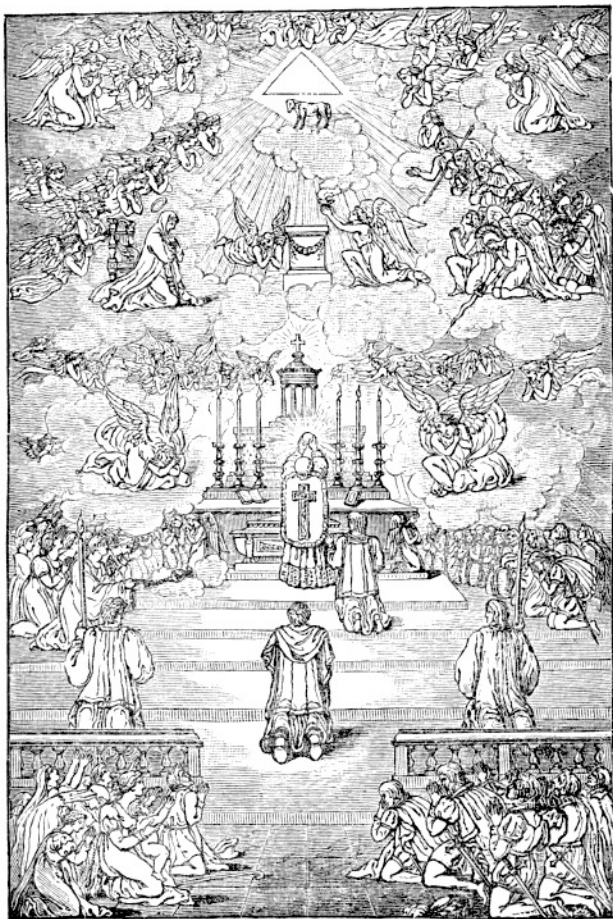


THE DRAMA *of the* HOLY MASS

By

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FOREWORD

"I, IF I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (St. John xii. 32). Saint John, reporting these words, goes on to comment on them, saying that our Lord spoke them "signifying what death he should die." There can be no question but that this was our Lord's primary meaning, but this does not exclude the possibility of another application of the same words. We may well imagine that our Lord, looking forward through the Christian ages and seeing his sacred Body and Blood lifted up from the altars of his Church, meant also that men would be drawn to him by the celebration of the Unbloody Sacrifice.

If the Mass were merely a drama it could not fail to have an attractive power proportionate to the solemnity and faithfulness of its representation of the Lord's death, just as the Passion Play at Oberammergau and similar representations are not without effect in drawing souls to a closer union with him. But the Mass is much more than a drama, much more than a "showing forth" or a "proclaiming" of the Lord's death. The divine gifts of the Body and Blood of our Lord turn what would otherwise be merely drama into something of an identity. We cannot, of course, say that our Lord is immolated afresh in the Mass (that would make it not an identity but a repetition); but the offering of the Mass is that same immolation,

that same all-sufficing Sacrifice, which was consummated on Calvary.

It is impossible to estimate what we have lost in England and in the various parts of our Communion by centuries of neglect of this divinely appointed means of preaching Christ crucified. Much as the Oxford Movement has done to increase the number of masses, there has been too little emphasis laid upon the sacrificial aspect of the Mass; the struggle to defend the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Mass has diverted attention from the chief purpose for which that Presence is given—namely, “the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ.”

This little book is designed to help in restoring the balance of eucharistic worship by laying stress upon this representational aspect of the Mass, and it is, therefore, justly entitled “The Drama of the Mass,” though, as we have seen, the word “drama” does not express the whole truth of the matter. Its use should, therefore, tend towards a fuller and richer understanding of the Holy Mysteries and, by consequence, towards a greater love for the mystery of our redemption which is therein portrayed. This is the fervent hope of its author and of me, whom he has asked to write this foreword.

DOM MARTIN COLETT, O.S.B.,
Nashdom Abbey.

St. John of the Cross, 1932

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

CATHOLICS are accustomed to speak of the Mass under various titles. We talk of “the Eucharist,” “the Communion,” “the Supper,” “the Sacrifice,” “the Mystery,” but it is seldom, if ever, spoken of as “the Drama” of the Mass.

The reason for this is, of course, not far to seek. We have an instinctive aversion to any similes or phraseology which we fear will in any degree lower the dignity of the great mysteries of our holy Faith. Any spoken or implied association of sacred things with what we term “worldly” or secular things seems wrong and irreverent. And yet we must bear in mind that in the purpose and will of God nothing is secular, as we use the term, but all is holy. As God created the world and all things therein, they are holy, as he intended them to be. It is man’s free will that has abused the good gifts of God and made them, not unholy in themselves, but occasions of temptation and sin.

The Catholic religion is sacramental: it unites matter and spirit; the body is concerned in religion as well as the soul, for Jesus Christ took a Body and shared our life. He wore that Body without a touch of sin, and he took the common and everyday things of life and blessed them and made them sacramental. So to the Catholic Christian all life is holy, and every good and perfect gift is from God above.

We know that the Drama and the theatrical

profession may be abused and made the occasion of depravity and sin—but what good thing in the world is not abused? Yet, such things are in themselves, for all the abuse, holy still, for the only wicked thing in the world is a wicked will.

After all, other terms, such as “mystery,” “sacrifice,” “supper,” are also used in an unworthy sense, and the very acts by which we receive the Blessed Sacrament—eating and drinking—are constantly abused. The gifts of the actor, those talents which cause him to excel in his profession, are good and God-given.

