

Rays of Catholic Truth

By A Catholic

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1284 (1958)

GOD having created man, the masterpiece of His omnipotence, placed him in Paradise (Gen. 2:8) in the state of original justice, which he forfeited by his fall for himself and his posterity. Hence we find ourselves inheriting from our first parents, Adam and Eve, this fallen state - the loss of original sanctity and righteousness, the loss of God's friendship and sonship, and even heaven itself.

"Wherefore as by one man sin entered the world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Man was thereby impaired in soul and body, by nature spiritually dead, fallen off and separated from God, and no longer capable of attaining his high and supernatural end. God saw His generous and gracious designs frustrated and could no longer look down with complacency upon degraded man. Nevertheless, the special love of God for man sought him out even when he was fleeing from Him. God promised man a Redeemer, who, when He came, (some medieval scholars calculated it to be over four thousand years after the creation,) accepted the conditions, save sin, which man had incurred. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1: 11).

Redemption.

Redemption literally means a buying back of something that has been forfeited; a liberation from captivity, or from the bondage of sin and its penalties. Thus Jesus Christ, by His Passion and Death, bought us back from sin and Satan; freed us from eternal damnation, reconciled us to God, and reopened heaven for us. He merited abundant grace to enable us to lead a holy life and obtain eternal happiness in heaven.

Consequently, by the Redemption, with its infinite satisfaction, God has given man a chance - we should call it a second chance after he had miserably failed in the first - of working out his salvation and attaining his supernatural end, through the merits of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, joined to the performance of such duties of acknowledgement and services as God Himself has, from time to time, clearly ordained and established.

Redemption Not Equivalent to Salvation.

Though Christ redeemed the whole human race by His death upon the Cross, nevertheless redemption is not equivalent to salvation. Redemption is an entirely free act on the part of God, but salvation, although wholly God's work, requires man's free co-operation as a necessary condition. Christ indeed made full satisfaction for all the sins of mankind, and merited eternal salvation for the whole human race. But even this will not save us without co-operation on our part. Hence St. Augustine says so aptly: "God, Who created us without our co-operation, will not save us without our co-operation."

Christ made full atonement for our sins, but He has also imposed upon us the obligation of co-operating with Him by applying that atonement to our souls, through the channels He Himself

established for that purpose; the principal and normal channels are the Mass and the Sacraments. Hence, the fact that Christ redeemed all men means simply this: that it is possible for all men to be saved. But even God cannot save a man against his free will. Even God cannot save a man unless he is willing to be saved and, further, is ready to show that will by doing all that Christ and His Church command.

The Conditions of Co-operation.

As said before, Christ merited eternal salvation for all men without exception as He died for all without exception. "Jesus Christ who gave Himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. 2: 6). And yet men are not all saved because they do not, on their part, fulfil the conditions imposed by Christ Himself - that is, they do not believe, keep the commandments and use the means of grace. These are the duties of acknowledgement and service imposed by God - these are the conditions of co-operation imposed upon all who profess to believe in Christ, and desire to partake in His merits.

Briefly stated, the Creed teaches us what we must believe. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11:6); "He that believes not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16); "He that does not believe is already judged" (John 3:18). The commandments teach us what we must do. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). The commandments are the outward and practical expression of faith. We must not only believe, we must keep the commandments. We must have both faith and the works of faith. It was Christ Himself Who said: "If you love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15); and again: "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). The commandments, then, no less than faith, are a condition necessary to eternal salvation. "So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself" (James 2:17).

Finally, we must use the means of grace instituted by Christ, for grace is absolutely necessary to salvation. "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Without the grace of God we can neither believe nor keep the commandments. It is grace that enlightens our understanding and moves our will to believe. "For by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves; for it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Neither can we keep the commandments by our own natural strength, unaided by the grace of God. Grace is just so necessary that without it we can neither begin nor carry out the least thing towards eternal salvation. "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to accomplish" (Phil. 2:13).

Briefly summarized, it is the doctrine of the Church that, in order to secure eternal salvation, man needs the grace of God to begin, to continue, and to complete the work of his sanctification. But man on his part must co-operate with the grace of God. Thus good works and eternal salvation proceed from the union of two elements: the interior, supernatural grace of God, and the free will of man. Whoever overrates either at the expense of the other falls into heresy.

What Is Grace?

No mere natural act of man can gain for him eternal salvation. Being a supernatural good, the natural powers of man require supernatural help in order to obtain it. This supernatural help is grace. By grace alone we enter into communication with Jesus Christ and partake in His infinite merits which are the source of everything conducive to salvation.

Grace, then, is a free and supernatural gift superadded to the natural gifts of man through the merits of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It is that strength which God indiscriminately bestows upon man enabling him to live a good life, to shun sin and practise virtue. As God desires all men to be saved,

so does He grant His grace to everyone - even a pagan, who does all that lies in his power to come to the knowledge of truth. "God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth" (1 Tim, 2:4).

