing the defilement of that offence, renders the soul an object more pleasing in the eyes of God and worthier of His love. The remission of venial sins is typified in the curing of the lepers, which was accomplished by Jesus Christ near Capharnaum.

We may obtain pardon of mortal sin without receiving forgiveness of the venial sins of which we may be at the same time guilty; for we can love God, though our love be yet lukewarm. But if we be guilty of several mortal sins, we cannot obtain pardon of one without the other; for we cannot be at one and the same time an enemy and a friend of God. It is so with a man who has received several mortal wounds, he cannot hope to live until they have every one been healed.

There is no limit to the number of times our sins will be forgiven us; our pardon will be always renewed: nevertheless, the oftener we fall, the more difficult becomes our conversion, as we thereby multiply obstacles to grace.

If we have the misfortune, my brethren, to fall into mortal sin, let us not remain in so lamentable and dangerous a state; but, after the example of the *Prodigal Son*, let us arise, by a true sorrow, let us return to our Father, let us fly every occasion of sin, let us employ every means against a relapse.

83. The Pope.—The Vicar of Jesus Christ.

Feed my lambs; feed my sheep (St. John xxi. 15, 17.)

The Pope is called *the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth*. By Vicar of Christ, we mean His viceroy on earth, he who holds His place, who occupies the throne, the See which of right belongs to Jesus Christ Himself. Whilst Our Saviour was on earth, His Apostles and His first disciples formed a small congregation of which He was the Head and the Father: this was the infant Church. And had He remained visible amongst us, this supreme and good Shepherd would personally govern the flock composed of all the faithful, and there would be no need of a Pope to do so in His stead. But as it was in keeping with the eternal decrees that the Son of God should ascend into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, He appointed a viceroy, His other self, saying to St. Peter: *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep*: as if He had said, all the faithful are my lambs and my sheep, I am their Shepherd and their Master; but I appoint you shepherd in my place, with full power to lead my whole flock, as I myself would lead them, and I wish that all they who are of it obey you as they would me.

From that moment St. Peter, and after him in turn each of his successors, was elevated to the dignity of Vicar of Jesus Christ, to govern, to instruct, to encourage, to defend the faithful, as would Jesus Christ Himself if He were visibly with us.

The Pope, holding the place of Jesus Christ is therefore His most sublime representative on earth, and His most perfect image. Just as there are different representations of Christ in picture and in statuary, which more or less perfectly portray Him, so there are in the Church persons who are as it were His living images; these are the Bishops, priests, and other ecclesiastics. But all these

ministers of Jesus Christ do not represent Him in the same degree, because they do not all participate in the same measure of His divine authority. The Pope alone plenarily represents Him, for he alone possesses the plenitude of His power: hence the Pope, as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, is the most sublime representative of the Son of God on earth.

What respect, what love, ought we not then to have for our Holy Father the Pope ! With what zeal ought we not to defend his cause and assist him in his necessities ! Truly will the Saviour say, Whatsoever you have done, not for the least of my brethren, but for my Vicar, the same you have done for me.

84. The Eleventh Article of the Creed.—The Qualities of a Glorified Body.

The resurrection of the body.

We profess in this article the great dogma of the *general resurrection*; that is to say, that all men, the just and the unjust, will rise each one in his own body.

Yes, all, good and bad, will rise on the last day in the integrity of their bodies and their members: there will be neither young, nor old, nor blind, nor lame; all will be physically perfect, but all will not be endowed with the same glory.

The qualities of the risen bodies will vary according to the state of the souls: *They that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life*, says the Saviour, *but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment*. Now, this difference of destiny will be marked on the bodies of the one and the other: the wicked will be hideous as the demons, as horrible as hell, which is to be their future habitation; the just will be brilliant and beautiful, like unto the angels, whose brothers they are

to be; like unto God Himself, whose true children they are to be.

The bodies of the just will be endowed with these four qualities: impassibility, subtility, agility, and luminosity.

Impassibility will render them invulnerable, incapable of suffering and death.

Subtility will establish a perfect harmony between them and the soul, so that they will obey the soul in every action and movement, without being arrested by any obstacle; they will penetrate, as did Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the hardest substances, and will be, in a certain sense, spiritual. *It shall rise a spiritual body*, says St. Paul.

Agility will enable them to move from place to place, no matter how distant, in less than a moment.

Luminosity will adorn them with an incomparable beauty, and will render them radiant as the sun. *Then*, says the Saviour, *shall the just shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father*. Our Saviour has given us a foreshadow of this in His Transfiguration.

This glory, however, will be proportionate to the merits of each one. *As star differeth from star in glory*, says St. Paul, *so also in the resurrection of the dead*. Then shall we appreciate the value of the sufferings and mortifications of this life, which have merited for us such glory.

The bodies of the elect being immortal and incorruptible, they will have no need of nourishment; but their senses will be gratified by joys most holy and pure. For, if it is just that the wicked be punished in their senses because they have abused them, it is also just that the blessed be rewarded in their senses because they have mortified them. Hence will their ears be charmed with the most melodious music; their eyes will be delighted with all that is most beautiful—they will behold

Jesus Christ, His Holy Mother, the Saints; they will see in one look all the wonders of creation.

What ineffable happiness! Should we not, my brethren, subject ourselves to all the mortifications necessary to merit it? Let us bear then with joy the yoke of Jesus Christ, ever remembering the recompense that awaits us. Let us not pamper our bodies here below; let us rather share the sufferings of Jesus Christ, let us rather have part in His glory on the day of the resurrection. If it happen that death deprives us of one whom we love, let us console ourselves with the hope of the resurrection, which will reunite in another and happy life all who have died in the Lord.

85. The Twelfth Article of the Creed.—The Future Life.

And life everlasting. Amen.

The life everlasting, which we profess in the twelfth article of the Creed, is the *future life*, happy for the good, unhappy for the wicked. It begins for every one at the moment of death: souls on their departure from this life enter into eternity. *Man shall go into his house of eternity* (Eccl. xii. 5).

But in what place are they received? Whither go the souls of Christians who die? You answer: they go to heaven, to purgatory or hell. Heaven is the haven of the just; purgatory, a place of expiation; hell, an abyss of torments and eternal despair.

Now, the fate of souls and their future abode depend on their state at the hour of death.

If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be (Eccl. xi. 3). We may add that the tree falls to the side towards which it is bent, that is to say, man ordinarily dies in the state in which he has lived.

A soul departing from this life may be (1) in a state of grace so perfect, that it has no stain, no fault to expiate; (2) it may be in the state of grace, but, at the same time, be defiled by some venial faults, or debtor to some temporal punishments due to its sins; (3) finally, it may be so unfortunate as to be found in the state of mortal sin.

From this we understand which are the souls that go to heaven, those that go to purgatory, and those that descend into hell.

1. Heaven, eternal beatitude, is the blessed end for which we have been created; must not that prize be won? Should I not do everything, make every sacrifice, to assure myself of heaven? How will it be if I do not reach heaven?

2. Hell, damnation, is the misery of miseries; particularly because this misery is eternal. An eternity of misery! Who will comprehend this truth? Ah! it is not without reason the Son of God has warned us to sacrifice, without reserve, this temporal life so as to escape eternal death. *Fear ye not, says he, them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear them that can destroy both soul and body into hell* (St. Matt. x. 28).

Let us then take care, my brethren, never to live in mortal sin, lest death surprise us in that state, and our misery, like that of the wicked rich man, be irreparable.

3. The sufferings of purgatory are more severe than the most austere penances we can impose on ourselves in this life: let us then aid the souls that are confined there, and at the same time let us labor to escape these terrible punishments, by satisfying God's justice for our sins, whilst we yet live.

86. Laws.—Divine Law.—Human Law.

Before considering the Ten Commandments which constitute the law of God, it is proper that we should explain briefly the nature of law in general.

Law is a rule given to a reasonable creature, by which he is to govern his conduct through life. In other words, it is the *rule of human actions*.

We distinguish the divine law and the human law, according as it emanates either directly from God, or from human legislators who hold their authority from God. *Let every soul, says St. Paul, be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God* (Rom. xiii. 1).

The *divine law*, according to the manner in which God has promulgated it, is called the *natural law*, the *Mosaic law*, and the *Evangelical law*.

The *natural law* is that which every man receives at his birth, written on his reasonable nature, and founded on this principle: *Honor God, and do to others as you would be done by*.

1. The *Mosaic law*, which was promulgated through Moses, consists of (1) a moral part; (2) a ritual or ceremonial part; (3) a civil or judicial part.

The *Evangelical law*, contained in the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, embraces (1) the dogmatic truths, which must be believed; (2) the precepts obligatory on all Christians; (3) the counsels, which all are not held to follow.

2. *Human laws* are divided into ecclesiastical and civil laws, according to the authority from which they emanate.

Ecclesiastical superiors, by virtue of the power which they have received from Jesus Christ, enact laws (1) to maintain order and peace throughout the Church by a

stable and wise government; (2) to prevent abuses; (3) to aid the faithful in the observance of the divine laws. Of the ecclesiastical laws, the principal are those we call the *six Commandments of the Church*.

Civil laws are enacted by those who govern the State, to maintain order, civil government, public peace, and to regulate the reciprocal rights of citizens, without prejudice to the rights of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Human laws are susceptible of *dispensations*; that is to say, the superior, in a particular case, may for just reasons exempt a subject from fulfilling the law.

Let us always keep before our minds, my brethren, the law of God; let us ask the grace and necessary assistance to observe it all our life; let us also observe all the human laws which concern us, as they bind us in all they ordain that is not contrary to the law of God.

87. The First Commandment.—Worship.

“I am the Lord thy God.”

The first Commandment requires us to render to God the worship which is due Him. We call *worship* the exercise of religion: it consists in the honors which we ought to render to God interiorly and exteriorly, directly and indirectly.

1. We ought to render to God a religious worship; it is the first duty of a reasonable creature. If a child should honor his father, the subject his king, the beggar his benefactor, is there not greater reason why the creature ought to honor his Creator? Religion is, then, the first of the obligations imposed on man, and he who fails to fulfil it can never merit the title of an honest man; since the honest man is he who fulfils all his duties, not only towards his neighbor, but also towards his God.

2. *Interior* worship consists in acts of faith, reverence, love, and others of a like nature which it enkindles in the

heart. *God is a Spirit*, says Jesus Christ, *and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth* (St. John iv. 24.)

3. *Exterior* worship embraces vocal prayers, religious chants, the festivals and offices of the Church. We call it *public* worship when it is rendered to God by an assembly of the people, by a parish, a diocese, or by the entire Church. The services held in the churches, religious processions, the administration of the Sacraments, pertain to public worship.

Interior worship, though it is commendable, does not suffice; man also owes God an exterior and public worship: (1) because belonging entirely to God, he should render Him the homage of his whole being; (2) because exterior acts serve to elevate his mind and his heart to God; (3) because exterior worship gathers men as children before their father; (4) because since the beginning of the world God has always required an exterior and public worship, as is evident from the sacrifices offered in all ages.

4. We call *direct* worship the religious acts by which we honor God in Himself.

5. *Indirect* worship is to honor God indirectly, which we do when we honor the Saints, because the honors we pay the Saints redound also to God, though in an indirect manner, almost as the praises bestowed on a pupil do credit to his teacher.

From this it is easy to understand how we transgress the first Commandment by neglecting divine worship.

Let us honor God, my brethren, as our Saviour commands, not with our lips, but from the abundance of our heart, *in spirit and in truth*. Let us render Him the glory which is His due; for they who glorify Him will in their turn be glorified. Let not a day of our life pass without proving by our acts of adoration and our fervent invocations that we acknowledge God as our Master and the Supreme Ruler of all things.

88. The First Commandment.—Irreligion.

Since the first Commandment enjoins the practice of the true religion established by our Lord Jesus Christ, it is evident we disobey this Commandment by irreligion, which is directly opposed to it.

The principal sins of irreligion are heresy, religious indifference, apostasy, impiety, and sacrilege. *Heresy* is the obstinate denial of a dogma of faith proposed by the Church. *Religious indifference* is to disregard religion and the duties it imposes, as if such conduct merited no punishment: it regards in the same light the true religion and the sects, as if they were all equally good or equally the offspring of superstition. *Apostasy* is the renunciation of the Catholic faith to unite with some sect, even that of the freethinkers.

Impiety is the sin committed by those who outrage or blaspheme God and His Church. We mean by *sacrilege* the profanation of a sacred thing; a sacrilege is called *personal, real, or local*, according as it has for its object a person, an article, or a place consecrated to God. It is a sacrilege to profane the Sacraments, cemeteries, the properties belonging to the Church. They who usurp or confiscate, the property, the revenues, or the rights of the Church, or pious foundations, incur the excommunication proclaimed by the Council of Trent, and can be absolved only by the Sovereign Pontiff.

We must consider as sacrilegious, disrespectful conduct in churches, which are holy places, *houses of God, houses of prayer*. Our Saviour, on two occasions, indignantly drove from the Temple at Jerusalem those who were there selling animals destined for the sacrifices. And the Temple at Jerusalem was far from being as holy as our churches. Cherish a profound respect for the things of God, for our holy religion, established by the only Son of God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ; frequent the Sacra-

ments, which are the fountains of grace, but always bring to their reception a Christian preparation. Guard your intercourse with heretics and impious men; avoid, as much as possible, their conversation, which is often hostile to religion and always dangerous. Fly association with the impious, but pray for them. Alas! they are so unhappy in the void and uncertainty whither the want of faith has led them; and moreover, soon, if they be not converted, they shall fall into the hands of the God whom they have outraged: pray then that without delay they may cast themselves into the arms of His mercy.

89. The Second Commandment.—Blasphemy.

Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord, thy God, in vain.

The second Commandment forbids blasphemy and imprecations by which we offend the holy name of God.

Blasphemy is a heinous sin—the sin of the demons, of the lost, who, in the midst of the torments they have merited, blaspheme the God who punishes them.

We must not, however, confound positive blasphemy with apparent blasphemy, such as unbecoming words, sounding badly or approaching blasphemy. Blasphemy, properly speaking, is always a mortal sin, and God has frequently visibly punished it. *Whosoever, says the Scripture, blasphemeth the name of God, dying, let him die* (Levit. xxiv. 16). Words approaching blasphemy, though not mortal sins, are unworthy of a Christian.

Besides those who formally utter blasphemy, there are others likewise grievously culpable in this matter, namely, those who provoke or applaud it; those who, being held to prevent it, tolerate it; those who publish papers, reviews, pamphlets, containing blasphemy; those who read them with pleasure; and also those who, without read-

ing them, favor their publication or co-operate therein by their subscription

The blasphemer, besides his sin of blasphemy, is often guilty of scandal—a sin against the fifth Commandment. Alas! there are children who know not as yet how to pray to God, but who already blaspheme His holy name! How have they learned it?

How may the habit of blaspheming be overcome by him who has acquired it? (1) By remembering it is as foolish as it is atrocious to curse the name of our Saviour, and to curse it with a tongue which has been sanctified by Holy Communion; (2) by avoiding anger and strong drink; (3) by prayer; (4) by confession; (5) by imposing a penance on himself each time he may have the misfortune to blaspheme.

What should we do on hearing any one blaspheme? If he who blasphemes is our inferior, we are held to reprimand him. If, though not his superior, we think a word from us will serve to prevent the repetition of an offence so injurious to the majesty of God, charity requires us to speak it. If we can conceive no remedy for the evil, charity and Christian piety demand that we ask for him God's pardon. *Lord, forgive him, for he knows not what he does when blaspheming Thy name. Praised be Jesus Christ. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

90. The Third Commandment.—The Sabbath and the Sunday.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

The third Commandment commands us to sanctify the Sunday or the Lord's day, and forbids us to profane it.

The natural law ordains that we sanctify, from time to time, a day, by consecrating it to the worship of God,

though it determines no particular day; but the positive divine law has prescribed the seventh day.

The Mosaic revelation specifies the sanctification of the Sabbath, and the Christian Decalogue the Sunday.

The Sabbath was instituted in the Old Testament in memory of the rest or repose of God after the six days of the work of creation, and as a remembrance of the favor which He accorded His people by delivering them from the bondage of Egypt (Deut. v. 14, 15).

The Apostles substituted the Sunday for the Sabbath, as a perpetual memorial of the great mysteries of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost. These mysteries, which affirm a spiritual deliverance and a creation far superior to the first, were accomplished not on the seventh day of the week, but on the first. The Saviour Himself sanctified in a certain sense this day with His disciples, by appearing in their midst in the Cenacle on two successive Sundays. It is then not without reason that the Apostles designated this day as holy, by calling it *Sunday*, *Dies Dominica*, that is, "the Day of the Lord," and by commanding all the faithful to sanctify it. It is just and reasonable to dedicate a day to the Lord, considering we give six days to the cares of this world. The sanctification of the Sunday is a public profession of our faith, and a nourishment necessary for the life of our souls.

Let us always sanctify the day of the Lord, my brethren, as Christian piety exacts. Let us fear profaning it, by labor, by want of reverence in holy places, or by sins and debaucheries, fearing the chastisements with which God has threatened the profaners of the Sabbath: *They grievously violated my Sabbaths*, said He in the Old Law, *therefore have I resolved to pour out my indignation upon them* (Ezech. xx. 13).

91. The Third Commandment.—The Profanation of the Sunday.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

The third Commandment commands us to sanctify the Sunday, and forbids us to profane it.

We profane the Lord's day not only by forbidden work, but also and especially by committing sin, and by dangerous and wicked amusements.

Not only has God frequently promised special blessings to families and nations who faithfully observe the Sunday, but He has also menaced with the most severe penalties those who profane that day. The profanation of the Sunday is a grievous offence in the eyes of God, an insult to religion, and a scandal to our neighbor. The consequences of such profanation are most deplorable: it causes a forgetfulness of God and His service, the demoralization of nations, and the destruction of all Christianity in the soul. Without the observance of the Sunday the practice of religion is impossible.

The ordinary sins by which the Sunday is profaned are drunkenness, obscene and uncharitable conversations, sins of impurity and blasphemy. To avoid these sins, we must retire at a seasonable hour of the night, fly dangerous occasions—that is, bad company and improper places. Parents should be careful in this respect, not only as regards themselves, but particularly in reference to their children.

After having assisted at the divine offices of the Church, at Mass, and if possible at Vespers, there is no prohibition against good Christians allowing themselves becoming and moderate recreation: it must, however, be pure and innocent; then there will be no reproach of conscience.

Let us always avoid sin, my brethren; but let us especially fear to commit it on the day consecrated to the honor of God.

92. The Fourth Commandment.—Superiors.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

The fourth Commandment commands us to honor our parents, as also all our superiors, temporal as well as spiritual.

Among temporal superiors we include masters—those who have servants or domestics.

What are their reciprocal obligations?

Masters should see that their servants observe the law of God, instruct them personally, or by others, in at least the fundamental truths of faith, and concede them the necessary time to perform their religious duties: they should admonish them when they do wrong, but always with kindness and charity, give them good advice and good example; and finally, punctually pay them their wages. A good master should always say to himself: Had Providence placed me in the position of a domestic, how would I wish to be treated? If a domestic is sick, charity at least requires that he procure him every possible and necessary succor, and if the sickness becomes dangerous, call the clergy in time. A master would be grievously culpable if, instead of edifying a domestic, he should scandalize him by his conduct, or by proposals contrary to morality or religion. And he would be still more culpable should he propose or command him to do anything unjust, immoral, or forbidden by the laws of the Church.

Servants or domestics owe their masters respect, obedience, service, and fidelity. Fidelity consists in carefully managing and guarding the property and interests of their masters, never doing them injury, nor permitting others to do so. They should obey them in all things that are just and reasonable, particularly in everything that has reference to the nature of the service for which they have been hired. This obedience should be prompt, exact, without reserve; and, to be Christian and merito-

rious, they should obey their masters as God, as Jesus Christ Himself (Eph. vi. 5 *seq.*). A domestic should never execute the orders of a master who commands anything contrary to the law of God, to justice, to good morals; his obedience would then be sinful. He would be likewise equally culpable if, by hope of reward or fear of dismissal, he should be a party to the licentiousness or dishonesty of his master. Domestics are guilty of a grievous sin when they reveal certain family secrets—those which compromise the honor, the reputation, or the interests of their masters. Detraction and calumny on the part of a servant towards his master are, everything else being equal, more sinful than when directed against any one else; and the same may be said of unfaithfulness, stealing, injustice of any kind.

The owners and the superintendents of workshops and manufactories, should act towards their workmen with Christian goodness, paying them just wages, and above all seeing that they observe the laws of religion and morality; and workmen, on their part, should respect their masters, faithfully serve them, and further their interests as if they were their own.

Masters and servants should always remember these words of St. Paul: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ. And you masters do the same thing to them; knowing that the Lord both of them and you is in heaven: and there is no respect of persons with Him* (Eph. vi. 5).

93. The Fifth Commandment.—The Duel, Suicide.

Thou shalt not kill.

This Commandment forbids murder, the duel, suicide, and all that tends to injure bodily life—our neighbor's or our own.

1. Murder consists in taking the life of a human being without lawful authority.

No man, no matter what his position, no matter what injury he may have suffered, is permitted to kill or wound a fellow-man without legitimate authority. These alone can lawfully do so: (1) those authorized to put to death criminals condemned by the law; (2) soldiers fighting in a just war; (3) those who cannot otherwise defend their life against an unjust aggressor.

In defending our life, however, we are permitted only a sufficient offence; that is to say, we are not to do our aggressor greater injury than is necessary to protect ourselves, nor are we to strike before nor after the time of the attack. To be justified in wounding our neighbor, we must be attacked, or have good reason to suppose we are to be presently attacked; for example, should he draw forth a revolver, knife, or any other dangerous weapon. We are allowed to defend our neighbor in the same circumstances and in the same degree in which it is permissible to defend ourselves.

2. By the duel we mean a premeditated combat between two or more persons who, on their own private authority, attack each other with deadly weapons at an appointed time and place. The duel admits of no justification, and in the eyes of religion and good morals will always be an atrocious crime, and also a double crime; since he who engages in it seeks not only the death of another, but endangers his own life. A duel cannot be permitted, either to redeem, as is said, one's honor, or to escape the reproach of cowardice, or on any other pretext. The Church excommunicates duellists and all who take part in a duel, by being present at the place of combat, either as witnesses or spectators: she declares them to be infamous, and they deserve that appellation, because they are cowards, not having the courage to forgive; they are bad citizens, violating the laws of society; they are bad

Christians, trampling on divine and ecclesiastical laws. They who die in these barbarous conflicts are deprived of the prayers of the Church and of Christian sepulture, as also they who die by suicide.

3. We call *suicide* the terrible crime of those who cause their own death. It is never permitted to kill one's self: to do so is to usurp the rights of God, who is the author and arbiter of our existence, and those of the society of which we are members.

We have received from God only the use of our life, and no one is so far master of himself as to destroy his life at his pleasure. Hence the law does not say: *Thou shalt not kill thy neighbor*; but it absolutely affirms: *Thou shalt not kill*. The suicide violates this law, by committing the most dreadful of murders, and merits eternal damnation. He is not guilty of suicide who exposes his life, when necessity requires it: as the workman, who engages in a dangerous occupation as a means of livelihood; by sacrificing it to the public good, as the soldier who dies rather than desert his post; by immolating it to filial love, as the child, who, to save his parent, gives him the bread necessary for his own sustenance; by offering it in charity, as the shipwrecked, who cedes to another the plank to which he had confided his own safety.

Married persons, particularly mothers and nurses, must remember they are guilty of homicide when they maliciously cause the death of an infant, or when they endanger its life by any grave imprudence or negligence.

Does the fifth Commandment only forbid homicide? No, it equally forbids us to wound, to strike our neighbor, to curse, to wish him harm, to nourish in our hearts feelings of anger, hatred, or envy.

Ah! my brethren, it is not anger and revenge that Jesus Christ teaches us: *Learn of me*, says He, *for I am meek and humble of heart*. When we feel anger arising

within us, let us immediately quench that dangerous fire; let us preserve silence, let us interiorly pray God to aid us in overcoming ourselves.

94. The Sixth and Ninth Commandments.—Impurity and its Remedies.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

These two Commandments forbid the sin of impurity in all its forms.

To preserve ourselves from this heinous sin of impurity, it is necessary, my brethren, that we conceive a vivid horror for it, and know well the remedies for it.

1. Why therefore should we have a horror for impurity? Because this sin, more than any other, is (1) infamous in the eyes of men; (2) abominable in the eyes of God, particularly when committed by a Christian; (3) disastrous in its consequences, and terrible in its chastisements.

The consequences of impurity are relapses, detestable habits, sacrileges caused by the shame of confessing this sin, scandals, and a multitude of other sins, loss of faith, hard-heartedness, final impenitence.

The chastisements of the impure are often, in this life, the loss of reputation, property, health, and a premature death; and after death, everlasting fire. To this sin, says St. Liguori, the majority of the lost must attribute their damnation.

2. For this evil, however violent it may be, there are remedies, not only to heal the wounds already made in a soul, but also to preserve from taint a soul as yet innocent. These remedies are efficacious, provided we use them with perseverance. They are: (1) Shunning its occasions, such as bad reading, dangerous com-

panions, etc.; avoiding idleness; refraining from intemperance.

(2) Love of chastity. This virtue is, as it were, the pearl of the Christian virtues; the Scripture extols its beauty: it renders man like unto the angels; it is the guardian of peace of heart and a perennial source of all kinds of virtues and good works.

(3) Prayer and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to St. Joseph, to our Guardian Angel.

(4) Frequentation of the Sacraments.

(5) Fasting, mortification, and occupation.

(6) Modesty, and watchfulness over the senses.

(7) Humility.

(8) The remembrance of our last end and of the presence of God.

(9) The thought of the dignity of the Christian; we ought to preserve our bodies and souls pure, because they have been consecrated to God by Baptism, when they became members of Jesus Christ, and living temples of the Holy Ghost; and because they have been sanctified by the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

Neglect no means, my brethren, to preserve always pure and intact the holy and beautiful virtue of chastity; invoke the protection of the holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, and fly every occasion which might cause you the loss of so precious a treasure.

95. The Seventh and Tenth Commandments.— Injustice.—Restitution.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

These two Commandments forbid theft and every species of injustice; they exact the restitution of ill-got goods and the payment of debts.

1. Injustice is in its nature a mortal sin; but every act of injustice, a certain particular theft, does not always constitute a mortal sin, because injustice admits of lightness of matter. A few cents or a few dimes are not, generally speaking, grave matter, such as the nature of mortal sin requires. But it is impossible in this respect, to establish an absolute and invariable rule: the faithful should have their confessor determine the gravity of each particular case, by telling him all the circumstances. Small thefts or petty frauds, continued with the intention of finally purloining a large sum, are mortal sins; for each act is done with a grievously culpable intention.

Children also sin when they steal from their parents; they, at the same time wrong their brothers and sisters, and frequently cause innocent persons of the household to be suspected of theft.

Domestics have no right to give in alms the property of their masters, nor are they to compensate themselves by secretly retaining or subtracting anything therefrom.

2. *Restitution.*—Justice requires the restitution of the property of another, the reparation of any damage done, and the payment of debts. This must be done as soon as possible, in as much as possible, and to whom it is possible: that is to say, to the owner or creditor, or, if he be dead, to his heirs; if this is not possible, the money must be distributed in alms or spent in good works. He who can make restitution must do it himself, and not place the obligation on his heirs.

The obligation of restitution, as well as the payment of debts, establishes a lien on an estate and passes to its heirs, and each one is held to satisfy it according to his share of the inheritance. Their responsibility, however, does not extend beyond the valuation of their proportionate share.

The Eighth Commandment.—Backbiting. 163

The obligation of restitution may be remitted by the creditor, and is suspended by the inability of the debtor.

He who cannot at once make restitution should have the intention of doing so as soon as possible; and, if he can restore a part, he should make that partial restitution without delay.

Grave necessity excuses those from restitution who cannot do so without notably endangering their position in life; provided this position has been acquired by legitimate means, and is not the fruit of their injustice.

In conclusion, he who holds the property of another may restore clandestinely and indirectly, so as not to compromise his reputation.

The restitution of another's property is an obligation so binding, that he who refuses to fulfil it cannot be admitted to the Sacraments, according to this axiom of theologians: *Without restitution, no pardon.*

Let us then take care, my brethren, never to appropriate anything to ourselves which it would be subsequently necessary to restore; and if we have anything in our possession, let us make haste to speak of it to our confessor, and to do all that justice requires.

96. The Eighth Commandment.—Backbiting.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The Eighth Commandment forbids, besides false swearing and lying, all other sins of speech injurious to our neighbor, especially backbiting and calumny.

To backbite, is to wrong the reputation of our neighbor by unjustly revealing his hidden faults and defects. To calumniate, is to impute to our neighbor a crime which he has not committed, or to exaggerate his faults. To constitute the sin of backbiting two conditions are

necessary: (1) that what is revealed is not publicly known, and (2) that the revelation is *unjust*; because Christian charity sometimes demands that we make known the faults of our neighbor, that he may be corrected, that others may be saved from perversion, that an evil design or misfortune may be frustrated. In these cases, the faults must be made known to those who have a right to this knowledge, as parents, masters, and superiors. It is not backbiting to tell of another what is not exactly to his advantage if it is true, when consulted by persons interested in the knowledge; as, for example, when there is question of a marriage, or any other important affair.

Backbiting and calumny are called *detraction*. There are many ways of committing it: namely, by attributing to our neighbor a fault of which he is innocent, a defect which he has not; by exaggerating his faults, by affirming as certain what is uncertain, by revealing what is unknown, by making insinuations, by causing suspicions by the use of such expressions as: *It is said, it is related*; by unfavorably interpreting the good intentions of our neighbor, by denying his good qualities, by disparaging his merit; often, by bestowing lukewarm praise, or by keeping a silence which may appear as an approval of the evil which others relate of him, or a denial of the good which they say of him.

Detraction and defamation can be committed not only by word of mouth, but also, and in a manner more injurious, by the press, in newspapers and other publications. Nor is it permitted to defame a religious Order, or community, any more than it is a single individual. The backbiting and calumny are also, all things being equal, more grievous in the first case than in the second.

It is also forbidden to defame the dead: because we should respect their memory, and by defaming them we painfully offend their parents and friends.

It is never permitted us to take part in detraction, nor to listen to it with complacency. We should, if it is possible, defend our neighbor, or, if we have the authority, impose silence on the detractors; if not, we must manifest by our silence, by our looks, our disapproval of such conversations, or, better still, we must immediately turn away, according to the circumstances. When we have injured our neighbor in his reputation or property by backbiting or calumny, we are bound to make reparation in as far as we are able, either by retracting the calumny, or by speaking well of the person whom we have defamed.

Let us never, my brethren, defile our tongue by detraction, ridicule, or injurious reproaches. Let us have a horror for backbiting and calumny; let us never say of our neighbor what we would not wish to have said of ourselves; let us remember the words of our Saviour: *Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned* (St. Luke, vi. 37).

97. The First Commandment of the Church.— Devotion at Mass.

To rest from servile work, and to hear Mass on all Sundays and Holy-days of obligation.

The first Commandment of the Church is intended to aid the faithful in the observance of the third Commandment of the Decalogue. By the third Commandment God requires us to keep holy the Sundays by devoutly serving God; and the Church, by the first Commandment, binds us to hear Mass on Sunday, as the most worthy manner of serving the Lord on that day.

By virtue of this law, all the faithful who have reached the age of reason, and are not lawfully excused, are held to devoutly hear Mass on Sundays and Holy-days of obligation. If we are prevented from so doing, we are nevertheless held to a spirit of recollection at home, for

example, when we must nurse the sick, it is proper that we substitute for the Mass our prayers, saying them in union with the priest and the faithful who are at church.

That we may assist devoutly at the Sacrifice of the Mass, at which even the angels are present with a holy fear, we must remember that the Mass is an unbloody continuance of the Sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered on the Cross when immolating Himself for the salvation of the world: therefore, uniting our intention with that of the priest, we must follow attentively all that takes place at the altar, redoubling our fervor at the principal parts. When the priest has reached the Communion, if it is not our happiness to sacramentally communicate, it is a most holy practice to make a spiritual Communion, which consists in the desire of a devout heart, thirsting for the actual reception of the body of Jesus Christ. When, then, the moment has come, let us repeat with our whole heart, in union with the priest, these words of the Centurion of the Gospel: *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed.* At the same time let us excite in our heart a holy and ardent desire of receiving our Saviour in Sacramental Communion, fervently saying, *Deign, O Lord, soon to nourish me with Thy life-giving flesh, that I may live of Thy life.*

During Mass we ought to pray with recollection and devotion. All prayers are good, and the Church does not prescribe any in particular. We may recite those which are found in approved prayer-books, or we may say the Rosary, or we may meditate on the mysteries of the Passion which the Mass recalls.

Though the Church requires her children to hear Mass only on Sundays and Holy-days of obligation, she nevertheless desires them to assist on week-days. Nothing is more conformable to the true Christian spirit than to hear Mass every day, provided our duties permit it;

and nothing can so certainly assure God's benediction on a family as the presence of one of its members every day at the Holy Sacrifice.

Do you wish, my brethren, to be true Christians, and as such blessed of God; then sanctify the days consecrated to the Lord. They who well fulfil this duty, fulfil all the others. Always assist at Mass with the most profound reverence, and with the most devout attention. Do not be content with hearing Mass on Sunday; but also assist at the other services—at the sermons and religious instructions in the parish church.

98. The Second Commandment of the Church.— Fasting.

To fast and abstain on the days appointed by the Church.

This precept embraces the double law of fasting and abstinence; that is to say, it commands us to fast and to abstain on the days prescribed by the Church.

It is a Commandment of Christian penance.

Penance in general, is a law which binds all men since the sin of Adam, and is a condition absolutely necessary for salvation. This our Saviour has explicitly taught in these words: *Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish* (St. Luke, xiii. 3); and we may say that His doctrine is summed up in these words, which form part of His first instruction: *Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (St. Matt. iv. 17).

All Christianity, represented by Jesus Christ on the Cross, is one great expiation; the Christian Law, one law of penance for the remission of sins.

This general law embraces two parts: *interior* penance, which consists in contrition for our sins, and *exterior* penance, which includes all the privations, all the cor-

poral mortifications, which we practise as a means for the expiation of our sins.

The second Commandment of the Church is as it were a particular article of the great law of penance. By it the Church appoints certain days of fasting as a corporal penance, which all the faithful must practise: thus determining what they are strictly held to do to satisfy the divine law of penance. As this divine law obliges the whole world, even those who are unable to observe the ecclesiastical precept of fasting, these last should take care to supply this deficiency by prayer, alms-deeds, or other good works.

You may ask, Why has the Church among corporal penances chosen and prescribed fasting and abstinence? It is (1) because this manner of penance has been most generally practised by the saints of all ages, and is sanctioned by the example of Jesus Christ Himself; (2) fasting is most easily practised by the greater number of the faithful; (3) it bears the most precious spiritual fruits. For, as the Church says in her liturgy of Lent, corporal fasting affects (1) the conquest of the passions by subjecting the concupiscence of the flesh to the spirit, and by weakening the force of our bad habits; (2) it elevates the soul and disposes it to prayer; (3) it appeases God's anger and draws down His blessings. The angel Raphaël said to Tobias: *Prayer is good with fasting* (Tob. xii. 8).

Let us consider, my brethren, fasting as a most powerful means to quench our passions and to satisfy the divine justice for our sins. Let us scrupulously observe the days of fasting appointed by the Church, and also, following the example of all the saints, let us from time to time impose on ourselves voluntary mortifications; for it is far better to do penance in this life than in the future; indeed, an hour in the torments of hell will be far more severe than an hundred years spent on earth in the most austere penance.

99. Sin.—Mortal Sin.—Venial Sin.

We call sin a *thought, word, act or omission contrary to the law of God.*

There are many kinds of sin; and first we distinguish mortal and venial sin.

1. *Mortal* sin is so named because it deprives us of sanctifying grace, and renders us worthy of condemnation, which is eternal death. *Venial* sin is that which, without depriving us of sanctifying grace, or the friendship of God, weakens the fervor of charity and merits temporal punishments.

We commit mortal sin when, with full knowledge and perfect consent, we transgress the law of God or of the Church in a grave matter.

To constitute, therefore, what is called a mortal sin three conditions are necessary: (1) *gravity of matter*, which should be appreciable, either in the matter itself, or by reason of its circumstances or consequences, or by reason of the importance attached to it by the legislator; (2) *full advertence* and perfect knowledge on the part of the understanding; (3) *free consent* of the will, which should likewise be *full* and *perfect*.

Mortal sin is a crime infinitely grievous in itself and disastrous in its effects. It is grievous with respect to God; for it is a rebellion, an outrage, a base ingratitude. It is disastrous with respect to us, because it defaces in us the image of God, causes the death of our soul, robs us of our good works, makes us enemies of God, slaves of the evil one, and worthy of hell: it likewise often draws down temporal punishments on the head of the sinner. We may obtain pardon of mortal sin in the Sacrament of Penance, and by perfect contrition, joined with a sincere purpose of confessing it as soon as we can.

A sin, mortal *in its nature*, may become venial in three

ways: (1) when there is wanting grievousness of matter; (2) when there is not perfect knowledge or advertence; (3) when there is not full consent. For example, a trivial detraction is only a venial sin; if it is grievous, if it tends to injure the reputation of our neighbor, it is mortal. There are certain commandments of God, for example the sixth, which do not admit of lightness of matter.

