

The Question Box

Questions Posed by Devout Catholics.

Answered by the Editors of the Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart.
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THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER.

QUESTION — How can I become a Member of the Apostleship of Prayer?

Answer — Apply to any Promoter of the Apostleship of Prayer; or, apply direct to the Office of THE IRISH MESSENGER, 37, Lower Leeson Street, Dublin, 2, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, or apply at any Jesuit residence.

QUESTION — What Indulgences are granted for membership of the Apostleship of Prayer?

Answer — As it would take up too much space to set down these Indulgences here it would be better to consult the Handbook of the Apostleship of Prayer, where these Indulgences are printed in full.

QUESTION — If a person wishes to recite a Decade of the Rosary, as a practice of the Apostleship of Prayer, is it necessary for him to recite a special Decade apart from his daily Rosary?

Answer — It is quite sufficient for such a person to offer up one Decade of his daily Rosary for the intentions of the Apostleship of Prayer.

QUESTION — Must a person who joins the Apostleship of Prayer fulfil all its practices?

Answer — The only essential practice for those who wish to become members of the Apostleship of Prayer is the First, namely, the "Morning Offering" daily. Members are free to adopt the other practices as they wish.

QUESTION — How may a person obtain the prayers of the members of the Apostleship of Prayer for a special intention?

Answer — All you have to do is to write to THE IRISH MESSENGER Office making your request.

QUESTION — What is the meaning of the Treasury of Good Works?

Answer — The Treasury of Good Works consists of certain good works, for example, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, Visits to the Sick, the Recitation of the Rosary, performed for the intentions of the Apostleship of Prayer.

QUESTION — May adults be enrolled as Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament?

Answer — Yes. Adults, to become Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament, should be enrolled as members of the Apostleship of Prayer and promise to go to Holy Communion at least once a week. Any Promoter of the Apostleship of Prayer has power to enroll Crusaders.

THE MASS.

QUESTION — Is not a "Low Mass" as good as a "High Mass"? Is it not all the one Sacrifice?

Answer — There is exactly the same Sacrifice in a 'Low Mass' as in a "High Mass." The latter, however, is carried out with greater solemnity and more external honour is paid to Our Saviour in a "High Mass" than in a "Low Mass." [Under the reforms to the liturgy proclaimed by Blessed Pope Paul VI, the distinction no longer applies, as the rubrics or rules allow Mass to be said freely with arrange of gradings or options to give the liturgy greater solemnity.]

QUESTION — What are "Votive" Masses?

Answer — Votive Masses are those, which do not correspond with the Office of the day but are said by the choice of the priest.

QUESTION — Could a person hear Mass properly without seeing the Altar?

Answer — Provided a person could follow the Mass, by seeing the movements of the people in front of him, by hearing the bell, et cetera, he could assist at the Mass though he could not see the Altar. It is full, conscious and active participation in the Mass.

QUESTION — Is it possible to hear Mass over the Wireless?

Answer — No Catholic can fulfil the obligation of being present at Mass on Sundays and Holidays by simply listening to the music and the prayers of Mass through the wireless on these days. Such listening in, of course, may be very profitable. [A similar comment can be made about Mass on Television.]

QUESTION — Some times people do not stand during the reading of the Last Gospel, especially if they are making their thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Is this correct?

Answer — If for a good reason, as the one indicated, people do not stand during the Last Gospel, it is quite all right. [The reference is to the Liturgy of Saint Pius V, as the Liturgy of Blessed Paul VI does not include the Last Gospel.]

QUESTION — Is a person late for Mass who comes into the church when the priest is uncovering the chalice at the Offertory?

Answer — A person is late for Mass who is absent from any part of the Mass. If a person is absent from a notable part of Sunday Mass through his own fault then the sin is grievous.

QUESTION — Which is the more correct thing to do; to kneel down or remain standing while the Credo is being said during Mass?

Answer — The more correct thing to do is to kneel during the Credo under the rubrics of Saint Pius V. In many places, there is a custom to remain standing while the Credo is 'being recited. One should conform to the local custom. [The rubrics of Blessed Paul VI require the congregation to return to the ancient practice and stand during the recitation of the Creed.]

QUESTION — What is meant by the Sequence at Mass?

Answer — The Sequence is a hymn, which is recited at some Masses just before [the book is moved for] the Gospel. For instance, the "Stabat Mater" ('by the Cross Stands the Mother') is recited for the Feast of the Seven Dolours.

QUESTION — What is meant by the "Ordinary of the Mass"?

Answer — By the "Ordinary of the Mass" is meant that part of the Mass which is the same in every Mass. Certain prayers in the Mass vary according to the Feast and season and others are always the same. These latter are called the "Ordinary."

QUESTION — What are Gregorian Masses?

Answer — Gregorian Masses consist of thirty Masses offered up on thirty consecutive days for the repose of a soul in Purgatory. All the Masses need not be said by the same priest, nor is it necessary that they all be said on the same altar. They were instituted by Pope Saint Gregory the Great, to whom the efficacy of thirty daily consecutive Masses was revealed.