Kinds of Grace.

According to its action in the soul, there are two kinds of grace: first, the grace of assistance, also called actual or transient grace; second, sanctifying grace, or justification.

Actual grace acts transiently upon the soul. It is that supernatural help that prompts us to do right and shun wrong, and, because it comes to us only when we need its help to perform a good action or avoid an evil one, it is called transient grace, or passing inspiration. "To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Ps. 94:8 {95:8}).

Sanctifying grace is an abiding, supernatural gift which adorns the soul and makes it holy and just in the sight of God. It is bestowed upon the soul in baptism, remains habitually in the soul, and is lost only by mortal sin.

Sanctifying grace is also called "justification," or "Divine adoption," because by it we are justified and made not only the "friends of God" (John 15:14), but also His beloved children. By it we are made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), that is, raised to a supernatural state. "Behold what manner of charity the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). And St. Paul says: "We are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16, 17). True, we are mere creatures, and cannot be God's children by nature, but by grace we share in some way the Divine nature, and so become His adopted children.

Through sanctifying grace we are "born again" God's children, and our soul receives supernatural life and powers, together with the infused virtues of faith, hope and charity. For this reason, a Christian child with grace can make an act of supernatural faith in the truths of Divine revelation, that even the wisest pagan philosopher, by his own unaided natural powers, cannot do.

Sanctifying grace makes man a child of God; actual grace urges him to live as such. It is actual grace that enlightens his mind and moves his will to serve and worship God, to live a good life, avoid sin and practise virtue; and if he has lost sanctifying grace by mortal sin, it is actual grace which urges him to repent and make a good confession, and hereby recover his lost treasure. (Note: If confession is impossible, an act of perfect contrition will always restore a sinner to the state of grace.) For the sinner cannot rise from his fallen state unless God come to his assistance by giving him actual grace to repent and confess his sins.

Divine Adoption Entirely Gratuitous.

Sanctifying grace or Divine adoption is an entirely free gift flowing from the mercy and love of God, and cannot be merited by any human or natural act. It is given to man, not on account of his own or any human merit, but purely through the merits of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, there are certain conditions or dispositions of soul necessary thereto, except in the case of infant baptism. For as man can do absolutely nothing towards eternal salvation without grace, so neither can grace operate in him against his free will. So that even God cannot save a man unless he wills to be saved.

Grace Forces No Man.

Man is a free agent and can choose good or evil, can co-operate with grace or reject it for grace forces no man. Free will is the noblest natural gift of God to man; and yet no other gift is so much abused. But while man has the power of choosing evil, he has not the right to do so, for God has given him free will to be for him a source of merit in choosing good. Neither has God left him ignorant of what is good, but has established just laws for his guidance, so that by subjecting his will to these he may perfect himself and attain the end for which he was created. Moreover, God has engraven His own law on the human heart so that even those who never heard the sound of the Gospel, know what is right and what is wrong by the voice of conscience. St. Paul says that the commandments were written in the hearts of men and that conscience made them known; for the Gentiles "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them" (Rom. 2:15).

Finally, it is sanctifying grace within us that gives value to all our good works, even the least; while at the same time this wonderful gift is itself preserved and increased in the soul by every good work, especially by the Mass, the sacraments and prayer. The Church teaches that every good work performed in the state of grace merits: firstly, an increase of grace and of merit for heaven; secondly, eternal salvation.

All the efforts of a Christian should be directed to preserve and increase within his soul this inestimable treasure of sanctification. He should pray often to God to give him grace and take care never to close his heart against it. Our Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the gate and knock." (Apoc. 3:20). "We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1).

In order to make His grace more effective in the human heart, God often connects it with material events, such as illness, sudden death, good or bad fortune; and such Divine warnings should not be heedlessly disregarded. Nothing is more dangerous than not to know the time of God's visitation. (Examples: Math, 23:37; Luke 19:41-44).

How beautiful and consoling is the Catholic doctrine of grace! If the Christian has sanctifying grace, with faith, hope and charity, he will live a life above nature, a supernatural life, which will enable him to conquer his passions and practise virtue; which will unite him with God in this world and bring him to his supernatural destiny, the vision of God forever in heaven. Instead of blindly following his passions, with never a thought of God and hereafter, he will live as a true Christian and practise self-control, temperance and moderation to all things.

Never can we be sufficiently grateful for the Redemption which purchased for us sanctifying grace, that wonderful gift which makes us not only friends of God, but His beloved children, with a right and title to the kingdom of heaven. Can we imagine how hopeless and desolate the world would be without it?

Fruits of the Redemption

Though all the benefits of Christianity to mankind and its influence upon the world are the effects of the Redemption, the chief fruits or effects may be briefly summed up as follows: -

1. Satisfaction of Divine Justice by the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ.
2. Divine truth committed by Christ and His Apostles to the Church and called the "deposit of faith."
3. Divine grace, both sanctifying and actual, which is dispensed mainly through the Sacrifice of the Mass and the seven Sacraments.