2. Venial sin is an offence against God in a matter not grave; or else, an offence in grave matter, but without full advertence of the understanding, or without full consent of the will. Though this sin does not deprive us of the friendship of God, it weakens, however, in our soul the fervor of charity, it disposes us to mortal sin, renders us liable to the pains of purgatory, and the chastisements of God in this life. We may obtain pardon of venial sins, not only in the Sacrament of Penance, but also by a sincere repentance, by prayer, and other good works performed with a contrite heart.

Fly, my brethren, mortal sin as the supreme evil, as the cause, the only cause, of eternal damnation. If you have had the misfortune to fall into it, remain not in that direful state, but hasten to arise from it by a sincere repentance.

100. The Virtues.—Faith.

Of Christian virtues, there are three which are paramount to all others, and which we should in a special manner understand, cultivate, and augment in our hearts by frequent acts: they are the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity.

These three virtues are intimately united: faith is the fountain of the other two; hope is born of faith; charity, of faith and hope. Charity is the most excellent of the three, the soul and the life of the other two: without it faith and hope are dead virtues, incapable of meriting eternal life.

1. *The virtue of faith* is a gift of God and a light, by which we firmly believe, by reason of the supreme truthfulness of God, all that which has been divinely revealed and proposed as such by the Church.

2. *The motive* or the foundation of our faith is the supreme veracity, the infallibility of God, who has revealed that which we believe. This motive contains two distinct truths: (1) God has revealed the dogmas of our faith; (2) His revelation or His word is infallible. The one and the other is known to us, by the light of reason, by the history and indisputable testimony of the Church, as also by the light and assistance of grace.

Faith is not then a blind or rash act, but an act eminently reasonable. "I believe the mysteries of religion," says Mgr. de Ségur, "as I believe the mysteries of nature, because I know that they exist. I know that the mysteries of nature exist, because irrecusable witnesses attest it—my senses and the common sense; I know that the mysteries of religion exist, because witnesses far more irrecusable also attest it—Jesus Christ and His Church. My reason helps me to examine, to weigh the force of their testimony. But, once I have examined by the light of philosophy, criticism, and good sense the facts which prove the veracity, the divinity, the infallibility, of these witnesses, my reason has completed its work: faith must follow. Reason has led me to the truth: she speaks; I have nothing more to do but to listen, to open my soul, to believe, to adore. My faith is then eminently reasonable."

This is not to say that to believe, the faithful must first examine the motives of faith. Those, who, being born in the bosom of the Church, have been brought up as Christians, have a faith and a certitude of it like unto the certitude of him who knows that he will see the light at daybreak. They have then no need, in order to believe, to examine the facts and the miracles which demonstrate the truth of the testimony of the Church;

and if they examine them, it is only to understand more clearly what they already believe, to strengthen themselves against error, or to defend the truth.

As regards adults who have not as yet faith, or who have had the misfortune to lose it, it is their duty to seek instruction. By the study of certain truths, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and others, which are called motives of credibility, reasons for belief, they will comprehend without difficulty that God has truly spoken, and that the Church is the depository of His word. Then reason itself will make it a duty for them to believe, and the necessary grace will not be refused them, at least, if they pray for it.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having made the bases of our faith so evident to the eyes of all who seek the truth. "Let us congratulate ourselves," writes the distinguished d'Aguesseau to his son, "let us congratulate ourselves, my son, that the miracles on which our faith rests are facts more firmly established than the conquests of Alexander or the death of Cæsar."

Let us have care, my brethren, to reaffirm and to strengthen every day our faith by frequent acts; for the stronger our faith, the more rapid our progress in all the other virtues, according to the words of the Holy Ghost: *The just man liveth by faith.*

101. The Virtue of Faith.—Its Object.

Among the three theological virtues, the first is faith, the source and root of hope and charity.

Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. Every Christian who has come to the age of reason is bound to believe, at least implicitly, and in general, all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches. Moreover, he should believe *explicitly*, and as a consequence *know in particular*, certain points of Christian doctrine. Of

these points some are necessary *by necessity of means*, others only *by necessity of precept*. The first are those of which a knowledge is so indispensable, that should an adult be ignorant of them, even without any fault of his, he could not receive the Sacraments, nor accomplish his salvation. As regards the second, we should strive to know them, and voluntary neglect would be sinful; but an involuntary ignorance of them does not render us incapable of justification and salvation. The following *four points* are necessary by necessity of means: (1) that there is only one God; (2) that there are three Persons in God, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; (3) that God the Son, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, was made man for us, was crucified, died, and rose again; (4) that God will reward the good and punish the wicked.

The following *six points* are substantially necessary by necessity of precept: (1) the Lord's Prayer; (2) the Angelical Salutation; (3) the Apostles' Creed; (4) the Commandments of God and of the Church; (5) the Sacraments—those at least which every Christian ought to receive; (6) the duties of our individual state of life.

We are not only held to believe interiorly the truths of faith, but also to profess our faith exteriorly by the practices and worship which God demands.

The Christian should make an act of faith when he comes to the age of reason, and should repeat it frequently during life and at the approach of death. The good Christian recites every day his act of faith with the acts of hope, love, and contrition.

Since then, my brethren, faith is the root of other virtues and the foundation of a Christian life, let us exercise great care to preserve and strengthen it in our souls; let us never permit a day to pass without a devout act of faith, uniting to it the acts of hope, love, and contrition. And should it be our duty to be present at the deathbed

of a friend or neighbor, we should not forget to aid him in reciting from time to time these acts, piously saying with him: *My God, I believe in Thee. My God, I hope in Thee. My God, I love Thee with my whole heart. My God, I am sorry for my sins, and I ask Thee to pardon them.*

102. The Moral Virtues.

We call the *moral virtues* those which have for their direct and immediate object the regulation of morals, in this differing from the theological virtues, which, though having, it is true, an indirect yet powerful influence on morals, have for their direct object God Himself and His divine attributes. The moral virtues are the faithful companions of the theological virtues, and form for them a fitting train.

The moral virtues are most numerous, the chief being the four which we call cardinal virtues, because they are, as it were, centres around which the others group themselves, and pivots on which they move.

The four cardinal virtues are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance.

1. Prudence is that virtue which indicates and commands what we must do in order that each of our actions may be such as honesty and wisdom require. We call it the *leader of the virtues*: it holds, indeed, as it were, the reins of all the others; and this is why it holds the first place among the cardinal virtues. *True and genuine prudence* is Christian prudence, which has for its guide faith and the teachings of the Gospel. It directs man in all his actions towards his last end, that is to say, towards God and his salvation which is in God, by means of this maxim: *Quid hoc ad æternitatem? What is this worth with reference to my eternal salvation?*

2. Justice, the second of the cardinal virtues, is that which bids us give exactly to each one what belongs to

him. To justice is united the virtue of religion, the most excellent of the moral virtues, because it has for its object the worship of God.

3. The virtue of fortitude is that which gives us courage to face the dangers and to undergo the labors which encounter us in the performance of the duties which reason or faith imposes on us, either towards God, our neighbor, or ourselves. Martyrdom is the most heroic act of fortitude.

4. Temperance, the fourth of the cardinal virtues, is that which causes us to curb our sensuality, and to use with moderation all that which gratifies the senses. Its rule is not our passions, nor blind instinct; but the true need of our nature, which claims what is necessary for the support of life. What is necessary includes what is useful and proper, but excludes what is superfluous.

Besides the cardinal virtues, there are other moral virtues especially recommended to us, namely, piety, obedience, humility, meekness, chastity, mortification, penance, gratitude, and perseverance.

Let us ask, my brethren, let us often ask of our Divine Master the gift of all the virtues of His Sacred Heart. Let us have an ardent desire; let us have a hunger and a thirst to acquire all the treasures of sanctity and justice; then shall we merit them according to the words: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.*

103. Grace.—Actual Grace.

Grace is a gift of God, and a supernatural, interior means by which He leads and disposes us for eternal glory. *Grace*, say theologians, *is the germ, the seed of glory.*

There are two kinds of grace—*actual* grace and *habitual* or *sanctifying* grace. We shall now consider actual grace:

let us strive to form a clear and distinct idea of it. What is actual grace? What are its effects? What are its properties?

1. By actual grace we mean a supernatural and interior assistance given us by the Holy Ghost to perform the works necessary to accomplish our salvation. Wholly differing from exterior graces, such as preaching and other helps to salvation which fall under the senses, actual grace is purely interior, spiritual, invisible; it is, as it were, a ray from the Holy Ghost penetrating into the soul and acting upon all its faculties.

2. The principal effects which it produces in the soul are these four: (1) it enlightens the understanding; (2) it moves the will; (3) it fortifies its power; (4) it elevates its actions to a supernatural dignity. It is because of these effects that we sometimes call it the *light* of the Holy Ghost, sometimes *inspiration* or *unction*, sometimes *power* from on high or *divine assistance* which fortifies and which elevates.

3. Its two principal properties are its *necessity* and *power*.

(1) The interior grace of the Holy Ghost is absolutely necessary to do anything conducive to our salvation: without the interior help of grace man is incapable of doing anything worthy of heaven; to make one step in the way of salvation. If a bird cannot fly from the earth without the aid of his wings, still less are we able to rise without grace towards the ineffable mount of salvation which is in God.

(2) The grace of God is all-powerful: with its assistance, if they co-operate therewith, the greatest sinners can return to God, break the chains of their bad habits, avoid the occasions of sin, and by a sincere repentance be reinstated in the love of God. Likewise the just, strengthened by grace, can triumph over all temptations, all persecutions, all obstacles in the way of perfection: they can

practise those heroic virtues which we admire in the Martyrs and all the Saints. *I can do all things*, says St. Paul, *in him who strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13).

It follows from this, my brethren, that we should employ the means ordained by God to obtain grace, namely, prayer, the Sacraments, Mass, and good works of every description.

Let us employ these means, then, without ceasing: let us constantly petition the aids of that grace of which we have continual need; and also let us take care lest we abuse grace or hinder its effect by cowardly refusing to act according to its light; let us always strive without delay to generously correspond with its divine inspirations.

104. The Sacraments.—Their Efficacy.

A Sacrament is a sensible sign, instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, and typifying a special grace which it produces in our soul.

A Sacrament, we say, produces grace in the soul. This is what we call the *efficacy* of the sacramental sign. As a seal produces its impression on wax, as bread nourishes, as water extinguishes fire, as fire burns, a key opens, a sponge cleanses; so a Sacrament produces in the soul the grace which is proper to it. It is *a sign which produces*. A sign which is simply indicative is far different from that which produces what it indicates. A military uniform is indicative of a certain corps of the army—it is simply an indicative sign; the trumpeter by the sound of his trumpet puts the army in motion—it is a sign which produces an effect.

It is in the works of God and His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ that above all we find examples of signs which by their own power produce an effect. By His all-powerful word the Creator produced the world and all it contains:

He said: *Let there be light*, and light was created. Jesus Christ touched with his hand a leper, saying: *Be thou cleansed*, and he was cleansed. He touched the bier of the son of the widow of Naïm, saying to the dead, *Arise*: and he arose full of life. At the nuptials of Cana He changed water into wine by His word; in the desert He multiplied the loaves by His blessing.

These are so many signs which *produced*; and it is thus that the Sacraments infallibly produce their effect as often as he who receives them places no obstacle.

An obstacle consists in a want of disposition. Thus, he who goes to confession without being duly prepared does not receive forgiveness of his sins. He acts like the man who endeavors to set fire to wet straw: it will not burn; not because the fire is powerless, but because the inflammable matter, not being duly prepared, will not take fire. Likewise the sinner who confesses his sins to a priest to have them forgiven by virtue of the Sacrament, if he has not a true repentance and a firm purpose, prevents the absolution from producing its effect.

We must take care not to confound a Sacrament with the ceremonies which accompany it. Between a Sacrament and the ceremonies of a Sacrament there is an essential difference, like unto that which we note between a diamond, and the ring in which it is mounted; between a relic and its reliquary; between the Blessed Sacrament and the ostensorium in which it is exposed for the adoration of the faithful. All the prayers and actions which, in the administration of a Sacrament, precede or follow the sacramental sign instituted by Jesus Christ, are so many ceremonies inserted by the Church, either for our instruction, or to surround the Sacrament with the respect and dignity which is becoming so holy an institution.

Let us take care, my brethren, never to wilfully place an obstacle to the effects of the Sacraments. Let us always

carefully dispose ourselves for their worthy reception, to the end that we may receive the plenitude of the fruits which they confer on those who are well prepared.

105. Baptism.—Its Effects and Ceremonies.

Baptism is the first and most necessary of the Sacraments, and the gate, as it were, by which we must enter into the Church of Jesus Christ. This Sacrament is also called the *Sacrament of regeneration*, because in its reception man is subject to a second birth, and receives a new life—the life of the children of God.

The Sacrament of Baptism was prefigured in a living type at the Baptism of Jesus Christ. Then the Heavens opened, the Holy Ghost descended under the form of a dove, and the voice of the heavenly Father was heard, saying these words: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* These circumstances are indicative of what takes place at the moment of the reception of Baptism.

There are three kinds of Baptism: the Baptism of *blood* or martyrdom, the Baptism of *desire*, and the Baptism of *water*. Either of these three Baptisms is sufficient to cleanse the soul of its sins, and to open to it the gates of heaven; but the Baptism of water alone is a Sacrament, and alone imprints on the soul the baptismal character: the other two are acts of virtue which supply Sacramental Baptism.

The administration of Baptism, except in a case of necessity, is accompanied by a number of most beautiful ceremonies, of which these are the most noticeable. The Catechumen is first detained by the priest at the door of the Church, because it is Baptism which opens it to him. He gives him the name of Saint, because he comes to be inscribed among the number of the Saints and children of God. He breathes in his face, to signify that he will be freed from the spirit of darkness by the Holy

Ghost, who comes to animate him with the breath of a new life. He forms the sign of the Cross on his forehead and breast, in order that, when he is a Christian, he may bear with love and courage the symbol of his crucified Master. He puts in his mouth blessed salt, the emblem of incorruption and wisdom, to remind him that he should preserve himself free from the corruption of sin, and live according to the wisdom and faith of Jesus Christ. He touches with saliva his ears and nostrils, to denote that he should henceforth hearken to the voice of God, and love the sweet odor of Christian piety.

Introduced into the Church and led to the font, the Catechumen renounces Satan, his works, his pomps, and allies himself to Jesus Christ by demanding Baptism. He renounces *Satan*, that is to say, the service of the Prince of Darkness; *his works*, that is to say, sin; *all his pomps*, that is to say, the vanities of the world, and the occasions of sin. These are the Baptismal *vows* or promises. The reception of this Sacrament embodies a kind of contract between God and the recipient. God grants him all the privileges of His adopted children, and he on his part engages to live as a true Christian, in accordance with the precepts of faith and the example of Jesus Christ. Infants, not being able of themselves to make these pledges, do so in the person of their godfathers and godmothers. These thus become sponsors for the promises of their godchild, and should carefully watch over his Christian education.

After the Sacramental ablution, the priest invests the newly baptized with a white robe, or at least places on his head a white veil, symbolical of the baptismal innocence which he should preserve immaculate until death, to present it at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, such as he received it in Baptism. He gives him a lighted candle, to remind him that he should not only cherish in his heart faith, hope, and charity, but also outwardly profess

these virtues and practise them in his works. Finally, the priest dismisses him with these words: *Go in peace, and may the Lord be with you.*

We have, my brethren, contracted in holy Baptism the obligation of believing and practising the doctrine of Jesus Christ as taught us in the true Church. That we may faithfully fulfil this great duty, let us often renew our Baptismal promises, saying: *I renounce Satan, his works and all his pomps; and I ally myself to Jesus Christ forever.*

106. Confirmation.—Its Effects.

You all know, my brethren, that Confirmation is *a Sacrament administered by the Bishop, in which the Christian receives the fortitude of the Holy Ghost to courageously profess the faith.*

Let us consider in a more explicit manner the effects of Confirmation. They are the following:

(1) An increase of sanctifying grace, of the Christian virtues, and of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which, especially the gift of fortitude, are communicated to the confirmed in a more plenteous degree than they were received by him in Baptism. (2) Actual grace, consisting in the fortitude which the Holy Ghost will give to the confirmed, when necessary, to constantly profess his faith, in his heart, in his words and actions; to overcome human respect, temptations contrary to faith, and all the enemies of his salvation, which are the devil, the world, and the flesh; to patiently bear all the contradictions he may suffer by reason of his faith. (3) The indelible character impressed on the soul—a character more glorious and noble in the eyes of God than all the insignia of worldly dignities.

These precious effects of Confirmation are typified by the Sacramental sign and ceremonies: (1) The oil and the unction represent the grace; for in the same manner as oil feeds the flame and strengthens the

athlete, so does the grace of the Holy Ghost nourish the light of faith, and fortify the soldier of Jesus Christ. (2) The balsam, a fragrant liquid, used to preserve bodies from corruption, is a symbol of spiritual incorruption and of the sweet odor of Jesus Christ. (3) The unction is made in the form of a cross, and on the forehead, where the courage of heroes is manifest: to indicate that it confers the fortitude never to blush for the Cross of Jesus Christ. (4) The Bishop imposes his hands on him whom he confirms, to denote that the Holy Ghost descends on him, and takes possession of his soul; (5) he gives him a gentle slap, to teach him he should suffer all persecutions, all adversities, for the name of Jesus Christ.

Let us take great care, my brethren, to preserve, to co-operate with, the graces of our Confirmation: let us be resolute Christians, let us trample under foot human respect, let us proudly confess our faith as did the multitude of martyrs; let us fulfil with fidelity and constancy the most arduous duties of a Christian. Courage and confidence! God is our strength.

107. The Eucharist.

Of all the Sacraments, the most sublime and the most holy is that of the ever-blessed Eucharist.

What is the Eucharist? To this question you answer it is *a Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which He Himself is present under the species of bread and wine.*

1. The Eucharist is a *Sacrament*, a Sacrament which surpasses in excellence all the others, since it contains not only grace, but the very Author and Source of grace.

We designate by the name of *Blessed Sacrament* the adorable Host, and the wine changed into the Blood of Jesus Christ, which the priest elevates before the eyes of

the faithful at the consecration in the Mass. Like all the Sacraments, the Eucharist is a visible sign of an invisible grace: the species or the visible appearances of bread and wine signify the spiritual nourishment which the Eucharistic grace communicates to our souls.

2. *A Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ.* Our Saviour instituted it at the last Supper, when, taking bread into His adorable hands, He blessed it, broke and gave it to His disciples, saying: *Take ye, and eat: this is my body.* Likewise, taking the chalice which contained wine, He blessed it and gave it to His disciples, saying: *Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.* Then He added: *Do this for a commemoration of Me.* It is strictly speaking by these last words that the Saviour instituted the Eucharist, since by them He gave to His Apostles, and to all priests who should come after them, the power to consecrate and administer as He did this Divine Sacrament.

3. *In which He Himself is present.* It is in this consists the dogma of the Real Presence. In the holy Eucharist, in the Host, Jesus Christ is personally present, His humanity and His divinity, as He was present at the last Supper, as He is really in heaven. This wonderful presence is effected by the almighty power of the words of consecration, which change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

4. *Under the species of bread and wine:* that is to say, under the *appearances* of bread and wine. After the consecration, the body and blood of Jesus Christ are substituted in the place of the substance of the bread and wine, but the dual appearance of bread and wine remains, as a veil enveloping the Saviour and concealing Him from our vision. Were God to remove that veil, as He one day did in favor of the Blessed Margaret Mary, we would behold our adorable Master with His sacred wounds, as the Saints see Him in heaven.

If any one ask how is this miracle accomplished, we must answer that it is by the power of God, who can without difficulty annihilate the substance of a morsel of bread and conceal under its appearances a human body. If any one ask what happens when the adorable Host is broken, we must answer that it is the species or appearances which are broken; the body of the Saviour being indivisible, receives no injury; but after the division of the species, it is present whole and entire under each of the parts.

If any one ask what is the difference between the sacred Host and the precious blood which is in the chalice, we must answer there is no difference except that which is in the species: the Real Presence is the same: Jesus Christ is equally present under the species of bread and under that of the wine. If any one ask what worship we must render the holy Eucharist, we must answer that the Blessed Sacrament, being the living body of Jesus Christ, that is to say, Jesus Christ Himself, though veiled, we must render to it the worship due to Jesus Christ, namely, adoration. In presence of the Blessed Sacrament the faithful ought to kneel, prostrating themselves in spirit and adoring their God with the angels, who are always in adoration at the feet of their King present on our altars.

Let us thank Our Lord Jesus Christ, my brethren, for the inestimable treasure He has bequeathed to us in the holy Eucharist: let us ask Him to increase more and more our devotion toward that adorable Mystery.

108. The Eucharist.—A Sacrifice.

The holy Eucharist, inasmuch as it is offered to God, constitutes the sacrifice of the New Law, the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

What is the Mass? We answer: *It is the sacrifice of the*

new Law, in which the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are offered to God the Father.

Sacrifice is the great act of religion; it is defined: *the offering of some sensible thing, made to God in acknowledgment of His sovereign dominion over all creatures.*

We have said that sacrifice is the great act, the principal and solemn act of *Religion*, because it constitutes the essence of the worship which man ought to render to God. Accordingly there have been sacrifices from the moment there was a religious worship among men, that is to say, from the beginning of the world. The sacrifices we know to have been offered by Cain and Abel, by Noe and his descendants, and even by idolatrous nations, attest this.

The sacrifices offered by the ancient patriarchs, and afterward by Aaron and the priests of the Mosaic Law, were but types of the great sacrifice of the New Law, which was to be offered by Jesus Christ, eternal Priest and Pontiff. Among the ancient types the principal were the sacrifice of Abel, that of Abraham, of Melchisedech, and the paschal Lamb. The sacrifice of the New Law is *unique*: that is to say, there are not a number of them, as in the Old Law; there is but one, namely, that of Jesus Christ, in which the divine Mediator is at one and the same time both Priest and Victim.

This sacrifice of Jesus Christ, unique in its substance, is dual as regards the manner of oblation, and comprehends the bloody and unbloody sacrifice.

The first is that which the Saviour offered on the altar of the Cross; the second, that which He offered at the Last Supper, and which He still offers every day by the hands of His ministers, the priests of the Church. This is the holy sacrifice of the Mass, an unbloody continuation, to endure through all ages and generations, of the bloody sacrifice which was offered on Calvary. Since the holy Mass, my brethren, is the same sacrifice as that

of Calvary, though offered in an unbloody manner, it follows that it is, as that of Calvary, of infinite dignity and excellence. What a blessing then it is to have it in our power to assist thereat! But also how profound ought to be our respect and our devotion when, in union with the priest, we participate in the celebration of the holy Mysteries!

109. The Sacrament of Penance.

One of the most important points of Christian instruction, and which we cannot too well understand, is the Sacrament of Penance.

We have been taught that Penance *is a Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ, in which the sins committed after Baptism are, by the power of the priest, forgiven those who confess them with a true repentance.*

Let us endeavor to fully understand this definition by attentively considering the six parts which it contains.

1. Penance is a *Sacrament*.—It is then a sensible sign, which produces a grace, namely, the remission of sins. It is one of the two Sacraments which are called Sacraments of the dead, because they alone can be received in the state of mortal sin.

2. *Instituted by Jesus Christ*.—Our Saviour instituted this Sacrament of Penance on the day of His resurrection, because this Sacrament effects the resurrection of souls dead by mortal sin. It was promised some months before, when, speaking to His Apostles of the conversion of sinners, He used these words: *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* (St. Matt. xviii. 18). He fulfilled this promise on the day of His resurrection, when, appearing to His assembled Apostles, He breathed on them, saying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they*

are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.

3. *In which the sins are forgiven.*—Such is the proper effect of this Sacrament: it remits sins, it effaces them as a sponge wipes out writing done with chalk, it destroys them as the fire does dry wood thrown into a furnace. However, if it remits sin, it does not ordinarily remit all the temporal punishments due to sin: we must liquidate this debt by works of satisfaction.

4. *The sins committed after Baptism.*—Be those sins what they may, what their number, what their enormity, provided we confess them with a sincere repentance, we obtain forgiveness of them.

5. *They are forgiven by the power of the priest.*—The power to forgive sins, properly speaking, belongs to Jesus Christ alone; but He has communicated it to His Apostles, charging them in their turn to transmit it to all priests through the medium of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This power, which priests exercise by giving Absolution, is a participation in the power of God, and surpasses that of all the kings of the earth.

6. *Those who confess them with a true repentance.*—The Sacrament of Penance requires the confession of the sins. Hence, instead of saying *to receive the Sacrament of Penance*, we often use the expression *to go to confession, to make our confession*. It exacts also *a true repentance*, which is as it were the soul of the Sacrament.

We say that repentance, contrition, is as it were the soul of the Sacrament of Penance, because it avails us nothing to confess our sins if we are not truly penitent. When therefore, my brethren, you go to confession, ask always of God the grace to have true sorrow for your sins, a firm purpose never again to commit them, and to avoid the occasions of them.

110. Extreme Unction.—Its Effects.

Extreme Unction is a Sacrament which Jesus Christ, in His paternal goodness, has instituted for the spiritual and bodily comfort of the sick. The effects which it produces are most precious both as regards the soul and the body.

1. As regards the soul, Extreme Unction (1) effaces venial sins; and even mortal sins, when the sick have not the strength to confess them, provided they have in their heart attrition or imperfect contrition for them; (2) it completes the purification of the soul, by removing the relics of sin; (3) it fortifies the sick, and aids them to bear their sufferings with patience, to triumph over the attacks of the demon at the supreme moment, and to offer to God in a manner becoming a Christian the sacrifice of their life.

2. As regards the body, Extreme Unction consoles the sick and sweetens their sorrows: it also restores them their health, if God judges it conducive to their eternal salvation.

All these effects are indicated by the sacramental sign, particularly by the properties of the oil with which the holy unctions are made.

Natural oil heals and calms; it strengthens athletes; it illumines and dissipates darkness; it is the type of the holy oil, which produces analogous effects in the person of the sick.

The sacramental oil is blessed, and the unctions are accompanied by prayers, to indicate that it is not by its natural virtue, but by that of the Holy Ghost, it heals the soul and body of their sickness.

To partake of the precious effects of Extreme Unction, the sick should have the proper dispositions, and above all should not delay the reception of this Sacrament. Promptitude in the application of this divine remedy is most important, particularly to obtain bodily ease and

health. The holy oil produces its effect as regards the body after the manner of natural remedies. As with them, this Sacrament helps nature, which is supposed to have a certain amount of strength; whilst it is powerless, when nature is too enfeebled and life almost extinct. Accordingly, many of the sick die, because they postpone to the last moment the reception of this Sacrament; whilst they are frequently restored to health who receive it in due time.

Let us not delay, my brethren, when the occasion presents itself, to aid the sick by procuring them the reception of Extreme Unction; and let us resolve to receive it promptly ourselves, and with the most holy dispositions: that is to say, with faith, and with a heartfelt repentance, asking anew of God the pardon of the sins we have committed by our eyesight, our hearing, by our other senses, praying Him to grant us all the graces of the Sacrament.

III. Holy Orders.

Holy Orders is a Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ to create ministers for His Altars, and to thus perpetuate in His Church the priesthood which He Himself conferred on His Apostles. The minister of the Sacrament of Holy Orders is a Bishop: the power of conferring the priesthood belonging essentially to the episcopal character.

The effects of Holy Orders are three in number: the indelible character, to which is attached the power; sanctifying grace; actual graces to worthily fulfil the sacred functions of the ministry.

These effects are indicated by the Sacramental sign, that is to say, by the words, by the instruments or symbols of the power, likewise by the imposition of hands. In the early ages, the chiefs, in the presence of the peo-

ple, placed their hands on the heads of those whom they willed to elevate to the magistracy.

To exercise the greater part of his functions, excepting those which pertain exclusively to *the power of Holy Orders* inherent in his sacerdotal character, the priest must have *the power of jurisdiction*, which is conferred on him by assignment to some particular mission.

Though every baptized man can validly receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders, nevertheless, to be admitted to its reception, three conditions are requisite: divine vocation, knowledge, and virtue.

He who presents himself for this Sacrament must ascend gradually through the lesser to the greater Orders, and receive first the clerical tonsure. The *Tonsure* is not an order, but a preliminary ceremony, by which the candidate for the sanctuary is separated from the laity, consecrated to God and incorporated with the clergy.

The clergy of the New Law was prefigured in the Old Law by the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants, as also by the levites or inferior ministers of the Mosaic worship. They all, priests and levites, belonged to the tribe of Levi, which the Lord had set apart to be wholly consecrated to the service of His temple and His altars. The Christian clergy likewise, form a holy tribe, but as far superior to that of the Old Law as their functions are more august.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having established in His Church this venerable priesthood, through whose ministry He conveys to us His most precious blessings; for having given us those sacred ministers, in whose person He dwells in a certain sense visible amongst us. Let us often pray Him to preserve His priests in the sanctity becoming their divine vocation.

112. Matrimony.

Matrimony is a *Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ to confer on the faithful, who receive it, the grace to fulfil the duties of spouses and of Christian parents.*

Christian marriage is the conjugal union of man and woman, formed in accordance with the laws of the Church, and has two great characteristics, namely, unity and indissolubility. It unites the married couple by the most sacred link of fidelity, and establishes them in a permanent state, which is called the state of marriage. The matrimonial union once consummated is indissoluble, and is dissolved only by the death of the husband or wife. No human power can so break the bond or tie of marriage that either of the married parties may contract a new union.

What is called *civil divorce* does not annul the matrimonial contract: it remains in all its force; and, as long as both the spouses live, a second marriage is impossible.

The Sacrament of Matrimony produces two important effects: it conveys grace and imposes obligations.

1. It produces an increase of sanctifying grace, at the same time that it gives actual graces, by which married persons are enabled to fulfil all their obligations, to sustain all their difficulties and trials, and to constantly practise all the virtues of spouses and of Christian parents.

2. The obligations which it imposes are:

- (1) Fidelity, love, mutual support and forbearance.

- (2) Solicitude for the proper government of the family. The husband is the head: to him belongs the supreme authority; the wife owes him submission and obedience, but being his companion rather than slave, she of right participates in his dignity, his privileges, and his honors.

(3) The all-important obligation of the education of the children. The children belong to God, who has created them, who has adopted them in Baptism and confided them to the parents as a most precious and sacred treasure, which they must return to Him without corruption or defilement. Now, the safeguard of this treasure, the only means to assure the virtue and well-being of the children, is a truly moral and Christian education.

If you believe, my brethren, that you are called to the state of marriage, prepare for it in a holy manner, after the example of the young Tobias and Sara (Tob. viii.); neglect nothing to merit the reception of all the graces of the Sacrament. If you are married, bear your obligations with Christian courage; fulfil your duties after the example of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph; the grace of God will not desert you; you have received the pledge of it in the reception of the Sacrament.

113. Prayer.—The Necessity of Prayer.

Prayer is one of the great duties of the Christian: whoever does not pray, or who does so but seldom, is not a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

But when must we pray? 1. The Saviour tells us *to pray always and without ceasing*: which means that we ought to do so frequently, often elevating our heart to God, offering Him our work, our sufferings and our joys.

2. There are, however, days and moments which impose on us a special obligation to pray: such are Sundays and Feast-days, moments of affliction and temptation; critical circumstances in which, for example, there is question of important matters, as in the choice of a state of life or preparation for approaching death.

3. Moreover, the true Christian ought not to neglect to pray morning and night, before and after meals. *Morn-*

ing and *night* prayer is a practice as old as Christianity, and universally received in the Church. As these prayers need not be long, it is a duty all can fulfil; there is no one, generally speaking, who cannot recite every morning and every night at least the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Creed, with an act of Contrition. Prayers *before and after meals* have, likewise, been practised by the faithful from the earliest times, and every good Christian considers it a duty to recite them.

The Church, in her liturgy, has formulas for the blessing and thanksgiving at table, as she has prayers for morning and night in the canonical hours.

We ought to pray for the living and for the dead; for ourselves and for others, that is to say, for our superiors, our benefactors, our friends, and even for our enemies. We must also pray for the Church and for her august Chief, *for kings, and all that are in high stations* (1 Tim. ii.); for the conversion of sinners, for the perseverance of the just, for the propagation of the Faith, and for the welfare of our country.

We ought to ask of God, before all else, the well-being of our soul, and for all that has reference to our salvation. It is, however, permitted us to ask for temporal blessings, such as health, success in our business; but we must ask them as Christians, that is to say, urged by a good motive, having in view the glory of God, and with submission to His divine will.

Have we thus practised, my brethren, the all-important duty of prayer? have we faithfully prayed morning and night? have we prayed in the time of temptation? Let us form the resolution of praying hereafter with the greatest constancy, taking as our example the Saints and Jesus Christ Himself.

114. The Festivals of the Church.—Advent—Christmas.

It is as instructive as it is interesting to have a knowledge of the festivals which our Mother the Church celebrates during the year.

The ecclesiastical year commences on the first Sunday of Advent, about the end of November.

Advent is a season appointed by the Church to honor the mystery of the Incarnation, with a view of preparing the faithful to worthily celebrate the birth in time of the divine Word, on the great feast of Christmas. This season includes the four weeks before Christmas, representing the four thousand years which intervened between the time of Adam and the coming of Jesus Christ. It reminds us of the longings of the patriarchs and prophets who sighed for that coming.

We may sanctify Advent by (1) adoring in spirit the Word incarnate and congratulating Mary on her happiness; (2) by fervently asking that Jesus Christ may come to establish, and to strengthen, His kingdom in our hearts; (3) by animating ourselves with the spirit of prayer, recollection, and mortification; (4) by devoutly approaching the Sacraments.

On the eighth day of December the Church celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God. Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin, being preserved therefrom by the future merits of Jesus Christ, whose mother she was to be. In the first moment of her existence she was enriched with the treasures of grace, and adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is this mystery which the Church celebrates on this day.

Christmas is the feast of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On this day the priest celebrates three Masses, to

honor the triple birth of the Son of God: His birth in time in the stable at Bethlehem; His spiritual birth by faith and charity in the souls of the shepherds and the faithful; finally, His birth or His eternal generation in the bosom of His Father.

Though we may not be held to assist at three Masses, the fervent of the faithful endeavor to observe a custom so holy and so conformable to the spirit of the Church.

On the first of January is celebrated the Circumcision of the Saviour. Circumcision in the Old Law was a painful and humiliating ceremony, prescribed to the Israelites for a sign of their covenant with God, and of their faith in a future Messias. It was the distinctive mark of the children of Abraham, and was obligatory by the law of Moses, as Baptism, of which it was the figure, is obligatory by the law of Jesus Christ. The mystery of the circumcision of Jesus Christ teaches us that the Christian should practise spiritual circumcision, which consists in removing from his heart all sin and every irregular desire, also in denying himself what is superfluous and useless. On the day of His circumcision, the Son of God, made man, received the name of Jesus, which means *Saviour*: adorable name, which should inspire us with sentiments of reverence, confidence, and love. Let us frequently invoke this divine name by saying: *My Jesus, mercy!*

115. Death.—Preparation.

In all thy works, says the Holy Ghost, remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin (Eccl. vii. 40).

We know that the last ends, of which we should ever be mindful, are death, judgment, hell, and heaven.

Let us now consider death:

God keeps us in ignorance of the hour of our death in order that we may always live in the state of grace,

as our Saviour teaches us by these words: *Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour.*

1. We should be prepared for death even when we are young, for we may die at any age, as daily experience demonstrates.

We should be prepared, because we die but once, and on our death depends our eternal and irrevocable lot.

2. We will be always prepared if we always live as true Christians.

Then we shall have but little fear of death: because the death of the just, of the good Christian, is sweet and consoling; that of the sinner is alone terrible and most miserable.

When we are dangerously sick we must make our immediate preparation for death. Now to do this properly we should (1) call the priest without delay; (2) make our confession, and also a general confession of our whole life; (3) and when the seriousness of our sickness permits, receive as soon as morally possible, and with profound devotion, the holy Viaticum, Extreme Unction, and the plenary indulgence.

Having received the last Sacraments, it is becoming we should busy ourselves thereafter only with God, and think but of that solemn moment when we shall appear before Him.

When death is near, the friends of the dying should recite for him the prayers for those in their last agony, and place in his hand the blessed candle.

Let us often beg of God, my brethren, the grace not to die without having devoutly received the Sacraments of the Church.

116. Hell.

That there is a hell, is the third of those last ends which the Christian should never forget.

Hell is a place of indescribable torments, where the demons and the damned are punished by divine justice. Hell may be called the *prison of God*. If the kings of the earth have prisons for their rebellious subjects, should not the *King of kings* have His to punish those creatures who violate His laws and insult His majesty?

In reference to this dreadful truth, faith teaches us (1) that there is a hell, that is to say, a place of punishment for sinners; (2) that the souls of impenitent sinners descend there immediately after death; (3) that the pains of hell will be eternal.

They, says the Saviour, speaking of the condemned, shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting. The rich man also died, says He again, and he was buried in hell. And elsewhere He calls hell *an unquenchable fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, where their worm dieth not.* Finally, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the preaching of His Gospel, asserted no less than fifteen times that there is a hell.