QUESTION — What do you mean by "A Month's Mind?"

Answer — A Month's Mind is a Mass offered for a person thirty days after his death. This is reckoned from any day between the person's death and burial.

QUESTION — What are the three cards, usually framed, which are to be seen on the altar during Mass?

Answer — These cards or charts, contain prayers, which the priest recites during the Mass [in the Liturgy of Saint Pius V].

QUESTION — Must Priests say Mass daily?

Answer — At the present time, daily Mass is the practice of priests unless they are prevented by illness, but the Church does not impose the obligation of daily Mass on them.

QUESTION — May Mass be celebrated after 12 noon.

Answer — According to the 1917 Canon Law, Mass should not be commenced sooner than an hour before dawn or later than one hour after midday, unless there is a just cause or a legitimate concession for beginning Mass sooner or later than the times mentioned. [The 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law formalized the allowance of Mass in the afternoons and evenings.]

QUESTION — When a priest celebrates three Masses on Christmas Day does he receive the Body and Blood of Christ three times?

Answer — As the three Masses celebrated by a priest on Christmas Day are three distinct Masses the priest receives the Body and Blood of Christ at each of the Masses.

QUESTION — May a Priest offer a Mass which is not a Requiem Mass, that is without wearing black vestments, for a dead person?

Answer --Mass may be offered for the dead on any day of the year when Mass is allowed, and black vestments need not necessarily be worn.

QUESTION — For High Mass is it necessary for the Deacon and Sub-Deacon to be fasting as well as the Celebrant?

Answer — Only the Celebrant is required to be fasting for High Mass. [Vatican II considerably loosened the rules of fasting and also removed the order of sub-deacon.]

QUESTION — Suppose a person going to Mass on a Sunday were to find a person dying on the roadside should he go for a doctor though this would involve his missing Mass that day?

Answer — In such a case a person should go for a doctor. Such an act of charity would excuse his missing of Mass.

QUESTION — What should be done with Mass Cards?

Answer — We presume you refer to Requiem Mass Cards, which are sent to the relatives of deceased persons expressing one's intention of getting Masses offered for the deceased. These cards are generally placed on the coffin of the dead person. After the funeral, relatives of the dead person may use their own discretion as to what should be done with them.

QUESTION — Sometimes when I attend Mass in our Church two other Masses are being celebrated at the same time at the side altars, what should be done to gain a benefit from these Masses?

Answer — The best thing to do in such case is to concentrate on the Mass offered up at the High Altar, but have the intention of gaining as much as you can from the other two Masses.

QUESTION — Can a priest offer Mass for a soul in Purgatory without including other souls?

Answer — A priest can offer the "special fruit" of the Mass for a particular soul; but all the souls in Purgatory as well as the faithful on earth share in the "general fruit" of each Mass.

QUESTION — Why is a person forbidden not to leave until the end of Mass on Sundays, but may leave before the end on week-days?

Answer — To hear the whole of Mass on Sunday is of obligation and therefore to omit a portion of the Mass is sinful; the gravity of the sin will depend on the amount of the Mass omitted. Mass on weekdays is not of obligation, unless the days be holidays (Holy Days) of obligation.

QUESTION — When souls pass from Purgatory to Heaven do these souls know that we will offer Masses and pray for them?

Answer — As it is a common belief in the Church that the saints in Heaven hear our prayers, such souls would know that Masses and prayers are being said for them.

QUESTION — When asking a priest to say Mass for our dead relatives is it necessary to tell him their names?

Answer — No. The priest will offer the Mass for your intention, which is the repose of the souls of your relatives, and that is quite sufficient.

QUESTION — When I think of getting a Mass said for my father, thoughts of my other dead relatives and friends come to my mind, and I do not know for whom I ought to get the Mass offered?

Answer — The best thing for you to do is to get the Mass offered for your dead friends and relatives, and to leave the application of the fruits of the Mass to God; He knows best to which of your deceased friends the fruits of the Mass should be applied.

QUESTION — A person promises to get a certain number of Masses said in thanksgiving for favours received, must all these Masses be said at once, and is it necessary to mention the names of the saints in whose honour he wishes the Masses to be offered?

Answer — It will be sufficient to get the Masses celebrated according as circumstances will permit, and there is no need to mention the names of the saints.

QUESTION — When I was young I promised to say prayers and get Masses offered for the dead, am I bound by the promise now? I can't remember what prayers, and the number of Masses I promised.

Answer — Generally, such a promise is not made with the intention of binding one in conscience and so its fulfilment does not bind under the pain of sin. It would be well, however, to say some prayers and get Masses said for your intention, if that could be conveniently done.

QUESTION — Why are the vestments used by the priest in the celebration of Mass of different colours for different days?