Divine justice demanded a satisfaction adequate to sin, and no creature - least of all man, who had fallen so deeply - was able to give such satisfaction. Again, the offences against the infinite majesty of God demanded a satisfaction of infinite value which Christ alone was able to give. By His voluntary obedience unto death on the Cross, Christ made full, nay, superabundant satisfaction to the Divine Majesty for the manifold offences given to Him by man's disobedience and thus redeemed man from the eternal punishment he had deserved. Wherefore St. Paul says: "As by the disobedience of one man [Adam] many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one [Christ] many shall be made just" (Rom. 5:19).

Jesus Christ Himself chose and established the means whereby His Divine grace - His atonement and merits - should be applied to our souls: namely, the priesthood, the Sacrifice of the Mass and the seven sacraments. These are, as it were, the official channels by which the Son of God gives us His saving doctrine, and applies His atoning merits to our souls.

To the Catholic priesthood is confided the whole "deposit of faith," the saving doctrines of truth and salvation, and theirs the sacred trust to preserve it pure and incorrupt, just as it was entrusted to them by Christ and His Apostles; theirs also the sublime mission to teach it and preach it with Divine authority. Likewise, in the administration of the sacraments they speak in Christ's name and act in His stead; and it is by their ministry that He offers Himself on the altar.

Sacrifice - Its Meaning and Universality.

According to psychology, according to history, and according to Scripture, sacrifice is the highest act of worship that can be offered to Almighty God.

Sacrifice is a visible gift offered to God, as a victim, by a duly authorized person, with its complete or partial destruction, in public acknowledgement of God's supreme dominion over us and all creatures; and of the honour and glory which, as creatures, we owe to Him, the Almighty Creator and Master of life and death.

Sacrifice is of Divine institution and is as old as the human race. Taught by our first parents, Cain and Abel offered sacrifice to God (Gen. 4:3, 5); so did Noah and his family on coming out of the ark (Gen. 8:20); so did all the Patriarchs; so did the children of Israel in the wilderness and in the promised land. "We will sacrifice to the Lord as He has commanded us" (Exod. 8:27). All nations and people from the beginning (Gen. 4:), Moslem followers of Mohammed, Protestants and pure Buddhists alone excepted, have offered sacrifice, and made it their highest and most solemn act of external worship.

Kinds of Sacrifice.

Under the Patriarchal dispensation and under the Mosaic law, we find numerous sacrifices established by God's command, or with His approval. Some were bloody, others unbloody. Some were called holocausts, or whole-burnt offerings, in which the victim, after being slain, was entirely consumed by fire upon God's altar, for His honour and glory.

There were sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God for all His benefits; sacrifices of propitiation to implore His forgiveness for the sins of people; and sacrifice of supplication to ask His blessing and protection. For example, sacrifices of praise were offered daily in the Temple; Noah's sacrifice was of thanksgiving; those which Judas Machabeus had offered before going to battle were supplicatory; those offered for his warriors who fell in battle were propitiatory and expiatory (2 Mach. 12:43).

(Note: The Sacrifice of the Mass fulfils all these ends. It is the most perfect sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, of propitiation and supplication.)

Objects Used in Sacrifice

Animals such as oxen, sheep, goats and turtle doves, as well as incense and the fruits of the earth, were among the objects of Jewish sacrifice. Oil and wine were also offered, the wine being poured out as a libation upon the altar or before it.

Historically, we find sacrifice existing, not only among the Jews, who worshipped the true God, but also among pagan and idolatrous nations, for even the very heathen in their darkest hour never lost the idea of sacrifice. But their knowledge of God and religion was so confused and perverted that they offered sacrifice not to the true God, but to idols of wood and stone, to animals, to the sun, moon and stars, and other objects.

Sad to say, even human sacrifices were offered by many ancient peoples - the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks and other pagan nations. No people on earth offered more human sacrifices than the natives of America. The Mexicans, we are told, offered not less than twenty human victims every year, and when they had no captives for this purpose they did not spare even their own children.

But even the mistaken offerings and superstitions of the heathen bear witness to man's universal consciousness of sin and guilt, and to the natural, instinctive craving of the human heart to offer sacrifice and atonement to the Almighty Creator and Master of life and death.

Ancient Sacrifices Abolished.

The sacrifices of the Old Law were only types and figures of the great Sacrifice the Redeemer was to offer on the Cross. They could not take away sin, nor open the gates of heaven, for only God, Who was offered, could take away the sins of mankind. These sacrifices were acceptable to God and useful to man only by faith in the Redeemer to come and through the infinite merits of His supreme sacrifice on Calvary. Being only types and figures of the spotless Sacrifice of the New Law, they ceased with the passing of the Old Law; and, as an historical fact, they were never offered after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem.