The torments of the condemned in hell are the *pain of loss* and the *pain of sense*. The first consists in being deprived of the vision of God, the supreme good of man and the ultimate end of his existence: this privation is accompanied by the deepest anguish. The second consists in the pains caused, as much by the avenging fire, as by all the other torments of hell combined, not excluding the vile company of the damned.

Though the nature of this fire is not defined by faith, the language of the Scriptures and of the Fathers of the Church does not permit us to doubt that it is a material fire, endowed, however, by the power of God with all the

especial qualities necessary to make it the instrument of His justice. This fire acts directly on the souls, causing them to experience, without the medium of their bodies, sensible sufferings, which naturally they could only suffer through the organs of the senses. This our Saviour gives us to understand in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, wherein He shows us the soul of the rich man in hell, and makes him give utterance to these words: *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.*

Hell surpasses in horror all that words can express. One hour in the torments of hell is more severe than a hundred years passed on earth in the most austere penance.

Let us think of hell, my brethren, and let us fear lest it be our portion. *Fear not*, says Jesus Christ, *them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell* (St. Matt. x. 28); that is to say, fear, and have only that fear, fear to commit mortal sin, which God punishes with the torments of hell.

117. Paradise.—The Beauty of Heaven.

Paradise, the fourth of the last ends of man, is a place of delights, where the elect behold God in His glory, and enjoy eternal beatitude. It is also called *heaven*.

Heaven is often confounded with the happiness there enjoyed. They are, however, distinct: heaven, properly speaking, is a place; the happiness of heaven, a state.

Heaven, or paradise, is also named the *house of God*, His glorious house, which the blessed inhabit as the children of their heavenly Father. Finally, heaven is called *the country* of the children of God, as opposed to this world, which is their exile. As regards the location of heaven

we have no positive knowledge; but the Scriptures by opposing heaven to hell, by using the expression *to descend into hell, to ascend into heaven*, present to us the sojourn of the blessed as situated in the upper regions. Hence, the opinion of theologians, who place it above the immense space occupied by the constellations and planets.

The character of this heavenly habitation should be in harmony with that of its inhabitants—God, the angels, and the elect among men: hence it must be of such a nature as to serve not only as a sojourn for pure spirits, but also for corporeal creatures, for men, after the general resurrection, with their glorified bodies.

The beauty and immensity of heaven no tongue can tell, nor mind conceive. All that we can say is, that its magnificence is worthy of the King who is there enthroned, and of the multitude of saints who reign with Him: *There alone*, says the prophet, *is Our Lord magnificent.*

It was the happy privilege of St. John the Apostle, in a prophetic vision, to have had a glimpse of it, and its marvellous wonders he has described for us. As he beheld the heavenly Jerusalem, its foundations are of sapphire and emerald, its porches and walls of jasper and topaz, its gates of pearls, and its colonnades of crystal enchased in gold. There a sun a thousand times more brilliant than the sun which shines for us gives forth an eternal day; there blooms the tree of life, whose fruit is always ripe, ever bearing, never dying; there flows the river of peace and a thousand torrents of pure pleasures, whither the elect go to be satiated with plentiful draughts of glory and happiness; there is the throne of the living God, whose living light makes all things resplendent with a thousand colors, and before whom are prostrate and ranged in their order of dignity the angels with their golden harps, the cherubim and the seraphim, their hearts inflamed with love. Thus writes St. John; but we know

it in no wise approaches the reality, which no human language could portray; for, as says St. Paul, *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 and faithfully serve Him* (1 Cor. ii. 9).

Ah! my brethren, since the beauty of heaven awaits us, should we not continually make it the subject of our thoughts? Should we not trample under foot all that is perishable to realize so great a happiness? Let us say, let us often repeat: *Heaven gained, all is gained! heaven lost all is lost!*

SHORT SERMONS

FOR THE

Low Masses of Sunday.

THIRD SERIES.

THIRD SERIES.

118. Man—His Dignity.

Christian doctrine teaches us that man is a reasonable creature, composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body. Let us speak of the soul—of the body—of the dignity of man.

1. Our soul is endowed with memory, understanding and free-will: these are its three principal faculties, which may also be called the powers of the soul. It is true that it has others, for instance that of locomotion, of seeing, of hearing, and of speaking; but these faculties are of an inferior order, and cannot act except through the organs of the body; whilst the first are purely spiritual and by their nature independent of these organs.

The human soul has been created to animate a body and not to exist in the simple state of a pure spirit as the angels.

Even when by death it is separated from the body, it is in a situation essentially temporary, and its nature requires that, after a time determined by God, it should assume again its body to form the complete being—the man—such as God created it.

The soul considered in its spiritual nature is a most beautiful being, susceptible of the most excellent gifts and qualities, but also liable to debasement and degradation. Hence the difference of souls in the eyes of God and the angels, who behold some adorned with the

beauty of grace and virtue, others disfigured by vice and sin.

2. The human body is of its nature mortal, and must become, after a very short time, the inevitable prey of death. It is of very little moment in comparison to the soul, and foolish is he who occupies himself too much with it, particularly to the detriment of his soul. In sacrificing the soul for the body he sacrifices the master for the slave, immortality for a passing moment.

3. Faith also teaches us *the dignity of man*. The human creature is distinguished from all other beings by the nobility and dignity of his nature. This dignity is apparent in his exterior, as even the pagans recognized it. God, they said, has given man a noble countenance and made him to hold his head erect to behold the heavens. But this dignity which manifests itself exteriorly has its cause and source from within.

Now, my brethren, what is the source or the interior principle of the dignity of man? This dignity is the consequence (1) of the image of God which every man bears engraven in his nature; and (2) of the end—the high destiny for which he has been created.

Let us have always before our eyes that destiny so great and so encouraging, which is to serve God in this life and to possess Him eternally in the next, where we will share His glory and His happiness.

119. The Duties of a Christian—Faith, its Basis.

The first duty of a Christian is to believe, faith being the basis of all Christian life. We must firmly believe the entire Christian doctrine, that is to say, all the truths, without any exception, which God has revealed to us and which He proposes to us by His Church.

1. We must *firmly* believe—we must accept with an

undoubting certitude all the teachings of faith: because God, who has revealed them, is the supreme and infallible truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

This cannot be said of men. They do not always speak the truth; and even when they have not the intention to deceive they are frequently themselves deceived and fall into error. Again you do not always believe what men tell you. But when you know that he who is speaking to you tells the truth, that he is incapable of telling a falsehood, that what he describes to you, for example, of Rome, or of Jerusalem, he has seen with his own eyes, then you believe him on his word. Yet, strictly speaking, this man could himself be deceived, whilst God cannot fall into error: it is as impossible that He be deceived or His word be false, as it is impossible that light be darkness. It is necessary, therefore, to have a firm faith—a faith not admitting of the smallest doubt concerning matters proposed for our belief.

2. We must believe the entire Christian doctrine, such as it is proposed by the Church, the infallible organ of Jesus Christ. It does not therefore permit us to reject any article of faith, for example a mystery, or to entertain a voluntary doubt of it because we cannot understand it. The mysteries being of the revealed truths of God as well as the others, have absolutely the same certainty. Besides it is not surprising that a doctrine revealed by God contains mysteries: "*You would be, my God, very little,*" writes St. Francis de Sales, "*if an intelligence as feeble as ours could comprehend Thee.*" We must therefore humble our reason before the infinite wisdom of God which speaks to us, *bringing*, as says the Apostle, *into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. x. 5). It does not, however, therefore follow that in matters of faith man cannot make any use of his reason: for (1) the Catholic who acknowledges the Church as the pillar of truth may examine and study the dogmas con-

tained in the sacred deposit of faith; provided that in that study he is guided by the infallible authority, established to preserve us from falling into error. (2) He who is not a Catholic, may and should study, alone or assisted by those well instructed, the miracles and the historical facts on which rest the truth of revelation and the infallibility of the Church. When these facts have been satisfactorily proven, he is held to admit them, and, as a consequence, to accept the Catholic faith. He who professes the true faith, has full liberty to study these fundamental historical facts: and that study will be most useful to him, not to acquire a certitude which he has already by the grace of God, but to confirm it the more and to teach others.

Let us thank God, my brethren, who has given us the gift of faith, and let us ask Him to aid us in living in consonance with our belief.

120. The Christian Doctrine.—The Sacred Scriptures, Tradition.

The Christian doctrine which the Church proposes for our belief is contained in the Sacred Scriptures and Apostolic traditions.

I. We call the *Sacred Scriptures* the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments. These books numbering seventy-two, were written by forty authors, who succeeded one another during a period of six centuries. We call them *Holy books*. Some of them narrate historical facts, others contain moral instructions and prophecies. The historical books have a double authority, namely, a human authority and a divine authority.

(1) The human and simply historical authority of the biblical books is the result of the authenticity, the integrity and the veracity which we must concede them. Their authenticity and their integrity are vouched for

by the Synagogue and the Church, which have carefully preserved the Scriptures from their origin down to our own time. The Jewish doctors went so far as to count not only the chapters but the words and letters of each book: even to the making up a list of the capital and small letters which they contain. The veracity of the authors is evident from the credence which all people have given them, going back even to their contemporaries.

(2.) The divine authority of the Scriptures is the result of what is called "*Inspiration*." Their authors have been divinely *inspired*, that is to say, the Holy Ghost has directed the pen of the sacred writers—enlightened their intelligence, and has suggested to them, at least substantially, all that they have written. A letter written by a royal secretary at the dictation of the king is truly the word and letter of the king himself; in like manner the Sacred Scriptures written at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost are verily the writings of God—the word of God. *What is the Bible?* asks St. Gregory; and he answers with St. Augustin: *It is a divine epistle, a message of the all-powerful God, addressed to His creatures who inhabit this earth.*

II. Besides the doctrine contained in the Bible, we must believe certain truths not taught in the Sacred Scriptures, but which have been transmitted to us orally by the Apostles.

These truths the Apostles received from Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost, who descended on them on Pentecost that they might know all truth. These unwritten dogmas are called *Apostolic Traditions*.

As examples of traditional dogmas we may mention the perpetual virginity of the mother of God, the precise number of the Sacraments, of the Evangelists, the canon of the inspired books.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having bestowed on His Church the double treasure of the Scriptures and

Tradition, in which she holds the sacred deposit of faith and whence she draws every doctrine which she teaches us. Let us hear those doctrines with the greatest respect, since they are the word of God Himself.

121. The First Article of the Creed.—The Divine Perfections.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

To fully understand the first article of the Creed, it is necessary to distinguish in God three things—His nature, His attributes, and His personality.

1. His nature which we may also call the divine essence, comprehends all that which is in God, abstraction being made from His personality, or from the three Persons who have that nature: in the same manner as the human nature comprehends all that which is in man, the soul and body, abstraction being made from the person who has that soul and body.

2. We call the attributes of God, His properties, His perfections, for instance, His wisdom, His power, His goodness. We see as it were a reflection of them in man, who, like Him, particularly if he observes the law of God, has some perfections similar to those of his Creator, whose image and likeness he bears. Such are for example the goodness, the charity, which are characteristic of the Saints.

3. We call the personality that perfection of intelligent beings which makes them masters of themselves. We see that men are personal beings; each man is a person. God is likewise a personal being, but His personality is triple: *God is one Trinity*: there are three divine Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Let us speak now of the *attributes of God in particular*.

According to our conception, the divine nature is

adorned with its attributes as the sun with its light. These attributes are numberless: the principal are:

The incomprehensibility, the ineffability, the invisibility of God.

God is *incomprehensible*, because no created intelligence can comprehend Him: it would be easier to contain the ocean in the palm of our hand or to weigh the mountains in a balance. God is *ineffable*, because no human language can describe His beauty. God is *invisible*, because He is a spirit, an uncreated spirit, similar but infinitely superior to the human soul or to the angels, who are created spirits. Now, God being spiritual, cannot be seen by the eyes of the body, but He is visible to the eyes of the blessed in heaven: there they behold Him face to face in the splendor of His glory.

Let us, my brethren, have a profound reverence for the presence of God, particularly when in church, and at prayer.

122. The First Article of the Creed.—The Knowledge, the Will, the Power of God.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

In the first article of the Creed we profess one true God, with all His attributes or perfections.

Among the divine attributes we discern knowledge, will and power.

Man created in the image of God is gifted with knowledge, free will, and a certain power of action: but the knowledge, the will, and the power of man, are but the shadow of God's knowledge, will and power.

1. God's *knowledge* embraces all the treasures of science and wisdom. It is a sun without the least spot, in comparison with which the knowledge of men, even

though they were all as wise as Solomon, is barely as a lighted candle.—God knows and sees all things: *All things are naked and open to his eyes.* (Heb. iv. 13.) He sees the past and the future as well as the present. The mysteries of science. The secrets of our hearts. He sees into the future as we see in the distance, his knowledge in no wise interfering with the free action of the creature.

He will manifest His knowledge on the day of judgment, when the secrets of consciences and the mysteries of Providence will be laid bare before all eyes. Let us never say then: why does God do such a thing? why does He permit such an event?

2. *The will* of God, infinitely free and infinitely holy in all that it wills or does not will, is called *directive* or *operative*, according to the nature of its object.

It is *directive*, when it guides reasonable creatures by laws, admonitions, examples and desires: *operative*, when it acts directly in the world by creation, by miracles, etc., or when it permits and tolerates the actions of creatures, which have not its approval.—Man should submit to the will of God in all things, always saying: *Thy will be done.*

3. The *power* of God has no limits: He is all powerful in the order of nature and grace. Nothing is difficult or impossible to him, excepting that which implies sin, imperfection or contradiction. He has especially manifested His power in the order of nature by the creation of the world: and, in the order of grace, by the redemption and sanctification of man.

The knowledge of God, my brethren, should cause us to shun evil: His will should be the measure of our will: and His power as His goodness, the foundation of all our confidence in Him.

123. The First Article of the Creed.—The Magnificence of Creation.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

What is meant by the world, by the heaven and earth which God has created? These words signify the universe and all it contains, the stars, minerals, plants, animals, men and angels.

When we contemplate the spectacle of creation, we readily perceive that God has impressed upon it His greatness, His beauty and His goodness.

1. *His greatness.* Let us look at the mountains, the ocean, then at the stars, their number, their magnitude, compared to that of the earth, itself so large, and we will see that the Creator has stamped His work with the seal of His greatness. Let us confine ourselves to one amazing fact: our earth has a circumference of twenty-four thousand miles, and the sun is larger by a million and a half times! How great then is the Creator! and how little are we in comparison to Him!

2. *His beauty.* Let us consider the firmament with its stars, the earth with its trees and flowers; the animals, even the smallest, and their wonderful organism; the earth with the order and harmony which prevail in all its parts: and we shall see a brilliant reflection of the beauty of its Creator.

3. *His goodness.* Let us observe how nature provides for all the wants of the animals, above all of man; how she lavishly furnishes all necessary for our corporal life: light, food, raiment, habitation; and likewise all that our souls require; a religious instruction, a salutary word: how the heavens speak to us of God and draw our hearts towards Him, according to the words of the prophet, *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*, "the heavens show forth the

glory of God " (Ps. xviii); and we shall see that the works of God bear the impress of His goodness.

Let us have a pure heart, my brethren, and an attentive ear to the truths of faith: then will the universe be to us a book, where we shall see written the wonders of the power, of the goodness and of the love of God, inflaming our hearts with a divine love.

124. The First Article of the Creed.—The Guardian Angels.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

God has created heaven and earth, as also all the visible and invisible beings who inhabit the universe. The chief of these creatures are the angels and men.

Among the angels we have our most particular friends and most generous benefactors: they are our guardian angels.

Faith teaches us that we have each a guardian angel, who is our constant companion during life. And further, it is a common opinion, founded on the words of Scripture, that communities, such as the Church, dioceses, nations, have likewise their guardian angels. *God hath given his angels charge over thee*, says the prophet, *to keep thee in all thy ways.*

What service does our guardian angel render us? and what do we owe him in return?

1. The guardian angel defends his client against all the assaults of the demon, he endeavors to shield him from every evil, even bodily harm, but particularly does he strive to keep him from sin and the occasions of sin. If it is his sorrow to see him yield to temptation, he seeks to lead him to repentance; and, notwithstanding the stubbornness and indocility of the sinner, never does he wholly abandon him. And if he finds him docile,

then does he support him in the way to God, and assist him to advance more and more in virtue and sanctity.

To effect this he suggests good thoughts, good desires, he offers to God his prayers and good works, and aids him especially at the hour of death.

After death, if the soul that has been confided to him is in the state of mortal sin, he abandons it to the demon; if it is in the state of grace, he leads it as far as purgatory; and when it has been entirely purified he conducts it into heaven.

The angel Raphael guiding the young Tobias, protecting him from harm, loading him with benefits, is an example of what our guardian angel does, or wishes to do, for us (Tob. 5).

2. What do we owe him in return? "We should render," says St. Bernard, "to our guardian angel a homage of respect, of love and confidence: we should respect his presence, for he is always by our side: we should love him by reason of his many favors: we should have an abiding confidence in him by reason of the protection he offers us, and which we should frequently invoke."

125. The First Article of the Creed.—Man.—Original Sin.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

God has created heaven and earth and all the inhabitants thereof—angels and men. Faith teaches us how man was created by God, and how, but just created, he incurred God's displeasure by committing sin. The teachings of faith referring to the creation of man and original sin may be thus explained.

1. The whole human family, with its races and varieties, is descended from one common father, and all

men are as a consequence brothers. Such is the dogma of the unity of the human species. We readily perceive the result of this beautiful unity. Mankind was destined to be one family, acknowledging God as its Father, and praising with an unanimous voice His holy name. This is the ideal which Jesus Christ came to realize in the foundation of His Church, which should reunite in His embrace all people, so as to form one fold, one family, whose Father is God.

2. God created man in His image and likeness. Having created the earth, the plants and the animals, He said, as if recollecting himself to do His chief work, *Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over all creatures.* And God, adds the Sacred Scripture, *created man to His own image.*

3. God having created man to enjoy eternal beatitude in heaven, placed him on this earth for a time to merit this happiness. Such is the end of man—his first and last end.

4. To aid him in accomplishing his high destiny, God endowed him with the most precious gifts—understanding, sanctifying grace, the submission of his senses to reason, infused knowledge, felicity and immortality.

5. But Adam sinned. God had forbidden him to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: notwithstanding this prohibition, at the solicitation of Eve and the serpent, he ate of the forbidden fruit, and thus grievously disobeyed his Creator.

6. By this sin Adam incurred the divine indignation, lost sanctifying grace, with all the other gifts which he possessed, was banished from the terrestrial paradise and condemned, with all his descendants, to live on this earth as in a place of exile.

7. All men are born guilty of the sin committed by their first father: this is the doctrine of original sin.

8. The Blessed Virgin Mary is alone an exception

to this common malediction, being free from the stain of original sin. This is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, founded on the words which the Angel Gabriel, on behalf of God, addressed to this Blessed Virgin: *I salute thee, Hail, full of Grace.*

Let us invoke frequently, my brethren, the Immaculate Virgin, that she may aid us in purifying our souls from all defilement.

126. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Incarnation.—The Hypostatic Union.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

In the second article of the Creed, we profess that God the Son was made man for us: this is the doctrine of the incarnation and the hypostatic union.

What is meant by the incarnation and the hypostatic union?

1. The incarnation is that great miracle by which God the Son was made man when he took to Himself the human nature in the virginal womb of Mary, and united to Himself that human nature by an inseparable union.

2. The hypostatic union signifies the manner in which is accomplished the union of the human nature with the person of God the Son. The word *hypostatic* means *personal*, and it is said that the humanity with the divinity is hypostatic, or personal, because the human nature is immediately united to the *personality* of God the Son: so that this divine Person, God the Son, has two natures, the divine and the human nature: the first essentially His from all eternity; the second a foreign nature, but which He adopted as His own at the moment of His incarnation. Since that time the human nature belongs to God the Son, as, in each of us, our body and our soul are inseparably ours. In virtue of the hypostatic union the humanity of Christ is substantially united to a divine

person—to a God: it is the humanity of a God, the body and the soul of a God: consequently, it is a divine body, a divine and adorable soul. For, in the same manner as that which appertains to a king is royal, so that which belongs to God is divine.

It is thus we understand doctrinal expressions such as this: *that what we honor in the devotion of the Sacred Heart, is the Heart of Jesus hypostatically united to God the Son.* These words signify that we honor the Heart of Jesus as it exists, living in His sacred breast, and belonging to His person, which is the person of God the Son.

From the hypostatic union it moreover follows, that whatever Jesus Christ does, either as man or as God, must be ascribed to God the Son: for it is always God the Son who acts. Also, the words of Jesus Christ are the words of God the Son: His sufferings and death, the sufferings and death of God the Son: consequently they are divine, and of one value, of one infinite merit.

Let us then, my brethren, adore Jesus Christ as He exists, let us adore His divinity and His humanity, since it is always the very God the Son whom we adore. Let us have an unwavering confidence in the merits of His passion, as they are of infinite value.

127. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Incarnation.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

The Son of God made man is called Jesus Christ, a significative name which indicates His greatness, His mission and its blessings.

He is called Jesus, that is to say, *Saviour*, because He came into this world to save us, by delivering us from sin, and from death which is the consequence of sin.

He is called Christ, *Anointed*, because He is by excellence the anointed of the Lord, and because He

received from the Father the triple unction and the triple character of priest, prophet and king. As priest, He offered the bloody sacrifice of the New Law by immolating Himself on the Cross, and He offers every day on the altar the unbloody sacrifice by the hands of His ministers. As prophet, He gave us the doctrines of Christianity. As king, He established a kingdom, which is His Church, and which He governs from His throne in heaven by the ministry of His visible Vicar on earth, our Holy Father the Pope.

To the name of Jesus Christ the Creed joins *our* Saviour. We may here inquire why God the Son, rather than God the Father, is called our Saviour?

It is (1) because He is not only our Creator, as God the Father, but our Redeemer; (2) because by becoming man He has come to dwell amongst us and has become *ours* in a special manner; (3) because by redeeming us at the price of His blood, we are His property, and He is thus, by a new title, our Master and our Saviour.

Let us ever remember that we were the slaves of the evil one, that the gates of heaven were closed against us, and that hell was our only inheritance; but, in His ineffable mercy, the Son of God, by becoming man and dying for us, broke the chains which bound us, endowed us with the liberty of children of God, opened to us the gates of heaven, and showed us the way which leads thereto. Nor is this all: not only has He made known to us the way to heaven, but by His grace aids us in our pilgrimage.

Let us then, my brethren, accept the assistance which the divine Master offers us in prayer and the Sacraments to keep us in the way which leads to eternal life. Let us love Jesus Christ, our Saviour and best benefactor: let us honor the holy name, the name of Jesus Christ, at the mention of which every knee ought to bow of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth.

128. The Third Article of the Creed.—The Birth and Hidden Life of Jesus Christ.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

In the third article of the Creed we profess the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ and His birth of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

The Son of God was born, as we know, at Bethlehem. The Church celebrates this mystery on the twenty-fifth day of December, Christmas Day. Three great events signalized the birth of the Saviour: the poverty of His cradle, the adoration of the shepherds and the arrival of the Magi, guided by a star. When these had found the Infant Jesus at Bethlehem, they prostrated themselves in adoration: and unfolding their treasures, they offered Him gifts, of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This is the subject of the feast of the Epiphany.

On the eighth day after His birth, the Divine Infant was circumcised, and was named Jesus: this is the feast of the Circumcision which we celebrate on the first of January.

On the fortieth day He was presented in the Temple, where His holy Mother at the same time performed the ceremony of the purification: hence the feast of the Purification which is celebrated on the second of February. It was on this occasion that the Saviour of the world, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of an infant, was recognized by two holy persons, the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna. Simeon took the Infant into his arms, and in a transport of joy said: *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel* (St. Luke, ii. 29-32).

Shortly after this followed the flight into Egypt. There the Holy Family remained during the lifetime of Herod, who sought the life of the Child: after his death they returned to Judea, and made their home at Nazareth.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He astonished the doctors of the Law in the Temple at Jerusalem by emitting, as it were, one ray of His divine wisdom: subsequently He returned with His parents to Nazareth, and, says the Gospel, "he was subject to them: and he advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man."

The Gospel, moreover, intimates that He labored as a mechanic in the humble workshop of St. Joseph: this is what we call His hidden life, which continued until He was about thirty years old. How many are the lessons, my brethren, which the Saviour teaches us in His hidden life? A God obeying His own creatures! A God laboring as an humble mechanic! Behold how He has ennobled, sanctified labor! Behold how He has exalted the humble condition of the working man: happy those who, in that humble yet noble calling, fix their eyes on the divine workman of Nazareth and by His example sanctify their labor.

129. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—The Tribunal of Caiphas.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Many were the stages of our Saviour's passion: the first was the garden of Olives, the second the house of Caiphas, the high-priest of the Jews, and president of the great Council. Jesus, conducted by the soldiers, is led before Caiphas, who awaits Him with a crowd of Pharisees and members of the great Council. He immediately interrogates Him: but scarcely has Jesus an-

swered, when He is struck by one of the servants. He then calls witnesses to give evidence against Him; but their testimony being insufficient, the high-priest apostrophizes the Saviour and summons Him to explicitly say if He is the Son of God.

Answering affirmatively, Jesus was condemned to death as a blasphemer.

During this first examination, which took place about two o'clock in the morning, St. Peter having entered the court of the high-priest, being questioned first by one maid-servant, then by another and by a man-servant, finally by many servants and a kinsman of Malchus, and thus unable to avoid saying whether or not he was a disciple of Jesus, yielding to a sinful cowardice, denied His Master three times.

After the sentence, the Council being adjourned, Jesus was committed to the keeping of a body of low servants, who submitted Him to the vilest outrages.

In the meantime Judas, having heard that His Master was condemned to death, was struck with the most bitter remorse of conscience, and brought back the price of his treason: but the chief-priests refused to accept it. Then the unhappy man abandoning himself to despair, went and hanged himself with a halter. His body, says the Scripture, burst asunder in the midst: and all his bowels gushed out.

About seven o'clock in the morning, the full council being assembled at the house of Caiphas, they made Jesus repeat His pretendedly blasphemous declaration, they reiterated His condemnation, then they led Him to the pretorium, that is, to the palace of the Roman governor, who at that time was Pontius Pilate. Remembering these indignities, my brethren, which our divine Master suffered, and the patience with which He bore them, should we not learn to suffer something for the love of Him?

130. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—The Tribunal of Pilate.

Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

We have seen the first two scenes of the passion of our Saviour, namely, that of the garden of Olives, and the house of Caiphas: let us now view the third, that which had for its stage the palace of Pilate, which is called the pretorium.

Why, my brethren, did the Jews, after having condemned Jesus to death, arraign Him before the tribunal of Pilate? What was their purpose, and their plan?

They wished the death of Jesus on the cross, but without bearing the odium of their crime, or provoking the indignation of the people, who were most favorably disposed towards our Saviour. Therefore, they took care to proceed, not secretly and by assassination, but publicly, by condemning Him with a pretentious display of judges and justice. They reckoned on this to change public opinion in their favor. This is why (1) they assemble their Sanhedrim, a sort of senate or great Council of their nation; (2) and why they importune Pilate to ratify their sentence and to decree His crucifixion.

On Friday morning the leaders of the Jewish people lead Jesus to the pretorium. They usher in their divine prisoner, whilst they themselves remain without. Pilate having readily convinced Himself of the innocence of Jesus, appears and tells the Jews he must liberate Him. They then accuse Jesus of endeavoring to excite the people to rebellion in Judea and in Galilee, His own country.

Pilate hearing that He was a Galilean sent Him to Herod, King of Galilee, who was at that time resident

at Jerusalem. Herod, having interrogated Him, could find no cause for His condemnation, but treating Him as a fool, arrayed Him in a white garment as an object for public ridicule, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate, irresolute and cowardly judge, not daring to defy the Jews, who demanded with loud cries the death of Jesus, had recourse to a double expedient to appease their rage. He first sought to apply in His favor the paschal grace, which was to pardon a prisoner at the request of the people, but they preferred Barabbas to Jesus. His second expedient was the scourging at the pillar: he caused the innocent Jesus to be cut with the lash, hoping thereby to excite the pity of His enemies; but these blood-thirsty people with still greater vehemence demanded His death. Pilate yielded and pronounced the sentence which condemned Jesus to the death of the Cross.

What injustice, my brethren, what shocking injustice! To convict the innocent of a crime, and to condemn Him to death! And Jesus, the victim of such injustice, suffered it without a murmur, in His love of us. Should we not in our turn suffer something for the love of Him?

131. The Seventh Article of the Creed.—The Last Judgment, the Sentence.

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We profess in this article the dogma of the last judgment. When shall this great event take place?

After the general resurrection, when all men will have assembled at the place of judgment, awaiting the sovereign judge, the heavens will be opened, and they will see Jesus Christ descending with His angels and taking His seat on the throne of His majesty. At either side of Him the Apostles will also be assigned thrones to judge with Him all men and the rebellious angels.

The judge will place the elect on His right hand and the condemned on His left. "Then," says the Scripture, "the books will be opened:" which signifies that the consciences of men will be revealed. The conscience of each one, the secrets of his heart, his actions, his entire life, will be unveiled as on a living tablet, not only before his own eyes, but before the eyes of the whole world.

For nothing is covered, says our Saviour, which shall not be revealed on that day.

Jesus Christ will then pronounce the final sentence. He will say to the elect: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Then turning toward the wicked He will address to them these fearful words: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. xxv.). The sentences being pronounced, hell opening its abyss, swallows body and soul, the multitude of the damned, and closes on them forever. The remaining elect, who, mingling with the angels, and forming an innumerable host gloriously triumphant, are borne towards heaven in the company of Jesus Christ, entering with Him the heavenly Jerusalem.

Such then is the great event of which we shall all be witnesses, in which we shall all be interested, no matter who we are and what we may be: *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ* (Rom. xiv. 10). Will we be of the number of the elect? A serious question, which every one must decide for himself. As none of us wishes to be numbered with the damned, let us strive to be of the elect, by living, with the assistance of God's grace, as true Christians.

132. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Church, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

In this article we profess that the Catholic Church, of which the Roman Pontiff is head, is the true Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the Church? *It is*, we answer, *the assembly of the faithful, who profess the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, under the supremacy of our Holy Father the Pope.*

The word assembly here signifies an organized society, a kingdom.

The Church is that great empire which Daniel, in his prophetic visions, saw exalted and extended over all other kingdoms, to remain forever. It is the empire of Christ, that which the Saviour announced under the name of *their kingdom* or *the Kingdom of God*, the Church, of which He was to be founder and the head. The Church is a spiritual kingdom, but visible, and analogous to temporal kingdoms.

1. The Church is a *spiritual* kingdom: not because it is composed of pure spirits, but because its end and its principal means towards that end are spiritual.

2. The Church is a *visible* kingdom, because it is (1) composed of men, and (2) because it bears distinctive marks which are apparent to us.

3. It is *analogous to temporal kingdoms*, because it has, in a most perfect manner, all the essential conditions which constitute temporal kingdoms: its own autonomy, a sovereign, subjects, and a law by which the sovereign rules his subjects.

(1) Its own autonomy.—Every kingdom has the right of existence, of propriety, of preservation, etc., which other nations are bound to respect; the Church has the same autonomy, but it is more sacred: since it is found-

ed, not only on the natural order, as the autonomy of earthly kingdoms, but on the positive will of God.

(2) A sovereign.—The sovereign of the Church is Jesus Christ, always living, and who can have no successor; but as He is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and is not visible on earth, He has appointed as His representative a viceroy or Vicar, Peter and his successors, who, though elective, form the perpetual dynasty of the Kingdom of Christ.

(3) Subjects.—The subjects of the Church are, as a matter of fact, all the Catholics of the world. As a matter of right, not only Catholics but all men are subjects of the Church, because Jesus Christ being the legitimate King of all, all are held to acknowledge Him.

(4) A law.—The Scriptures with the Apostolic traditions, that is to say all that Jesus Christ revealed and taught, constitute the fundamental law, which regulates the government of the Church and the lives of the faithful.

This fundamental law is invariable, but in no wise excludes secondary laws and regulations. Such, for example, are the Commandments of the Church, which serve to promote a better observance of the primary ordinances.

Since Jesus Christ is the Head and King of the Church, all we, who have the happiness to belong to the Church, are His subjects. Let us then be faithful and obedient subjects: let us merit thus to pass from this earthly Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is that of His grace, to the Kingdom of His glory which is in heaven.

133. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Communion of Saints, Excommunication.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

Holy Church forms one family, where all the faithful, as so many children, work together under the direction

of their father, who is Jesus Christ, and where each one shares in the common good. This participation in the common good is called the *Communion of Saints*. It is defined: *the participation of the faithful in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the public offices, in the good works, in the prayers which are said in the Church, and in the indulgences which are affixed to them.*

Who are they who participate in the Communion of Saints, and who are deprived of this privilege?

1. All those who are members of the true Church participate in the Communion of Saints, each one according to his dispositions and necessities. There are in the Church living members and dead members, that is to say the just and the sinners: these last though not wholly excluded are deprived of the most precious gifts of the Communion of Saints. The deceased faithful who are in purgatory derive relief in their sufferings from the prayers and good works of their brethren on earth.

2. They are deprived of the Communion of Saints, or excluded from the Communion of the Church, who have never been living members of it: or who, having been, are cut off by excommunication, or have separated themselves by apostasy; in other words, they are the pagans, the Turks, the Jews, the heretics, the schismatics, the excommunicated and apostates.

Excommunication is an ecclesiastical censure or punishment which the Pope and Bishops have power to inflict.

We incur excommunication by participating in a duel either as principal or witness; by uniting with societies condemned by the Church—such as the Freemasons and Odd-fellows; by reading books and pamphlets nominately condemned and forbidden by the Church. Let us eagerly avail ourselves, my brethren, of the benefits of the Communion of Saints, by associating ourselves, at least by intention, with the good works which are

performed by the faithful, by gaining all the indulgences we possibly can.

Let us ask our Saviour never to permit us to be separated from the Church by heresy, unbelief, or culpable indifference which is the equivalent of apostasy.

134. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Constitution of the Church.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Church, established by our Lord Jesus Christ, is the assembly of the faithful, who profess the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, under the supremacy of our Holy Father the Pope.

By the term *assembly of the faithful* we are to understand a perfect society, founded by Jesus Christ, and composed of two parts, united together by the double link of authority and charity.

1. The Church is a society, that is to say *a moral body*. Every human society, such as a family or kingdom, constitutes a moral body, analogous to physical bodies—for example, to the human body.

In every physical body we distinguish two correlative parts: for instance, in the human body, the head which commands, and the members which obey; in a house, the foundation which sustains, and the edifice which is sustained. So, in the moral body or a society we distinguish two analogous parts—the one commanding and the other obeying.

2. The Church is a *perfect* society. There are some societies, for example a family, a community, which we call *imperfect*, because they are dependent on a superior authority. There are others which we call *perfect*, because they are independent of any superior society in the same order. Such is a kingdom, or a republic, which acknowledges no tribute to any other State. Now, the

Church is a *perfect society*, independent of every other, and of an incomparable organization: *This is the Lord's doing: and it is wonderful in our eyes* (Ps. cxvii.).

3. The Church is a society *established by Jesus Christ*. The kingdoms of this world are human institutions, and for this very reason subject to change and overthrow. The Church is a divine work, established by the God-Man, who has promised it an eternal duration: *Thou art Peter; says He to His chief Apostle, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

4. A society *composed of two parts*. The two constitutive parts of the Church are the clergy and the laity. The clergy embraces all the degrees of the hierarchy, and forms the Church teaching—governing; the laity embraces all the faithful subject to their pastors, and constitutes the Church taught—governed.

5. These two parts are *united together by the links of authority and charity*. The authority conferred by Jesus Christ on His Church is exercised in three ways, by teaching, governing, and administering the Sacraments: it unites the members to the Pope and their subordinate superiors, inspiring them with respect and Christian obedience. Charity unites the clergy to the laity and the laity to one another by a holy love, which urges them to seek the welfare of one another.

Let us love, my brethren, and practice obedience and Christian charity: these are the two links which bind us to the Church and to Jesus Christ.

135. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Mission and Destiny of the Church.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Church, the assembly, the society of the faithful, established by Jesus Christ, has received from Him a

mission to fulfil, a destiny to attain. The mission and final destiny of the Church are described in these words of her divine founder: *As my Father hath sent me, I also send you* (St. John xx. 21). *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?* (St. Luke xxiv. 26). *It is through many tribulations, we must enter into the Kingdom of God* (Acts xiv. 21).

The mission of Jesus Christ was to save the world: and His destiny to enter into glory by His sufferings. Such is also the mission and destiny of the Church.

1. Jesus Christ was sent to save the world by delivering it from error and sin, the fountains of all wickedness. To accomplish this, He preached His Gospel, shed His blood, and instituted the Sacraments.

The world's great error was the improper estimate placed on the riches and pleasures of this life, they being considered the only worthy objects of man's ambition and efforts. Our Saviour corrected this error by His doctrine, teaching that the immortal treasures of heaven are alone of intrinsic value; that to acquire them, man must estimate as above everything else the salvation of his soul; that to be saved, he must do penance for his sins, and observe the commandments of God. To extirpate sin, our Saviour shed His blood as an atonement, and at the same time instituted the Sacraments as means by which His satisfactions and His merits may be applied to us individually. The Church walking in the footsteps of her divine founder, continues to combat error and sin. To triumph over error, she preaches, she teaches; to blot out sin, she calls men to do penance, to receive the Sacraments, to practise every virtue.