Answer — Mass is offered for many purposes and in honour of different classes of saints, and each of these is symbolised by the colour of the vestments worn during Mass. Five colours are ordinarily used by the Church: White vestments signify innocence, purity and glory and are used on the feasts of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the angels and confessors, during Christmas and Easter Seasons. Red vestments symbolise charity and martyrdom and are worn for Masses of the Holy Ghost, on the feasts of the Holy Cross, and of martyrs. Green vestments are symbolic of hope and are worn on Sundays after the Epiphany and after Pentecost, (the 'Ordinary Sundays of the Year') on which there is no special commemoration. Violet or Purple vestments, expressive of penance, are used during Lent and Advent (except on Saints' days), and on the Feast of the Holy Innocents. [Holy Innocents day now sees the wearing of Red vestments for martyrs.] Black vestments signify mourning and are worn on Good Friday and at Masses for the dead. [Good Friday is generally now accompanied by red vestments and violet or white vestments are now permitted for Masses for the dead.] On the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) and on the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) Rose coloured vestments may be used.

QUESTION — Is the reading of the Missal the only way of assisting properly at Mass?

Answer — No. There are several methods of assisting at Mass, any one of which may be used to attend Mass with devotion. The reading of the Missal is recommended because a person who reads the Missal reads the same prayers as the priest does. The best method is the method that suits each particular person best. [Vatican II insisted on full, conscious and active participation as the ideal way of assisting at Mass. The vast majority of Catholics have found the reverent participation in the vernacular liturgy a great boon to their spiritual life.]

QUESTION — Is it quite all right to say the Rosary during Mass instead of reading the prayers in the Prayer Book?

Answer — Reciting the Rosary is an excellent way of assisting at Mass [if the Mass is neither a 'dialogue' Mass or a Mass in the vernacular, when one is expected to listen and respond to the various prayers and readings].

QUESTION — What is the meaning of the words "of the Day" which are put for some days during the month instead of the name of a Saint, on the Calendar of the Apostleship of Prayer?

Answer — When the words "Of the Day" are put on the Calendar instead of the name of a Saint, this means that the Ferial Mass is said on this day and not the Mass of a particular Saint. Except for particular seasons of the year, such as Lent and Advent, Christmastide and Eastertide, the Ferial Mass is usually the same as the Mass of the previous Sunday.

QUESTION — My sister has to leave Mass often at the Post Communion in order to let her husband go to a later Mass; does she fulfil the obligation of hearing Sunday Mass?

Answer — Yes, but she should endeavour to see if some other arrangement can be made to enable her husband and herself and indeed, her whole family to attend the whole Sunday Mass.

QUESTION — What is the meaning of the cross between words in several places in the Missal?

Answer — This means the Sign of the Cross, which the priest makes over an article he is blessing.

HOLY COMMUNION.

QUESTION — How often should a daily communicant go to confession?

Answer — In general a person who goes daily to Holy Communion and has no serious sin on his soul is advised to go to Confession weekly, as the purer a soul is at the time of Holy Communion, the more grace is obtained. In a case like this, it is always good to get the advice of one's confessor.

QUESTION — If a person is in the state of grace, may he go to Holy Communion every morning during the week after Confession, and also, on the following Sunday?

Answer — It is the wish of the Church and the Holy Father that the faithful should communicate as often as possible. Provided therefore that a person is in the state of grace and fulfils the other conditions required for his reception of the Sacrament he may go to Holy Communion as often as he can, while he remains in that state. It is advisable, however, for frequent communicants to go regularly to confession.

QUESTION — Which is the best time to go to Holy Communion, during Mass or after Mass?

Answer — The proper time to receive Holy Communion is during Mass after the priest's Communion. Often for the convenience of the people, Communion is distributed after Mass but those who can do so should receive during Mass.

QUESTION — "In some churches where Holy Communion is given before Mass, some people receive as soon as they enter the church, without any preparation, is this correct?"

Answer — In such a case a person should always come to the church in time to make a good preparation before Holy Communion. To receive Holy Communion without any preparation would be, at the very least, most disrespectful to the Blessed Sacrament.

QUESTION — Is it necessary to genuflect at the altar after receiving Holy Communion?

Answer — It is not necessary to genuflect at the altar rails after receiving Holy Communion. Oftentimes it is very undesirable to do so when so many are waiting to approach the rails.

QUESTION — A person who lives a good life but who lives a long way from the church would like to receive Holy Communion each Sunday of the month, is it sufficient for such a person to go to Confession once only during the month?

Answer — Provided no mortal sin has been committed since the Confession such a person may receive Holy Communion each Sunday. It would be well, however, to consult one's Confessor about this matter.

QUESTION — Is a person obliged to go to Holy Communion after having been to Confession?

Answer — No. Only Paschal Communion is obligatory on a person.

QUESTION — Which is better to follow the prayers of the Mass after Holy Communion, or to say one's own prayers of thanksgiving?

Answer — The better method is the method each one finds more helpful. [In the Liturgy of Blessed Paul VI, it is preferred that the whole congregation participates in the full prayers of the Mass. We are encouraged to also set aside some time for quiet thanksgiving.]