Nor were the sacrifices of the heathen anything more or less than a seeking after the true sacrifice of atonement. Moreover, a universal persuasion seemed to prevail that "it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away" (Hebr. 10:4), or that the Deity could be propitiated by other similar victims. A victim of infinite value was needed to reconcile man with God.

The Sacrifice of Infinite Value.

We hold, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, that this victim of infinite value - this one great and all-sufficient sacrifice for man's redemption - was the immolation of Our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. He was the God-man. On the Cross, He prayed, suffered and died as man for man, but He had the intercessory power of God with God.

(Note: Jesus Christ, because He is God, because He is almighty, could have accomplished man's redemption in various ways. He could have redeemed us by a word, a wish, or a sigh - by any single act of His sacred humanity, for His every act was of infinite value. But He chose to do it by His

bitter Passion and ignominious Death on the Cross, to prove to man the enormity of sin, the hatred God bears to it, and the excess of God's love for man.)

By this one, supreme, bloody oblation on the altar of the Cross, we were completely redeemed, our ransom was paid, and all mercy, grace and salvation were purchased for us. Neither can there be any need of Christ dying now any more, or purchasing any other graces for us than those for which He has already paid the price in His Precious Blood.

After His resurrection and ascension into heaven, where, "always living to make intercession for us" (Hebr. 8:25), He became our invisible High Priest, our perpetual Mediator, continually presenting His glorious Wounds before His Father in our behalf. On this bloodless Calvary He obtains the application to our souls of what He merited for us on Golgotha.

Nevertheless, visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, had been always and everywhere the law of the children of Adam, and Jesus Christ came "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, till heaven and earth pass away" (Matt. 5:17, 18). He came not to abolish the duty of sacrifice, but to perfect it. He abrogated the sacrifices of old, in themselves imperfect and mere types, only to institute and substitute in their stead a perfect one, the glorious Sacrifice of the Mass.

Four hundred years before Christ, the Prophet Malachy had clearly foretold that the sacrifices of the Old Law would be replaced by a clean oblation that would continue from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, everywhere and always (Mal. 1:10, 11). Christ had determined, even before Calvary, that this should be so; He had determined to make Calvary our lasting and endless sacrifice, and to this end He gave us the Mass as a means by which He renews and continues, even upon earth in an unbloody manner, the prayer and sacrifice of Calvary, not indeed by way of a new redemption, for "Christ dies now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9), but as a means by which the merits of the Cross are applied to our souls.

The Mass Perpetuates the Sacrifice of Calvary

The Mass is as old as Christianity. Jesus Christ Himself celebrated the first Mass at the Last Supper, the night before His bloody immolation on the Cross. We find accounts of this in the Bible (Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). From these accounts we learn that at the Last Supper Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist, the Mass and the priesthood. He instituted the Holy Eucharist not only as a sacrament for the food and nourishment of our souls, but also as a sacrifice, the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass, to be offered to God the Father by way of perpetual memorial of His Death on the Cross. "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, you shall show the Death of the Lord, until He come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

By the same Divine power by which He changed water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-10) He changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood and offered up in a mysterious manner, and by anticipation, the saving sacrifice of Salvation. Then He commanded His Apostles to do what He had done - namely, to offer to God His Body and Blood under the forms of bread and wine, saying: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19). The Apostles, the best interpreters of Christ's meaning, understood these words as a Divine command empowering them to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and offer it to God as a sacrifice - the Mass.

The bloody sacrifice whereby man was redeemed could not be repeated (Hebr. 10:14), but the Catholic Church teaches that the Mass is essentially the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, because its priest is the Priest of Calvary; its victim is the Victim of Calvary; and the separate consecration

of the bread and wine is a mystical representation of the blood-shedding of Calvary. Moreover, the end for which it is offered is to carry on the work of Calvary, by applying daily, upon the altars of the world, the infinite merits of Jesus Christ to the souls of men. The priest who offers the Mass is only the minister and visible representative of Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest. The priest acts in Christ's person and speaks in His name. For this reason, the Mass is not a new nor yet another sacrifice, but a perpetuation - a continuation of the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary applied in an unbloody manner to the needs of individual souls.

By virtue of this essential sameness, the Sacrifice of the Mass completely answers all the different ends of sacrifice, and that in a way infinitely more effective than any of the ancient sacrifices. The sacrifices of Abel, of Abraham and of Melchisedech were of no value whatever, except by faith in the Redeemer to come, and through the infinite merits of His Sacrifice on Calvary. They were mere creature-offerings, but the Mass no human imperfection has power to tarnish. It alone is worthy of the infinite Majesty of God.

Purpose of the Mass.