2. Jesus Christ suffered and by the way of sufferings entered into His glory. The Church must likewise suffer the persecutions, the combats, and the contradictions that crowd her way in her pilgrimage through the ages. She meets them without fear, she triumphs over

them, and so sends to glory ever reduplicating legions of heroes, who go to people the celestial city. When the number will be complete, at the day of judgment, they will appear with Jesus Christ before the eyes of the world, in all the splendor of their glory; and, with their divine Master, they will enter the eternal kingdom which was their destiny.

Then let us not fear, my brethren, to share the sufferings of Jesus Christ, since it is by so doing we will enter with Him into glory.

136. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Marks of the Church.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

In this article we profess that Jesus Christ has established a Church, and that that Church is no other than the Roman Catholic Church, beyond whose pale there is no salvation. In order that all men might be able to recognize His Church, our Saviour has stamped it with distinctive marks which are visible to all: namely, unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity.

1. *Unity.* As civil society is manifold, divided into a number of kingdoms, independent one of the other: so religious society, the Church of Jesus Christ, is one. She is one in this sense, (1) that there is only one true Church of Jesus Christ, embracing all the faithful of the world; (2) this one true Church has only one head, one faith, one liturgy founded on the Sacraments. *There shall be*, says Jesus Christ, *one fold and one shepherd.*

2. The *Sanctity* of the Church, invisible in itself, is seen in its effects, namely, (1) a doctrine always holy; (2) the heroic virtue and good works, always flourishing in a portion of the members of the Church; (3) the miracles, which even now are worked within her communion.

3. *Catholicity*, that is to say the universality of the

Church, her power of expanding and her propagation over the earth. As a vine which shoots its branches a great way off, the Church has engrafted herself on the nations of the earth, everywhere bringing forth the same fruits of sanctity and good works.

4. The *Apostolicity* of the Church is the apostolic foundation which our Saviour built for her. He established her on His Apostles, that is to say by their teaching and their divine mission, on an immovable basis from which she never can be shaken. Therefore a doctrine which cannot be traced to the Apostles is not the true doctrine. Pastors who cannot prove a descent from the Apostles by an uninterrupted succession, are not lawful pastors.

Such are the marks of the true Church of Jesus Christ, which are to be found only in the Church of Rome. Contemplating the Roman Catholic Church, we behold these four marks brilliantly emblazoned on her brow: she is one, she is holy, she is catholic and apostolic. To speak only of the last mark—the succession of the Popes, from St. Peter down to the present Pontiff—the conformity of her doctrine with all the holy Doctors even to the days of the Apostles, demonstrates her apostolicity.

The Church of Rome is therefore the true Church of Jesus Christ, which all must acknowledge or else suffer eternal loss. Let us thank God, my brethren, that we are children of the true Church; let us always love her as a fond mother; let us always give her, in the person of her ministers, the respect and obedience which are her due.

137. The Pope. The Pilot of the Bark of St. Peter. The Visible Head of the Church.

The Pope, the successor of Peter in the government of the Catholic Church, is not only the Vicar of Jesus Christ, but also the pilot who steers the sacred

bark of St. Peter. The bark or the small vessel employed by St. Peter in his occupation as a fisherman, on which our Saviour embarked, and from which He preached to the multitude, was a figure of the Church which was to buffet the waves of the ages, bearing Jesus Christ and His doctrine, having for her pilot Peter and his successors. The hand of Peter holds the tiller to direct the Church in her appointed voyage; he has nothing to fear, he knows no fear, for he carries Him who commands the waves and the tempests.

The Pope is also called the Visible Head of the Church. As a family is governed by its father, and a kingdom by its king, the Church—which is the family of God and His Kingdom on earth—should have a head to govern her. The Head is Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, to whom the Father has given all nations as an inheritance with full power in heaven and on earth; but being invisible to our eyes, it is necessary that He should exercise His divine government among men by a visible agent: such is His Vicar on earth, our Holy Father the Pope.

In his character of visible Head of the Church, the Pope governs the Church, as in a living man the head governs the body and all its members. His influence extends to all the faithful without exception, directing them in the way of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, as the representative of the divine Master Himself. What a blessing it is for us to have individually the privilege of obeying our holy Father the Pope, since his voice is no other than that of Jesus Christ Himself.

If you do not comprehend how the influence of the holy Father the Pope extends even to you, since you are distant from him many miles, know that he is near you in your pastors, who have received their authority from him, and in the laws and precepts of the Church which emanate from him, as do the words falling from his

lips. Let us then faithfully observe all the Commandments of holy Church as they are enacted by our holy Father the Pope: doing so we will be obedient to him who governs us in the name of Jesus Christ, we will be obedient to Jesus Christ Himself.

138. Conscience.

Besides the *law*, which is the external standard of human actions, there is an internal standard which aids us in the observance of the law: this is conscience.

The word *conscience* is often understood as referring to the remembrance of sins: for example, when one says he is about *to examine his conscience*; here we use it to signify the internal standard of human actions: in this sense we say that *one must follow his conscience*.

Conscience is defined as a practical judgment deciding the right or wrong of an act which we are about to perform. It is an interior voice, which says to each one what he must do, what he must avoid.

It is never lawful to act contrary to one's conscience: but, if one who is held to obedience believes what he is commanded to do to be contrary to the law, he may abstain from acting until it is explained to him.

The voice of conscience when it is clear and categorical must always be obeyed. If it be doubtful, the doubt must be removed by our study, or by our consulting those who are able to advise us.

Our conscience can be right, false or perverse. It is *right* when its judgment is conformable to the truth and the law properly interpreted; for example: *Obey thy parents*. It is *false* when it decides as good an action which is bad; for example: *Obey thy parents, even when they command thee to neglect thy religious duties*; or as bad an action which is good and lawful; for example: *We must observe the Ember days, even those not occurring in Lent*.

The *perverse* conscience is that of sinners, who, abandoning themselves to their wicked ways, are so accustomed to resist their reason and their conscience, that they no longer heed aught within them but the always false voice of passion, which they accept for the rule of conscience. Nevertheless sometimes reason makes itself heard in spite of them, and remorse makes them feel its sting: this is their moment of grace—it is God who summons them to amend their lives.

To prudently form our conscience, it is necessary (1) to have a knowledge of the divine law, in accordance with our state and condition in life; (2) to follow the judgment and direction of a prudent confessor.

Let us then, my brethren, have for our rule of life naught else but our conscience, obeying at all times its voice: then we will have nothing to reproach us, and we will enjoy that peace of heart which is sweeter than all the pleasures of the world.

139. The First Commandment.—Acts of Religion.

You will love and serve only one God with all thy heart.

The first Commandment prescribes our religious duties, these consist of divers acts of religion, namely: adoration, sacrifice, the oblation of ourselves, prayer and the participating in the public devotions of the Church.

1. *Adoration.* We must adore God, that is revere Him as the Creator of all things, and without reserve obey Him as the supreme Master whom all creation must serve. We must above all never forget to make an act of adoration, when we kneel to pray, or when we come into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

2. *Sacrifice.* Sacrifice consists in the immolation of a victim to honor the supreme majesty of God and to obtain His graces. Jesus Christ has enjoined only one

sacrifice, but a perfect sacrifice, one of infinite dignity: the sacrifice of the holy Mass.

3. *The oblation of ourselves.* This consists in offering to God our soul and body, all that we are, all that we possess, and in performing all our actions for His greater honor and glory, according to the words of St. Paul, *Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do: do all to the glory of God.* This offering of ourselves we may make by saying, *My God, I offer Thee my heart!* or else, *My God, I am thine, dispose of me and all I possess, according to Thy will and Thy good pleasure.*

4. *Prayer.* Prayer is a conversation with God, or as others define it, the elevation of our soul to God, offering Him our praise, our petitions and all the affections of our heart. Prayer is necessary for salvation, not only because it is of precept, but moreover it is necessary as a means for adults. Those who do not pray, or pray badly, shall not be saved: those who pray as our Saviour has prescribed, shall be saved. We should never forget to pray morning and evening, before and after meals, when present in the church at divine services, and in the time of danger and temptation.

5. *Participating in the public devotions of the Church.* This consists in frequenting the Sacraments, assisting at the sacrifice of the Mass, and the other offices and solemnities which are celebrated in the church. It is in the church that God is particularly pleased to hear our prayers. Exercise then, my brethren, with piety these different religious duties: we possess in this holy practice the foundation of a Christian life and the pledge of salvation.

140. The First Commandment.—The Worship of the Saints.

The first Commandment enjoins the religious worship, by which we must honor the divine Majesty.

With the worship which we directly offer God Himself, is connected the worship of the Saints, that is to say that which we give to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Angels, to the Martyrs and the Blessed, recognized as such by the Church.

1. The worship given to the Saints *revolves to God*, the Author of all sanctity: it is God Himself whom we principally honor by the honor we pay the Saints, as it is He who has crowned them with grace and glory.

2. The worship of the Saints, that very same by which we honor the august Mother of our Saviour, *differs essentially* from that of God. The worship given to God is called *latria* or adoration; that given to the Saints, *dulia* or homage: that given to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *hyperdulia* or greater homage, by reason of her supereminent dignity as Mother of God.

3. Not only is the worship of the Saints proper and lawful, but it is moreover fraught with the most precious advantages. This worship is consecrated by the general practice of the Church, a practice founded on tradition and the Scriptures: it is pleasing to God, who sees Himself glorified in His Saints by the honors which we pay them: it procures for the faithful powerful intercessors in heaven, and stimulates them to emulate their virtues on earth.

Among all the Angels and Saints we should particularly honor the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, our guardian angel, the Saint whose name we bear, and those who are our principal patrons. Let us honor the Saints, my brethren, with fervent devotion, according to the spirit of the Church: they will intercede for

us in heaven, and will aid us to imitate their virtues on earth.

141. The Second Commandment.—The Oath and Perjury.

Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord thy God in vain.

The second Commandment forbids not only blasphemy but also perjury.

Perjury is correctly defined false swearing, or the profanation of the religious act which is called swearing or oath.

To swear is to call God as a witness of the truth of what is said, or promised. This act in itself is good and holy: in calling God as a witness we profess that He is the supreme truth, and that He knows all things.

However, that swearing may be licit in practice, three conditions are necessary: truth, justice, and judgment: it is not enough that what one is saying is true and implies no sin, but there must be a reasonable motive for affirming it on oath. Therefore to swear to a lie, a slander, a criminal project, etc., is a mortal sin. To swear truly, but for insufficient and frivolous reasons, is disrespectful to the divine Majesty, and exposes the one so doing to commit perjury. Perjury or false swearing is always a mortal sin, because he outrages the eminent truthfulness of God, who summons Him to bear witness to the truth of a falsehood.

We must fulfil our sworn promises, if what is promised be neither bad nor forbidden; but no oath is binding which involves a disobedience of God's law. It is a sin to make such an oath, and a second sin to fulfil it. Such an oath is not binding, because it is never lawful to offend God. Our Saviour advises us in the Gospel *never to swear*, that is to say only seldom, and on important

occasions: as for the rest, we are simply to tell the truth: it is so, it is not so, *Yea, Yea, No, No* (St. Matt. v. 37).

These words of our Saviour should teach us to guard our speech, particularly when contradicted.

He gives us an example of this virtue in His Passion, by His silence when accused or maltreated.

If it happen that we be required by the law to take an oath, we must do so with a profound respect for the divine Majesty, which we invoke as a witness of the truth of what we say or promise.

The Church exacts of her ministers, under oath, a solemn profession of Catholic faith, before their ordination. This oath is taken in the church before the altar, where they are assembled and on which the book of the Gospels is placed.

142. The Third Commandment.—Hearing Mass.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.

To sanctify the Sunday, we must not only abstain from servile work, but also engage ourselves in the exercise of works of religion for the glory of God.

1. The first and principal duty to be fulfilled on Sunday, is to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. All the faithful who have reached the age of reason, are bound to hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation. We must hear a whole Mass under the pain of mortal sin: so that, should one come very late, for instance after the Offertory, he must hear another Mass. We must hear Mass in a Christian manner, that is to say, with respect and devotion: it is not sufficient that we be bodily present, engaging ourselves with everything other than the service of God.

It is obligatory to hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation, because, being a repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross, it is an act at once most holy, most salutary, and most acceptable to the divine Majesty.

2. Besides hearing Mass we should be present, as frequently as we can, at the other divine services, at the sermon, and instructions: we should receive the Sacraments, we should occupy ourselves in works of piety and charity convenient with our state of life. We are not, however, obliged to devote the entire day to works of religion and charity; we are allowed to spend a part of it in any becoming and Christian recreation.

The precept of hearing Mass ceases to bind, when it is either physically or morally impossible to be present thereat.

Hence, the following are dispensed from hearing Mass on Sunday: the sick, the convalescent who cannot go from home without danger of relapse; those who must nurse the sick; those who cannot procure any one to protect their homes, their children, or their business; those who live at a great distance from the church. In fine, domestics, children, women, provided their masters, their parents, their husbands require them to remain at home during the time of Mass, are dispensed, if they cannot disobey without grave inconvenience.

Let us not neglect, my brethren, on Sundays and holy-days of obligation to assist with devotion at the divine offices, and to devote ourselves to other works of piety. And if we find that it is impossible for us to be present at the Sermon, let us supply its want by reading some pious book.

143. The Fourth Commandment.—Sins of Children.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long lived.

The fourth Commandment commands us to honor our parents, and forbids all that is opposed to filial piety, that is to say, to the love, respect, and obedience which we owe our parents.

1. We sin against filial *love*, when we cherish in our heart hatred and ill-will towards our parents; when we curse them, when we wish them evil, when we annoy them, when we grieve them, when we make them shed tears, and when we neglect to pray for them.

2. We sin against *respect*, when we despise them, when we look at them disrespectfully, when we speak to them harshly, and when we answer them insolently; when we mock their advice, when we mimic them for ridicule, and when we address to them injurious and menacing words. To raise our hand in a threatening manner against our father or mother, even though we strike not, is a mortal sin.

We moreover do injury to our parents when we speak with pleasure of their faults; when we make known or exaggerate their faults to those who are ignorant of them: in a word, when we injure their reputation. In doing so, we commit a double sin: a sin against justice and a sin against filial piety.

In fine, they are guilty of disrespect, and worthy of severe censure, who, becoming rich, or being raised to some high dignity, refuse through pride or vanity to publicly recognize their parents, to visit them, to receive them at their homes, because they are poor or without education.

3. We sin against filial *obedience*, when we refuse to obey our parents' commands, or when we murmur in so doing. The sin of disobedience is either mortal or venial, according as there is more or less obstinacy or stubbornness, and the command is more or less important. We sin when, notwithstanding the prohibition of our parents, we associate with bad companions, or frequent dangerous places, saloons, balls, theatres, or evening entertainments; likewise, when in spite of the command of our parents, we omit to hear Mass on holy-days of obligation, to approach the Sacrament of Penance, or to attend

the religious instructions given in our parish. We also sin, when we fail to do what is commanded by our parents in the interest of the family or when, without sufficient reason, we leave home against the will of our father and mother. And, we must remember also, that he likewise offends against parental authority, who without the consent of his parents forms friendships with a view to matrimony.

Disobedience to our parents is a special sin, which we must always tell in confession. Hence, for example, he who, notwithstanding the commands of his parents, misses Mass on Sunday, must accuse himself not only of missing Mass, but also of disobeying his parents.

If, however, our parents should so far forget their duty as to command us to do anything contrary to God's law, to justice, or morality, we must refuse; this would not be to disobey our parents, but to obey God.

Moreover, when we have reached that age when it is necessary for us to choose a state of life, as on that choice depends to a great extent our eternal salvation, we must ask the grace of God to know His will, that we may as Christians fulfil it. But besides asking the direction of God by prayer, and seeking the advice of a prudent director in the tribunal of Penance, we should also, as a rule, consult with our parents, particularly when there is question of a state of life in the world.

Finally, we fail in the duty incumbent on us all of assisting our parents when, being able to aid them, we abandon them to their fate: when we do not interest ourselves in their salvation, or when we do not pray for them, be it during their life, or after their death.

Let us then, my brethren, never fail in our filial love; let no day pass without a prayer for our parents, be they living or dead.

144. The Fourth Commandment.—The Duties of Parents.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst be long lived.

The fourth Commandment not only requires children to honor their parents, but likewise implicitly prescribes to parents the important duties which their position imposes on them.

Parents must love all their children equally, and this love they prove by maintaining and educating them.

1. Parents must *love* their children in a *Christian manner*, that is to say, for the love of God, with a love mingled with respect, considering them as a sacred charge confided to their keeping by our Saviour; desiring and seeking their true welfare, not only as regards their body but also their soul. This is why parents are required to have their children baptized without unnecessary delay.

2. Parents must *maintain* their children. By saying this we mean that they are held to care for the bodily well-being and worldly interests of their children. They must use every care to prolong their life, to preserve their health, to guard them from bodily injury; they must provide them with food and clothing according to their condition in life.

Therefore parents are faithless to their duty when, by waste and extravagant habits, they render themselves unable to provide these things for their children.

3. They must educate their children. This education which is the chief duty of parents, and their principal responsibility before God, ought above all else be Christian.

Christian education begins at home, and is ordinarily completed at school.

Home education must be the foundation of school or

public education. Children in their early childhood, like soft wax, are capable of receiving every impression. We can make them angels, or the very reverse: parents will soon discover in what mould they have been modelled.

The duties of parents in reference to the education of their children are instruction, watchfulness, correction and good example.

Since the Christian education of their children is the all-important matter for which they will have to answer before the divine Tribunal, it is well that parents sometimes examine themselves in the presence of God on this subject, whether or not they fulfil their duties of instruction, of watchfulness, of correction which we shall hereafter explain, as also the obligation of ever giving good example.

145. The Fifth Commandment.—Scandal.

The fifth Commandment forbids murder, that of the soul as well as of the body. He murders the soul, and commits spiritual murder, who wounds and kills his neighbor in his soul by scandal.

By scandal we mean, all that may be to our neighbor an occasion of spiritual death. It is defined, *a word, an action or omission, bad in itself or only in appearance, that is the occasion of another committing sin*. Scandal may be *direct* or *indirect*. It is *direct* when he who gives it has the intention of inducing another to sin: for example, such is the scandal given by one who solicits another to commit a sin of impurity, theft or perjury.

It is *indirect* when there is no such intention, and yet by his bad example, in word or action, he is the occasion of another falling into sin.

The following must be considered as grievously guilty of scandal:

1. Those who habitually blaspheme.
2. Those who publish papers, pamphlets, or other publications contrary to religion or morality.
3. Those who sell or cause such writings to be read.
4. Those who compose, distribute or sing immoral songs.
5. Those who exhibit or attend plays or comedies in which the practice of religion or the sanctity of marriage or virtue is ridiculed.
6. Those who paint or print indecent pictures or make indecent statues.
7. Those who in their dress disregard the rules of decency and modesty.

It is a species of scandal to concur in the sin of our neighbor by a *formal* co-operation; this is never permissible. This is not so, however, of *material* co-operation. By this we mean an action indifferent in itself, which contributes to the sin of another contrary to the intention of the co-operator: for example, licitly selling fire-arms, notwithstanding that many purchasers use them for improper purposes.

Scandal is a most heinous sin, which Jesus Christ denounces with these dreadful words: *If any one shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea. Wo to the world because of scandals! Wo to the man by whom the scandal cometh!* The ruin done by the scandals of the world to Christians, particularly to the young, may be ascribed to two causes—first to the temerity with which they expose themselves to them; secondly, to human respect which leads them to follow bad example, or to cowardly yield to the influence of others.

Let us always give good example to our neighbor, my brethren, never scandalizing him: and if we have had the misfortune to scandalize any one, let us hasten to repair

it as far as we are able: let us urge to repentance whomsoever we have led into sin, and let us pray for his conversion.

146. The Eighth Commandment.—Contumely.—Ridicule.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The eighth Commandment forbids false testimony, lying, or detraction; it also forbids tale-bearing, contumely, ridicule and the betrayal of secrets.

Tale-bearing consists in relating to any one the unfavorable words spoken of him by another. This is a detestable practice, for it sows discord where there was peace, it discomposes the quiet of families and causes dissension among friends. It is a more grievous sin than detraction.

Contumely consists in saying or doing anything in the presence of our neighbor hurtful to his honor and reputation. We commit this sin by harsh words, reproaches, insinuations, or biting raillery.

Ridicule is to offend our neighbor by mockery, in order to cause him grief or shame. It is most heinous when it has for its object the virtue or the Christian simplicity of our neighbor. This, however, is not sinful, when it is engaged in as a recreation among friends; unless we foresee that the object of it will be angered. When we have injured any one, we must make reparation as soon as possible, by asking forgiveness, by apologizing, or by using some other words expressive of our regret and good-will.

We sin also by the abuse of the tongue *when we reveal*, without a valid reason, a secret which has been confided to us.

We are dispensed from the obligation of secrecy in the following cases: (1) when the matter has already

become known or public: for then it is no longer a secret; (2) when the revelation of the secret is considered necessary for the public good, or for any other very grave reason. We must understand that there is here no question of the natural secret, and in no wise of the sacramental secret of Confession, which admits of no dispensation, and which is buried in the bosom of God Himself.

The law of secrecy not only forbids us revealing matters confided to us: but also forbids us to extort the secret of another, to open and read letters which are not addressed to us, unless we have permission or a proportionate reason. In this, as in everything else referring to the obligation of justice and charity, we must follow the cardinal rule of never doing to others what we would not reasonably wish them to do to us. Let us ask God, my brethren, to deeply engrave in our hearts these maxims of justice and charity: never to do to another what we would not wish to have done to ourselves: never to say of another what we would not wish to have said of ourselves: never to speak of another as we would not wish others to speak of us. After the example of the divine Master, let us, my brethren, be humble and kind of heart, and never let us say of our neighbor an unkind, or ungenerous word.

147. The Second Commandment of the Church.— The Law of Fasting.

To keep fast in Lent, the Ember Days, the Fridays in Advent, and eves of certain Festivals, and to abstain from flesh on Fridays, and on other appointed days of abstinence.

This Commandment commands us to fast and to abstain on the days appointed by the Church.

When must we fast? In what does fasting consist? And who of the faithful are subject to this law?

The law of fasting obliges: (1) during the whole of Lent: (2) on the Ember Days, that is, on the Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays of four weeks in the year, namely, the third week of Advent, the first of Lent, that of Pentecost, and that whose Wednesday follows the fourteenth of September, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. (3) The Fridays of Advent. And finally, (4) on the vigils of Christmas, Pentecost, the Assumption and All-Saints.

The holy season of *Lent*, which is of Apostolic tradition, was appointed to honor and to imitate the fast of Jesus Christ in the desert.

The *Ember Days* were instituted to consecrate to God all the seasons of the year, to invoke His blessing on the fruits of the earth, and to thank Him for all He has given us: as also to ask Him for ministers worthy to serve at His altars, and a plentiful effusion of His grace in the Ordinations which take place in these seasons.

The ecclesiastical fast contains three elements, namely, one meal, abstinence from flesh and white meats, and the time of the repast. The *one meal* signifies that we eat but one meal in the day: this is the essential condition of fasting. The Church, however, allows us, besides the principal meal, a light collation. As regards the hour of our repast, it may vary according to the custom of families.

All the faithful who are twenty-one years old are bound to fast, under pain of mortal sin, unless they are lawfully dispensed. There are three reasons which legitimately free us from this obligation: dispensation, inability, laborious work. These, therefore, are exempt from fasting: the sick and infirm, the aged, when their strength begins to fail, which ordinarily happens when they are sixty years old: this, however, cannot be precisely determined; finally, all who cannot fast without

seriously endangering their health or rendering themselves incapable of fulfilling their duties.

If we cannot fast, but are able to abstain, we must do so.

All Christians who are twenty-one years old, particularly the fathers and mothers of families, masters and mistresses, should heed the fast days.

Let us examine ourselves, my brethren, and see how we have acted in reference to this law of the Church. Have we observed it? If we have not, have we had, have we at present, sufficient reasons for our being dispensed from it? If we doubt, let us interrogate our confessor in order that there may be no reproach of conscience in this matter at the hour of death.

148. Sin.—The Different Kinds of Sin.

Sin is an offence against God committed by a reasonable creature, it is *any thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God*. There are different kinds of sin.

There are 1. *sins against God, our neighbor and ourselves*, according as they are opposed to the duties we owe to God, our neighbor and ourselves. However, as a matter of fact, there is no sin which is not against God, since there is no sin which is not an offence against God, a transgression more or less direct of some divine, natural or positive law.

2. There are *internal and external sins*. Internal sins are those committed in the heart by the will alone; external sins are those begun with the will and outwardly consummated by word or act.

3. Sins are again divided, according to the manner in which they are committed, into sins of thought, word, deed, and omission.

(1) Under the term *sins of thought*, we include that of simple *thought* or imagination, that of *desire*, and that of

complacency. It is a sin of simple thought when we wilfully take pleasure in a bad imagination. A bad thought is sinful only when we take pleasure in it, and give consent to it. It is a sin of *desire* when we wish to consummate the act which is the object of a bad thought. It is a *sin of complacency* when we take pleasure in the remembrance of a sin already committed.

2. We sin *by word* whenever we say anything contrary to faith, religion, charity, justice, or purity; by permitting ourselves, for example, to blaspheme, to detract, to calumniate, to tell falsehoods, to commit perjury, as also when we speak of our wicked deeds.

3. We sin *by act* when we do what is forbidden: and by *omission* when knowingly and wilfully we leave undone what is of precept: for example, when we miss Mass on Sunday, through our own fault.

We are, my brethren, prone to evil: therefore must we keep a guard over ourselves, our thoughts, our words, and all our ways, never forgetting to ask God's assistance by prayer. Watchfulness and prayer are the means prescribed by our Saviour to preserve us from sin: *Watch and pray*, says He, *that ye enter not into temptation*.

149. Sin.—The Capital Sins.

The Christian should, above all things, avoid sin and dread it, as the supreme evil, and the parent of all misery. This dread of sin is nothing else but the *fear of God*, which is called by the Holy Ghost the beginning of wisdom. There are different kinds of sins, among others *the capital sins*, which it is to our interest well to understand.

There are seven capital sins—Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Lust, Gluttony, Wrath and Sloth.

We call them *capital sins*, not because they may be al-

ways mortal sins, but because they are the head and source of many other sins.

1. *Pride* is an inordinate desire of our preferment and a vain esteem of ourselves. It may be called a puffing up of the heart, arising from a too extravagant idea of oneself and his merits: it leads us to elevate ourselves above others, by despising them, and exaggerating our own importance, by ascribing all things to ourselves, rather than glorifying God by attributing all things to Him.

Pride is detestable to God and man: its pretensions as unwarrantable as they are extravagant: *O man*, says the Apostle, *what have you that you have not received?*

2. *Covetousness* is an inordinate love of money and of the things of this world. For one to seek a fortune, for a good purpose, remembering all the while his duties and his eternal salvation, is worthy of praise: otherwise it is worthy of censure—it is covetousness. This vice alienates us from God, because we cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon. It causes us to neglect the all-important matter of our salvation, breeds niggardliness and harshness towards the poor, cheating, dishonesty, quarrels, not to speak of the anxieties, the disappointments which accompany it, and the murmurs it evokes against Providence.

3. We call *Envy* the regret or sadness we experience at our neighbor's temporal or spiritual welfare, because we regard his welfare as lessening our own well-being or our merit. From this vice flow rash judgments, detractions and calumnies, malicious rejoicing at our neighbor's faults and misfortunes, hatred, vexations of every kind.

4. *Lust*, or the vice opposed to the chastity required by the sixth and ninth Commandments, is the poisoned source of sins without number. And what is more, indulgence in sinful pleasures opposed to chastity causes

an aversion for works of piety, blindness of the understanding, hardness of heart, diminution, even shipwreck of faith. It destroys the health of the body and robs the soul of all its beauty, it disgraces and ruins families: it often leads to final impenitence.

5. *Gluttony* is the inordinate love of eating and drinking, or the sinful inclination which causes one to use food immoderately. This shameful vice degrades him who is its slave until he makes a god of his belly, according to the words of the Apostle (Phil. iii.). He is guilty of this sin of gluttony who longs for food which his condition in life cannot provide him, who eats at unseasonable hours, particularly on fast days, finally he who eats and drinks to excess. From this sin arise many others—for example, drunkenness, impurity, anger, blasphemy, quarrels, dulness of the soul, dislike for spiritual things, contempt for the laws of the Church regarding fasting and abstinence. When excess in drink produces drunkenness, and deprives one of the use of reason, it is a mortal sin. This sin easily degenerates into a habit, and into a passion most tyrannical.

6. *Anger* is an inordinate emotion of the heart, which makes us violently condemn whatever displeases us, and seek revenge on those who contradict us. The consequences of anger are: hatred, revenge, curses, blasphemies, insults, and sometimes duels and murders. Anger is a mortal sin, when the emotion is such as to smother in us all love for God and our neighbor, causing us to blaspheme or to commit some other grievous offence. There is an anger, an indignation, just and reasonable: that which is born of true zeal, of pure love of justice.

7. *Sloth* is an inordinate love of repose, a laziness of the soul, a dislike of the duties of our state of life. It is a mortal sin whenever it causes us to neglect a work which we are bound to perform. It is the parent of idleness, loss

of time, negligence, ignorance, inconstancy in good resolutions, lukewarmness, temptations of every kind, and of the weakness which causes us to yield to them.

Would we preserve ourselves from committing these capital sins, we must, my brethren, resist our passions, and generously strive to conquer them in our early youth, by curbing our natural inclinations and listening to the voice of reason and of God.

150. The Virtues.—Faith.

Faith, the first of the three theological virtues, is also the beginning and root of all others.

We should guard it as our most precious treasure. Indeed, faith being the source of justification and the primary condition of salvation, if it is lost, it is impossible to be saved, hence we say, *faith lost, everything lost*: unless God, in the exercise of His great mercy, bestow this gift for a second time on the ungrateful soul. Now, we lose our faith when we commit the sins opposed to this virtue, namely, Infidelity, Heresy and Apostasy.

Infidelity is disbelief in the doctrines of Christianity: it is *negative* and not culpable in those who have never heard of them: *privative*, in those who are ignorant of them by their own fault: *positive* or *contradictory* in those who reject them when they are proposed to them. It is a sin of infidelity, when we refuse to believe any article of faith, or entertain a voluntary doubt concerning it.

We call *heresy* a pertinacious opinion, opposed to an article of faith, and deserving the punishment of excommunication.

What is denied, must be of faith: and the denial must be at once interior and exterior to incur the censure: heresy may therefore be defined, as an exterior and pertinacious profession of an error opposed to faith.

Apostasy consists in the abjuration of Christianity.

The impious, who after being baptized profess deism, materialism, liberalism, etc., are to be numbered among apostates. We may say the same of those who, being indifferent to matters of religion, profess nothing, neither truth nor error. All such, in a word, renounce the religion of Jesus Christ, which they embraced in Baptism. *Human respect*, which causes one to blush by reason of his faith, is contrary to that exterior profession which Jesus Christ demands of His disciples: *Whoever, says He, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when he shall come in his majesty, and that of his Father, and of the holy angels* (St. Luke ix. 26).

The virtue of Faith also obliges all the faithful to carefully guard this gift of God, and to shun whatever would compromise it. Therefore, my brethren, should we fly conversation with incredulous and indifferent persons: should we refrain from reading impious books and papers: should we never permit our children to attend those schools from which religion is excluded: for there they breathe an atmosphere which poisons their minds and murders their faith.

151. The Virtues.—Hope.

The second of the theological virtues is Hope.

1. Hope is an infused virtue, *by which we look to God for eternal happiness and the means of attaining it, because Jesus Christ has merited them for us, and God has promised them to us, and He is infinitely good, powerful, and faithful in all His promises.*

2. Hope is *necessary* for salvation. It is of obligation for us from time to time to make an act of hope: this obligation is particularly urgent when we are tempted by despair, or when we are in danger of death.

3. We *sin* against hope by deficiency and by excess: that is to say, either by despair or presumption.

We sin by *despair*, when we persuade ourselves that our sins are too heinous for pardon, that our passions are too violent to be overcome, and as a consequence we no longer pray: when in adversity we become so discouraged as to harbor a loathing for life, and wish to accomplish our death.

We sin by *presumption*, when we hope to obtain as easily from God the pardon of ten sins, for example, as of five, and when we make use of this unwarranted confidence as a reason for continuing to sin.

Those who continue in sin, hoping one day or another to remodel their lives, do not precisely sin against hope: but against the charity they owe themselves, as they evidently expose themselves to the danger of eternal perdition.

4. Besides Christian *hope* in the strict sense of the word, of which we now speak, there is a Christian *confidence* or a hope in a wider sense, by which we feel ourselves secure in the providence of God with all the confidence of a child in the protection of his father, in the midst of the trials of life.

Let us, my brethren, have a confidence without reserve in the goodness of God and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Has not the Saviour taught us to say: *Our Father, who art in heaven? Be not solicitous*, says He again to us, *for your life, for what you shall eat, or where-with you shall be clothed: your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of more value than they? Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you* (St. Matt. vi. 25 seq.).

Let us then never yield to discouragement: but in all

our trials and vexations let us turn our eyes towards our Saviour and behold His five wounds. Let us make every day an act of hope, conjointly with the acts of faith, love and contrition.

152. The Virtues.—The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Ghost.—The Eight Beatitudes.

The virtues make man perfect, as a reasonable creature, elevated to the dignity of a child of God. They bring him to the height of his perfection, they sanctify him in his understanding, in his will, in his senses and all his outward works. They crown him with all the splendor and beauty of which he is susceptible, and they fashion him in the mould of human perfection, the God-Man, Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The virtues which make us like unto the Son of God are numerous: besides the theological and moral virtues, there are also those which are called the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Fruits of the Holy Ghost, and the Beatitudes.

1. We call the *gifts of the Holy Ghost* the seven special virtues which the Holy Ghost communicates to the soul particularly in the Sacrament of Confirmation. They are the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord.

2. The virtues which St. Paul (Gal. v. 12) calls the *fruits* of the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost enkindles them in the soul, are chasity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith or fidelity, modesty, continency, chastity. We should value these virtues as most precious treasures, ardently desiring them, and praying the Holy Ghost to enrich our hearts with them.

3. The eight *beatitudes* are eight special virtues, to

which Jesus Christ has attached the promise of heavenly happiness in the following words:

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land.

Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Let us pray, my brethren, let us pray fervently the Holy Ghost, that He will deign to enrich us with all these heavenly gifts and all the virtues of which He is the divine Source: let us beseech Him above all for two virtues the parents of all the others, love and humility.

153. Good Works.—Works of Mercy.

The virtues beget good works, and, reciprocally, the practice of good works strengthens the Christian virtues.

There are three kinds of good works, namely: *prayer*, *fasting* and *alms-giving*. These works are, as the Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches, three remedies for the triple concupiscence. Moreover, by prayer we appease the justice of God, by alms-giving we render satisfaction to our neighbor, by fasting we chastise ourselves.

Good works are at the same time *meritorious*, *satisfactory*, and *impetratory*. (1) As *meritorious* before God, they merit grace in this life, and eternal happiness in the future. (2) As *satisfactory* they liquidate the temporal punishments due to our sins. (3) As *impetratory* they ob-

tain pardon for us of our venial sins, and the graces of which we have need.

The works of mercy are divided into *corporal* and *spiritual* works.

The *corporal* works of mercy are:

1. To feed the hungry;
2. To give drink to the thirsty;
3. To clothe the naked;
4. To visit and ransom the captives;
5. To harbor the harborless;
6. To visit the sick;
7. To bury the dead.

These works of mercy in behalf of our neighbor are of such value in the eyes of the Saviour, that He appreciates them as done to Himself, and tells us that they will be the principal reasons that will influence Him in the selection of those who are to partake of the eternal reward. *Come, He will say at the last day, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you: for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat (St. Matt. xxv.).*

The spiritual works of mercy are:

1. To admonish the sinner;
2. To instruct the ignorant;
3. To counsel the doubtful;
4. To comfort the sorrowful;
5. To bear wrongs patiently;
6. To forgive all injuries;
7. To pray for the living and the dead.

These works of mercy or charity, more or less obligatory for everybody, are of strict obligation and of justice for particular persons, and in particular circumstances. Thus superiors and parents, are bound by duty and by justice to give good advice to their inferiors, to reprimand them if they do wrong, to instruct them, etc.

Let us hasten, my brethren, to do well and to perform good works, whilst there is yet time; let us hasten, for time is short and uncertain. Let us make the most we can of good works, let us enrich them with merits, by doing them solely to please God and for His greater honor and glory.

154. Sanctifying Grace.

The divine gift of *grace* is divided into *actual* and *sanctifying* grace. The first is a momentary assistance, the second is a habitual, permanent quality communicated to the soul by the Holy Ghost.

1. Sanctifying grace is defined a *permanent gift, dwelling in the soul, and making us just, pleasing in the eyes of God, and capable of meriting eternal life*. Sanctifying grace is to the soul, what the soul is to the body, its life, and it renders man just and holy in the sight of God, as his corporal life exhibits him as living in the eyes of his fellow-men.