QUESTION — If a person takes food before going to bed, may he receive Holy Communion on the following morning, although some particles of the food may remain in the teeth, and perhaps may be unknowingly swallowed before the morning Mass?

Answer — In such a case a person may receive Holy Communion. [At the time of the question, fasting was from midnight. Fasting is now of only one hour's duration.]

QUESTION — Is it necessary to tell the priest if he gives a person two Hosts at Holy Communion?

Answer — A person who receives two Hosts at Holy Communion should not worry but consume both Hosts in the ordinary way.

QUESTION — May a man smoke on a Sunday morning before going to Holy Communion?

Answer — A man may smoke on a Sunday morning before Holy Communion. Out of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, many men prefer not to smoke before Holy Communion, and we heartily recommend this practice.

QUESTION — Is it right to use tooth paste when cleaning the teeth before going to Holy Communion?

Answer — Tooth paste may be used when cleaning the teeth before Holy Communion.

QUESTION — If the Sacred Host falls on the ground when a person is about to receive Holy Communion, is that a sign that the person is unworthy to receive it?

Answer — Certainly not. It is merely an accident and to think otherwise would be mere superstition and quite wrong.

QUESTION — I suffer from Asthma and inhale vapour of Glycerine in order to get relief, may I do so in the morning before going to Holy Communion?

Answer — Yes. [All medicines and medicinal preparations are permitted before Communion.]

QUESTION — Sometimes after receiving Holy Communion, the Host adheres to the palate of my set of teeth, is this any harm?

Answer — No. In such a case, the Host may be gently removed with the tongue.

QUESTION — I have artificial teeth and always worry after Communion thinking that a particle of the Host may remain under the plate."

Answer — It is quite wrong to worry in such a case. Receive the Host in the ordinary way and consume it as soon as possible; and then lay aside all worry.

QUESTION — My artificial teeth are slightly loose, is it necessary to remove them before receiving Holy Communion?

Answer — In such a case there seems to be no necessity to remove the artificial teeth before receiving Holy Communion.

QUESTION — Are sinful thoughts, which come into a person's head immediately after receiving Holy Communion, a sign that the person has received unworthily?

Answer — Sinful thoughts, which a person experiences unwillingly after Holy Communion are not a sign that the person has received unworthily.

QUESTION — Sometimes I get bad thoughts before Holy Communion and often I feel no devotion when about to receive Holy Communion. Is it wrong to receive in such a state?

Answer — Bad thoughts, even before Holy Communion, when not voluntarily entertained are not sinful, and therefore are no hindrance to the reception of Holy Communion. The absence of a feeling of sensible devotion before or after Holy Communion is no indication that a person was not prepared for the Sacrament.

QUESTION — Is a scrupulous person who remembers some sins of the past which he thinks have not been confessed but does not know whether they are mortal or venial, bound to confess these sins?

Answer — There is no obligation on such a person to confess these sins.

QUESTION — If a person, by mistake, ate meat on Friday, could he go to Communion the following day without going to Confession?

Answer — Yes. There might be some fault in forgetting the abstinence, but it would be a slight one and should not hinder one from receiving Communion. [Since Vatican II, the rules of abstinence from meat have been considerably modified, although the obligation to perform some act of penance on Fridays remains.]

QUESTION — A person wishes to receive Holy Communion on nine consecutive days, beginning on a Sunday. Is it necessary for that person to go to Confession again on the following Saturday if he is in the state of grace?

Answer — Provided a person is in the state of grace, Confession is not required in such a case. For those who go daily to Communion, weekly confession is advised, so that our souls may be as pure as possible for the reception of so great a Sacrament.

SIN AND CONFESSION.

QUESTION — What is an occasion of sin? May a person visit a place, which formerly was an occasion of sin for him, if his absence from that place would cause inconvenience to him?

Answer — Occasions of sin are any external circumstances (persons, places, or things), inciting to sin. They are called proximate occasions when they are generally followed by a sinful act, and remote when they are rarely followed by a sinful act. The general rule with regard to occasions of sin is that we are bound to avoid them if proximate, but not if remote. In view of this general rule if a person, by taking precautions, makes a place, which was formerly a proximate occasion of sin for him a remote occasion of sin he could go there.

QUESTION — What are "Reserved sins?"

Answer — "Reserved sins" are certain sins the absolution from which a superior reserves to himself. Certain cases are reserved to the Pope and others are reserved to the Bishops. In the latter case, the special reserved sins and the number will depend on the Bishop of the place.

QUESTION — Are we bound to confess doubtful mortal sins?

Answer — Doubtful mortal sins, namely, whether we committed them, whether they are mortal, or whether we have already told them in confession, need not be told in confession. It is good to confess them as doubtful sins, since, by doing so, we may save ourselves worry.

QUESTION — What do you mean by the sin of "Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit"? Why cannot this sin be pardoned?