It is important always to remember that the Mass is a sacrifice, that is, an act by which the Church renders officially to God, in the name of all men, a supreme worship of adoration. The offering which the priest makes to God is none other than Jesus Christ Himself, Who by His Sacrifice on the Cross paid to the Father an infinite worship of adoration, of praise, of propitiation for sin, and of supplication. Thus the Mass, by placing on the altar the Victim of Calvary, enables us to adore God adequately; to thank Him worthily for all His blessings; to appease Him fully by offering the Blood of Christ; to address to Him supplications which are always granted, in accordance with God's designs, because they are made in the name of Him Who, displaying His glorious Wounds before His Father, unceasingly pleads for us in heaven.

The Mass is the official and public act of worship of the Catholic Church. It is the sacrifice of the entire Catholic Church. There is no such thing as a private Mass belonging exclusively to the priest. The act is public and official whether it be offered in St. Peter's Rome, or in some African jungle, or frozen Siberian waste. It is public, because it is offered by the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ whose authorized representative the priest is.

The Mass is the sacrifice of Calvary made perpetual. It is Calvary brought down the centuries, to all peoples and nations, to all times and places, to every hamlet and village throughout the world. On 350,000 altars or more, daily this "clean oblation" is offered up, literally "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof," everywhere and always, without interruption, as the prophet of the Old Law had foretold (Mal. 1:10). Just think! Not a moment of the day or night when Mass is not being offered in some part of the world! It would indeed be tragic for us and for all the world if that Sacrifice should ever cease. We need that Sacrifice now, just as much as did the men of Christ's time. His supreme Sacrifice must still influence the earth; must rise in praise and thanksgiving to God the Father; must drop down its soothing alleviation on purgatory; must save sinners and sanctify saints!

Fruits of the Mass.

On the Cross, Christ purchased our ransom, and in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass the price of that ransom is applied to our souls. The sacrifice of Calvary is the fountain-head, that of the altar is the channel of the graces of Redemption to mankind.

The Mass is of infinite value, on account of the infinite dignity of Christ, who offers Himself in sacrifice; but the graces and favours conferred by it are limited, partly by the will of God in instituting it, and partly by the disposition of those who participate in its fruits. The merits and fruits of the Mass are indeed infinite, but the capacity of man to receive is finite. Hence, the application to the individual is limited by his capacity to receive - limited also by the Will of God, Who would have us come again and again, yes, daily to this salutary and inexhaustible fountain of grace and sanctification.

"Whether one or thousands eat, All receive the selfsame meat, Nor less for others leave." - Hymn for Corpus Christi.

The General fruits of the Mass benefit the whole Church on earth and in purgatory, for it is offered for all, both the living and the dead. The special fruits are applied: firstly, to the priest who offers it; secondly, to those for whom he offers it; thirdly, to those who assist at it; fourthly, to those for whom the faithful present pray and offer the Sacrifice, in union with the priest.

Altar Versus Pulpit.

Since the time of Christ, the centre of all Catholic worship has always been the sacrifice of Calvary continued on the altar. This has always been the pre-eminent source of grace and sanctification. In the days of the Apostles (Acts 2:42-46) the "breaking of bread," that is, the Mass, was the recognized standard by which the Christians were known, just as Catholics are known today because they go to Mass.

The Catholic Church is eminently a place of sacrifice. There is no church without an altar. Altars have always been used for sacrifice. The highest form of worship is sacrifice, and the highest act of sacrifice is the Mass. Everything in the Catholic Church centres about the altar and the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is because of the Mass that we have the priesthood, and through the Mass that we have the Holy Eucharist. Hence the altar takes a more prominent place in the Catholic Church than the pulpit; and Catholics rightly look upon attendance at Mass as of greater value than hearing a sermon. A sermon is the interpretation of the Word of God, but the Mass is the sacrifice of God Himself. It is the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary. In it Jesus Christ offers Himself in an unbloody manner, through the hands of the priest, as He once did in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross.

Our churches are built for the altar and the Sacrifices of the Mass. They are built as a habitation for the sacramental Christ, really and truly present on the altar and the tabernacle - even as God Himself directed Moses to build a sanctuary where He could dwell among His people (Lev. 26:12). They are not, primarily, for the accommodation of the worshippers, nor even as places of prayer and praise. They are intended first of all to be the "tabernacle of God with men" - a dwelling place for Our Lord Jesus Christ under the sacramental veils.

Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist for these three great ends: -

1. To be our perpetual Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Mass.
2. To be the food and nourishment of our souls in Holy Communion.
3. To remain with us always as God and man, to console and strengthen us by a real and abiding Presence on our altars. "My delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8:31).

It is His real abiding Presence that makes our churches holy, so that even a chance visitor must feel the hallowed atmosphere that pervades the sacred place - must experience a feeling of awe and reverence in His holy Presence.