Sanctifying grace is commonly called in the Scriptures *life*; it is indeed the supernatural life of the soul: life as true as that of the body, but invisible, latent, like that which is hidden in a seed.

2. Sanctifying grace produces in the soul marvellous effects: (1) it purifies us by cleansing our souls from sin. Grace expels sin, as light dissipates darkness, as life banishes death in a resurrection. (2) It renders us just, holy and lovable in the sight of God. The soul adorned with grace is loved by God with an ineffable love: in it the Holy Trinity dwells. (3) It renders us participants of the divine nature and beauty, and as like unto God as the creature can be in this world to the Creator. (4) It enables us to do heavenly works, meritorious of eternal life. (5) It makes us children of God by adoption, heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus Christ.

Those who possess sanctifying grace are said to be *in the state of grace*, and are called *the just*.

3. We receive sanctifying grace (1) in Baptism and the other Sacraments, when received with the proper dispositions: (2) when we make an act of perfect love.

It is *lost* by mortal sin. A grievous transgression of the law of God, which is called mortal sin, is as a deep wound

which destroys the life of grace in the soul, and makes us in the eyes of God like unto a dead body stamped with the image of the evil one.

It is *preserved* by faithfully observing the law of God, and avoiding mortal sin. It is augmented and increased by prayer, the Sacraments, and all the good works done in the state of grace. It may be *continually* augmented in this life: *The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day* (Prov. iv. 18).

Sanctifying grace being, my brethren, our most valuable possession, we ought to guard it with the greatest care, by avoiding that which alone robs us of it, namely, mortal sin and all the occasions which lead to it.

155. The Sacraments.—Their Number.

The Sacraments are the most powerful means of salvation and sanctification, which Jesus Christ has committed to His Church.

These divine institutions are seven in number.

1. The seven Sacraments are the basis of Christian devotion, and may be named the seven columns which sustain the Church, according to the words, *Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars.*

They also seem to have been typified in the old Law, by the golden candlestick, with seven lights upon it, fed with oil by seven funnels, which was shown to the prophet Zacharias in a vision. Indeed, the seven Sacraments are as seven channels, which continually convey to the soul the divine oil of grace.

2. It is not difficult for us to perceive in the number and choice of the Sacraments the most profound wisdom. The first five refer to the well-being of the individual, the last two regard the public welfare of the Church.

The seven, considered as one whole, are as necessary and sufficient for the life, the preservation, the spiritual prosperity of the Church considered as one body, as for each of her members in particular. To understand this, we must remember that the spiritual order resembles the order of nature, and follows an analogous progression.

As in the natural order, man is born, grows to manhood and is nourished: if he falls sick, needs proper medicines to save him from death, and subsequently fitting food to remove all the traces of his illness. As regards human society, it requires government to maintain order and prosperity: it has need also of marriage to perpetuate it.

So, in the supernatural order, there is a birth, it is Baptism; a manly growth, it is Confirmation; nourishing food, it is the Holy Eucharist; a medicinal remedy against death, it is Penance; a balm to heal the wounds and scars of sin, it is Extreme Unction. Moreover, it has a perennial source of order and of government, it is the Sacrament of Holy Orders: in fine, a holy means for the propagation of faithful people, it is the Sacrament of Matrimony. Let us thank God, my brethren, for having, by instituting the seven Sacraments, provided for all the wants of the faithful: favor ineffable, particularly if we consider that the Sacraments are the price of the blood of Jesus Christ. Yes, let us thank our Saviour for giving us these precious means of salvation, and let us ask Him for the grace of always receiving them with the proper dispositions.

156. The Eucharist.—Its Institution.

The Eucharist is the most holy of all our mysteries, because Jesus Christ Himself is there personally present, veiled under the species of bread and wine.

This Sacrament, which was instituted on Holy Thursday, at the Last Supper, was prefigured by many types; such was the *Paschal lamb*, whose blood saved from death the Jews in Egypt, and whose flesh was to be eaten with azyme or unleavened bread. The *Manna*, or the bread which by the will of God fell from heaven to nourish the Jews in their journey through the desert. The *loaves of Proposition* which the priests placed before the Lord in the Tabernacle, and which none dare eat unless purified and sanctified according to the Law. *The bread baked on coals* which Elias received from the hand of an angel, and which so invigorated him, that he walked during forty days and forty nights to the holy mountain of Horeb. *The water changed into wine* at the nuptials of Cana, the *loaves* multiplied by our Saviour to feed the people in the desert.

Before perfecting an institution so marvellous, our Saviour willed to announce it solemnly to His disciples in order to prepare their minds for it. He began by presenting them a vivid type of the Eucharist in the multiplication of the loaves, that is to say, in that miraculous bread which on two occasions He distributed to the people by the hands of the Apostles, the future pastors of the Church. Having worked this extraordinary miracle, He announced to those who had been the witnesses of it, that He would give them a bread far superior to that which they had eaten, a living bread, the true bread coming down from heaven, of which the Manna had been but a figure: that this wonderful bread would be His own flesh and His own blood: that by eating His flesh and drinking His blood they would have life everlasting. This promise, whose meaning was barely understood by those who heard it, was to be comprehended and realized at the Last Supper. On the eve of His passion, our Saviour assembled with His disciples at Jerusalem, in a large room, where their Paschal meal

had been prepared. On the table was the lamb immolated according to the Law, as also the bread and wine for the repast.

After they had eaten of the symbolical lamb, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples: then, seating Himself at the table with them, His countenance beaming with love, He opened His Heart in all its fulness to lavish on them the richest treasures of His infinite love. Taking the bread into His sacred hands, and, lifting His eyes heavenward, He gave thanks to His Father, blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to His Apostles, saying: *Take ye and eat, for this is My body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me.* Subsequently, taking the chalice, He likewise blessed it, and gave it to His Apostles, saying: *Take ye and drink: for this is My blood, the blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins. Do this in commemoration of Me.* All this, as every one must see, demonstrates the truth of the dogma of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, a dogma which moreover we find distinctly taught in the traditions of every age.

Let us believe, my brethren, with a living faith this sublime dogma of our holy religion: then, what happiness, what consolation we will enjoy in this vale of tears, since we will behold in the midst of us that divine Master who has said: *Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

157. The Eucharist.—The Consecration.

The Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Jesus Christ Himself is really present, was instituted at the Last Supper. On that occasion, by His all-powerful word, He changed the bread and wine into His body

and blood, then He said to His Apostles: *That which I have done, you yourselves shall do for a commemoration of Me.*

This the Apostles did: and priests, their successors in the priesthood, continue to do every day by that sublime act which we call *Consecration*, and which takes place in the Mass. To fully understand the meaning of this term *Consecration*, we must distinguish three things, the matter, the form and the minister.

The necessary *matter* is bread made of wheat, and wine of the grape. As regards its validity it does not matter whether the bread be leavened or unleavened: the laws of the Church, however, in regard to this should be faithfully observed.

The *form* consists of the words of Consecration, which are the very words pronounced by Jesus Christ when consecrating the bread and wine, namely: *This is My body; this is My blood.* These words have a power wholly divine, they effect the miracle of *Transubstantiation*. What means this term *Transubstantiation*? It signifies *change of substance*, and declares that the substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the body of Jesus Christ, and the substance of the wine into that of His blood. The divine Master has kindly willed to give us an example of a change of substance, done to strengthen our faith in the Eucharistic Transubstantiation: the change of the substance of water into that of wine at the nuptials of Cana (St. John. ii).

The *minister* is the priest, who pronounces these divine words at the Altar, about the middle of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He pronounces them in the name of Jesus Christ, whose person he represents, or rather it is Jesus Christ Himself who pronounces them by his mouth; as the priest does not say: *This is the body of Jesus Christ*, but: *This is My body.*

Having hardly pronounced the words, he kneels to adore the Host he holds in his hands; then he elevates It

before the eyes of the faithful, that with the angels they may adore It: for that Host is Jesus Christ in person, descended from heaven, and adored by the angels who accompany Him. The heavenly court, in the words of the Fathers, has descended with its King.

Let us always assist, my brethren, at the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, that is to say at the Holy Mass, with the most profound devotion, but let us redouble our piety and devotion at the solemn moment of the Consecration.

158. The Holy Eucharist.—Holy Communion.

The Eucharist received by the faithful at the holy Table is called Holy Communion. Every Christian should know what are the necessary dispositions for a worthy Communion. There are three conditions required for this end—faith, the state of grace, and fasting.

1. We must have *faith*: that is to say, faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacred Host. This faith is the source of reverence, humility, and all devotion: the firmer it is, the worthier our Communion. *Do you believe*, said the priest to the King St. Louis, when he brought him Holy Communion, *Do you believe that this is the true body of Jesus Christ? I believe*, replied the King, *and if I saw Him as the Apostles when He ascended into heaven, I would not more firmly believe it.*

2. We must be in *the state of grace*: Sanctifying grace purifies our soul, and makes it a worthy sanctuary for Jesus Christ, who comes to dwell there. Without it, the soul in the state of mortal sin is like unto a tomb full of filth and corruption. Such as are in this deplorable state must not approach the holy Table until they have purified themselves by a good Confession.

3. We must *be fasting*, that is to say, that at least from midnight, we must not have taken anything to eat or drink.

Whenever it is our happiness to receive Holy Communion, we should prepare for it by going modestly to the church, and whilst there, during the time at our disposal, endeavor to excite in our hearts sentiments of faith, humility, contrition, confidence, love, with an earnest desire of being united to Jesus Christ. To accomplish this we should recite corresponding acts, providing ourselves, if we require it, with a prayer book containing them. When it is time for us to approach the holy Table, we humbly repeat with the priest these words of the Centurion of the Gospel: *O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: say but the word and my soul shall be healed.*

Then, opening the mouth sufficiently and putting out the tongue a little over the lower lip, we receive the Sacred Host without touching it with the teeth, and with the greatest respect. We then return to our place in a spirit of holy recollection, and spend all the time our duties permit in acts of thanksgiving. This is the happiest moment of the true Christian, when being in possession of Jesus Christ, he can empty his heart into that of his divine Master. At that time he should pour out his soul at His feet, in adoration, in thanksgiving, asking all the favors he desires for himself, for his parents and superiors, his friends and enemies, for his Church and country, for the living and the dead.

Leaving the church, after receiving Communion, we should bring with us the remembrance of the ineffable favor we have received. Never should the Christian forget that his mouth, his heart, his whole body, have been sanctified by the body and blood of Jesus Christ; in fine, never should he be guilty of the blackest ingratitude in profaning by word or sinful action his body or its members, which have become by Holy Communion the members of Jesus Christ.

159. Holy Communion.—Sacrilegious Communion.

The holy Eucharist received by the faithful at the holy Table, is called Communion. The Holy Communion is *the sacramental reception of the holy Eucharist, which Jesus Christ has instituted to nourish our souls.* All living beings require to be nourished, and parents according to their condition give their children nourishment. The children of the wealthy receive rich food, far different from that of those of the poor: and the children of God receive from their heavenly Father a divine food: it is the holy Eucharist, called the bread of angels, the bread descended from heaven, which gives life eternal.

Relatively to the disposition of those who communicate, we distinguish two kinds of Communion, a good and a bad Communion, which we also call an unworthy Communion, or a sacrilege.

The first is that which is received with the necessary dispositions, the second that which is received in the state of mortal sin. A sacrilegious Communion, the profanation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, is a heinous sin, the same as that committed by Judas, who receiving unworthily his first Communion at the last Supper, afterwards betrayed his divine Master with a kiss. Soon after, this unhappy man hanged himself with a halter in despair, and at the moment of death, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

It is related that the Duke of Saxony, Witikind, whilst yet a pagan, visited without being recognized the Empire of Charlemagne, and entered a church at Paschal time. Whilst there God worked a miracle in his favor: as the priest was giving Communion to the faithful, he beheld in each Host a little infant beaming with beauty, extending his arms and inclining with an expression of the deepest love towards those who communicated, with one

exception, from whom he turned with horror and fright. Astonished at what he had seen, he asked an explanation of it after the ceremony: and when it was explained to him, he asked and received instruction in the doctrines of the Christian religion and was baptized. This illustrates the difference between a good and bad Communion.

Let us pray God, my brethren, to preserve us from ever being so unfortunate as to profane the body and blood of Jesus Christ by a sacrilegious Communion: and that we may ever avoid with the greatest care the causes that lead to it. The ordinary cause of a bad Communion is a bad Confession, and the most frequent cause of a bad Confession is the sin of impurity, for either there is wanting the courage to confess it or to forsake the occasion of it.

160. The Holy Mass.—Its Value.—Its Effects.

The Holy Mass, the sacrifice of the new Law, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, being the same as the sacrifice of the Cross, continued in an unbloody manner, is of an infinite value as regards the victim offered and its intrinsic merit: but the application of this value to the faithful, which we call the fruits of the Mass, is not infinite.

The Mass has four effects, corresponding with the four great ends of a sacrifice: (1) it renders to God that supreme homage which is His due: this is the *latria* effect; (2) it offers to God adequate thanksgiving: this is the eucharistic effect; (3) it obtains for us the remission of sins and their punishments: this is the propitiatory effect; finally it obtains for us new favors: this is the impetratory effect. It is easy to understand how these precious effects answer to our wants. 1. We must render God worthy homage and thanksgiving. 2. We need to

obtain pardon of our sins and assistance in our difficulties. Now the sacrifice of the Mass abundantly satisfies all these.

The Holy Mass obtains for us all kinds of grace, not only spiritual but also temporal. However, solely temporal favors, such as health, success in business, and others of a like character, are granted only in as much as they may aid in the salvation of our souls.

The sacrifice of the Mass produces its effects by its own intrinsic merit, independently of the personal sanctity of the priest. But the fruits of the Mass received by the faithful are in proportion to their dispositions—to their faith, confidence and favor, as also to their more or less efficacious co-operation in the celebration of the sacrifice. We particularly co-operate in the Mass when we have it offered by the priest, either for the living or the dead.

When the Mass is offered for the soul of a deceased person, a part of the satisfactions of Jesus Christ is placed at the feet of God for that soul: and God applies it to it according to His rule of justice and mercy.

Let us not be content, my brethren, with assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass as often as we can; but, moreover, let us take care to have it celebrated from time to time for the success of our undertakings, for our parents and friends, be they living or dead.

161. The Sacrament of Penance.—Contrition.

Considered relatively to the penitent who receives it, the Sacrament of Penance contains three parts, *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction*.

The most important of these three is contrition, without which the confession is null or of no value: because it being the vital principle of the Sacrament, it is as indispensable to it as is the root to a tree planted in the

ground. The tree is also composed of three parts, the trunk, the branches, and the root; but, as we readily understand, the all-important is the root. As long as the root remains intact it is possible for the tree to grow: if it is injured, the tree dies and withers. It is the same with contrition: when that is defective, the confession is null, there is no Sacrament.

These three parts of the Sacrament of Penance are also called the three acts of the penitent, or the three actions which the penitent should perform: it is therefore necessary we should have an exact knowledge of them, particularly of contrition.

What is contrition? *Contrition is a hearty sorrow and detestation of the sins we have committed, accompanied with a firm purpose of never again committing them.*

Contrition has two essential conditions: (1) sorrow and detestation; (2) a firm purpose of amendment: the first having reference to the past, the second to the future.

1. We have *sorrow* when we regret and grieve because we have offended the divine Majesty by sin. We have *detestation* when we detest and abhor sin as the greatest of all evils.

2. We have a firm purpose of amendment when we earnestly and resolutely intend, with God's grace, never again to commit sin, to fly its occasions, and to employ every means to persevere in doing good.

A traveller who by good fortune escapes death from the poisonous bite of serpents infesting a field through which he has passed, firmly resolves never again to go that way. Far firmer should be our resolution never again to commit sin. If a sinner was told that the next time he committed sin, he would be cast by irresistible hands into a flaming furnace, without doubt he would resolve never to do so. His resolution would be so steadfast that nothing in the world would move him: for noth-

ing in the world, he would say, could make me consent to be burnt alive. Such and still stronger should be our purpose never more to commit sin, because sin is the supreme evil, far greater than that of being thrown alive into flames.

Our purpose of amendment to be truly firm and resolute must include a determination *to fly the occasions of sin and to use the necessary means for perseverance*. He who does not wish to die of a contagious disease, should avoid those who are infected with it; he who does not wish to be burnt alive, should not throw himself into the fire; he who does not wish to be bitten by serpents, should not play with reptiles; the soldier who wishes to be victorious, should take with him his arms and fight valiantly.

When, by the grace of God, we experience a true sorrow for our sins, and have resolved never more to commit them, even when by reason of human frailty we fear for the future, our contrition is true and sincere.

Let us often ask of God, my brethren, a contrite and humble heart, the grace of lamenting our sins as did St. Peter and Mary Magdalene.

162. The Sacrament of Penance.—Contrition.—Its Motives.

Of the three parts of the Sacrament of Penance, contrition, confession and satisfaction, the first is the most important.

Contrition is a hearty sorrow and a detestation of the sins we have committed, accompanied with a firm purpose of never again committing them. Since contrition is so necessary that without it we cannot obtain forgiveness, we should pray God to grant us a true repentance, and at the same time do all in our power to excite it in our hearts. Contrition may be perfect or imperfect.

We have *perfect* contrition when we repent having offended God because He is supremely amiable, good, and perfect in Himself, and because sin displeases Him.

We have *imperfect* contrition when we repent having offended God because by it we have merited His punishments and lost heaven.

Imperfect contrition suffices for a good confession. Perfect contrition is more desirable: it remits sin, even without confession, when we desire to confess but cannot obtain the services of a confessor.

It is most important we should know the motives by which we may excite ourselves to contrition. These motives are, (1) because sin, particularly mortal sin, is infinitely displeasing to God; (2) because it offends and outrages that Father so sovereignly good and amiable; (3) because it has caused the death of Jesus Christ; (4) because it has robbed us of heaven; (5) because it has merited for us the hatred of God and the eternal pains of hell. Our Saviour gives us an example of true contrition in the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, who had wounded the heart of his father by his ingratitude and waywardness. But having fallen to the lowest depths of degradation, so low as to become a herder of swine, the unfortunate returned to himself, and recognizing his faults and bemoaning them he said: *I will rise, and will go to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* He immediately fulfilled his good resolution, and was received with joy by his father, who fell upon his neck and kissed him. In that moment he loved that good father more than ever before, and ever afterwards was faithful to him.

Let us all, my brethren, imitate the Prodigal Son in his humble repentance, in his return to his paternal home, and in his care never again to depart from it.

163. The Sacrament of Penance.—The Nature of the Sacrament.

Considered as a Sacrament, Penance is that Sacrament of the Church in which the sins committed after Baptism are forgiven those who penitently confess them, by the absolution of priest.

1. The *matter* of this Sacrament consists of the sins and the three acts of the penitent, contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The sins are the *passive* matter, the matter to be destroyed; the acts of the penitent are the *active* matter, which concurs with the absolution of the priest in extirpating the sins: the same as he who throws wood into a fire, concurs with the flames in destroying it.

2. The *form* of this Sacrament is the absolution given by the priest, and is as follows: By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, *I absolve* thee of thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

3. The *minister* of this Sacrament is the priest, who receives in the Sacrament of Holy Orders the same power to forgive sins, as Jesus Christ personally conferred on His Apostles when He instituted the Sacrament of Penance.

4. It was on the very day of His resurrection that He instituted this Sacrament, intended to effect the resurrection of souls, dead by sin. He had promised it some months before, when, speaking to His Apostles of the conversion of sinners and the remission of their sins, He expressed Himself in these words: *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* (St. Matt. xviii. 18). He fulfilled this promise on Easter Sunday, when, appearing to His assembled Apostles, He breathed on them, saying: *Whose*

sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained (St. John xx. 23).

5. Our Saviour by these words conferred on His Apostles, and through them on all priests, the power to forgive in the Sacrament of Penance all sins, however grievous or numerous they may be. This power, as the words pronounced by Jesus Christ indicate, is a judicial power. The confessors are appointed judges as well of the sins as of the dispositions of the sinner: if they judge them worthy of pardon, they absolve them, and their absolution is as valid as that of Jesus Christ Himself, whose place they hold.

We see by this that the Sacrament of Penance is invested with the dignity and process of a court: it is a tribunal, but one of mercy and reconciliation. The priest is there the judge; the penitent, at once the *prosecutor* and the *accused*; the *testimony* are the sins; the *sentence* is the absolution with the penance which the confessor imposes.

This judgment is the *Sacramental sign*: it describes the grace conferred, namely the remission of sins. But as sins are defilements of the soul, spiritual wounds and diseases, the holy Tribunal is called a *spiritual lavatory* to cleanse souls, and a *spiritual medicine* to heal their most dangerous wounds. It is in this light that the Sacrament of Penance has been presented by our Saviour in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The good and charitable Samaritan who bound up the wounds of the dying traveller represents Jesus Christ, who, in the person of the confessor, heals the wounds of the soul, pouring therein the oil and wine of sacramental grace.

8. The priest in the holy Tribunal takes the place of *Jesus Christ*, so that the penitent feels that he is kneeling not simply at the feet of a man but at the feet of his Saviour, who is the principal minister of the Sacrament. Let us then, my brethren, open our eyes to our faith, and always go to our confessor as to Jesus Christ Himself.

164. Indulgences.—Their Nature, Power, and Use.

We call an indulgence *a remission of the temporal punishments due to sin, granted by reason of the power of the keys, apart from the Sacrament of Penance.*

1. Faith teaches us that after the remission of the guilt of sin, there ordinarily remains a debt of temporal punishment which it will be necessary to pay to the divine justice, either in this life, or in the future, in purgatory. We pay the debt in this life, (1) by our own good works and personal penances, offered to God in union with the merits of Jesus Christ; (2) by the meritorious works of others, when they are transferred to us. This transfer is effected particularly by *indulgences*, which apply to the faithful the satisfactory merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Jesus Christ, as also the superabundant satisfactions of the Saints.

These superabundant satisfactions of the Saints, and the infinite satisfactions of Jesus Christ, constitute the *treasure of indulgences*, whose distribution is confided to the Head of the Church and is part of the power of the keys; this is what we call the power of granting indulgences.

2. This power is the prerogative, (1) of the Sovereign Pontiff, who alone has the right to grant indulgences extending to the entire Church; (2) of Bishops who may grant partial indulgences in their own dioceses.

There are different kinds of indulgences, the plenary indulgence, the partial indulgence, the indulgence applicable to the souls in purgatory, and the indulgence of the jubilee. To gain the indulgence of the jubilee or any other indulgence two things are necessary: we must (1) exactly fulfil all the conditions or prescribed works; (2) be free from mortal sin, that is to say be in the state of grace, at least when we fulfil the last condition.

The use of indulgences is singularly beneficial to the faithful, not only because it assists them in liquidating their debts to the divine justice, but also because it powerfully aids in nourishing in their souls faith, love, piety and fervor.

Let us not neglect, my brethren, any occasion to gain indulgences for the relief of the souls in purgatory; for, as our Saviour says, *With the same measure you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*

165. The Sacrament of Holy Orders.—Vocation.— The Sacerdotal Power.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is that instituted by Jesus Christ to perpetuate in His Church the priesthood He conferred on His Apostles.

If we consider it as a state of life, we must admit that the priesthood is the most holy, the most sublime calling in Christian society. Placed in this world to be a mediator between God and man, to exercise the ministry of the altar, to console all those who sorrow and those who suffer, to make men happy by nourishing in their souls religion and virtue, and to so aid them in accomplishing their eternal destiny, the priest is justly named a visible angel, an ambassador of God, another Jesus Christ. He has received the most sublime mission, the most august vocation.

He who embraces this most holy state is the happiest as well as the most venerable of men, if he be called to it by God. But no one should intrude himself into this sacred office without a vocation, because he will not have the abundance of grace necessary to fulfil its weighty and fearful duties. A vocation to the ecclesiastical state reveals itself by unmistakable signs—a solid piety, a love for Jesus Christ and His Church, an intelligent and judicious mind, a control of the passions, a generous de-

sire to consecrate one's life to the welfare of souls and the work of God on earth.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders confers on priests the power (1) to consecrate the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; (2) to forgive and retain sins; (3) to administer the other Sacraments; (4) to preach the word of God; (5) to bless persons and such things as the Ritual of the Church permits.

Holy Orders once received can never be forfeited: it imprints on the soul a sacred character which can never be effaced.

The faithful should honor their priests as the ministers of Jesus Christ and the fathers of their souls: always respecting their sacred character, showing them the submission which is their due, testifying a worthy acknowledgment of the services which they render their souls.

Those who should receive a special consideration and love, are: (1) the Sovereign Pontiff, because he is the Head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and the common Shepherd of all the faithful; (2) the Bishop, the shepherd of the diocese in which we reside: his subjects are bound to obey his ordinances, to hear his voice as docile lambs; (3) the parish priest to whom is confided the care of our souls, and the other priests who give us the aid of their ministry.

Let us always honor the priests of the Church, my brethren, as representing in a special manner our Saviour Jesus Christ: let us hearken to their words as those of Jesus Christ who speaks to us by their mouth: *Whosoever, says He, hears you, hears me; and whosoever despises you, despises me* (St. Luke, x. 16).

166. Prayer.—The Conditions, Efficacy, and Place of Prayer.

If we thoroughly understood the value and excellence of prayer, there would be nothing to which we would so devote ourselves as to the practice of this holy exercise, the most noble as well as the most useful occupation of man on earth.

Now, how must we pray? what conditions are necessary to make our prayers acceptable?

1. We should pray *in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ*, our Advocate and supreme Mediator, and say our prayers with attention, humility, confidence, resignation and perseverance. To fulfil these conditions, we must recollect ourselves when we begin our prayers, calling to mind the presence of God. A living faith in the divine presence is the key of prayer. We should persevere in this holy exercise notwithstanding the distractions which may accompany it: involuntary distractions in no wise rob prayer of its merit and efficacy.

2. Prayer is all-powerful: it can obtain all things from God, not only because it glorifies His divine perfections, but also because it rests on the promise of God and the merits of Jesus Christ. We may expect all things from God, since He can do all things, and by reason of the merits of Jesus Christ wishes to grant us every favor. If we do not always obtain what we ask, the reason of it is, either because it is bad in itself, or not to the interest of our eternal welfare, or else we are wanting in perseverance. God sometimes defers hearing us, to prove our faith, to punish our lukewarmness, to make us more humble and vigilant. It also now and then happens, that instead of obtaining the grace which we ask, a better one is granted us: for example, when in place of curing us of a sickness, God gives us the grace of bearing it with Christian patience.

As regards the place of prayer, we may pray and we should pray everywhere: for everywhere is God present, ready to hear and aid us. There are, however, places especially consecrated to prayer: they are churches and chapels. The poorest church, being the house of God, is by excellence a holy place, a place of prayer: *It is written that my house is a house of prayer* (St. Luke xix. 16). Public prayer, and said in common in the church, has a most particular efficacy. Jesus Christ has promised to be in a special manner in the midst of those who pray in common. Hear His words: *Again I say to you that 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 am I in the midst of them* (St. Matt. xviii. 19).

Let us pray everywhere with reverence: but let us have, my brethren, a particular reverence whilst in church, where Jesus Christ deigns to dwell in His sacred humanity among the sons of men: let us love to go there to adore Him, by prostrating ourselves in spirit before Him with the Angels who surround Him.

167. Prayer.—The Different Kinds of Prayer.

Nothing is so frequently recommended by our Saviour, as the holy exercise of prayer.

1. There are two kinds of prayer, vocal and mental prayer. *Vocal* prayer is that which proceeds from the heart and expresses itself in words. Thus, when we piously recite the *Lord's Prayer*, it is a vocal prayer. *Mental* prayer is that which is made interiorly, unaccompanied by any outward expression: it is usually called *meditation*. Meditation is a devout consideration made in the presence of God, in such manner as to arouse in the heart pious emotions towards the divine Majesty. We reflect on the truths of religion to better comprehend

them, so as to love and relish them, and ask the grace to conform our lives to them. Meditation brings forth the best fruit in the soul: it is necessary for all those who aspire to perfection.

2. We ordinarily begin our prayers with the sign of the Cross, the Christian symbol. This sign reminds us of the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemption.

Made with faith and piety, it banishes temptations, and invokes on us the blessings of God: it is therefore becoming that we should frequently make it.

3. There are an indefinite number of prayers used by the faithful, approved of by the Church, and each one may recite them according to his devotion: but there is one which is above all others, because it was taught us by the divine lips—*the Lord's Prayer*.

The *Lord's Prayer* or the *Our Father* is the best of all prayers, (1) because the author of it is Jesus Christ Himself; (2) because it contains in a brief form all we can possibly ask and desire. It is of precept that we know this prayer, as our Saviour has expressly ordained that we recite it.

This divine prayer consists of an introduction and seven distinct petitions, namely:

The introduction is—

Our Father, who art in heaven.

1st petition. Hallowed be Thy name.

2d petition. Thy kingdom come.

3d petition. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

4th petition. Give us this day our daily bread.

5th petition. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us.

6th petition. And lead us not into temptation.

7th petition. But deliver us from evil. Amen.

Let us devote, my brethren, from time to time, if not

every day, a few minutes to mental prayer, at least to spiritual reading, for example, in that incomparable book, the *Imitation of Christ*.

168. The Feasts of the Church.—The Epiphany. —The Purification.

As it is not less interesting than instructive to know the meaning of the feasts which we frequently celebrate, we shall explain two of them, namely, the Epiphany and the Purification.

1. The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on the sixth of January.

The word *Epiphany* signifies *manifestation*, and implies that on that day we celebrate the three great mysteries by which Jesus Christ made Himself known and manifested His glory to men.

(1) The vocation of the Gentiles to the faith, in the person of the Magi, who, led by a miraculous star to Bethlehem, believed in Jesus Christ; (2) the Baptism of our Saviour in the waters of the Jordan, when the heavenly Father made His voice heard, saying: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*; (3) the first miracle worked by Jesus at the nuptials of Cana, when he changed water into wine, and thus began to manifest His power.

2. The Purification or Candlemas Day, which falls on the second of February, is at once a feast of the Mother of God and of her divine Son.

The law of Moses required that the first born of male children should be offered to God in acknowledgment of the favor accorded the first born of the Israelites in Egypt, when they were spared by the destroying angel. This ceremony had to be performed forty days after the birth of the child. The law also commanded that on the same day the mother, who had contracted a legal

defilement, should purify herself in the temple by offering as expiatory victims a lamb and young pigeon, or, if she was poor, two turtles or two young pigeons. This is what is called the purification of the mother, and the presentation of the child in the temple.

It was in obedience to this law, to which neither she nor her divine Son were held, that the Blessed Virgin came to purify herself in the temple at Jerusalem, and to present there His Son to the Lord. Then it was that a holy old man named Simeon, enlightened by a light from on high, recognized the infant Messias, and taking Him into his arms with ineffable joy, predicted that He would be a sign for the contradiction of men, and that His mother's soul would be pierced by a sword of sorrow. We know how these prophecies were accomplished.

On this day candles are blessed, which signify (1) that Jesus Christ is the true light of the world by His doctrine and His example; (2) they typify also the living faith and ardent charity with which we should unite ourselves to God in union with Jesus Christ. We carry candles in procession to honor the journey of the Blessed Virgin when bearing the infant Jesus to Jerusalem.

May we always, my brethren, bear Jesus in our hearts by faith and love!

169. Our Last End.—Death.—The Preparation of a Christian.

The Christian, in keeping with the warning of Jesus Christ, ought to carefully prepare for death.

There is a double preparation for death: the remote preparation and the proximate or immediate preparation: the first consists in living a Christian life; the second, in the duties to be fulfilled at the approach of death.

What are these duties?

1. When we are dangerously sick, we should accept from the hand of God our sickness, and likewise our death which may follow it, in union with the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. A sickness borne in a Christian spirit is a kind of mitigated purgatory, purifying the soul before its departure from this world.

2. We should receive in due time, and with all possible devotion, the three Sacraments of the sick and the general Absolution.

By the *general Absolution* is meant a benediction to which the Sovereign Pontiff has annexed a plenary indulgence at the hour of death. To efficaciously receive it, we should (1) make an act of contrition for all our sins; (2) accept the sufferings of our sickness and even our death with resignation to the will of God; (3) devoutly invoke the holy name of Jesus, if not with our lips at least in our heart. We have said that the aids which religion offers to the sick should be received *in due time*: the reasons for it are easily understood. The obligation of so doing is not only incumbent on the sick, but it is also the duty of the physician and friends of the sick to provide for it.

If we are in danger of death and cannot obtain the services of a priest, we should elevate our heart towards God, and make acts of faith, hope, charity, and particularly of perfect contrition: then commend our soul to God's mercy.

When dying we should as far as we are able make pious and short aspirations, which friends should never fail to suggest to the departing; for example, *My God, I believe in thee: My God, I hope in thee: My God, I love thee with all my heart: My God, I am sorry for my sins: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul and my life: My good Angel, assist me: O Lord, let Thy holy will be done! Father, let it be not as I will, but as Thou wilt: O*

Mary, mother of grace and mercy! Save us from our enemy, and protect us at the hour of death: My God, into thy hands I commend my soul.

Let us ask, my brethren, let us frequently ask of our Lord the grace of a happy death after the example of Jesus Christ, by submitting ourselves with resignation to the will of God, and by committing with love and confidence our souls into His hands.

170. Purgatory.

After the particular judgment to which all must submit immediately after death, the sentence pronounced is executed without delay, and the soul goes to the place which it has merited.

There are four sojourns or places for souls in the future life: limbo, purgatory, hell, and heaven or paradise.

We call *limbo* the place where the souls of the just were detained before the coming of Jesus Christ. It was a place of repose, of peace and consolation, where the patriarchs and other saints of the old law waited the coming of the Redeemer.

Revelation does not disclose to us the location of limbo, no more than it does that of purgatory and hell: it is, however, the common opinion of the Doctors of the Church, that these different places occupy the vast regions in the interior of the earth. It is also generally believed that since the ascension of our Saviour, limbo has been appointed by God the resting place of the souls that depart this life guilty of only original sin.

Faith teaches us that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there can be succored by the suffrages of the faithful, especially by the holy sacrifice of the Mass. *It is a holy and wholesome thought, says the Scripture, to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.* We call purgatory a place of expiation, where the souls depart-

ing this life in the state of grace, but yet indebted to the divine justice, are delayed to suffer the punishments due to their sins. We say (1) *the souls departing this life in the state of grace*, because those in the state of mortal sin are condemned to hell where there is neither relief nor hope. The souls in purgatory being then in the state of grace, are destined for heaven—it is their right: but as nothing with defilement can enter heaven, and they are not without it, they cannot for the present be admitted. They are like unto golden vases covered with a black incrustation which obscures their beauty: it is therefore necessary that they be purified in a place of expiation. We say (2) *where they are delayed to suffer the punishments due to their sins*: when a soul in the state of mortal sin is pardoned, sanctifying grace being renewed in it, the gates of hell are closed and the gates of heaven opened to it; but as a rule, in place of the eternal chastisements, God requires of it a temporary expiation, punishments, penances, which it must undergo in this world or in the future. It is a debt which must be paid to the divine justice, which knows no statute of limitation, which no delay can wipe out.

Let us therefore, my brethren, in a spirit of Christian charity, be earnest in assisting the souls in purgatory: and at the same time let us not neglect to expiate our own faults in this life, instead of reserving them for expiation in the next.

171. Purgatory.—Its Punishments and their Mitigation.

After death, the souls of the faithful, according as their works have merited, go to heaven, hell, or purgatory.

1. Purgatory is a place of temporary expiation; and the sufferings there endured are of two kinds: the pain of *loss* and the pain of *sense*.

The first is the delay, or the privation for a time, of the beatific vision. As regards the pain of sense, its nature is not defined by faith; but according to the common opinion of theologians it consists of fire and other sufferings.

These punishments are most intense: they surpass all the pains of this life, not equalling, however, the horror of the sufferings of hell: they are softened by the consolations of hope, and differ in intensity according to the deserts of each one. These terrible chastisements are inflicted on the souls, (1) because they did not perform on earth the penances which God required for the mortal sins of which they had received pardon; (2) because they did not make reparation on earth for their venial sins, however trivial they may have been. These chastisements, as just as they are rigorous, teach us the malice of the smallest venial sin in the eyes of God. How long the period of expiation in purgatory is, we know not: it is, however, proportionate to each one's deserts. The opinion which teaches that it may be prolonged for years, is approved by the practice of the Church, which allows for an indefinite time the celebration of anniversary Masses for the dead.

2. The souls in purgatory, in the midst of their sufferings, enjoy the sweet consolation of being certain of their salvation: they can no longer sin, and they suffer with the most invariable patience, and with the most perfect resignation. Though incapable of assisting themselves by their prayers, they can pray for those who aid them.

The means by which we can succor them are prayer, fasting, alms-giving and other good works, the application of indulgences, and above all by the holy Mass.

Let us pray without ceasing, my brethren, for the souls in purgatory: and, as regards ourselves, let us avoid with care the smallest faults, even venial, since God punishes them with such severity.

SHORT SERMONS

FOR THE

Low Masses of Sunday.

FOURTH SERIES.

FOURTH SERIES.

172. Man.—His Destiny or the End of Man.

The first truth which we should know and deeply impress on our hearts, because it is the foundation of all moral life, is that which refers to the end of man.

Why was man created? From your childhood, you have heard *Man was created to serve God in this life, and to possess Him eternally in the future.*

This definition includes his remote and proximate end.