Answer — The following sins are generally called 'Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit': Final Impenitence, Despair, Obstinacy in Evil, Resistance of the Known Truth, Presumption, Hatred of Fraternal Charity. These sins are said to be unpardonable, not because they cannot be forgiven, because it is of faith that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven by God, but because people who thus sin become so depraved that their conversion is very difficult.

QUESTION — If a person learns later that an act, which he did not consider sinful when doing it, is ordinarily a mortal sin, is it a mortal sin in his case?

Answer — If at the time of doing a certain act a person did not think such an act mortally sinful he did not commit a mortal sin and the knowledge he gets afterwards cannot change this.

QUESTION — Is it sufficient for a good Confession to have Contrition some time previous to the actual Confession?

Answer — To prepare for confession, say, the day previous to the actual Confession and to have sorrow for the sins you will confess the following day is quite all right provided no new serious sins were committed in the meantime. An effort should be made to renew this sorrow before the actual Confession.

QUESTION — If a sin were committed in a church does this circumstance add to its guilt?

Answer — This would depend on the nature of the sin. For instance, to maliciously break the window of a private house is a sin, to do the same injury to a church window is a greater sin, because of the irreverence shown to God's house. Generally, a notable external sin committed in a church will nearly always have an aggravating circumstance, which makes the sin greater, owing to the obvious irreverence added to the malice of the sin. For instance, to steal a pound from a person in church is a somewhat greater sin than to steal a pound from the same person in the street, because such an act could hardly be done without an added sin of irreverence.

QUESTION — When a priest asks a penitent to mention a sin in his past life, is it necessary to mention a mortal sin, or to tell the number of times?

Answer — It is never necessary to mention a mortal sin that has been confessed and absolved. A priest asks a penitent to mention some sin of his past life to make sure that the person is presenting sufficient material for absolution and has greater sorrow. To mention a venial sin of the past is therefore quite sufficient. It is advisable to conclude one's accusation by a general accusation, for example, "For these and all the sins of my past Life, especially sins of uncharitableness, anger or lying, I wish to accuse myself and am truly sorry."

QUESTION — How is a General Confession to be made?

Answer — Methods of making a General Confession are given in the larger Prayer Books. The confessor is always ready to help a person in this matter.

QUESTION — If a person forgets to mention a few serious sins in a General Confession, is it necessary to mention these sins in his next Confession?

Answer — These sins need not be mentioned again unless the General Confession was made for the purpose of rectifying previous bad Confessions.

QUESTION — If a person be in mortal sin what benefit does he gain from prayers said and Masses heard while in that state?

Answer — Saint Paul tells us: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor and deliver my body to be burned and have not charity it profits me nothing." Good works, therefore, performed while a person is in the state of mortal sin are of no avail. They may, however, win for the person the grace of repentance. An Act of Perfect Contrition, with the real intention of going to Confession as soon as possible will restore sanctifying grace to the soul.

QUESTION — What use are the prayers and other good works performed by a person in mortal sin?

Answer — A person in mortal sin can always make an act of perfect contrition and this act with the intention of going to confession as soon as possible will reconcile him to God. Apart from this, prayers and good works can obtain for a person in mortal sin the grace of repentance.

QUESTION — Just after Confession a person remembers that he has forgotten to tell a mortal sin in the confession, should he return immediately to the confessional in order to tell the sin?

Answer — Provided the telling of the sin has not been omitted through carelessness it is sufficient to tell such a sin in the next confession. Such sins are absolved by the general absolution of the priest with the obligation however, that they are confessed when remembered.

QUESTION — What are "doubtful" sins, and is a person obliged to tell them in confession?

Answer — Doubtful sins may be divided into three classes: A person may doubt whether the sins were ever committed, whether they were ever confessed, or whether they were mortal or venial. If any of these doubts is really present then there is no obligation to confess them though it is advisable to confess them as doubtful sins for peace of mind.

QUESTION — A scrupulous person has been advised by a confessor never to go back on past sins but thinks that the telling of certain past sins would bring great peace of mind, would it be advisable for such a person to tell these sins?

Answer — Such a person should always follow the advice of the confessor and it is only by following the confessor's advice that peace of mind may be got.

QUESTION — If a certain article is ordered from a shop and two articles are sent by mistake, does a person sin who keeps the second article without paying for it?

Answer — Of course. To keep the second article without paying for it would be just the same as keeping an article you found though you knew the owner.

QUESTION — Is it a sin to gamble?

Answer Gambling in itself is not sinful; it is, however, very often an occasion of sin; the losing of money which should go to the support of one's family, the neglect of duty, often the risking of money and property belonging to other people.

MARRIAGE.

QUESTION — Is "company keeping" sinful?

Answer — "Company keeping" when carried out according to the intention of the Church, namely, with a view to marriage, and using the safeguards, which the Church advises in such cases, is not sinful.

QUESTION — Is it lawful to marry a first cousin?

Answer — No. By the impediment of consanguinity, Catholics are forbidden to marry within the third degree inclusive.