Other religions may have beautiful edifices, but they are only places of prayer, of preaching, or assembly. They have no altar in the real sense of the word. They have no sacrifice, no Mass, for all Protestants distinctly repudiate sacrifice. Catholics go to church to be present at the sacrifice of Calvary; they may or may not hear a sermon, may or may not join in a service of song or common prayer. With Catholics, it is the Mass that matters! Take away the Mass and you take away the very heart and soul, the very spirit and life of the Catholic Church. The so-called reformers of the sixteenth century, most of whom were faithless priests, realized this full well, and struck their first rabid blows at the Mass and the Priesthood. They pulled down the altars and declared the Mass idolatry. With the Mass went the priesthood and the Holy Eucharist. Sacrificing priests, that is "Mass-priests," had no place in their new religion.

The Mass is the great and obligatory act of worship of a Catholic. It is an act of sacrifice, and all join in it who are present with right intention and proper conduct. (Reverential presence constitutes worship and is sufficient as a bare minimum of proper conduct.) They may not necessarily be able to hear the words of the Mass; they may not necessarily understand them, but God, to Whom they are addressed, hears and understands. They must bear in mind that the Mass is a sacrifice - not a prayer-meeting - and sacrifice is the soul of religion.

But devout Catholics are not content with mere reverential presence. They will speak their hearts to Him Who is being mystically crucified for them anew. By their intention and prayers they make with the priest a joint offering of this great act of worship. They unite their intentions with those of the priest who is their representative before God in this sacred act. The saintly Pius X, the Pope of the Eucharist, urged all the faithful to "pray the Mass," that is, to pray the same prayers the priest does at the altar, and offer the Mass to God with him and by his hands. The best way to do this {at any Mass which uses a language with which you are not fluent} is by the use of a missal, which contains the Latin Mass prayers as well as their translation, arranged in parallel columns.

Mass in the Evening.

In the early days of Christianity, the Eucharistic service took place in the evening, after the example of Our Lord at the Last Supper. With it was connected the agape or love-feast, which was celebrated by chanting hymns, by prayer, and the kiss of peace. Owing to the abuses to which they gave rise, even in the days of the Apostles (1 Cor. 11:21), these feasts were separated from the Lord's Supper, and later were abolished entirely.

It was not long before the celebration of Mass was held in the morning, which gave rise to the Eucharistic fast. According to present day discipline, it is celebrated in the morning, and evening, and the celebrant must be fasting. There are, however, some exceptions to these regulations.

Mass in Private Houses.

In very early times it was permitted to offer the Holy Sacrifice in private houses. The Acts thus describe the manner of worship followed by the first Christian congregations "Continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and as they broke bread [or the 'breaking bread'] (that is, Holy Mass and Communion) from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:46). The Apostles and their first successors offered the Holy Sacrifice in simple rooms or

large halls of private houses. Many of their wealthy converts were happy to open their homes to the small congregations of early Christians. As in the course of time some abuses attended this custom, the Church forbade the celebration of Mass in private houses.

However, in mission countries, even at the present day, in new and sparsely settled districts, where the few Catholics are still unable to build churches, the devoted missionary priest, like his predecessors of the first centuries, is often glad to find a chance to offer the Holy Sacrifice and teach the catechism in the humble home of a devout peasant. But as the Catholics increase in number, and means permit, the little church with its permanent altar soon takes the place of the poor man's cottage. {Vatican II has extended the occasions in which it is permitted to have Mass celebrated in places other than churches.}

The Prayers of the Mass

The present Mass prayers originated in primitive Christianity; and the Canon (the most solemn part of the rite) except for non-essential additions is entirely of Apostolic origin. The Mass prayers breathe the simple sweetness of the Word of God, and of the early Fathers who prayed with hearts full of love for Jesus Christ. No non-Catholic can read them once and not perceive their wonderful beauty and devotion. A study of them has, indeed, made more than one earnest soul realize how false was the spirit of the Reformation that could brand them as blasphemous and idolatrous. {Here the modern reader is especially encouraged to read the Roman Canon or Eucharistic Prayer I, but much fruit is to be gained by a prayer reading of any of the authorized anaphoras or Eucharistic prayers in the various rites of the Catholic Church.}

All that is most devotional and inspiring in the Anglican service has been taken from the Roman liturgy; and most of the beautiful prayers of their prayer-book, so much admired and loved by non-Catholics, are merely translations of the old Catholic prayers.

The Ceremonies of the Mass.

The ceremonies of the Mass have all been handed down to us from the most ancient times, many from the time of the Apostles themselves. Their sublime and mysterious meaning is intended to fill our hearts with reverence and devotion. In them we discover a gradual and even more glorious development and advancement; for the Kingdom of God, like the mustard seed of the Gospel, must grow and spread.