1. The remote end of man is the possession of God during an ever happy eternity. We commonly call it *salvation*. All the wealth and pleasures of this world are as nothing in comparison with this ineffable good. We call it also *heaven* or *paradise, their kingdom, eternal life, the crown of glory which will never fade*. All the kingly crowns of earth will moulder into dust before it. In fine, this eternal destiny of man is so great and so blessed, that to acquire possession of it he must sacrifice without reserve all things perishable.

2. His proximate end is to serve God in this world: it is by a Christian life he must merit his salvation. God has willed that eternal happiness be reserved as a merited reward for fidelity to His law, which is the Gospel.

From this truth flow many conclusions:

1. Man is created for heaven, and his business on this earth is to prepare for it.

2. Man has not been placed upon this earth to amass riches, nor to enjoy the momentary pleasures of this un-

certain life, much less to sin and offend his Creator, but exclusively to serve his God and to store up imperishable riches: *Make to yourselves*, says Jesus Christ, *a treasure in heaven.*

3. Man can find his happiness nowhere but in God, because he has been made for God, and not for creatures, according to the beautiful words of St. Augustine: *You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our heart can never be at rest until it repose in Thee.* Let us, my brethren, have ever before our eyes the end for which we are upon this earth: and let us seek that end in all the actions of our life.

173. The Duties of a Christian.—A Faith Rich in Good Works.

Faith is the primary virtue, and the first duty of a Christian.

The virtue of faith, the foundation of a Christian life, gives us an absolute certitude of the truths which we believe; a certitude more positive than that which is based on the testimony of our eyes and reason. It rests on God, whose word cannot fail: and on the Church, which is likewise infallible when teaching us that word.

With respect to faith, every Christian ought to know (1) that it is necessary for salvation; (2) that it is insufficient without works; (3) that he ought, as far as he is able, courageously defend it.

1. Faith, the true faith, which is the Catholic faith, is absolutely necessary for salvation; *He*, says Jesus Christ, *who will not believe, will be condemned.* It is then in vain for us to flatter ourselves with the hope of escaping condemnation, if we refuse willingly to believe all that holy Church proposes to us.

This faith, so necessary for salvation, should not only be interior, but also exterior, that is to say, we must

openly confess it, without regard for the opinion of men, when an occasion presents itself for so doing.

2. Faith alone, however, will not save us: works must accompany it; for the Holy Ghost teaches us that *faith without works is dead*. Now, to have these necessary works, we should conform our lives to our belief by obeying the Commandments, and practising the Christian virtues. To have faith without works, is to have the root without the fruits: it is like unto that barren tree of which Jesus Christ spoke, when He said: *Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Depart from me, you that work iniquity: I never knew you as my disciples.*

It is then in vain for us to hope for salvation, if we do not unite to our faith practice, the practice of all the duties which a true Christian should fulfil.

3. If it happen that our faith be attacked, we must either ably defend it, if it be of advantage to do so, or immediately withdraw from the company; if we can do neither one nor the other, we must show by our silence that we take no part in such impious discourses, and wish in no wise to share the terrible accountability of those who engage in them. In order to preserve and strengthen in our souls the precious virtue of faith, let us fly, my brethren, all intercourse with the impious, let us avoid the reading of bad papers, and let us make frequently the act of faith, reciting the act which is found in our Catechism, or simply saying: *My God, I believe in Thee, increase my faith more and more.*

174. The Duties of a Christian.—The Certitude of Faith.

It is not sufficient for us to be Christians, we must be good Christians, satisfying all the obligations we contracted in our Baptism. Our first duty is to believe, as

the word of God, all that the religion of Jesus Christ proposes to us. Faith, the virtue of faith, the cornerstone of Christianity, is the vital principle of the Christian according to the words: *The just man liveth by faith*: he lives by faith, as the tree by its root. Now, the virtue of faith of which we speak, is *a gift of God, a light, by which we firmly believe, by reason of the eminent veracity of God, all that is divinely revealed and proposed as such by the Church.*

We believe, we say, *by reason of the eminent veracity of God*, that is to say on the infallible word of God: such is the foundation of our faith, which implies as already established two historical facts, namely, (1) that God has really spoken by the mouth of Jesus Christ: (2) that we possess His word pure and authentic: in other words, that the Christian doctrine, as proposed to us by the Catholic Church, is truly the revealed word of God.

1. How do we know that God has spoken by the mouth of Jesus Christ? We know it as the contemporaries of our Saviour knew it, with only this difference, that whilst they saw the proofs of it with their own eyes, we know it by incontestable evidence. But our certitude is not less; because to have positive knowledge of anything, it is not necessary to have seen it with our eyes or to have heard it with our ears. Those who have never seen the city of Rome are not less certain of its existence than those who have visited it; so also, when we see an ancient cathedral, we know that its foundations are solid, as well as those who saw them laid and built; when we see a century tree, we know it has a root as well as those who saw it planted. Besides, the light, the grace of faith, aids us in comprehending this evidence.

2. How are we certain that *we possess in the Catholic Church the pure and authentic doctrine of Jesus Christ?*

(1) We have the same certitude as the early Christians, when they listened to the preaching of the Apostles: with this difference, that in the place of the Apostles, we

have their successors; or what is the same, the infallible Church founded by the Apostles.

(2) We have this certitude, because we see with our own eyes the Church bearing evident marks of her divine authority and infallibility. Beholding an ancient edifice, we perceive that it has retained its identity and has not changed since the time of its erection: looking at the sun which shines for us, we comprehend that it is the same sun that brilliantly shone before the eyes of our first parents, and that it has not changed since then. Likewise viewing the Church, her miracles and the other marks of her divinity, we evidently see that she is the holy Church built by Jesus Christ on His Apostles, and that she has not changed in her journey through the ages.

Admirable Providence! which has caused the Sun of Christian truth to rise, to illuminate with a brilliant light all generations. Let us take care, my brethren, never to shut our eyes to this divine light, and ever to walk in its glare.

175. Christian Doctrine.—Its Divisions.

Among the many beautiful and useful sciences cultivated by human intelligence, there is one which surpasses all others by reason of its importance, beauty, and necessity: it is theology. Religious science, the Christian doctrine, is at once the most important, the most beautiful, and the most necessary of sciences: it may be called the golden branch of the scientific tree, that which bears the fruit of life and immortality. To study it intelligently, it is of the greatest importance that we know its divisions, or, in other words, the different parts which compose it.

We distinguish first two great divisions called the *dogmatic* and the *moral*: that is to say, the truths which we are simply held to believe, such as the Holy Trinity:

and the doctrines which we must not only believe but practise, as the Sacraments.

We distinguish secondly the following parts:

1. The Creed, an epitome of what we must believe and practise.
2. The Commandments, a summary of what we must do and avoid.
3. Sin, the disobedience of the Commandments.
4. The Christian virtues—the fruit of heeding the Commandments and the evangelical counsels.
5. Grace, the means of salvation.
6. The Sacraments, channels of grace.
7. Prayer and the festivals, the support of a Christian life.
8. Our last End, the reward, the crowning of a Christian life.

Let us endeavor, my brethren, better and better to know our holy religion: it will be the light of our minds, the sweetest consolation of our hearts.

176. The Symbol of Faith.—Its Origin and Contents.

The word *symbol* means (1) summary or epitome; (2) a password or a distinguishing emblem. The name symbol is given to the Creed or formulary of the Christian religion, because it is an abridged form of our faith, which is as it were the password distinguishing true Christians, and the emblem around which they rally.

There are three principal symbols or creeds of our faith, that of the Apostles, that of the Council of Nice, and that of St. Athanasius. The last two are explanatory of the Creed of the Apostles, which is the subject of the present instruction,

We call it the Apostles' Creed, (1) because it contains the doctrine of the Apostles; (2) because it has been in

use, at least in the Church of Rome, since the time of the Apostles; (3) because, according to the testimony of St. Jerome, St. Peter Chrysologus, and Ruffin, three writers of the fourth century, it was composed by the Apostles.

It is composed of twelve articles: and hence some authors have said that each of the twelve Apostles formulated one of the articles. These twelve articles are so many dogmas, distinct one from the other, as the members of the body: we must believe each one in particular.

The dominant dogma of the Creed is the mystery of the Holy Trinity, of which the series of twelve articles is but a development. It is divided into three parts, which successively refer to the three divine Persons: the first contains that which is attributed to the Father, namely, the work of creation; the second, that which is proper to the Son, the work of the redemption; the third, that which is referred to the Holy Ghost, the work of the sanctification of the Church.

The First Part, God the Father.

1. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

The Second Part, God the Son.

2. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

5. He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead.

6. He ascended into heaven: sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

7. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

The Third Part, God the Holy Ghost.

8. I believe in the Holy Ghost.

9. The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

10. The forgiveness of sins.

11. The resurrection of the body.

12. Life everlasting, Amen.

Have care, my brethren, to frequently recite the Apostles' Creed—for example, every morning—and teach your children to do the same.

177. The First Article of the Creed.—The Divine Perfections.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Believing in God, my brethren, we also believe in the perfections and attributes which constitute the nature of God. Of these perfections we shall to-day consider these four: the holiness, the truthfulness, the beauty and amiability of God.

1. The infinite holiness of God consists in His hatred of iniquity and His supreme love of justice, order, and all that is good. It excludes every shadow of sin in a manner as positive as the light of the sun excludes all darkness. It is because the Lord our God is holy, that He wishes us also to be holy. To accomplish this, He has not only given us His holy Law, but His only Son, His holy Church with her Sacraments and other aids for our sanctification.

2. Truthfulness, as an attribute of God, signifies His infallibility and sovereign veracity, in virtue of which God can neither deceive nor be deceived. *God is light:* He essentially excludes all darkness, not only sin, but

also ignorance, error and falsehood. This is the foundation of our faith: *I believe, O my God, all you have revealed, because you are the supreme and infallible truth.*

3. The beauty of God is also called His glory: the splendor of His majesty and its lustre far surpasses the brilliancy of the sun in the noonday sky. All that the universe presents to us most attractive and most beautiful is but a reflection of the magnificence of the Creator, but a ray of His incomparable beauty. The kings of the earth and all the glitter of their thrones are but as ashes and dust in His presence. In heaven, to the elect, will the marvels of this glory be alone revealed: *Only there is our Lord magnificent*, there only the Lord our God displays His magnificence (Isaias xxxiii. 21).

The *amiability* of God is as infinite as His beauty and goodness. He is so truly amiable in Himself, that it is impossible to know and particularly to see Him, without being enamored of Him. This divine attribute is also the incentive of our love, as we perceive from these words: *I love thee, O my God, with my whole heart, above all things, because thou art infinitely good in thyself and sovereignly amiable.* God, with His beauty and His ineffable charms, is the true object of our love: our hearts were made for Him, as our eyes for the light.

Let us then love, my brethren, with all our heart a God so amiable, and let this love be seen in our works, by avoiding to offend Him, and by doing in all things His will and good pleasure.

178. The First Article of the Creed.—The Divine Perfections.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

The first article includes all that God has revealed to us of Himself and His divine perfections. These per-

fections are numberless: we shall confine ourselves to-day to the consideration of the happiness of God, of His goodness, providence, mercy and justice.

1. The *Happiness* of God consists in the infinite felicity which He enjoys through all eternity. He is infinitely happy, because He possesses in Himself every good, and has no need of any creature. If He created us, it is only because of His love and goodness: *Yea I have loved thee*, says He, *with an everlasting love* (Jerem. xxxi. 3).

2. The *Goodness* of God towards us is infinite. It consists in His love for us, a love which urges Him to bestow on us every favor and so render us worthy participants of His happiness. He wishes the eternal salvation of all men, and refuses no one the means of accomplishing it: so that no one will be lost except by his own fault. The goodness of God displays itself in His endless blessings. As a good Father, He not only bestows what is necessary for soul and body; but also everything useful and pleasing to us. Should we not then give Him in return gratitude, love and confidence? The goodness of God, combined with His power and fidelity to His promises, is the foundation of the hope and confidence we have in Him, as expressed in these words: *I hope in thee, my God, with a firm confidence, because thou art infinitely good towards us, almighty and faithful to thy promises.*

3. The *Providence* of God is that divine perfection by which God watches over all His creatures with a paternal solicitude, and aids them to attain their destiny. The principal object of this providence is man, and the salvation of his soul. God regards each of us as if alone in the world, and so disposes of everything as if made with a view to our eternal salvation, to lead us in the way marked out by Jesus Christ.

4. The *Mercy* of God consists in His goodness towards the suffering and afflicted; particularly towards sinners, whom He tolerates, whom He calls, for whom He waits,

and whom He reconciles by His grace. How beautifully is this exemplified in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

5. The *Justice* of God exercised towards impenitent sinners will be made manifest at the day of judgment, when the sovereign Judge will say to them: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*

My brethren, we must necessarily glorify, either the mercy of God, or His justice: His mercy, by saving our souls: or His justice, by suffering the pains of hell. Ah! is it not better for us to glorify His mercy, by serving Him faithfully and attaining eternal happiness in heaven?

179. The First Article of the Creed.—The Creation of the World.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Having explained the doctrine of faith in reference to God, we shall now consider what it teaches us with respect to His works. Now, all the works of God are reducible to these two—creation, by which He created the world: and providence, by which He governs and directs creatures to their last end.

Faith teaches us that God is the creator of heaven and earth: let us understand these words.

To create is to make out of nothing a substance, be it what it may. An artist makes a statue: is this a creation? No, because it is not modelled out of nothing, but chiselled out of a stone. A gardener causes a flower to bloom: is this creation? No, it has not come from nothing, but from a seed, which contained its germ. Before the beginning of things, there was not a single atom of matter, and by the simple word of God, the universe came forth from the womb of nothingness: this was creation.

God alone can create, and annihilate what He has made. The most powerful of men, the wisest of scientists, cannot create the smallest animalcule, a blade of grass, or a grain of sand. Creation is an act of almighty power, and belongs to God alone.

When did God create the world? As the Scripture does not tell us how long the interval of time between the creation of heaven and earth, and that of the first man, we do not know the antiquity of the material world: but as regards the human race we know it is not very ancient: it being no more than six or eight thousand years since the creation of Adam. What was there before the creation of the world? God, in His eternal glory, happy in Himself, and having no need of any creature. But that ineffable Majesty, willing to manifest His perfections and to share His felicity with creatures formed in His own image and likeness, created the world, angels and men.

This stupendous work required no effort on His part: He called them forth by His will alone: *He hath done all things whatsoever He would.*

The Almighty power of God, my brethren, should inspire us with the greatest confidence. Since this Almighty God is a Father who loves and protects us, why should we grow faint amidst the dangers and trials of life?

Let us look around us: all that we behold, animals and vegetation, the bread which nourishes us, the clothing which covers us, all have come from God, everything is made for us, in order that we may use them properly, as so many means to accomplish our salvation.

180. The First Article of the Creed.—Angels and Demons.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

When creating heaven and earth, God also created men and angels.

Among the Angels, there were some who fell into mortal sin, and by that offence, incurred the divine indignation and the eternal punishment of hell.

These fallen angels, or demons, animated with a hatred for God and man, seek to accomplish our ruin by temptations, and sometimes even by possession.

1. By *temptation* we mean every solicitation to evil, every emotion arising within us, be it in our mind or senses, and enticing us to sin. All these do not come from the evil one. Those caused by him consist in the thoughts he suggests to us, or the passions he excites in us. We have a striking example of temptation in our first parents, who were tempted in the Garden of Paradise, and had the misfortune to yield (Gen. iii.). If God for just reasons permits us to be tempted by the enemy, He never allows that it be beyond our strength, provided we have recourse to prayer (1 Cor. x. 13).

2. *Possession*, the lowest degree of abasement to which fallen human nature can be subject in this world, consists in the permanent residence of the demon in man, and his physical power over the organic faculties of the soul: that is to say, over the imagination, senses, speech, and locomotion. When the evil spirit acts only from without, molesting, striking, and moving, from one place to another the person attacked, it is an incomplete possession and is called *obsession*; but when he lives within a man, and is master of his organic faculties, doing with him as a plaything, there is true possession. The soul

of the possessed is like a horseman, on whose steed has mounted a thief who holds the reins in his stead.

Cases of possession were common in the time of Jesus Christ, as we read in the Gospel. God willed to vividly manifest the empire of the tyrant which our Saviour came to overthrow (St. Luke viii. 27; St. Mark v. 2). In our days, cases of true possession are most rare, though the visible action of the evil one is common enough.

We must not confound possession, or the physical empire of the devil, with his moral influence over the wicked. By sin, particularly by the habit of sin, man adopts the demon as his companion, friend, counsellor, as a master whom he obeys, whose sentiments, tastes and language he soon makes his own. From this follows that deep-seated wickedness of some men, which makes them like unto incarnate demons.

Nor must we confound possession, or the physical action of the evil one over persons, with his local action. This consists in apparitions and diabolical manifestations in certain houses or assemblies. These sometimes happen, but more rarely than is commonly believed.

What we have to particularly fear on the part of the demon, are his wicked temptations. *For our wrestling*, says St. Paul, *is not against flesh and blood: but against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places* (Eph. vi. 12). Therefore, my brethren, let us always have at hand our spiritual arms—prayer, the sign of the Cross, the use of holy water and devotion to our guardian angel.

181. The Second Article of the Creed.—The Divinity of the Mission and Person of Jesus Christ.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord.

In this article, my brethren, we profess the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has demonstrated as well the divinity of His mission as the divinity of His person, not only by His miracles, but also by the prophecies which were fulfilled in Him. *Search, says He, search the Scriptures: the same are they that give testimony of me* (St. John v. 39).

1. Truly do the Scriptures bear evidence to the *divine mission* of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of the world was there promise of a Redeemer: This Redeemer, said the prophets, will arise from the race of Abraham, will be an offshoot of the tree of Jesse, a descendant of King David; He will have no father according to the flesh, but will be miraculously born of a Virgin, in the little city of Bethlehem, when a foreign Prince will hold the sceptre in Israel. He will be poor all His life, and will work numberless miracles, discovering to all His mission and His divinity.

Such was the testimony of the prophets in reference to the future Redeemer. Now, all this was accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ.

This divine Redeemer had been likewise portrayed *to the living* by a multitude of types: that is to say, by holy personages, as also by sacrifices and victims; for example, Noe, Isaac, Moses, the Paschal Lamb. All these figures have been realized in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. Jesus is then the Redeemer divinely announced by the prophets; His doctrine is then divine, as also His mission.

2. Moreover, since He Himself has declared that He is the Son of God, the *divinity of His person* is unquestionable.

In view of all these proofs of the divinity of Jesus Christ, let us say, my brethren, with the royal King David, *Testimonia tua credibilia facta sunt nimis*: O God, thy testimonies are become exceedingly credible. I believe, O Jesus, in Thy divinity: in that faith I hope to live and die.

182. The Third Article of the Creed.—The Public Life of Jesus Christ.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, passed His infancy and all His years to perfect manhood, *always advancing in wisdom and grace with God and men.*

The first part of His life was hidden in the humble home at Nazareth, the second was public and brilliant as a meteor, throughout Judea.

He began His public life about the age of thirty years, when He quitted Nazareth, going to the banks of the Jordan, where He received Baptism from the hands of St. John the Baptist, His precursor. After His Baptism He retired into the desert, where He fasted forty days, and triumphed over the temptations of the devil, which He willed to undergo for our example. Coming out from the desert He began His evangelical life, a life of miracles and of preaching, which continued until His death on the cross.

The *miracles* He worked are innumerable, and as a rule were prompted only by the goodness of His heart. He changed water into wine, He multiplied the loaves, He filled with fishes the nets of fishermen, He calmed the sea, He delivered the possessed of the devil, He cured the sick, He called the dead to life.

His *preaching*, which consisted of precepts and counsels, frequently took the parabolic form. His principal

parables are those of the sower, the pearl of great price, the good Shepherd, the good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the talents, the ten virgins, the unfaithful steward, and the insolvent debtor.

To give an idea of the glory and the happiness of the heaven which He had promised His disciples, He worked the miracle of His Transfiguration a little while before undergoing that death which He was to suffer for the salvation of the world. He foretold His death with its most minute circumstances, as also His future resurrection. All these predictions were accomplished in their smallest details, as we shall see in the explanation of the fourth article of the Creed.

The life of our Saviour, my brethren, should be the model of our life: *He hath done*, says the Scripture, *all things well*. Let us ask ourselves: How am I doing; what have I done? and humbly beg God's grace to spend the remainder of our life in doing penance for the evil we have done.

183. The Fourth Article of the Creed.—The Passion.—The Tribunals of Pilate and Herod.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

At the time of the passion of our Saviour, Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, commissioned by the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Cæsar, who was its sovereign. He exercised the functions of a judge in his palace at Jerusalem, called the pretorium. This pretorium of Pontius Pilate was the principal theatre of the sufferings which preceded the crucifixion of our Saviour.

Though Pilate was convinced, after his first questions, of the innocence of our Saviour, not having the courage to brave the Jews by setting Him free, he first sent Him before another tribunal—that of Herod—

then he attempted to apply in His favor the act of grace which the Jews enjoyed at the Paschal time. This is why he proposed to them the choice between Jesus and Barabbas.

This expedient having failed, the cowardly magistrate condemns Him to the punishment of flagellation. Accordingly was Jesus most cruelly scourged; and more—thanks to the barbarity of the soldiers, whose hatred was not satisfied by fulfilling the orders of the governor—He was crowned with thorns and deluged with outrages.

Seeing Jesus in this most pitiable condition, Pilate led Him to the porch of his palace, where He could be seen by all—hoping that His appearance in that sad plight would move the Jews to compassion for Him—and pointing to Him he said: *Ecce Homo!* “Behold the man!” But no sooner said than the Jews cried out, *Crucify Him! He forbids us to give tribute to Cæsar: if thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar’s friend.*

The vacillating governor yields to human respect, sacrifices his conscience to his interests, and condemns Jesus to the death of the Cross, at the same time washing his hands and saying, *I am innocent of the blood of this just man.*

Behold, my brethren, how men commit iniquity and crucify our Saviour; some, as the chiefs of the Jews, through malice; others, as the people, through folly and fickleness, by permitting themselves to be led astray; others, again, as Pilate, through worldly interests and a cowardly human respect. And I, a Christian, do I always place my God and my duty above everything else? Beholding the Son of God scourged, crowned with thorns for love of me, do I always think of showing my gratitude? Do I return love for love?

184. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Church the Spouse of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Church, the assembly of the faithful, is called in the Scripture *the Spouse of the Lamb*, or *the mystical Spouse of Jesus Christ*.

As such, the Church represents in a spiritual sense a living being endowed with a heavenly beauty and fecundity.

1. She represents *a living being*, composed of a body and soul. Her soul is the Holy Ghost who dwells in her, and imparts to her the life of grace, with faith, hope, charity, and all His other gifts. The body of the Church consists of a visible head, the Sovereign Pontiff, and of members likewise visible, the faithful who are united to him by the medium of their subordinate pastors.

There are three kinds of members of the Church, the living members, the dead members, and the separated members.

The *living members* are all the faithful in the state of grace: this constitutes the true life of the soul. Those who are not in the state of grace, but yet profess faith and hope in God, have as it were the roots, the sources of this life.

The *dead members* are those living in the state of mortal sin. The extreme degree of this death is the loss of faith.

The *separated members* are those who having been united to the body of the Church by Baptism, have cut themselves off from it, either by public apostasy, by heresy, by schism, by incurring nominal excommunication, or finally, after death, by meriting eternal condemnation. To apostasy, or defection from Catholic faith, may be

ascribed the indifferentism or the impiety of those who believe only what they will, and who maintain that in matters of religion, it is permissible for each one to believe what he pleases. Such men without any religion are worse than professed heretics.

2. The Church represents a being worthy of our admiration: she is a queen *resplendent with beauty*. This beauty, which never fades, is at once interior and exterior. Her interior beauty consists in sanctifying grace, in the sanctity and virtues of her members, as in the holiness of her invisible Chief, who ever dwells within her. Her exterior beauty shines in her miracles, in the admirable order of her hierarchy, and in the splendor of her liturgy.

3. The Church represents a being rich in fecundity. This spiritual fecundity manifests itself in the innumerable children of God which she never ceases to bring forth, in the works of her inexhaustible charity, and in the rich fruits ever ripening on the countless trees of virtue growing within her domain.

Thus is it that the Church exhibits herself to us a *living being*, as a heavenly queen whom Jesus Christ calls His spouse, and whom we, who are her children, should call our mother, our holy mother the Church.

Let us then love the Church, our mother, let us love her with a true love, and let us never forget the reverence and obedience which are her due.

185. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Triple Church of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The holy Catholic Church, established by Jesus Christ, and which we know has perpetuated herself on this earth during nineteen hundred years, is but a part, a province

of the great kingdom, of which Jesus Christ is the divine Founder and Chief. Considered as one whole, this kingdom comprises the Church *militant* on earth, the Church *suffering* in purgatory, and the Church *triumphant* in heaven. The first two are in a transitory state: they are preparing themselves, and striving to unite with the Church triumphant, which is permanent, and which, at the end of the world, when peopled with the saints and the just, will alone continue to exist during all eternity.

The Church *militant* resembles a city, whose inhabitants change from year to year; or a century tree, whose foliage is renewed every year, though the trunk and the branches always remain. The Church *suffering*, or purgatory, is a holy prison, where souls who have need of expiation take the places of such as have already been purified. But the Church *triumphant* is a permanent city, whose inhabitants never change. They who enter, remain there, and their number daily increases. It is an edifice in course of construction; to which we are constantly adding new stones, not one of which will ever fall from its place.

These living stones, placed on high, are shaped here below, like those used in the building of the temple of Solomon: *The house of God*, says the Scripture, *was built of stones hewed and made ready: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house when it was in building* (3 Kings vi. 7). When the last stone will be placed, that is to say, when the last of the elect will have entered heaven, the Church on the earth will have completed her mission, and will go to reign with her divine Spouse through all eternity.

Why is the Church on earth called militant?

Why that of purgatory, suffering, and that of heaven, triumphant?

Let us strive, my brethren, to be of those living stones;

let us shape ourselves by bearing with patience the trials of life, and soon will we be placed in that glorious city of the elect.

186. The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Church, our Mother.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Church is the assembly or society of the faithful, into which we have been incorporated by Baptism. We are then her children, and call her by a *valid* title our mother, our holy Mother the Church.

The Church is our mother, not only because she is the mystical spouse of Jesus Christ, who begot us by His blood on the Cross: but also because she does for us what the best of mothers does for her children, and may truly say: *I have brought up children, and exalted them* to the height of glory. Maternal devotion is love: but the love of a mother for her children is a love of incomparable benevolence. A mother procures for her children in as much as she is able this triple blessing: life, education, and inheritance.

1. The life given by the Church to her children is that of sanctifying grace: she breathes it into them at Baptism, she nourishes it by the Sacraments, she preserves it by her vigilance, and if they lose it, she aids them in recovering it.

2. The Church provides with the greatest solicitude for the Christian education of her children: hence her zeal for religious instruction, for the study of the catechism, for Christian schools, for the preaching of the Gospel, for spiritual reading.

The inheritance which the Church secures for her children is heaven. Notwithstanding all their ingratitude, she never wills to deprive them of it; on the contrary, she strives without ceasing, particularly in

the time of sickness and death, to assure them its possession.

If we would show ourselves worthy children of the Church, we should render her that acknowledgment which a grateful child makes to the best of mothers; we should love, honor and obey her.

1. To love the Church, is to love her ceremonies and her liturgy, her ministers and her pastors, who are the fathers of our souls.

2. To honor the Church, is to honor her Bishops and her priests by reason of their dignity; that is not only to speak of them with respect, but also to defend them when attacked or insulted, as a devoted son would defend his father or mother. We should honor the Church with a deeper respect than Solomon showed to Bethsabee (3 Kings. ii. 19).

3. To obey the Church, is to observe her Commandments, to heed her precepts: as a consequence, to keep holy the Sunday, to go to Communion at Easter, to abstain and fast at the appointed times, to refrain from reading bad books and papers.

To obey the Church is to obey God, to disobey is to disobey Jesus Christ Himself: *He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me* (St. Luke x. 16). *He that striketh his father or mother, shall be put to death. He that curseth his father or mother, shall die the death* (Exod. xxi. 15, 17). Happy those who fulfil with respect to the Church these duties of filial piety: our Lord will enrich them with blessings, according to the words: *Let him that blesseth thee be filled with blessings* (Gen. xxvii. 29).

187.—The Ninth Article of the Creed.—The Church.—Her Rights, Her Power.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

The Catholic Church is the assembly, that is to say the society of the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our Saviour having established His Church as a human society, existing and working among men, she must have rights and power.

1. The *rights of the Church* may be reduced to those of propriety, independence and immunity.

By virtue of her *right of propriety* she owns material effects, churches, cemeteries, movable and immovable goods, either for the service of the altar, for the support of her clergy, or for the relief of the poor.

To take from the Church what she holds is not only an act of injustice, but a sacrilege.

By virtue of her *right of independence*, the Church fulfils without hindrance her mission on earth, and no temporal prince may embarrass or fetter her government, the assembly of her councils, or the exercise of her worship.

By virtue of the *right of immunity*, the clergy of the Church are exempt from public duties, such as military service, incompatible with the functions of their ministry.

Such are the rights of the Church, rights sacred and imprescriptible, because they are divine. Cupidity and tyranny can violate these rights, but they cannot abrogate them.

2. *The Power.* Considered in its totality, the power conferred by Jesus Christ on His Church is divisible into three parts: the power of teaching, of ministering, and of governing.

The Power of teaching. The Church has received, with

the gift of infallibility in matters of faith and morals, the mission to teach all people, and especially her own children. By virtue of this mission, it is her right and her duty not only to define the true doctrine, to preach and to catechise, but also to superintend the education of the faithful, to maintain the Christian character of schools, to condemn publications injurious to faith and morals; why then ask: Why do Bishops and priests forbid the reading of such or such papers?

By her *power of ministering*, the Church administers all the Sacraments, with the exception of marriage, with regard to which she is only the judge, with full power to create annulling impediments, and of dispensing from them. It is by virtue of this same power that she grants indulgences, institutes festivals, regulates the ceremonies of the Sacrifice of the Mass and all that pertains to public worship. By virtue of her *power of government*, also called *jurisdiction*, the Church exercises three privileges: she provides for the religious government of the faithful, by appointing Pastors, by enacting laws, by prescribing penalties which are the sanction of these laws.

Let us respect, my brethren, and let us always defend the rights of the Church: let us observe faithfully her laws, let us hear the teachings of her Pastors: *He that heareth you, heareth me*, says Jesus Christ, *and he that despiseth you, despiseth me* (St. Luke x. 16).

188.—The Pope.—The Common Father of the Faithful.—We ought to assist Him.

The Sovereign Pontiff, the visible Head of the Church, is called the Common Father of the faithful. This title is justly his: (1) because the faithful are the children of God born to Him in Baptism, and forming a family of which the Pope is the Head and Father; (2) because he loves us as a most tender father, as Jesus Christ Himself.

This is why our Saviour when confiding to Peter His lambs and His sheep, required of him that he should love them as a good Shepherd, ready to give his life for his flock; (3) because in as far as is in his power he does for us all that the best of fathers does for his children: he instructs us by his word, he nourishes our souls with the Sacraments, he defends us by his prayers from our enemies, he leads us to our eternal inheritance.

If the Pope is truly our Father and bestows on us unceasingly the most precious gifts, what are our obligations with respect to him? We owe our Holy Father all that children owe to the best and most august of fathers: love, respect, obedience, and assistance in his necessities.

1. Love.—A child who loves his father is pleased to think of him, to speak of him, to pray for him, to look at his portrait, and to receive his paternal benediction. Joseph, in the midst of the splendors of Egypt, forgot not his father, Jacob. *I am Joseph*, said he to his brethren; *is my father yet living? Make haste and go to my father and say to him: come down to me, linger not.* And when Jacob arrived in Egypt, Joseph went forth in his chariot to meet him: and seeing him, he fell upon his neck, and embracing him wept. Such should be our love for our holy Father the Pope, we should give him every proof of a most devoted love, particularly now when he receives naught but abuse from so many unnatural children.

2. Respect.—If the dignity of a simple priest is so sublime that it surpasses that of the angels, what shall we say of the dignity of the Vicar of Jesus Christ?

St. Francis of Assisium said that should he meet an angel and a priest he would salute the priest before the angel, as being the more exalted of the two.

St. Francis of Sales speaks of a venerable priest, to whom God vouchsafed the favor of seeing his guardian angel under a sensible form, and says this heavenly spirit ceded to him the right of way in deference to his sacerdo-

tal character. The emperor Maximus having invited to his table the Bishop St. Martin, sat at his side, and ordered that the cup which was offered to his Majesty should be first presented to the Bishop, as the anointed of the Lord.

What then should be our respect for the Pope, who is the Bishop of bishops ?

Can we show too great respect to him whom Jesus Christ has elevated to the sublime dignity of being His other self ?

3. Obedience.—Who does not comprehend that we owe the Sovereign Pontiff the most unquestionable obedience, since it is to him, as the highest authority on earth, that these words refer: *he who hears you, hears me.*

Now, we practise this obedience towards our holy Father by faithfully observing the laws of the Church which are his, and by obeying our immediate pastors who govern us in his name.

4. Assistance.—What assistance do we owe our holy Father ? This question is almost unnecessary in our day. We see him despoiled of the resources which Providence, during more than twelve centuries, had bestowed on the Popes to enable them to exercise with the necessary liberty and dignity their august functions. These sacrilegious spoliations have deprived him of the patrimony of St. Peter, of his revenues, of his independence, and of the wise and many assistants of which he has need to fulfil his Apostolic ministry. Should we not then by our protests, by our alms, by our prayers, by every means in our power, succor the Father of our souls in his present distress ?

These are the duties which we have to fulfil, as true children of the Church, in reference to our holy Father, the Pope. Let us then fulfil these duties, and we shall share in those blessings which God has promised to children who honor their parents. *Honor thy father and thy*

mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth. Yes, if we honor our Father by excellence, we shall be blessed in this life, and eternally blessed in the life to come.

189. The First Commandment.—Images and Relics.

I am the Lord thy God.

The first Commandment prescribes religious worship, which consists in the honor we pay God and His Saints.

We honor the Saints in two ways: (1) in their person, directly considered; (2) in their relics and images. The images of the Saints which we have in our churches are not simply ornaments, they are objects of worship and veneration. By *relics* we mean the bodies of Saints, their bones or some part of their members, as also all the objects which belonged to them, which were used by them, or which served as instruments of their martyrdom.

1. We honor the Saints in their person, or directly, when we invoke them, and supplicate them to intercede for us with God, by offering them prayers or having the holy Mass celebrated in their honor.

2. We honor them in their relics or images when we kneel, burn lights or place flowers before these holy objects.

The worship of relics and images, consecrated by the practice and decisions of the Church, is founded on the best reasons.

We honor the *relics* of the Saints, (1) because they are precious souvenirs of our best friends; (2) because the bodies of the Saints having been the instruments of virtue, members of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost, shall one day rise in glory; (3) because God has been pleased to glorify these sacred remains by miracles.

We honor the *images* of Jesus Christ and the Saints,

because they excite us to devotion, keep us attentive in prayer, recall to us salutary truths, and place before our eyes the best exemplars. The worship we pay images and relics is a *relative* worship, which ascends and terminates in the persons whose images or relics we venerate. This relative worship is the supreme degree of *latria*, when we venerate the image of Jesus Christ or the relics of His holy passion; *dulia*, when there is question of those of the Saints; *hyperdulia*, when we honor the images of the Blessed Virgin.

Since the honor we render to images, redounds to the persons whom they represent, it follows that by prostrating, for example, at the foot of a crucifix, we do the equivalent of prostrating at the feet of Jesus Christ Himself. Let us honor the relics of the Saints, my brethren, and their holy images: let us place them in our homes, especially the image of Jesus Christ and that of His Blessed Mother: let us not forget the lessons they teach us and the examples they give us; and let us remember that the honors we pay them are received by the heavenly persons they represent, as if directly rendered to them.

190. The First Commandment.—Contrary Sins.

I am the Lord thy God.

The first Commandment commands us to honor God by faith, hope, charity and religion; and forbids forgetfulness of God, as also the sins contrary to faith, hope, charity and the virtue of religion.

1. By *forgetfulness of God* we mean that negligence of religious duties into which they fall who permit themselves to be absorbed in worldly affairs: *Seek ye first*, says the Saviour, *the kingdom of God and his justice* (St. Matt. vi. 33).

2. The sins contrary to *faith*, are disbelief of what the Church teaches, voluntary doubt concerning matters of

faith, neglect to procure religious instruction, exposing ourselves to the loss of faith by bad reading, and being ashamed of our faith by reason of human respect.

3. The sins contrary *to hope* are despair, and presumption as regards our salvation. Practical presumption, which consists in deferring conversion and negligence in matters pertaining to salvation, causes the loss of many souls. Men, as St. Augustine remarks, have too much confidence in God when there is question of their salvation, whilst, when there is question of temporal affairs, they have by far too little. They act, as if in these matters all depended on themselves, and in no wise on God; whilst as regards their salvation, as if it were the work of God alone.

4. The sins contrary to the *love* of God above all things, are to give our heart to creatures with prejudice to the love of God, to neglect to make acts of the love of God, harboring enmity, and contending against God and His Church.