QUESTION — May third cousins marry?

Answer — Third cousins do not come within the forbidden degrees of kindred and, therefore, may marry.

QUESTION — Is it sinful to write an anonymous letter to warn parents for instance that their children were keeping what was thought to be dangerous company?

Answer — Such an anonymous letter would not be sinful. It is better not to write anonymous letters; such letters do little good, if any at all, and often do a great deal of harm. If the matter seems to you to be an urgent one it is better to approach the parents personally.

QUESTION — What is the attitude of the Church towards "Mixed Marriages"?

Answer — "A Mixed Marriage" is a marriage between a Catholic and one who, though baptised, does not profess the Catholic Faith. Such marriages have always been disapproved of by the Church, nor does she ever permit them except on certain conditions, and for very grave reasons.

QUESTION — Is a Catholic who has made a "mixed marriage" denied the privilege of having the home "Consecrated to the Sacred Heart"?

Answer — A Catholic who has contracted a "mixed marriage" may certainly get the home "Consecrated to the Sacred Heart." The Consecration will bring peace and happiness to the home and may bring the non-Catholic member of the family to the true Faith.

QUESTION — What is the meaning of affinity?

Answer — Affinity is an impediment that prevents a valid marriage, unless by dispensation, with certain blood relatives of a previous wife or husband.

QUESTION — Is it wrong for a wife to leave her husband who takes drink to excess, and live with her own people?

Answer — In such a case a person should always consult her confessor.

QUESTION — Is a Catholic who has been married to a Protestant in a Registry Office married in the eyes of God and His Church, and may such a person receive the Sacraments?

Answer — The Church regards such a marriage as invalid and, therefore, a person who has gone through that form of marriage is in sin and cannot receive the Sacraments while in that state.

VARIOUS DEVOTIONS.

QUESTION — When may a person gain the Indulgences of the Stations of the Cross by holding a Crucifix to which these Indulgences have been attached while reciting the prescribed prayers?

Answer — Those who are sick, or at sea, in prison, or who are prevented in any other way from visiting a church and making there the Stations of the Cross in the ordinary manner may gain the Indulgences by holding in their hands the specially blessed Crucifix and reciting the prescribed prayers.

QUESTION — May a person make the Stations of the Cross by meditating on each Station in the usual way without leaving his place in the church?

Answer — To gain the Indulgences of the Stations of the Cross it is necessary to meditate, according to one's ability, on the Passion of Our Saviour, and to go from one Station to the other, so far as the number of persons engaged in the devotion, and the space where the Stations are erected will permit. (In a congregation, it is sufficient that the leader of cross-bearer moves from station to station.)

QUESTION — If a person who is making the "Nine Fridays" is unable to receive on a certain First Friday but goes to Holy Communion the following Saturday, may this person so fulfil the conditions for the making of the "Nine Fridays"?

Answer — In making the "Nine Fridays" the conditions laid down by Our Lord Himself must be observed, that is, receiving Holy Communion on nine successive First Fridays; the going to Communion on a day other than the First Friday, therefore will not fulfil the conditions.

QUESTION — What are the Blessed Sacrament Beads?

Answer — The Blessed Sacrament Beads consist of a string of thirty-three beads. On each of these beads is recited an aspiration: "Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, have mercy on us!"

QUESTION — What are the Indulgences attached to the Beads of the Immaculate Conception?

Answer — The indulgences attached are: 300 days for each recitation. A Plenary Indulgence once a month, on the day of choice, to those who recite it daily for a month. [Since Vatican II, reference to number of days has been eliminated and such indulgences are referred to as 'partial indulgences'. It must be recalled that God is never outdone in generosity.]

QUESTION — I live far away in the country. Could I join the Sodality of Our Lady? There is no Centre near and so I could not attend any meetings.

Answer — As the Sodality of the Children of Mary is a sodality composed of active members, persons who cannot attend the meetings cannot become members.

QUESTION — What is the origin of the Miraculous Medal? May any priest bless this medal?

Answer — The Miraculous Medal owes its origin to an apparition of Our Blessed Lady to Saint Catherine Laboure, a nun of the Congregation of Saint Vincent de Paul. The model of this medal as we know it now, was shown to her and she was invited to get it made and distributed among the

faithful in order to popularise devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Any priest who has authority may bless this medal.

QUESTION — In making a Novena, is it necessary to complete it with Confession and Communion? May a person make a Novena offering up special prayers morning and night for that purpose?

Answer — It is a very good thing to end a novena by going to Confession and Holy Communion, but this is not necessary, unless Confession and Holy Communion are prescribed, as in the case of special public novenas. A person may make a private novena at will, using any prayers that the person may like, and these prayers may be said with the morning and evening prayers or at any other time.

QUESTION — When a person wishes to make a Novena is it necessary that the Novena be made in a church?

Answer — If the Novena consists in the recitation of certain prayers and the saying of the prayers in a church is not a condition of the Novena, it may be made at home or anywhere else without going to the church.