The manner of performing the Divine service in the days of the Apostles is described by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, and by St. Paul in his Epistles. The life and soul of the service was the commemoration of the Last Supper, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It was accompanied with common prayer, readings from Holy Scripture, chanting of psalms, and a collection made for the poor. The Eucharist, or Mass proper, began with the selection from the offerings brought by the people of the bread and wine for the sacrifice. There were as yet no fixed prayers for this part of the service, the celebrant "giving thanks" in the words chosen by himself. The consecration consisted of a prayer in memory of Our Lord's Passion and the words of transubstantiation as we have them in the Mass today. But in the course of the first few centuries it became gradually fixed by the decrees of bishops, popes and councils. Even as early as the time of Constantine the Great, about 325, the prayers and ceremonies of the Mass were much the same, and appointed in the same order, as we have them today.

The passing centuries have brought changes in the ceremonies of the Mass and the people no longer bring the bread and wine used in the Sacrifice as once they did. But the Mass itself is just the same. It is the sacrifice of the Supper Room and Calvary, and the congregation still, as of old, has a share in the offering of it.

A Consoling Assurance

What a consolation for us to know that our holy Sacrifice of the Mass was in all ages of Christianity, just as it is in our own, offered up for both the living and the dead! It is a consolation and an assurance to know that not only the essential part of this holy Sacrifice has remained without change since the very hour of the Last Supper, but even its outward symbols and ceremonies as we have them today, were strictly and permanently established during the earliest ages of the Church.

What feelings of reverence fill our souls when we remember that the same holy Sacrifice of the Mass at which we assist today has been solemnized during almost two thousand years, in precisely the same way by our ancestors in the Faith!

We learn from the writings of the earliest Church Fathers, as well as from ancient relics, from original inscriptions and from images found in the catacombs, that even in those times the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist was held and taught and reduced to practice, even as in our own day; and our souls overflow with gratitude to Jesus Christ for having permitted us to be members of that Mystical Body, the Church, in which He has lived, in which He still lives, and in which He shall continue to live forever!

Why does the Catholic Church Use Latin so much?

Latin is the official language of the Catholic Church and especially of that part of the Catholic Church which falls under the direct administration of the Patriarch of the West. It is not a foreign language, but the changeless and universal language of the changeless and universal Church. A changeless tongue is a fitting form for changeless truth. It makes the Catholic Church really international as opposed to the merely national or provincial churches of Protestant sects. It proclaims the unity and universality of Catholic doctrine. It typifies the unity of the Catholic Church and helps to preserve it. Thus all decrees, liturgical rubrics, encyclicals etc. are normally released in their definitive form in Latin.

NOTE: Out of respect for very ancient usage, the Catholic Eastern Rite Churches, sometimes called the "Uniate" Churches of the East retain the rite and language established by very ancient custom. They have always been a part of the universal Catholic Church. At no time in its history has the Catholic Church had only one liturgical language. Therefore, at present, {1958} Mass is offered in a number of languages, as Greek, Coptic, Armenian, Syriac, old Slavonic, and a few others. Many of these languages have nearly gone out of daily use, and are not subject to the changes of modern languages.

Latin enables any priest, American, African, European or Asiatic, to officiate in any foreign land, regardless of language, habits and customs of such peoples. {Today he can use the Latin of the "Novus Ordo" Missal.} Latin enables the Catholic Hierarchy to communicate freely with each other and with the See of Rome, and to discuss matters of discipline and dogma in their general councils. Even medical men and scientists have wished and hoped for a common medium of communication at their international congresses. The Church has it!

The basic form of the Mass is familiar to any devout Catholic all over the world, such is the uniformity of practice, no matter what the rite in which the Mass is said.

By the use of Latin in her decrees and definitions, the Church preserves unity of faith throughout the world. Another advantage of using a so-called "dead" language, such as Latin, is that the words do not change their meanings, as constantly happens in modern languages. Latin thus preserves the exactness of dogmatic decrees and definitions of councils, so necessary in a changeless and universal Church.

An Objection Answered

The former objection made by some Protestants to our use of Latin is not well founded. Indeed there is no reason for criticism, for it must be remembered that all announcements, sermons, instructions, public prayers or hymns - all services we have in common with those of our separated brethren - are in the language used by the people. Remember, the Mass is an action rather than a prayer - a sublime sacrifice which the priest, in the name of Christ, offers to God for the people. The prayers he uses are addressed directly to God and are not sermons intended for the people. It may be added that ever when Latin Liturgies were common, missals for the laity containing the Latin, with translation and explanations of the Mass and other public services, were highly recommended, as they still are, so that the faithful can, and could, follow the actions and prayers of the priest as, indeed, they are so earnestly exhorted to do.

Why Use Vestments?

In the Old Law, God Himself minutely appointed the vestments for the priests, and commanded: "Aaron and his sons shall use them when they approach the altar to minister in the sanctuary, lest being guilty of iniquity they die" (Exod. 28:43). As in the New Law the Sacrifice of the Mass is the highest and most solemn act of worship, the Church has appointed particular vestments to be worn by the priest when officiating at the altar. They mark him as a man set apart from the world, the ambassador of God. They remind us that he does not act in his own person, but as the representative of God. They have a significant meaning and appeal to the senses, for the Church desires to concentrate the whole man, with all his faculties, upon this supreme and central act of religious worship. Naturally, they seem strange to non-Catholics and others twenty centuries after Christ, for they all date back to Roman days - none of them being later than the eighth century.