5. The sins contrary *to religion* are superstition and irreligion, which are opposed to it, the one by excess, the other by defect.

Under these two heads may be classified all the sins which can be committed against this virtue.

Let us faithfully observe, my brethren, the first Commandment of God; let us always fulfil our religious duties in preference to everything else; let us fly as a pest bad literature and the association of the impious; let us not neglect to recite every day the acts of the theological virtues, the acts of faith, hope and charity, as also the act of contrition.

Now, to make these acts of faith, hope and charity, no particular formula is necessary; it suffices simply to say: *My God, I believe in Thee; I hope in Thee; I love Thee with my whole heart.* However, it is better to express, according to the formulas we have learned, the motives

which are the foundation of our faith, hope and love: and this condition is likewise necessary to gain the indulgences attached to the recital of the acts; namely, seven years and seven quarantines each time we recite them, besides a plenary indulgence each month, provided we have recited them faithfully every day.

191. The First Commandment.—Superstition and Irreligion.

I am the Lord thy God.

The first Commandment commands us to honor the true God by a worship worthy of Him; it forbids superstition and irreligion.

1. By *superstition* we mean certain practices of worship which are false and wicked. In this category are classed the sins of idolatry, divination, and magic.

Idolatry is to adore false gods, as did the pagans, who went so far as to offer incense, not only to gods of gold and brass, but even to vile animals. It is a species of idolatry to have a passion for riches.

Avaritia simulacrorum servitus, covetousness, says St. Paul, is the service of idols (Coloss. iii. 5); so also is intemperance: *Quorum Deus venter est*, says the same Apostle of those who are enslaved to it: whose God is their belly (Phil. iii. 19).

It is forbidden to consult fortune-tellers, who pretend to make known the future, to conjure or raise up spirits, to have pretended interviews with the souls of the dead, etc. God alone knows the future, because the events of all time are present to His eyes: He sees the future as the present, and makes it known only when it pleases Him. Then it is prophecy, of which there are many examples in the Scriptures.

The demon does not know the future, nor could he

reveal it; and when he pretends to do it he but conjectures. As regards the souls of the dead, either the elect or the damned, they cannot appear to the living, unless, as St. Thomas teaches, by an exceptional act of God's providence, in very rare cases. Hence the souls, said to be evoked by *mediums*, are either demons imitating the language of these souls, or, as is ordinarily the case, illusions caused by trickery.

It is likewise forbidden to foolishly attribute to magic and witchcraft, diseases and other purely natural effects.

2. By *irreligion* we mean the vice which rejects or assails the true faith. The principal sins which it includes are heresy, apostasy, religious indifference, impiety and sacrilege.

Let us have a lively horror, my brethren, for all that savors of impiety; let us avoid the company of persons hostile to the Church, indifferent or careless in religious matters; let us have a profound reverence for holy things, and let us ask of God the spirit of Christian piety.

192. The Second Commandment.—The Violation of Vows.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

The second Commandment, besides blasphemy and perjury, also forbids the violation of vows.

A *vow* is a deliberate promise made to God in reference to something good, with the intention of being bound by it.

We mean by *something good*, that which is good in itself, and is better to do than to omit. We must not confound a vow with a good resolution, which is not made with the intention of obliging under the pain of sin.

The Church, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing which she has received from Jesus Christ, may,

for just motives, dispense in vows, or commute them for other good works. This power is invested in the Pope and Bishops, who may exercise it personally or by their delegates.

A vow is a salutary and holy act, provided in making it we proceed with discretion and prudence. When a vow we would make has reference to a matter of importance in itself or consequences, we should anticipate it by fervent prayer and by seeking the advice of our confessor.

When we have made a vow, we are bound to accomplish it and without unnecessary delay. If we find it too difficult to fulfil, or other grave obstacles present themselves, we should speak to our confessor to obtain a dispensation.

What we call the *Baptismal vows* are not, strictly speaking, vows such as those of which we now speak; but sacred engagements and obligations which we contract before God by the very fact of the reception of Baptism. In receiving the character and rank of Christians, we stipulate to live as Christians and to faithfully observe the law of Jesus Christ. A kind of contract is made between the baptized and Christ: the baptized promising to be faithful to the divine Master, and He, on His part, promising him eternal life.

Be discreet, my brethren, when there is question of binding yourselves by a vow: never do so without consulting your confessor. If you have, with the required prudence, made any promise to God, carefully and promptly fulfil it. As regards the Baptismal vows, a Christian should endeavor all his life to be faithful to them: and to this end it is helpful to renew them from time to time, repeating these words which were pronounced for us at the sacred font: *I renounce Satan, all his works and all his pomps; I bind myself to Jesus Christ forever.*

193. The Fourth Commandment.—The Duty of Education.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

The fourth Commandment imposes not only on children the obligation of filial piety, but also on parents the grave duty of the Christian education of their children.

Education consists in the formation of the man *as a man*, I mean as a reasonable creature, moral and endowed with an immortal soul. It consists of two parts: the formation of the intellect, or *instruction*, and that of the heart, which is *moral training*. Education should be Christian: that is to say it should have for its basis Christian doctrine and morality. The reason of this is, (1) that by virtue of the positive law of Jesus Christ all men are held to model their lives by His doctrine; (2) that an education which is not Christian is not a true education, but only a false and pernicious training. For, (1) if we consider the *intellectual part* or *instruction*, once it is simply profane and separate from religious instruction, it cannot be other than false and incomplete. It will be incomplete, for man's instruction embraces not only the knowledge of what regards his body and the present life, but also that which refers to his soul and the future life. Now, of these two parts, civil or public instruction includes only the first, which is the least important. It will be false, because it misleads man by giving him a wrong idea of life, teaching him to so live and labor as to acquire the goods of this life, instead of those immortal goods which are the principal end of his existence. (2) If we consider the *moral training*, that is impossible without religion, for it alone can subdue the passions of the human heart and make man virtuous. An institution from which religion is excluded may produce a man learned in the natural sciences, in the

arts, in politics but no matter how learned he may be, he will ever be a vicious man.

Parents who through prejudice, through worldly interests or any other motive, neglect the Christian education of their children, or send them to godless schools, (1) will have a terrible responsibility before God, (2) and will probably receive their punishment in this life, if not otherwise at least in the sorrows which their children will cause them.

As regards you, my dear brethren, have but one ambition, ask of God but one grace, that you may bring up your children as Christians, and when dying leave them the most precious of inheritances, that of probity and virtue.

194. **The Fourth Commandment.—The Sins of Parents.**

Honor thy father and thy mother.

By reason of the fourth Commandment, not only should children honor their parents, but they on their part should love with a Christian love their children, and prove this love by caring for their bodily well-being, by procuring for them a Christian education, and by establishing them in some vocation in life as a means for their future self-support.

1. Parents sin against *parental love* by cherishing in their hearts aversion, hatred for a child, or by so far forgetting themselves as to curse him, by maltreating him, or by speaking of his faults to strangers. They also sin when they have for their children that passionate fondness which blinds their understanding, and renders them insensible to their children's faults; when they have not an equal love for all their children, but entertain a predilection for one to the prejudice of the others—an ordinary cause of jealousy and discord in families.

2. They are delinquent in their duty as regards the *bodily welfare* of their children when they negligently expose them to accidents injurious to life or limb. (All negligence or ill-treatment that seriously affects the life, health, or growth of a child is a mortal sin.) They sin when by laziness or extravagance, or by costly pleasures and gambling, they deprive their children of proper nourishment; when they injure their future well-being by neglecting to prepare them for a becoming position in society.

3. They neglect their duty as regards the *spiritual welfare* of their children if they carelessly permit them to die without Baptism; if they do not consider their first and most sacred duty the Christian education of those who, by their Baptism, are disciples of Jesus Christ.

4. When parents commit to others the care and education of their children, they ought to select persons worthy of their confidence. They are guilty of mortal sin when they confide them to institutions or teachers who, by reason of their want of faith, irreligion, or immorality, are liable to corrupt them by their principles, or by their bad example, or simply by their indifference.

5. They sin when they scandalize their children by their own negligence in matters of religion, by their want of devotion, by their blasphemies, by their falsehoods, by their calumnies, by their curses, and by every act contrary to charity, to justice, to the morality of the Gospel. They are also guilty of sin if they take them to improper places of amusement; if they command them to do anything forbidden by the law of God, of the Church, or of equity. In this case they are guilty of two sins, one against parental love, and the other against the virtue violated by the scandalous action.

Christian parents, let the education of your children be your first care, and a virtuous life the most precious inheritance you hope to leave them. Ask God every day

to aid you in the fulfilment of this duty, as difficult as it is important.

195. The Fourth Commandment.—Superiors and Inferiors.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long on the earth.

The fourth Commandment regards not only children and parents, but also all other superiors and inferiors.

Now, besides parents, there are three other classes of superiors; namely, those who hold the place of our parents, those who govern us in the spiritual order, and those who govern us in the temporal order. We shall here speak only of the first two classes.

1. By superiors who hold the place of our parents we mean guardians and teachers. The obligations of *guardians* in reference to their wards are, in spiritual and temporal matters, the same as those of fathers and mothers relatively to their children. It is the duty of the guardian to procure for the minor confided to his care a becoming education, to watch over his conduct, to advise him, and to correct him. Reciprocally, the duties of wards towards their guardians are the same as those of children towards their parents, with this exception: they are not bound to afford them pecuniary assistance.

Teachers, schoolmasters, and all those engaged in the instruction and education of the young, being the depositaries of the confidence of parents and of paternal authority, ought constantly strive to advance those committed to their care in piety, virtue, and knowledge. They are grievously guilty when they abandon them to themselves, not keeping a watch over them, or failing to have them fulfil their religious duties; when they neglect to protect them from whatsoever might be detrimental

to their innocence or their health; when they permit them to read books injurious to their faith or morals, and also when they give them bad example. The duties of scholars relatively to their teachers are similar to those that they owe to their parents, at least as regards respect and obedience.

2. *Superiors in the spiritual order* are the ecclesiastical authorities, the Pope, Bishops, and priests, entrusted with the safe-keeping of our souls. They have all-important obligations to fulfil towards the people committed to their care. The principal are, to teach, to exhort, to administer the Sacraments, to combat scandals, to visit the sick, to comfort the dying, even at the peril of their life. As regards their pastors, the faithful are held to respect them, to obey them as they would Jesus Christ in all matters which pertain to religion, and, if it is necessary, to provide for their support. All the ministers of religion have a right to our respect, but we owe it in a special manner to the Sovereign Pontiff, who is our common Father, the Pastor of pastors, the Vicar of Jesus Christ; to the Bishop of our diocese; to our pastor; to our confessor. We sin against the respect due to a priest by ridicule, by backbiting, by calumny. And if by so doing we injure his ministry, we grievously sin against justice and religion.

Let us always entertain the greatest respect, my brethren, for our superiors as holding relatively to us the place of God; but let us especially honor our spiritual superiors, since it is to them these words of Christ particularly refer: *He who hears you, hears me.*

196. The Eighth Commandment.—Rash Judgments.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The eighth Commandment forbids false testimony and all words injurious to our neighbor. But besides in-

jurious speech, this Commandment also forbids us to harbor injurious thoughts concerning our neighbors; in other words, rash judgments.

We judge rashly when we judge badly of the actions of our neighbor without sufficient evidence. When doubts, suspicions, or judgments unfavorable to our neighbor arise in our mind, we must not stop to deliberate on them, but, on the contrary, banish them as soon as we discover them to be rash and unjust.

By judging our neighbor, (1) we lose our time; (2) we frequently err; (3) we offend God; (4) we wound charity by judging our brother as we ourselves would not wish to be judged; (5) we betray our own wickedness, for we ordinarily judge others by ourselves, and we attribute to them the evil that we ourselves are disposed to do. He whose heart is the seat of charity is ever ready to put a good interpretation on all the actions of his neighbor, to excuse the intention, and to believe others better than himself.

The doubts and suspicions of superiors, of masters, and of fathers of families, charged with the care of others, whom they should mistrust in order to prevent them from doing wrong, are neither unjust nor blamable; they are simply acts of prudence. Such also is the doubt we entertain when there is question of self-protection against some possible evil. Thus, for example, when we receive a stranger into our home, we may prudently take the same precaution for the safety of our property as we would in the case of the presence of one whose honesty we suspected.

Let us never think evil of our neighbor, let us not judge him, and then we may expect merciful judgment at the tribunal of God. *Judge not, says our Saviour, and you shall not be judged.*

Would we as Christians observe all that this eighth Commandment prescribes, and never injure our neigh-

bor by word or by rash judgment, we must root out from our heart all jealousy, envy, and hatred, and ask the help of God to govern as Christians our tongues, saying with the prophet, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips.* (Ps. 140.)

197. The Third Commandment of the Church.— Annual Confession.

To confess our sins at least once a year.

By this Commandment the Church ordains that all the faithful shall approach the tribunal of Penance at least once in each year. Children who have reached the age of discretion are bound by this precept; and it is the duty of parents and masters to prepare them and to send them to confession.

This law of annual confession was enacted in the fourth Council of Lateran, held in the year 1215. In the early ages of the Church the faithful frequently confessed and communicated, having no need to be urged by a particular Commandment; the general law established by Jesus Christ in the institution of the Sacrament of Penance, and their own fervor, being sufficient inducement. But at the time of the convening of this Council the remissness of many rendered this precept necessary. The Church therefore ordains annual confession as an act strictly necessary to fulfil the divine precept as regards confession, but in no wise as a practice with which she is satisfied. This is clearly evident from the words *at least*, indicating by them her desire that her children be not content with an annual confession, and likewise insinuating that it may be necessary for them to confess more frequently. But why this desire of the Church that we confess frequently? That we may thereby escape grave dangers and obtain precious graces.

1. Those who confess only at Easter manifest but little zeal for their salvation; they deprive themselves of many graces, fall more easily into mortal sin, and are likewise exposed to the danger of dying in that perilous state.

2. Frequent confession, on the contrary, not only preserves us from mortal sins, but also aids us to avoid venial sins, and to acquire that purity of conscience which is the seed and growth of all the virtues.

Confession is one of the principal practices of the Christian life, and may be said to indicate the measure of our fervor. They who seldom confess are, as a rule, but lukewarm and indifferent Christians; they who confess frequently give proof of their fervor. See, my brethren, and examine before God if you sufficiently frequent this salutary Sacrament; see if your divine Master, if the welfare of your own soul, demands nothing more than you have done.

198. The Third Commandment of the Church.— A Good Confession.

To confess our sins at least once a year.

The Church by this Commandment commands all the faithful to confess once a year, at the very least, to satisfy the precept of Jesus Christ, who, by the very fact of instituting the Sacrament of Penance, has made its reception obligatory to all the faithful.

But the precept of Jesus Christ goes further than the Commandment of the Church. Besides the annual confession prescribed by the Church, it is of divine obligation that we confess our sins when in danger of death, and in this case it cannot be deferred. Moreover, love for God and for ourselves demands that we hasten to apply this salutary remedy whenever we have the misfortune to commit mortal sin, (1) because we would be

doubly ungrateful and guilty if, after having offended God, we should continue to live at enmity with Him; (2) because it is most prejudicial to our own interests to live in the state of mortal sin, since we are thus deprived of many graces, and all the good works done in that state are void of supernatural merit; (3) because it is most dangerous to abide in such a state, as we thus expose ourselves to fall into greater and numberless sins, and to die in enmity with God.

We must remember that to fulfil the obligation of our annual confession any kind of a confession does not suffice: we must make a *good* confession. Now, that our confession may not only be valid, but also abounding in fruit, as is the intention of the divine Institutor, two conditions are requisite: (1) sufficient instruction concerning this Sacrament and its different parts; (2) a practical method to fulfil the different acts which this Sacrament requires before, during, and after confession.

Before confession, we must (1) ask of God the grace to make our confession with a spirit of true repentance even as if we were making it for the last time; (2) examine our conscience; (3) excite ourselves to sorrow for our sins, and form a firm purpose of amendment, reciting with all our heart the acts of faith, hope, love, and particularly of contrition.

During confession—that is, when in the confessional—we must tell our sins with a humble sincerity, and afterwards respectfully listen to whatever our confessor is pleased to say.

After confession, when we have received absolution, we must fulfil the penance imposed, and without delay put in practice the advice which we have received from our confessor.

If you wish to live as Christians, my brethren, and to assure your salvation, approach frequently the tribunal of mercy; and if you wish to derive consolation and fruit

from your confession, consider (1) that you go to throw yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ, who acts and speaks in the person of His minister; (2) that the confession you are about to make will be perhaps the last in your life.

199. The Fourth Commandment of the Church.— Easter Communion.

To receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist at Easter or within the time appointed.

As the third Commandment of the Church prescribes annual confession, so the fourth Commandment ordains the Easter Communion.

By this precept all the faithful are obliged to receive Communion at least once a year, and that during Easter time, which in these United States extends from the first Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday. By this law the Church determines what the faithful are strictly bound to do to fulfil the precept of Jesus Christ Himself, which obliges them to communicate from time to time during life.

This fourth Commandment of the Church was enacted in the fourth Council of Lateran, held in the year 1215, at the same time as the law relating to annual confession, and for similar reasons.

To the nonfulfilment of this precept the same Council has attached a double punishment, exclusion from the Church during life and deprivation of Christian burial after death. These punishments are, however, comminatory: to incur them, a Bishop must pass sentence. As we have said above, the Council of Lateran had no other motive in enacting this decree than to quicken the negligence of a number of Christians who had ceased to frequent the holy Table as was the custom in the early Church.

Why should we receive Communion during Easter-time? Evidently because the feast of Easter is the greatest of all festivals; and it was then that our Saviour Himself, on the occasion of the institution of the Eucharist, gave Communion to His apostles. Those who cannot receive Communion during Easter-time ought, if they wish to act according to the spirit of the Church, to do so as soon thereafter as their convenience permits.

With propriety we may here say a word in reference to *first Communion*. Children are bound to receive Communion when they have reached *the age of discretion*; that is to say, when they are able sufficiently to comprehend the mystery of the Holy Eucharist: about the age of from ten to twelve years: they ought then to make their *first Communion*.

This most important act of religion, the foundation of a Christian life and the pledge of future goodness, requires on the part of the child a double preparation, a knowledge of the truths of religion and good conduct. For this reason they ought to be well instructed in the Catechism, and their hearts prepared for the reception of their Lord by suitable religious exercises. Parents must remember that it is their sacred duty to aid in this preparation of their children.

Oh, if we could only comprehend how much the future of children and the happiness even of parents are dependent on a good first Communion, with what care would we not prepare those for whom we are responsible, for this the most memorable act in the life of a Christian! However, first Communion made, all is not done: parents and children should act in concert to preserve its precious fruits; this will be attained by constantly frequenting the Sacraments.

**200. The Fourth Commandment of the Church.—
A Good Communion.—Frequent Communion.**

The fourth Commandment of the Church commands all the faithful who have reached the age of discretion to receive Communion during Easter-time. We must, however, remember that besides the ecclesiastical precept of Easter Communion, there is a divine precept which obliges us to receive Communion when we are in danger of death. This Communion is called the *Viaticum*.

To fulfil our Easter duty, prescribed by the fourth Commandment of the Church, we must understand that a worthy Communion is necessary, and that we do not satisfy the precept of the Church by a Communion received in the state of mortal sin, as this would be to commit a heinous sacrilege, a profanation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

To communicate worthily we must be, above everything else, in the state of grace: this is the essential condition. We ought, moreover, before approaching the holy Table, arouse in our hearts sentiments of piety and devotion, and after Communion make at least a quarter of an hour's thanksgiving, familiarly conversing with the divine Guest whom we entertain, or devoutly reciting the prayers we find in our prayer-book. What a precious moment is that in which the Christian is in possession of his God! What limit shall we place to his expressions of love to such a friend as Jesus!

In her precept the Church does not simply say that the faithful ought to receive Communion at Easter, but qualifies it by the use of the term *at least*, to teach us that she in no wise intends that the faithful should content themselves with Easter Communion. She desires, on the contrary, that her children communicate frequently during the year, yes, that they most frequently approach the

holy Table ; for frequent Communion is always beneficial, and often even indispensable. *Monthly* Communion is rightfully regarded as a means generally necessary to persevere in a truly virtuous life. We would therefore urge all the faithful to receive Communion once a month ; or if that is not always convenient, at least on all the great festivals of the year. *Weekly* Communion, or even *daily*, is likewise conformable to the spirit of the Church, and most salutary to those fervent souls who, with the approbation of a prudent confessor, merit to partake so often of the divine banquet.

If, my brethren, you fully appreciated the treasures hidden in holy Communion, you would brave, as St. Teresa, the storms and the tempests, to have the happiness to communicate. Purify, then, your soul and render yourself worthy to approach frequently the Table of the Lord.

201. Sin.—The Different Kinds of Sin.

Among the different kinds of sin which the Christian must combat are the *seven capital sins* : Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Lust, Gluttony, Anger, and Sloth.

To triumph over these capital sins we must practise the virtues which are opposed to them ; namely, humility, as opposed to pride ; liberality, to avarice ; love of our neighbor, to envy ; chastity, to lust ; temperance, to gluttony ; patience, to anger ; and occupation and fervor, to sloth.

Besides the capital sins, there are also the *sins against the Holy Ghost*. We designate by this term sins of pure malice, which, being directly opposed to the mercy of God and the grace of the Holy Ghost, render conversion most difficult. They are six in number, namely :

(1) Despairing of God's grace, or of our salvation.

(2) Presuming so far on the mercy of God that we expect to be saved without good works.

(3) Envyng our neighbor his spiritual good.

(4) Resisting the truths of faith which the Church teaches.

(5) Persevering in sin, notwithstanding the exhortations, the graces, the lights, and the warnings given by God.

(6) Refusing to repent, and as a consequence deliberately persevering in impenitence.

To be satisfied to die in impenitence is the height of obstinacy.

Besides offending God by our own sins, we can also offend Him by the sins of *others* if we are accessory to them: by counsel; by protecting or aiding those who commit them; by command; by praise or flattery; by materially participating in them; by silence when we ought to speak to prevent them; by not punishing them; or by not making them known to those who have the power to prevent them.

The sins which, by reason of their extraordinary malice, *cry to heaven for vengeance* are these four: wilful murder; sodomy; oppression of the poor, of widows and orphans; defrauding laborers of their wages.

Let us, my brethren, carefully watch our conduct, so as never to be accessory to the sins of others.

Let us regard all sin, even the smallest venial sin, as the greatest of all evils, as surpassing all the bodily evils that could happen us: let us have for it a vivid horror, preferring to die rather than offend the divine Majesty.

202. Sin.—Its Causes and Remedies.

Our life on earth is a warfare. Our enemy, our great enemy, is sin. And would we be victorious in the combat, it is necessary that we have a knowledge of the causes and remedies of sin.

I. The *formal* cause of sin is the will of him who com-

mits it; but ordinarily this will, without ceasing to be free, is moved by other causes, which are called *impulsive*: they are *temptations*. By temptations we mean every attraction, every internal or external allurements, which entices or solicits to evil. They come to us from our three spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. By the *world* is to be understood the false maxims of the world, luxury, riches, honors, human respect, and all exterior attractions; by the *flesh*, lust, debauchery, intemperance, and sensuality; finally, the *devil*, who, whilst he makes use of the world and the flesh to tempt us, especially busies himself in the spread of impiety, irreligion, and all kinds of error.

II. As regards the *remedy* for sin, it may be considered with reference to the past and the future. As regards the past—that is, the sins which we have committed—we must apply the remedy of Christian penance, which has its efficacy in the merits of Jesus Christ. This penance may be sacramental or not sacramental: the first is the Sacrament of Penance; the second includes all the satisfactions and good works we may practise by way of atonement for our sins. As regards the future, so that we may not again fall into sin, the remedy consists in employing the proper means to avoid it. What are these *means*? The four principal are:

1. A knowledge of the law of God.
2. Prayer, with the remembrance of the eternal truths.
3. The frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.

4. Avoiding the occasions of sin. Since a Christian ought to fly sin as he would fly at the approach of a serpent, he is also held to fly its occasions. He who voluntarily exposes himself to them is then and there guilty of sin, and, moreover, seals his own condemnation, according to these words of the Holy Ghost: *He who loves danger shall perish therein.*

203. Sin.—The Occasions of Sin.

Since it is the duty of the Christian to fly sin, he is also bound to avoid its occasions.

We call *occasions of sin* certain exterior circumstances which lead us to do what is forbidden, either of their own nature or by reason of our own weakness. The most common and perilous occasions of sin in our day are:

1. Companions or associations which sow in the heart the poison of forbidden pleasures or irreligion.
2. Irreligious or immoral *books* and *newspapers*, licentious *novels*, and all other dangerous and useless publications.
3. The *theatre*. Though dramatic representations are not bad in themselves, the character of the stage in our day is such as to invoke condemnation. Of the plays presented, some are so immoral, either by reason of the dialogue or the accessories, the situations, the costumes, or the ballet, as to render those guilty of mortal sin who patronize them; and those even which are called legitimate are in reality only less bad, and always dangerous to good morals. In a word, the theatre is not the place for a Christian. He who frequents it exposes himself to every vice, and even to the loss of faith.
4. *Balls and dances*. No one is permitted to take part in those balls which are licentious, either by reason of the indecent character of the dances, or the costumes and toilets. Even decent dances are not without danger, and a Christian of his own choice should never take part in them. *Use not much*, says the Holy Ghost, *the company of her that is a dancer* (Eccles. ix. 4); and we know from the Gospel the evil result of the dance of the daughter of Herodias (St. Matt. xiv. 6). In case of doubt in these delicate matters, it is evident we should seek the advice of a prudent confessor. If, my brethren,

you wish to save your souls, you must fly the occasions of sin. *If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, says our Saviour, cut it off, and cast it from thee;* and the Holy Ghost explicitly affirms that, if we expose ourselves to danger, our ruin is assured: *He who loves danger shall perish therein.* Let us, then, fly the occasions of sin even as sin itself, as they are naught but the gates of hell.

204. The Virtues.—Charity, Love of God.

Charity, the most excellent of the theological virtues and the queen of all the Christian virtues, supposes faith and hope, whose flower it is. Charity is absolutely necessary for salvation; without it the practice of the other virtues will serve us nothing. It is defined, *a supernatural virtue by which we love God for His own sake above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.* God, our neighbor, and ourselves are the material objects of charity; the motive is God Himself, His infinite perfections, His sovereign amiability, etc. Though the virtue of charity is one, there are two precepts which refer to it, one having special reference to God, the other to our neighbor.

Let us speak to-day of the first. Our Saviour promulgates the *precept of the love of God* in these words: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first Commandment* (St. Matt. xxii. 37, 38). This precept commands us to love God above all things, to prefer Him to all things, and to love creatures for God's sake, because God wills it, because He loves them as the works of His hands, and because all the good they possess comes from Him.

We ought to love God, because He is sovereignly good, because He has loved us first and has given us His only Son, because He every day loads us with favors, finally

because He commands it, and promises us, as a reward, eternal happiness.

When the motive of our love for God is principally Himself, because He is infinitely good and amiable, our love is the true love of charity; when we love Him principally for His gifts and favors, our love is then simply a love of hope or gratitude. This love, especially that of gratitude, leads to charity, but is distinct from that pure virtue with which it must not be confounded. To love God because of His favors is *gratitude*; to love Him because of His goodness made manifest by these favors is *charity*.

Our love for God ought to be *sovereign*; that is, we ought to love God above all things, or, as says the Scripture, *with our whole heart*. Hence we should be ready to sacrifice everything rather than commit mortal sin, which is essentially opposed to charity.

By reason of this precept of charity we are in duty bound, from time to time, and at the approach of death, to recite acts of love. This the good Christian frequently does, saying, for example: *My God and my all! my God, I love thee with my whole heart!* And never does he forget to recite every day the acts of faith, hope, and love, joining to them, as a complement, the act of contrition.

True love of God, however, consists less in eloquent words and sentimental affections than in works: *He that hath My commandments and keepeth them*, says our Saviour, *he it is that loveth Me*.

204. The Virtues.—Charity.—Love of our Neighbor.

Charity is the most excellent of the three theological virtues; it is fitly called *the queen of the virtues*.

Charity has for its object God and our neighbor; hence we say the love of God and the love of our neigh-

bor. Let us speak to-day of the love of our neighbor, which is also called fraternal charity.

The love of our neighbor is inseparable from the love of God. And this commandment we have from God, that *he who loveth God loveth also his brother*, (1 St. John iv.) We ought to love our neighbor, that is to say, all men without any exception, (1) because God commands it; (2) because Jesus Christ has taught us to do so by His words and example; (3) because all men are created in the image of God, are brothers of Jesus Christ, children of God, and heirs of an eternal inheritance.

God commands us to love our neighbor. *The second Commandment*, says Our Saviour, *is like to this : thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. In other words, as you love God for His own sake, you ought also (1) to love yourselves for God, and (2) your neighbor as yourselves for God.

1. Our self-love should be well ordered, and it is so if we submit our will to the will of God, if we seek not our own welfare to the detriment of our neighbor, and if we have more care for our soul than our body.

2. We ought to love our neighbor *as ourselves* : this is the law of Christian charity. It consists in doing for others as we might reasonably wish them to do for us; and in never doing to others what we would not wish them to do to us.

We satisfy this general obligation of the love of our neighbor, (1) by not desiring any one's injury; (2) by sincerely wishing for all, without exception, the spiritual and temporal goods which we ought or may desire for ourselves; (3) by doing to them as we might reasonably wish them to do to us; and (4) by praying for all, even our enemies.

There is, however, an order which we should follow in fulfilling these duties of charity. We must, whilst doing good, have in view before everything the well-being of our soul or our salvation: our own first, then that of our

neighbor, especially of our parents and relatives. He therefore sins grievously against charity who neglects his own salvation, or who fails to procure in time the administration of the Sacraments for his parents or relatives when in danger of death.

Let us, my brethren, do all the good we can for our neighbor, but let us not forget our own spiritual interests. *Charity when well ordered begins with our own soul.*

206. The Virtues.—Fraternal Charity.

Charity is the queen of the virtues. Considered in reference to our neighbor, it is called fraternal charity, or love of our neighbor.

The love of our neighbor imposes three special obligations: the love of our enemies, almsgiving, and fraternal correction.

1. Our love for our neighbor should be at once interior and exterior, not excepting even those who are *our enemies*.

The love of our enemies is a special precept of the Gospel, which obliges us to sincerely pardon those who have done us injury, to give them the outward marks of friendship which circumstances require, and to be fully reconciled to them.

That we may be said to sincerely *pardon* them requires that we banish from our heart all rancor, desire for revenge, and ill-feeling; also that we pray for them, extend to them the customary marks of civility, and be prepared to do them a service in case of necessity. Our Saviour is an example for us in this respect; and He requires that we pardon our brethren if we wish our heavenly Father to pardon us.

Charity requires us to be reconciled with our enemies, and we therefore sin when we refuse to do so.

2. Almsgiving, or temporal assistance given to the poor, is a precept for all those whose circumstances allow

of it. Jesus Christ expressly declares that the damned shall be condemned to the fire of Hell, because they have not given alms to the poor.

The rich—that is, those who have a superfluity of the goods of this world—are in duty bound by the precept of charity to assist the poor who are *in grave and pressing need*; and, to do this, they are obliged to dispense with what is vain and frivolous.

Finally, the precept of almsgiving concerns in a certain manner all men; for, says the Scripture: *According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little* (Tobias iv. 8).

2. *Fraternal correction* is a spiritual work of mercy, which consists in reproving our neighbor for his faults and sins, through a motive of charity. This is of precept, and is binding on all men, especially superiors. However, it does not always oblige: that one who is not a superior may be under obligation, certain conditions are necessary; among others, the sin for which he would reprove his brother must be grave and certain, and he should feel that his reproof would be of service.

The principal sins opposed to the love of our neighbor are anger, hatred, envy, calumny, and scandal.

Let us, my brethren, sincerely love our neighbor. Let us be merciful, and we shall obtain mercy; let us forgive, and we shall be forgiven. Then, in keeping with the practice of true and fervent Christians, let us ever recite, as a part of our night prayers, the acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition, saying with a heart overflowing with love these beautiful words: *My God, I love Thee with my whole heart above all things, because Thou art sovereignly good; and I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee.*

207. Christian Perfection.—The Evangelical Counsels.—Vocation.

The evangelical law has its degrees: it not only leads souls to justice, but also aids them to climb to the height of perfection.

1. Christian *justice* consists in the fleeing of evil and the practice of good; Christian *perfection*, in the union of the soul with God by the link of perfect charity. This perfect charity requires that, free from every inordinate love of the world and ourselves, we love God in Himself and our neighbor, and seek Him in all our actions.

The most efficacious means to acquire this spirit of detachment and freedom of heart is to observe the evangelical counsels, which, when they are practised under vow, constitute the religious state, also called the state of perfection.

2. The evangelical counsels, of which we here speak, are the three great virtues of voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and perfect obedience. Our Saviour proposes them to us as a way to heaven far preferable to the way of the Commandments.

The Gospel presents us three roads that lead to God. The first is that of the Commandments; all men must obey these to be saved. The second is that of the counsels, which consists in uniting the observance of the evangelical counsels to that of the Commandments. Our Saviour has not made it obligatory for us to walk in this way; but He proposes it to those generous souls who are willing to consecrate without reserve their existence to God. This is what we call the religious life. The third is the intermediate way; namely, that of virginity or celibacy in the world.

There are therefore three states of life in which we may work out our salvation: the state of marriage, celibacy, and virginity. These three states are honorable

and holy, but not equally perfect, if we consider them in themselves or as means of salvation and sanctification: celibacy is more perfect than the state of marriage; and the religious state the most excellent of the three. The religious state is that of the monastic Orders and the religious Congregations approved by the Church. The faithful who wish to join them must promise to live according to their rule, and to seek perfection by the observance of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. By these holy vows man not only offers to God all that he possesses and all that he is, but he also removes from his path the chief obstacles to Christian perfection.

Though the religious state is only of counsel, a matter of free choice, offered to those who are about to adopt a state of life, it is, however, of obligation for such as cannot save their souls without employing this great means of salvation.

Nothing is more holy, more beautiful, nor more meritorious than to follow the evangelical counsels and to embrace the religious life, provided it is the will of God. A divine vocation is ordinarily manifested by the following signs: (1) a spiritual and constant attraction to that state, founded on motives of reason and faith; (2) the proper qualifications to fulfil the obligations we would contract, and the disposition to discharge them; (3) the moral possibility of leaving the world, or the absence of a serious impediment; (4) the approval of a prudent and wise confessor.

Nothing is more important, my brethren, than to know and follow our vocation. The young ought every day to ask this grace; and those who have already chosen a state of life ought unceasingly strive to fulfil, as becomes Christians, all their duties.

208. Merit.—Conditions for Gaining Merit.

By divine grace we merit the reward which God has prepared for us in heaven.

1. Merit is the fruit of grace, in this sense, that grace renders us capable of performing works meritorious in the eyes of God. A man in the state of grace, says our Saviour, resembles a branch which abides in the vine: this branch bears grapes because it draws from the vine a life-giving sap, the cause of its fecundity. This spiritual sap, the source of merit, is naught else but grace.

By *merit* or a *meritorious work* we mean a good work done with the assistance of grace to please God, and worthy in His eyes of an eternal reward.

There are two kinds of merit, that of the *just*, he who possesses sanctifying grace, and that of the *sinner*. The first merits of the justice of God, as the servant working for his master; the second merits only of the mercy of God—in justice he cannot claim it—as the beggar humbly asking alms may merit to receive them.

2. The *just man*, by his works, merits an increase of sanctifying grace, and also an increase of happiness in the future life. These two rewards go together: each degree of grace in this life corresponds to a degree of happiness in the next.

The *sinner*, by his prayers, by his good works and penances, can merit the grace to rise from sin and to return to God by a sincere repentance.

All men without any exception can merit of the mercy of God actual graces and all the necessary assistance to avoid sin, to advance in virtue, and to persevere in God's service until it is crowned with a happy death.

3. That we may have merit with God, it suffices that we do any good work through a supernatural motive;

that is, for the glory of God and our own salvation. To merit an increase of sanctifying grace and eternal happiness, we must, moreover, be in the state of grace.

Would we have merit before God, now is the time to store it up. Whilst in this world, the sinner can merit his eternal salvation; and the just can increase his store, by daily aspiring towards perfection and thus proportionately increasing his future happiness, according to these words of Our Saviour: *Make to yourselves treasure in heaven*; and those of the Apostle: *And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap.*

209. The Sacraments.—Their Nature.—Their Efficacy.

The Sacraments are sensible signs, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, to confer on us the divine gift of grace.

1. In every Sacrament we distinguish two parts, which are known as the *matter* and *form*: of which there are two parallel parts in man; namely, the body and the soul.

In a Sacrament the *matter* is the sensible thing, or that part which indicates in an indistinct manner the grace; for example, the bread and wine in the Eucharist, the water in Baptism, or the pouring of the water on the head of the catechumen.

The *form* is the Sacramental words, or that part of the rite which indicates in a distinct manner the grace; for example, in Baptism, *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The form united to the matter by a lawful minister properly constitutes the rite, the Sacramental sign, instituted by Jesus Christ; for example, in Baptism, water poured on the head of the catechumen by the minister, who pronounces whilst doing so the Sacramental words; this is the Sacrament divested of all ceremonies, in its

strict essence. This form, matter, and minister are three component parts determined by the Son of God, invariable, and essential for the validity of the Sacrament. Any substantial change or omission in any one of these particulars would nullify the Sacrament, for it would be no longer the rite instituted by Jesus Christ.