QUESTION — Does a person who attends all the sermons and instructions of a Mission or Retreat but goes to Holy Communion in another church gain all the indulgences of the Mission?

Answer — Such a person would gain all the indulgences of the Mission. It would be well for a person to receive Holy Communion in the church where he has attended the mission, except for some special reason he cannot go there.

QUESTION — Should children of seven years say their morning prayers at the bedside or are the prayers they recite in the morning at school sufficient?

Answer — It is always best to get the children to recite some prayers each morning at the bedside.

QUESTION — A person wishes to consecrate himself and those working under him to the Sacred Heart, what is he to do?

Answer — He should get a statue or picture of the Sacred Heart. Then arrangements should be made with a priest to bless the picture and perform the Consecration Ceremony in the presence of all concerned. If a priest cannot be got, all should assemble round the picture or statue and the Act of Consecration should be recited by all together. The presence of the priest is necessary, however, for the gaining of the special Indulgence granted for the Consecration. A beautiful Consecration picture of the Sacred Heart with a space underneath for the names of those consecrating themselves may be got from THE IRISH MESSENGER Office for a small price, post free. A Ceremonial Leaflet may also be got for even less, post free. Write to us for details.

QUESTION — May a business place be consecrated to the Sacred Heart?

Answer — A business place may certainly be consecrated to the Sacred Heart. All such places should be consecrated, and people should show their business is dedicated to the Sacred Heart by having His picture or statue exposed in a prominent place.

QUESTION — May I make the "Holy Hour" every day?

Answer — The "Holy Hour" may be made in private in any place and at any time.

QUESTION — Is it necessary to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to make the "Holy Hour"?

Answer — The "Holy Hour" is an hour of prayer in union with the Sacred Heart in the Agony of the Garden; this practice was revealed by Our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary, and the Arch-confraternity of the Holy Hour was established to extend it. All members of the Apostleship of Prayer share in the privileges of the Arch-confraternity. No special place is prescribed.

QUESTION — May a person recite the Rosary when making the "Holy Hour" privately?

Answer — Yes. Any form of vocal or mental prayer may be used in union with Our Saviour's Agony.

QUESTION — What is the meaning of the letters I.N.R.I, on a Crucifix?

Answer — These letters are the initials of the words "Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judaeorum" (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) — the letters I and J. being the same in ancient Latin.

CRUCIFIXES.

QUESTION — May any priest bless a crucifix for the Plenary Indulgence at the hour of death?

Answer — Only priests who have the privilege can bless the crucifix with this Indulgence.

QUESTION — If I got a Crucifix from a dying person, is it necessary to get it blessed again for my own use?

Answer — According to the 1917 Code of Canon Law, indulgenced objects can be lent, given as presents or received as legacies; the indulgences attached to these objects can be gained by those who receive them, provided they fulfil the conditions for the gaining of the indulgences. A Crucifix got from a dying person can therefore be used by the person who receives it and need not necessarily be blessed again.

QUESTION — Some time ago, I got a crucifix indulgenced at a mission. This crucifix accidentally fell into the fire and some wood, which formed part of it, was burnt; the figure, however, and the main portion of it are quite safe. Has it lost its indulgence?

Answer — As the indulgence of a crucifix is attached to the figure, since the figure was not destroyed, it still preserves the indulgence.

QUESTION — Why are the skull and crossbones represented at the foot of some crucifixes?

Answer — The skull and bones are represented at the foot of some crucifixes to remind us of Golgotha, the place of crucifixion — the word Golgotha means a skull. There is also a legend that in the hole dug for Our Lord's cross was found the skull of Adam. This legend may possibly account for the representing of the skull and bones at the foot of the crucifix.

QUESTION — What is meant by a crucifix blessed for the Stations of the Cross?

Answer — Many priests have the power of blessing a crucifix that may be used to gain the Indulgences of the Stations of the Cross by those who are prevented from making the Stations in the ordinary way. To gain the Indulgences a crucifix so blessed is held in the hand, and the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father" are said twenty times.

QUESTION — Can two old people who are unable to go to church gain the Indulgences for the making of the Stations of the Cross at home by using a Crucifix indulgenced for that purpose?

Answer — Yes. Those who are prevented by sickness, or on account of some other legitimate reason, from making the Stations of the Cross in the usual way, can gain the Indulgences at home by reciting the "Our Father," "Hail Mary" and "Gloria" twenty times and using the indulgenced Crucifix.

SCAPULARS.

QUESTION — What is the origin of the Scapular Medal?

Answer — Scapular medals had their origin in Africa. The Catholic Negroes used to wear the cloth scapular on their uncovered breasts as a profession of faith. Owing to dust and perspiration, the scapular quickly became discoloured, soiled and unbecoming in appearance.

Consequently, at the request of the missionaries, permission was granted to the Negroes to wear a medal instead of the cloth scapular. Gradually this permission was extended to the whole world.

QUESTION — What are the Five Scapulars?