Colours Symbolic

The Church speaks to us also by the colour of the vestments worn at the different seasons of the year and on different feast days. They are as changing flowers that bloom in the beautiful Eden of the Catholic Church. White, symbolic of purity and holy joy, is worn on the feasts of Our Lord, His holy Mother, and His angel and virgin favourites as well as other saints. Red, symbolic of love and martyrdom, is used on the festivals of the Holy Ghost, the holy Cross, the Precious Blood, and the bravest of Christian brave, the apostles and martyrs. Violet, symbolic of humility and penance, is appointed for Lent, Advent, Vigils, and Ember (or Penitential) Days. Green, symbolic of hope of life everlasting, is used on the remaining Sundays and week-days of the year. Black, symbolic of sorrow and mourning, is used on Good Friday and can be used at Masses for the departed.

"It Is the Mass that Matters"

"It is the Mass that matters." Such was the conclusion of a noted Congregational minister converted to the Catholic Faith some years ago. The clergyman was none other than the well-known Rev.

William Orchard, of London, England, whose conversion has been heralded as the greatest since the time of Newman. And if we enquire of Catholic converts what it was that drew them into the bosom of the Church, we shall find that in most instances the Mass was one of the principal factors in their conversion.

In England, within recent times, a prominent non-Catholic minister - referred to above - had "Mass" celebrated daily in his Congregational chapel. This imitation of the Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass was continued over a period of years. At length, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, this clergyman came to realize that he could never be satisfied with a merely external representation of the Catholic ritual. After deep study and earnest prayer, he entered the fold of the true Church, and not long thereafter went to Rome to study for the priesthood.

While he was yet outside the Church, Rev. Orchard wrote these astonishing words: "We may well hope that the Mass will one day be discerned by all Christians to be the one thing that matters; the Catholic celebration of it, the point at which unity will be found; and the doctrine of transubstantiation, the basis of a sacramental philosophy which will illumine many mysteries, the centre from which our efforts at social reconstruction will be truly inspired."

Another Convert

From England, we turn our attention to a notable convert to the Catholic Faith in France. Here we find that it was through the devout attendance of Catholics at Mass that this brilliant conquest was made for Holy Mother the Church. There is no brighter name in the literary annals of France than that of Montalembert. His eloquence and the greatness of his soul were on a plane with his ancestral dignity. "Throughout the ever-varying political struggles of his country, he was for almost half a century in the foremost ranks of the champions of Christian liberty. In his youth, however, it was his misfortune to have been caught up by the atheistic atmosphere and the fashionable tone of infidelity affected in the University of France.

It was during a tour in Ireland that the gift of our holy Faith was bestowed upon him. Travelling through the most neglected parts of the country, he was again and again struck by the earnest piety and heroic spirit of sacrifice of the Irish Catholics. Gradually he became convinced that the Catholic Faith is not merely a matter of theory - but rather a Divine life which through God's mercy is given to men, and which only purity of conduct, the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial, and the practice of virtues which the Catholic Church commands, can preserve.

Finding himself on a Sunday morning in a rural district of Ireland while the season was particularly inclement, he resolved to test for himself whether the Irish Catholics were truly ready to endure hardships for their Faith. In his carriage, he accompanied the crowd as it streamed along the road to Mass. When they began to climb a hillside, he followed them on foot. At length the chapel came into sight; it was a small thatched dwelling, scarcely able to shelter the aged priest and a few members of the congregation. All the remainder knelt in front of the little chapel under the broad canopy of the heavens, with nothing to shelter them. The wind, rain and mud, however, held no terrors for them. They knelt bare-headed, while their minds and hearts were absorbed in God. It was from this lowly hillside altar, where the fervent congregation knelt in humble adoration and a throb of true piety vibrated through every heart, that a ray of heavenly light brought the gift of Divine Faith to the heart and soul of Montalembert. Until his last breath, he ever cherished the warmest

affection for Ireland, and he delighted to repeat that to the heroic spirit of sacrifice displayed by the Irish people, he was indebted for the priceless treasure of the Catholic Faith.

Conclusion - Rays of Splendour of the Midday Sun

These are but a few of the many examples which might be cited of those who have come out of the shadows of unbelief into the noonday light of the Catholic Faith and have rejoiced in the peace which filled their souls after months, perhaps years, of anxious wrestling with doubts and fears. To them, entrance into the Catholic Church was as a passing from the mists of twilight into the refulgent splendour of the midday sun, and they realized that in them the longing of the Psalmist had been fulfilled; the wings of the flying dove had brought them peace and rest.