2. *The Sacraments produce their effects by their own power, independently of the dispositions of the minister, but dependently on those of him who receives them.*

A Sacrament always produces its effect, no matter what may be the disposition of the minister who confers it: as fire always burns wood, no matter what the condition of the hand which consigns it to it; as a seal always makes its impression on soft wax, no matter what the condition of the hand which applies it; as seed always germinates in the cultivated land, no matter what the condition of the hand which sows it. The reason of this is that the visible minister is but the secondary minister, the agent of Jesus Christ, who is the invisible and principal Minister. It is Jesus Christ who baptizes by the hand of the minister, who confirms by the hand of the Bishop, who consecrates and absolves by the words of the priest; it is He, always holy, always full of grace and truth, who gives to a Sacrament its entire efficacy. But if it is true that the efficacy of a Sacrament in no wise depends on the dispositions of the minister, it is also true, that to receive the grace of a Sacrament, it is necessary that the subject have the proper dispositions.

As wax to receive an impression must be soft, as wood to burn must be dry, as the earth to germinate seed must be tilled, so also to partake of the effects of a Sacrament, he who receives it must be duly prepared and disposed; and the more perfect his dispositions, the more plentifully does he receive of the grace of the Sacrament.

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having instituted the Sacraments whose effects are infallible, and al-

ways convey to our souls the divine gift of grace. Let us always prepare with the greatest care, when there is question of receiving them, in order that we may share of the Sacramental grace in all its plenitude.

210. The Sacraments.—The Division of the Sacraments.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted seven Sacraments which answer all the needs of the faithful.

They are divided:

1. Into Sacraments of the *living* and Sacraments of the *dead*. The first can be received only by those who are *living* of the life of grace; the second can be received by those who are *dead* as regards grace, that is to say, who are in the state of mortal sin. Remember, however, that if it is necessary to be in the state of grace to receive the first, it is by no means necessary to be in the state of mortal sin to receive the second. There are five Sacraments of the living and two of the dead.

2. Into the Sacraments which *impress a character on the soul* and cannot be received a second time, and Sacraments which *do not impress a character* and can be received several times. There are three Sacraments which impress a character on the soul.

3. Into Sacraments *necessary as means*, Sacraments *necessary by precept*, and Sacraments of *free choice*. Only one Sacrament, strictly speaking, is *necessary as a means*, namely: Baptism; two are of free choice, namely: Holy Orders and Matrimony: the other four are necessary by precept. We must, however, understand that the Sacrament of Penance is an indispensable means of salvation for those who commit mortal sin after Baptism, and can procure the services of a confessor.

4. There is one of the Sacraments which surpasses all the others in dignity: it is the most holy Sacrament of

the Eucharist: because it contains, not only grace, but Jesus Christ Himself, the divine Author and Source of grace.

Let us, my brethren, have the most profound respect for all the Sacraments, since they are divine institutions; but let us venerate, let us adore with our whole soul the august Sacrament of the Altar, in which we have not less than the Son of God made man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

211. The Eucharist.—The End for which it is Instituted.

We know, my brethren, that in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, we possess Jesus Christ, who deigns to dwell there with the sons of men. What goodness on His part! and what a wonderful miracle! Why is it that He willed to work so great a marvel?

What end had He in view in the institution of the Eucharist?

Many are the motives which urged our Lord to bequeath to us this divine Sacrament. Among others that we might have therein:

1. A living monument, during all time, of His passion.
2. An everlasting proof of His ineffable love.
3. A food for our souls and a preservative against sin.
4. A pledge of our resurrection and future happiness.
5. A living figure of the Church, His mystical body of which He is Head.
6. A clean and perfect sacrifice infinitely pleasing to His Father.
7. A perennial source of consolation in our earthly exile, by always dwelling really present in our midst. What a consolation for him who believes, to have such a friend, to have it in his power to approach so near to His person.

How shall we respond to these gracious motives of our Saviour?

1. By frequently receiving Holy Communion.

2. By our lively faith and devotion when present at Mass, at Benediction, during the "Forty Hours," and when the Blessed Sacrament is borne to our homes on the occasion of sickness.

On entering a Church where reposes the Blessed Sacrament, let us, my brethren, give proof of our faith and love for our Saviour, seated in the Tabernacle as on His throne of mercy, His heart inflamed with love and saying to us: *Come to Me all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you*;—and immediately let us prostrate in spirit at His feet.

212. Holy Communion.—The Sacramental Signification of the Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, was instituted to be received by the faithful, at the holy Table, in holy Communion.

The salutary effects of holy Communion are signified by the Sacrament, considered in itself and its reception.

1. The *bread* which is made of many grains of wheat, broken and ground by the millstone, the *wine* made of many grapes expressed in the wine-press, for the food and drink of man, signify: (1) the real presence of the body and blood of that same Jesus Christ, who was bruised and immolated for us in His passion; (2) the spiritual nourishment which our souls receive in Communion; (3) the charity which unites together all the faithful, thus forming the mystical body of Jesus Christ. We are all members of that body, and as such ought to be united as one loving family: so that there should be amongst us neither discord, hatred, nor enmity; at all times respecting and aiding one another, having, as the first Christians, but one heart and soul.

The Eucharist is the furnace of this charity and the cement of this union.

2. *Transubstantiation*, or the changing of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, indicates the spiritual transformation in the Christian, who, by the effects of the Eucharist, is transformed into another Jesus Christ, so that his words and works become holy as those of Jesus Christ.

3. The sacred *banquet* of Communion is a figure of the feast which shall accompany the eternal nuptials in the Kingdom of heaven (St. Luke xiv. 16; xxii. 30).

4. The *sacred Host*, which under the appearance of bread contains the Author of life, is a figure of the life of grace hidden in our souls, and an image of the children of God, enveloped by the veil of their mortal bodies.

When we, my brethren, have the happiness to receive Communion, or when we make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, let us ask our Saviour to make us like unto Him, and to give us a heart pure, humble, and charitable as His divine heart.

213. Holy Communion.—The Reception of Holy Communion.

We know, my brethren, that the holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that it is received by us in holy Communion. Would we receive holy Communion with the proper dispositions, having purified our souls of the guilt of mortal sin, we must take sufficient time to arouse within us sentiments of faith and devotion.

With this purpose we should recite the acts of faith, contrition, confidence and love, using, if we will, the acts to be found in our prayer-book. After Communion we should not be in haste to leave the Church: faith and de-

votion require that we spend at least a quarter of an hour in thanksgiving, conversing familiarly with the divine Guest whom we have the happiness to entertain, or reciting appropriate acts from our prayer-book. The moments after Communion are the most precious in the life of a Christian.

Communion received in the state of mortal sin, is an unworthy Communion, a sacrilege, a profanation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ; a heinous crime, which blinds the intellect, hardens the heart, and frequently leads to final impenitence. The ordinary cause of a sacrilegious Communion is a bad confession.

Frequent Communion properly so called is not weekly Communion, but that received many times in the week, or even every day. Weekly Communion is sometimes necessary, or at least most useful, to aid us to resist temptations, to overcome bad habits, to persevere in the state of grace. Would we communicate more frequently, particular dispositions are necessary; we must not only be free from mortal sin, and all affection for venial sin, but it is further necessary that we have for the most part surmounted our bad inclinations, that we daily meditate, and derive solid fruit from so great a privilege. This is the teaching of theologians and masters of a spiritual life.

By *spiritual* Communion we mean a heartfelt desire to receive Sacramental Communion: in other words, to thirst for the happiness of receiving at the holy Table the body and blood of Jesus Christ, accompanying this desire with the acts of faith, humility and contrition for our sins. We cannot too strongly recommend this beautiful and pious practice: nothing is more beneficial to our soul, nor more pleasing to Jesus Christ, especially during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and in our visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Let us sometimes, my brethren, visit our divine Sav-

iour in His adorable Sacrament: that is to say, when we come to Church, let us go in spirit to His feet, to converse with Him, as a child with his father, as one sick with his physician, or as a friend with his particular, his dearest friend.

214. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.—Its Ceremonies.

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which holds the first place in Christian worship, is a public act, exercised in the name of the faithful, at which they ought to assist and take part. The very architecture of the Catholic Church proclaims that the Mass is the principal act of worship, for the altar at which it is offered is always erected in the most prominent position.

Though the priest is delegated by the Church to offer to the divine Majesty the supreme worship of all the faithful, they are not thereby excluded from participating in it. They also offer the Sacrifice, but by the hands of the priest, and take part therein by uniting their intention with his.

Since the Mass is the supreme act of public worship, it is proper that it be celebrated with a fitting accompaniment of sacred ceremonies. All these ceremonies of the Mass considered as one whole, are called the *liturgy*: the sublime drama, which aids us to understand the invisible mysteries of the altar. They may be divided into three parts: the preparation for the Sacrifice, the Sacrifice itself, and the thanksgiving after the Sacrifice.

1. The preparation or *the preparatory part* continues to the Offertory, and embraces the prayers, instructions and readings, selected from the Gospels, Epistles and other sacred books.

2. *The action of the Sacrifice* begins with the Offertory and ends with the Communion. It includes the prayers

and various ceremonies which precede, accompany and follow the consecration.

3. The thanksgiving commences after the Communion and continues to the end of the last Gospel. It consists of prayers offered to God in acknowledgment of the sacrifice which has been offered, and to petition a plentiful effusion of all its fruits in our souls: this effusion of grace is signified by the blessing of the priest. The Mass is ended with the reading of the first verses of the Gospel of St. John, a Gospel intended to impress us with the dignity of the victim that has been immolated.

As regards the accompaniments and ceremonies of the Mass, without entering into detail, we may say that they all tend to bring before our minds two things: the passion of our Saviour, whose mystery is renewed, and the dispositions with which we ought to be present at it. The altar, which is ascended by steps, represents Mount Calvary. The crucifix placed on the top of the altar, recalls to us Jesus Christ dying on the Cross. The lighted candles are symbols of the faith and devotion which ought to glow in the hearts of the faithful when present at Mass. The sacred vestments, embroidered with the sign of the Cross, indicate that the priest is the minister and visible representative of Jesus Christ, the principal and invisible Priest. The sign of the Cross made many times by the priest over the Host and the chalice remind us again and again that we offer to the heavenly Father the divine Victim of the Cross, and that we ought to unite ourselves to Him by loving the Cross, by patience and Christian penance.

When we assist at Mass, my brethren, let us not lose sight of the Cross of our Saviour, and let us ask our divine Master to aid us in uniting all our crosses with His.

215. The Sacrament of Penance.—Confession.

The second part of the Sacrament of Penance is Confession, that is the accusation of our sins.

What sins should we confess?

We ought to confess all the mortal sins of which we find ourselves guilty after a careful examination of our conscience, adding their number and the circumstances which change their species.

This answer contains six parts which we shall separately explain.

1. *We ought to confess mortal sins.* There are two kinds of sin, venial and mortal: *venial* sin, for example, a slight disobedience, a harmless lie, or an act of impatience; *mortal* sins, for example, blasphemy, a grave act of disobedience or disrespect to parents, immodest conversation or actions, or the wilful omission of Mass on Sunday. That a sin be mortal three conditions are requisite: (1) it must be an offence in grave matter; committed (2) with full knowledge of its sinfulness, and (3) with free and full consent.

Venial sin tarnishes the soul; mortal sin kills the soul, by robbing it of sanctifying grace. Venial sin renders us less pleasing to God, and mortal sin makes us enemies of God. Venial sin deserves purgatory, and mortal sin deserves hell.

Now, though it be beneficial to confess venial sins, we are not bound to do so; but it is of strict obligation for us to confess our mortal sins.

I do not always know, you say, if the sin that I have committed is venial or mortal; then what should I do?

In this case, tell your sin, or, at least, ask your confessor to explain the subject of your doubt.

2. We ought to confess *all* mortal sins, that is to say, all those we have committed since our last good confession. To conceal a single one is to render our

confession null and to commit a sacrilege. We must make known all, or else we cannot hope to be restored to the life of grace, just as a man who had received ten mortal wounds could not expect to live, unless he made known all, not excepting one, to the physician who was able to heal them. He who has had the misfortune to commit a sacrilege, ought to make reparation by accusing himself of it to his confessor; then he ought to repeat the sins of his first bad confession, and all the mortal sins he has committed since that time. To *forget* a mortal sin does not nullify a confession otherwise good; but if we afterwards remember it, we must tell it, at least in our next confession.

3. The mortal sins *of which we find ourselves guilty*. If we have not committed mortal sins, we ought contritely to accuse ourselves of our venial sins; and it is advantageous to add some mortal sin already confessed, renewing at the same time our contrition for it.

When we doubt whether or not we have committed such or such a sin, or whether we did so with full consent, we must confess it as doubtful, in accordance with our conscience: unless, as in the case of a very scrupulous conscience, our confessor should forbid it.

4. After a *careful examination of our conscience*. The examination of our conscience is obligatory. We ought to examine our conscience with care so as not to omit any mortal sins through culpable negligence.

5. Adding their *number*. We must then count our sins; if we cannot remember the exact number, we must tell that which seems to us most probable, adding the words *more* or *less*; and, if necessary, say approximately how many times a day or month we have had the misfortune to fall.

6. Adding the *circumstances which change their species*. For example, in a case of theft, we must say if we have **taken** a large sum, sufficient to constitute a mortal sin;

relatively to the fifth commandment, he who has been guilty of hatred towards his neighbor, ought, if the person for whom he entertained that hatred was his father or brother, make known that circumstance, because such hatred is opposed not only to the love of our neighbor, but also to that special love which we should cherish for our parents and relatives.

Would we facilitate the examination of our conscience, we should pass in review the Commandments of God and of the Church, the capital sins, the duties of our state, and the circumstances of our position. Let us always prepare, my brethren, with the greatest care for sacramental confession: it is one of the most important acts of religion.

216. The Sacrament of Penance.—Satisfaction.— A Good and Bad Confession.

The third part of Penance is sacramental satisfaction, which consists in performing, without unnecessary delay, the penance imposed by our confessor.

Since this penance is part of the Sacrament, we are bound carefully and exactly to complete it; this is why, if we find it too difficult, we should ask our confessor to impose another in its stead. Though it may not be necessary for us to perform our penance before receiving Communion, it is our duty to comply with it as quickly as we can. If our confessor has appointed any particular time for its fulfilment, we should act in accordance with his direction.

1. When a penitent has properly satisfied the requirements of the three parts of Penance, namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, he receives pardon of his sins, for he has made what is called a *good confession*. For there are two kinds of confessions the good and bad confession. The first is that in which the Penitent

really receives the pardon of his sins and all the graces of the Sacrament; the second is that in which he does not receive pardon of any sin, but on the contrary renders himself guilty of a still more grievous sin, of a sacrilege. Could we see with the eyes of angels, penitents leaving the confessional, we would behold them all radiant in beauty, with the exception of a few who would appear unsightly and hideous: these are they who have been so unfortunate as to make a bad confession.

2. A confession is bad, (1) when there is not contrition with a firm purpose to avoid sin and its occasions; (2) when by reason of a dishonorable sham or a guilty negligence, we do not confess all the mortal sins we have committed.

He who has been so unfortunate as to make a sacrilegious confession, ought, as a necessary reparation, tell that sin to his confessor, and, moreover, repeat all his bad confessions, that is to say, accuse himself again of all the sins which he confessed in his first bad confession, as also of all those which he has committed since that time.

Let us beg God, my brethren, to grant us the grace of always frankly and contritely confessing all our sins, so that we may never be so unfortunate as to make a sacrilegious confession.

217. The Sacrament of Penance.—The Method of Preparation.

Would we reap the precious fruits of the Sacrament of Penance, we must know well how to receive it.

Now, what must we do, when we go to confession? We must (1) *pray to God*; (2) *examine our conscience*; (3) *make an act of faith, of hope, of love, and especially of contrition*; (4) *confess our sins*; (5) *perform our penance and heed the advice of our confessor*.

1. We must *pray to God*,—we must thank Him for His mercy, which has spared us, notwithstanding our sins; and ask Him for the grace to make a good confession, as if it were the last of our life.

2. *Examine our conscience.* To facilitate our examination we should recall the Commandments of God and of the Church, the capital sins, the duties of our state, and the circumstances of our position. We must not forget to ask ourselves when we made our last confession, and if we performed our penance. In a word, we must do all our life, as we did when preparing for our first confession.

3. Make an act of *faith, of hope, of love, and especially of contrition.* We must make these acts with our whole heart, and, before reciting the act of contrition, excite within us its sentiments. Now, to do this, here is an easy method. We place ourselves in the presence of God, and in spirit visit heaven, hell, and Calvary: heaven, to behold there the mighty God whom we have offended, and the happiness we have bartered for sin; hell, to see how God punishes sin; Calvary, to contemplate the death of the Son of God caused by sin. At the sight of these dreadful consequences of sin, it will not be difficult for us to convince ourselves that by committing it we have perpetrated an evil which is, in the estimate of God, far greater than all other evils.

4. *Confess our sins.* When the opportunity presents itself, we modestly enter the confessional, and say: *Bless me, my father, for I have sinned. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints; and to you, my father, the representative of Jesus Christ, all the sins that I have committed since my last confession, which was . . . I received absolution and performed my penance.*

My father, I accuse myself, as regards the first Commandment . . . the second Commandment . . . and so to the end.

We tell our sins with simplicity and sincerity, in the order which we prefer; but it is well to follow the order of the Commandments, and if we have committed any very grave sin, let it be the first we confess. We should have the greatest confidence in our confessor, who is our father, burning with love for poor sinners, especially for those who accuse themselves with candor. Moreover, he is bound to the most inviolable secrecy, and must die a thousand times, rather than reveal the most trivial venial sin made known in confession.

When we have told all our sins, we conclude with this formula: *Of all these sins, and of those which I have forgotten, I ask pardon of God, and of you, my father, penance and absolution.* If our confessor should then ask of us any explanation regarding our sins, we are to modestly answer, and hear with attention his advice and the penance he imposes; finally, whilst he pronounces the words of absolution, we renew from the depths of our heart the act of contrition which we recited before entering the confessional.

5. Perform *our penance and heed the advice of our confessor.* On leaving the confessional, and before quitting the Church, we should thank God for having vouchsafed us the favor of absolution, and ask the grace to reduce to practice the advice given us by His minister; then we perform our penance, if we can conveniently do so.

Let us faithfully observe, my brethren, these practical rules, and we shall find the Sacrament of Penance not only the source of pardon for our sins, but a fountain of peace, and of strength in the way of perfection.

218. Indulgences.—Their Nature.—The Use.

We call an indulgence *the remission of the debt of temporal punishment, which remains due to the Divine Justice for sin, after the sin itself, and the eternal punishment, have been remitted by the Sacrament of Penance.* The Church grants indulgences by virtue of the *power of the keys.*

You know, my brethren, that after the remission of the guilt of sin, there ordinarily remains a debt of temporal punishment to be paid to the Divine Justice, either in this life, or the next. And it is far preferable to liquidate it in this life than to reserve its satisfaction for purgatory. For in that place of expiation it will be necessary to satisfy the full rigor of Divine Justice and to suffer the most excruciating punishments. *There one hour of suffering will be more sharp,* says the Imitation of Christ, *than a hundred years spent here in the most rigid penance.*

Satisfaction is rendered most easy for us in this life by means of indulgences, which transfer to the faithful, when, they gain them, the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and the Saints.

An indulgence is partial or plenary; local, personal, or real. A *partial* indulgence, of forty days, for example is that which remits a part of the punishment due to sin. A *plenary* indulgence is so called because it remits all the temporal punishment due to sin: so that, if one was to gain the full effect of a plenary indulgence, he would be as pure before God as if he had been regenerated by Baptism. A *local* indulgence is that which is attached to a place, to a Church or an altar. A *personal* indulgence is that which is directly granted to one or many persons: for example, to the members of a confraternity. A *real* indulgence is that which is attached to certain things: for example, to rosaries, medals, or the stations of the Way of the Cross.

The use of indulgences is particularly beneficial to the faithful: 1. they help them to pay their debts to Divine Justice; 2. they powerfully assist in nourishing in their souls faith, charity, piety and fervor. Indulgences nourish (1) faith, since they remind us of the chastisements reserved for sin, and of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ; they nourish (2) charity, since they lead us to succor our departed brethren; they excite (3) piety and devotion, as they effectually urge the faithful to approach the Sacraments and to perform good works.

Let us not neglect, my brethren, any occasion to gain indulgences for the relief of the souls in purgatory: For, says our Saviour, *with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*

219. Matrimony. — Its Effects. — A Happy Marriage.

Matrimony is a Sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, which, being received with a proper preparation, gives to the married couple the pledge of all the happiness which a Christian may desire in that state. What are the effects of this Sacrament? and what is the necessary preparation for its reception? I. The Sacrament of Matrimony, besides the grace which it conveys to the soul, originates with respect to the married couple two effects: the sacramental bond, and the obligations or duties of the marriage state.

I. The first effect of this Sacrament is the sacramental bond which unites thereafter the married couple. It is indissoluble, and cannot be severed except by the death of one of the two. It is God Himself who has united them; *what therefore God hath joined together*, says Jesus Christ, *let no man put asunder* (St. Matt. xix.). The Church sometimes for grave reasons permits a *separation*; but the marriage always remains intact before God

and the Church, even when the civil power grants a *divorce in law*. To contract a second marriage, and to cohabit, is to live in the state of adultery and continual sin.

2. The duties of the married couple consist in cherishing for one another a sincere affection, in reciprocally keeping conjugal faith, in assisting one another in every difficulty, in accepting without murmur the cares of the family, in bringing up their children in the fear of God, instructing them in their Catechism, correcting them when necessary, giving them good example, guarding them from bad associations and everything that might be injurious to their spiritual or temporal welfare.

II. Would you receive this Sacrament as becomes Christians, you must (1) pray fervently to the Lord that you may know whether He has called you to the state of marriage, and whether you shall be able to properly fulfil all its duties; (2) banish all bad motives, and have naught in view but the glory of God, and the salvation of your soul; (3) exercise prudence in the selection of the one whom you would marry, considering virtue as far more valuable than riches and transient beauty; (4) before making your final decision, ask the counsel of your confessor, and other prudent persons; (5) have a knowledge of the obligations of the marriage state, and of all that refers to a Christian life, so that you may properly instruct your children; (6) prepare in due time for Confession and Communion, and receive those Sacraments at least a day or two before, if not on the appointed day of your marriage: which day must not be postponed unless for grave reasons; (7) observe Christian moderation in the festive celebrations of your nuptials; (8) annually sanctify the anniversary of your marriage, by receiving the Sacraments, or at least hearing Mass, renewing your resolution to faithfully fulfil until death the duties of your state.

Unhappy marriages, alas! too frequent, are often accompanied with evils and vexations which make them a hell on earth. Would we seek their cause, we will find it: (1) in the unlawful associations of youth, and the bad intentions which are often the motives of marriage; (2) in the want of preparation for this Sacrament, which some do not fear to profane, by receiving it in the state of mortal sin: as if they did not know that this crime merits God's chastisements, rather than His graces and blessings; (3) in the wicked life of those already married, which is frequently so opposed to the law of God and nature, as to merit the divine vengeance. Those who receive this Sacrament in keeping with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Church, escape these evils, and are happy in the enjoyment of that peace which is always the portion of the Christian family.

If God has called you, my brethren, to the marriage state, carefully prepare to receive this Sacrament. With this intention avoid, before all else, sin and the occasions of sin, pray fervently, and place yourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

220. Prayer.—The Lord's Prayer.

The most excellent of all prayers is the *Lord's Prayer*, whose author is our Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore a divine prayer which we ought most frequently to recite and with the greatest devotion. That we may always do so, let us endeavor to understand well its meaning.

The *Lord's Prayer* includes an introduction, seven petitions and a short conclusion.

The introduction is: *Our Father, who art in heaven*. We call God our Father, (1) because it is from Him that we have life, all that we are and all that we possess; (2) because having been adopted by Jesus Christ, He recognizes us as the brothers of His only Son, loves us as His

children, and constitutes us heirs of His Kingdom. We add: *who art in heaven*, to raise our hearts to heaven, where we are destined to dwell with God our Father, as also to make us desire and ask all that may be necessary to render us worthy of this happiness.

1. *Hallowed be thy name.* By these words we pray: (1) that the name of God may be never profaned or blasphemed; (2) that God may be known, loved, served, and glorified by all men, especially by ourselves.

2. *Thy Kingdom come:* in other words, (1) that God may reign in all hearts, particularly in our own, by His grace and love; (2) that we may one day reign with Him in heaven; (3) that the Kingdom of God, which is the Church, may be triumphant and victorious throughout the world.

3. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* We here ask God for grace to do His will on earth, to obey His Commandments with the same fidelity and love, if it is possible, as do the elect in heaven.

4. *Give us this day our daily bread.* These words signify: give us each day all that is necessary, as well for the life of our soul as for that of our body. For the life of our soul: the word of God, grace, and the holy Eucharist; for that of the body: food, raiment, and shelter. We say *give us*, and not *give me*, because we pray not only for ourselves, but for all men, being children of the same family. The word *to-day* teaches us, that we ought not to be solicitous for the morrow, but confide in God for the necessities of each day, banishing from our hearts all disquieting care.

5. *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us.* By these words we beg of God the pardon of our sins and the grace of a sincere repentance: but as God forgives us only in as much as we ourselves forgive others, we add that we also forgive them with our whole heart.

6. *And lead us not into temptation:* that is to say, save us from temptations or give us the grace to resist them. We call temptations everything that leads us to offend God by sin.

7. *But deliver us from evil:* this is to be understood as referring to all the evils that can happen us either in this life or the future, but particularly to spiritual evils, to sin and eternal damnation.

Amen. This conclusion confirms and ratifies the entire prayer, and expresses our earnest hope that all our preceding petitions may be granted.

Would we recite the *Lord's Prayer* with devotion, let us always recollect ourselves for a moment, my brethren, before we begin, in order that we may place ourselves in spirit in the presence of Him to whom we are to speak.

221. Prayer.—The Angelic Salutation.

Besides the *Lord's Prayer*, there is another prayer which we should have always on our lips: it is the *Angelic Salutation*. The Church as a rule recites it after the *Lora's Prayer* to offer her prayers to God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The *Angelic Salutation* or the *Hail Mary*, is composed of three parts: (1) the words of the Angel Gabriel addressed to Mary, on the day of the Annunciation; (2) those of St. Elisabeth, cousin of the Mother of God, on the day of the Visitation; (3) a concluding petition: *Holy Mary, Mother of God*, etc., which has been added by the Church.

The words of this beautiful prayer express the most sublime truths; we may briefly explain them by the aid of the following paraphrase:

Hail Mary, full of grace. I salute and I congratulate thee, O Blessed Virgin; thou hast received from God more abundant graces than have been vouchsafed any

other creature, and thou hast constantly augmented them by the sanctity of thy life and thy invariable fidelity.

The Lord is with thee in an unique and most marvellous manner: He was with thee in thy Immaculate Conception; He was with thee in the mystery of the Incarnation and during the years of thy pilgrimage on earth; and He is with thee now in the kingdom of heaven for all eternity.

Blessed art thou among women, because thou hast been chosen among all women to be the mother of God; because, by becoming a mother, thou didst not cease to be a virgin; because thou art peerless among women, among all creatures, in sanctity.

And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus: Jesus Christ, thy divine Son, who has saved us and enriched us with blessings. He who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the object of the praise of angels and of men in time and eternity.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us. Obtain for us from God, by thy all-powerful intercession, the forgiveness of our sins, as also the grace of living a good life and of dying a happy death.

Let us frequently repeat, my brethren, and with piety, the *Angelic Salutation*, especially in the exercise of the devotion of the Holy Rosary. Let us have an ardent devotion, a particular devotion to the august Mother of God. This special and tender devotion to the Virgin Mary is recognized by the Saints and Doctors of the Church as a sign and pledge of predestination; hence the maxim: *A servant of Mary shall never be lost*.

222. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

When we pray, we sometimes address ourselves directly to God, and sometimes to the Angels and Saints, that they may intercede for us with God.

Among all the Saints, we ought to honor by an especial devotion the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and unceasingly commend ourselves to her maternal protection.

1. Why should we have for the Blessed Virgin Mary an *especial* devotion, far exceeding that which we entertain for all the other Saints and Angels? (1) Because she excels all in sanctity, being *full of grace*; (2) because she surpasses all in dignity, being the Mother of God and the Queen of heaven; (3) because we ought particularly to love and honor her whom Jesus Christ so singularly loved and honored on earth, and whom He loves and honors more than all the Saints in heaven; (4) because Mary has been given to us by Jesus Christ as our mother and protectress; (5) because we ought to testify our gratitude for her many favors, and constantly seek her assistance with the most abiding confidence.

2. Why this confidence? Our confidence in Mary is founded on her power with God, and her maternal interest in our welfare. Her *power* comes to her from Jesus Christ, her Divine Son, who, honoring her as His Mother, has made her Queen of Angels and men. Her *interest* in our welfare is the natural sequence of her being the Mother of God and our mother. Jesus Christ committed us to her, and she adopted us as her children, at the foot of the Cross.

3. Would we have for the Blessed Virgin the devotion which is her due, we ought (1) to honor, love, and invoke her; (2) make her virtues the subject of our meditation, so as to render ourselves, as she, like unto Jesus Christ.

4. The fruits of this devotion to this best of Mothers will be untold consolations and graces during life, and her assistance at the hour of death.

5. The pious practices in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary especially recommended by the Church, are: to

celebrate her feasts by approaching the Sacraments, to recite her litanies, to say the *Angelus* and Rosary, to honor and invoke her immaculate Heart, to join the Confraternities erected in her honor, to wear her scapular, and especially to love and glorify her Divine Son in the Blessed Sacrament.

Let us have a tender and filial devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary, my brethren. She is our Mother; Jesus Christ gave her to us as such when dying on the Cross; to all He has said: *Behold thy Mother.*

223. The Feasts of the Church.—Septuagesima Sunday.—Lent.

As nothing is more instructive than to be well informed in reference to the solemnities of the Church, I will speak to you to-day of the *Forty Hours* devotion, as also of Septuagesima Sunday and Lent.

The *Forty Hours* is a devotion which was primarily instituted to withdraw the faithful from the excesses of the Carnival, and to ask God's pardon for the sins which were committed on those days of scandal. It is also celebrated at other times of the year, always for the purpose of imploring God's mercy and averting His chastisements. This devotion continues for three days, and the Blessed Sacrament is exposed during forty hours, or about that period of time.

Septuagesima Sunday, the seventh antecedent to that of the Passion, and the third before Lent, is in a manner an introduction to the holy season of Lent. The Church on that day omits in her offices the joyful ejaculation of the *Alleluia*, adopts violet vestments, as a symbol of penance, and begins to meditate on the sufferings of her divine Spouse. This teaches us how foreign it is to the spirit of the Church for Christians, at the approach of Lent, to take part in inordinate and sinful amusements.

We call *Lent* the forty days of fasting and penance which the Church prescribes to her children before the feast of Easter. She has established it: (1) to honor and imitate the fast of Jesus Christ in the desert; (2) to have us practise the penance required by our sins; (3) to prepare us for the worthy celebration of Easter.

On *Ash Wednesday*, the first day of Lent, the priest places blessed ashes on the foreheads of each of the faithful, saying: *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.* The Church has instituted this ceremony, (1) to preserve the remembrance of her ancient discipline, in accordance with which ashes were sprinkled on the heads of public penitents, to inspire them with humility and sorrow for their sins; (2) to exhort us to penance by the thought of death, which shall convert our bodies into dust.

Let us deeply impress on our minds, my brethren, those words which the Church addresses to her children at the beginning of Lent: *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*

224. The Particular Judgment.

After death comes judgment. Faith teaches us that there are two judgments—the particular judgment and the general judgment. This last will take place at the end of the world, after the universal resurrection; the particular judgment immediately after our death. When a man dies, his soul leaving his body appears before the tribunal of Jesus Christ to be judged, according to these words of the Apostle: *After death, the judgment.*

The sentence pronounced is put in execution without delay, and the soul is committed to the place which it has merited. The thought of this judgment, which has caused the greatest Saints to tremble, ought also to inspire us with a holy fear.

What should render this tribunal so terrifying to poor sinners such as we are, is:

1. That it is impossible for us to evade it.
2. That the Judge is inexorable.
3. That the sentence will be irrevocable.

What will be the subject-matter of this judgment?

1. It will include all the thoughts, words, and deeds of our life, the use or abuse we have made of grace, of the talents, and of all the gifts that God has bestowed on us.

2. We shall be judged in reference to the good we have done, that we may be rewarded; and in reference to the evil, that we may be punished.

3. Nothing shall escape the scrutiny of the judge; and Jesus Christ teaches us that we shall have to answer for every idle word.

What are we to understand by these words: *the books shall be opened*, as the Scripture tells us?

1. It is the book of the law, in which our duties are inscribed.

2. The book of our conscience, in which are written the actions by which we have observed or transgressed the law.

How will it be, my brethren, if the pages of our book reveal unforgiven mortal sins? What happiness, on the contrary, if they exhibit to the eyes of our Judge penances and good works!

Let us often reflect, my brethren, on the fearful account we shall have ere long to render to our Judge, and let us so live as to escape His condemnation.

225. Hell.

The dogma referring to hell is the most dread-inspiring truth of our faith. Yes, faith teaches that there is a hell. Jesus Christ fifteen times repeats in His Gospel that there is a hell. If the existence of hell were only proba-

ble, we ought to be Saints, lest we should merit it; but considering that it is an unquestionable truth, what should be our precaution?

Yes, there is a hell, and the damned suffer there two kinds of punishments: the pain of loss and the pain of sense.

(1) The pain of loss, or the deprivation of the beatific vision, surpasses all that we can imagine that is most painful, because the damned, drawn towards God as towards the centre of all their aspirations, are eternally repulsed by His anger.

2. The pain of sense in hell is the torment caused by the never-dying worm of conscience, by the absence of all hope, of every consolation, and by the intensity of the devouring fire which shall never be extinguished.

(1) The Scripture calls *the never-dying worm of conscience* that cruel memory which unceasingly reproaches the damned for having brought about their loss by their crimes, whilst they might have been so easily saved; for having rejected the grace of their conversion, and so wantonly abused the mercy of God.

(2) The damned suffer without the faintest glimmer of hope, without having the slightest probability of ever seeing an end to their torments; and without any consolation, either on the part of God, of the demons, or of their lost associates. A drop of water was refused to the rich man in hell.

(3) The fire of hell surpasses in intensity and fury the fire of the most raging furnaces. *Which of you*, exclaims the Prophet, *can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*

What cruelly increases the sufferings of the damned is that their sufferings are in vain, without any merit; whilst on earth the most trivial penance was meritorious.

Such is the dogma of hell.

Now, my brethren, a single mortal sin suffices to de-

serve hell, because every mortal sin kills the soul, makes us enemies of God, and includes infinite malice.

Let us then fear mortal sin, let us especially fear to live in that state, lest dying we be buried in the abyss of eternal despair.

226. Heaven.—Beatitude.

Heaven is a place of glory and felicity, where the elect enjoy in God eternal happiness.

What is happiness?

Happiness is the enjoyment of every good, and exemption from every evil. It in no wise exists on earth, and man cannot attain it until after the present life. The happiness for which we have been created is called *beatitude*. St. Thomas defines beatitude, *the supreme good, destined to fully satiate the reasonable desires of the human heart*. This is to be found in God, and in God alone, since He only is the supreme good.

The beatitude enjoyed by the heavenly host is a perfect beatitude, absolutely excluding all that is evil, and embodying all that is good for the body and soul.

The beatitude of the soul, beatitude properly speaking, and called *essential*, will be the source of that of the body; on the day of the resurrection it will diffuse itself in the bodily substance, as does the ray of light in the crystal which surrounds it. It consists in the possession and enjoyment of God by the beatific vision.

We call the *beatific or intuitive vision of God* the loving contemplation of the divine essence. The elect are admitted into the presence of God, as well-beloved children into the presence of a father who discloses to them all his riches. They see God face to face, in all His beauty, in all the splendor of His amiability. Seeing Him, they love Him with all the ardor of their affections, and they become like unto Him, as far as a creature can be like unto

the Creator. *We shall be like unto Him*, says St. John, *for we shall see Him as he is*. Their love, as it were, deifies them.

Human intelligence, incapable by its nature to appreciate the splendor of the divine essence, must needs be elevated to a state superior to its natural condition, receive, in other words, a new power to contemplate the uncreated world, as it did in the past the created world. This new power or light with which human intelligence is endowed, is called the *light of glory*. Enlightened by this light of glory, the souls of the blessed see God Himself, and all things in God. They comprehend the mystery of the Holy Trinity and all the other mysteries; they also know all that takes place in the world and is done by creatures, inasmuch as they are interested. Hence, the Saints see the honor we render them on earth; the pastors of the Church see their flocks; parents their children, and children their parents; in a word, all see and know what is of interest and pleasure to them.

Since the happiness of heaven is so great, my brethren should we not willingly bear the trials and crosses of this life to merit it? *The sufferings of this time*, says the Apostle, *are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*.

THE END.


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