Answer — The Five Scapulars are: The Scapular of the Passion (red), the Scapular of the Seven Dolours (Black), the Scapular of the Immaculate Conception (blue), the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (brown), the Scapular of the Most Holy Trinity (white).

QUESTION — If a person is enrolled in the Five Scapulars, but wears a Scapular Medal instead of the Scapulars does he gain the Indulgences attached to the wearing of the ordinary Scapulars?

Answer — A person who has been enrolled in the Scapulars but wears a Scapular Medal instead of the Scapulars, participates in all the indulgences and privileges accorded to the wearing of the ordinary Scapulars.

QUESTION — "I have been enrolled in the Five Scapulars but ceased wearing the Scapulars for some time as I had lost them. I have found them; is it necessary for me to be enrolled again?"

Answer — No.

QUESTION — Will one Scapular Medal suffice for all the Scapulars, or is it necessary to have a different medal for each Scapular?

Answer — A single Scapular Medal will suffice for all the Scapulars provided it has received a special blessing for each Scapular it is meant to replace. It is well to remember, however, that when being enrolled in a particular Scapular the ordinary Scapular of wool should be used.

QUESTION — Who may enroll in the Brown Scapular?

Answer — Practically all priests are authorised to enroll in the Brown Scapular.

QUESTION — When a person wears the Five Scapulars together, is it necessary (a) to wear both the red and brown strings; (b) that the red string should touch each of the other four scapulars; (c) in what order should the scapulars be arranged?

Answer — It is recommended that each scapular have its own cord; but if only one cord is used this should be red if the Scapular of the Passion is among the five. The scapulars should be sewn together at their upper ends, and all should be attached to the cord. It is recommended, but not

essential that the white Scapular of the Most Holy Trinity be first and the red Scapular of the Passion be the last of the series.

QUESTION — What is the proper material and colour for the Brown Scapular?

Answer — The material for the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel or, the Brown Scapular, should be wool and of the same colour as the Carmelite Habit. The strings of the Scapular may be made of any material.

THE ROSARY.

QUESTION — Are the prayers said on Rosary Beads, which has not been blessed of any use?

Answer — Of course they are! All prayers are good and besides special blessing are granted to those who say the Rosary. The Indulgences, which are usually conferred with the blessing of the Beads, however, cannot be gained by those who use an unblessed set of Rosary Beads.

QUESTION — Does a Rosary lose its Indulgences for its owner when used by another person?

Answer — No. Indulgences attached to rosaries and other objects of devotion are lost only when the object is sold or completely destroyed. Rosaries may be repaired again and again, and missing beads replaced, without losing their Indulgences.

QUESTION — If a person were distracted when saying the Rosary should he repeat the decade?

Answer — No. Such repetition could become an annoying and unfruitful habit. Very few people are free of distractions when praying, so when it is noticed that the mind is wandering bring it back quietly to prayer. Say your Rosary with ordinary care and do not let the distractions worry you.

QUESTION — What Indulgences may be gained by saying the "Family Rosary"?

Answer — The faithful who recite in common the five decades of the Rosary, whether in their homes, in the church, or in a public or private oratory, may gain the following Indulgences: 10 years once a day. A Plenary Indulgence on the last Sunday of each month, provided they have recited the Rosary in common at least three times in any of the preceding weeks; the conditions for the gaining of this Indulgence are: Confession and Communion and Prayers for the Pope's Intentions, and a visit to a church. [Since Vatican II, reference to number of years has been eliminated and such indulgences are referred to as 'partial indulgences'. It must be recalled that God is never outdone in generosity.]

QUESTION — If a set of Rosary Beads needs re-wiring is it necessary to get them blessed again after they have been re-wired?

Answer — No.

QUESTION — May persons repair their Rosary beads, using parts of an old set of Rosary beads for the purpose?

Answer — Provided the Rosary Beads you wish to repair is substantially intact, portions missing may be supplied from an old Rosary.

QUESTION — If some beads of a Rosary are missing, do the other beads still retain the indulgence with which they were blessed?

Answer — Provided that the Rosary as a whole is intact, the absence of some of the beads does not affect the indulgences attached to it.

QUESTION — Does the blessing leave Rosary beads or crucifixes at the death of the owner?

Answer — As the blessing is usually attached to the beads or crucifixes themselves, and not to the person who owns them, the blessing remains after the death of the owner.

QUESTION — To gain indulgences for the saying of the Rosary is it necessary that the five decades be said without a break, or may the decades be said separately at different times?

Answer — Provided that when saying the decades of the Rosary, one has the intention of gaining the Indulgences, each decade may be said at a different time.

QUESTION — To gain the Indulgences granted for the saying of the Rosary is it necessary to hold the beads in the hands?

Answer — Certain Indulgences are granted for the saying of the Rosary with or without the beads. To gain the Benedictine, Crozier or Dominican Indulgences, the beads must be used; if, however, several persons are reciting the Rosary together it is sufficient that the person leading uses them.