In the Middle Ages the stage was cradled in the Church, drama was used to present the truths of Christianity, and the first theatres were the parish churches; so we may, without levity or irreverence, think and speak of the Mass as a drama. Of course, it differs from the theatrical drama, for while the drama on the stage is, in all its parts and details, for the benefit of the audience, the Drama at the altar is offered to God. The theatre audience is a passive spectator of the drama, but the Catholic congregation is an active participant, for the people “assist” at Mass and the priest offers it on their behalf, and they, in union with him, plead the great Sacrifice before God.

The word “drama” comes from the Greek, and means a thing which is “done,” a deed, an

act, a duty, an action which is performed. Any work or action which expresses a belief or a thought, or a talent, or an emotion, is drama. This being so, the word “drama,” which at first seemed so unsuitable as a name for the Holy Communion Service, is really a most suitable and fitting title, for the Mass is essentially something “done,” and, above all, it is a “duty.” It is not a mere form of words, such as Matins or Evensong, but it is an “action” which is “performed.” It is the reconstruction and reproduction of a past event presented by means of “actions” and “words” and “things,” and those who do these things are actors in the true sense; they are performers, acting a great drama before God.

The Holy Mass represents in word and action the redemptive work of Christ, but it does more than represent, it re-enacts and reproduces the merits and graces of Christ’s work and actually passes them on to us.

Thus, when we come to Mass, we take part (not just look on) in a dramatic performance, a mighty “Act,” a stupendous “Deed,” which brings Christ among us again in his Incarnate Life. The Mass, then, *is* a drama. There is the structural setting—altar, choir, sanctuary, ornaments, incense, etc.; there is “acting” as the ceremonies, intricate and profound, are carried out; there is (to use a common phrase) “dressing up,” for the ministers of the altar

wear sacrificial and ministerial robes; and, lastly, there is the reading, the speaking, the chanting, a choir and organ, rendering the musical parts with almost operatic effect. So we may justly think and speak, with a true Christian and sacramental reverence, of the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass as a drama—nay as “the Drama,” for there is presented before God and man the history of God’s atonement, redemption, and restoration of mankind to fellowship with himself through the Incarnate Life and atoning Death and consummating Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

These meditations are based on the traditional order of the Mass in the Western Church.

Every Catholic should understand the order and structure of the historic Mass of Western Christendom, for not only is it more primitive and Catholic than the Prayer Book form, but its use has been sanctified by countless Saints and martyrs, who gave their lives and poured forth their blood for the doctrines which it enshrines.

This book is intended as a devotional aid to assistance at Mass, that by contemplating the mystic scenes and divine teachings which lie in every word and every ceremony of the Divine Mysteries we may find our hearts filled with a deeper love and a greater reverence for this adorable Sacrifice and Sacrament of God’s Love. Those who use this book can, of course,

readjust it as they please, and according to circumstances and the customs of the church they attend, and the author begs them to remember him occasionally as they assist at the “Drama of the Holy Mass.”

L. V. G. F. L.

CORPUS CHRISTI, 1932.

NOTE

In requiem Masses and in passiontide the *Judica* me is omitted.

In penitential, requiem, and ferial Masses the *Gloria* is omitted.

In requiem, ferial, and certain holy-day Masses the *Credo* is omitted.

In requiems the Blessing is not given.



SUMMARY OF ACTS AND SCENES

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SCENE 2

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SCENE 4

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SCENE 6

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INTRODUCTION

THE Drama of the Mass is divided into four Acts and twenty-three scenes.

The first Act is called "Preparation," with five scenes, and comprises the Mass from the beginning to the end of the Kyrie eleison. The scenes show us God's preparation of the world for the coming of the Redeemer, from the Fall of man to the preaching of St. John the Baptist.

The second Act is called "Revelation," with seven scenes, from the Gloria in Excelsis to the Credo inclusive, showing the perfect revelation of God to man through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, his mystical Body on earth.

The third Act is called "Redemption," with six scenes, from the offertory to the memorial of the departed in the Canon inclusive. This Act portrays the supreme self-sacrificing Love of God, from the offering of himself in spirit and purpose, when he set his Face to go to Jerusalem to die, until the placing of his Body in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb.

The fourth Act is called "Consummation," with five scenes, comprising that part of Mass from the commixture and "Pax" to the end of the Last Gospel, the end of Mass. Here we see the explanation and the gathering up of all that God has done in the previous Acts, by the impartation of himself to man in Communion, the restoration of the fellowship broken at the

Fall of Man and promised immediately afterwards, to the pledge and assurance of Christ's abiding presence with his Church, both in Body and Spirit, always, even to the end of the world.

The setting of the Drama of the Holy Mass is the same throughout the service.

The building of the church has a nave for the congregation, a chancel for servers and singers, and east of the chancel the sanctuary, or Holy of Holies. In the sanctuary is the altar, raised on steps and surmounted by a cross or crucifix, flanked by lighted candles. The altar-table itself is vested with a fair linen cloth on the top and often a coloured frontal in front. On the altar stands the Missal, or Altar Book. To the right of the altar stands the credence table, on which are placed the sacred vessels, chalice and paten, the book of the Holy Gospels, the box of bread, the cruets of wine and water, and the dish and towel for the Lavabo. Here also stand the acolytes' torches when not in use. Near the credence table are three seats, called "sedilia," for the sacred ministers; to the left of the sanctuary is a seat for the thurifer, and upon the altar step is the bell or gong to be sounded at the Elevation of the Host.

The furniture of the sanctuary, and the ornaments of the church and the ministers, had their origin in the early ages of Christianity, and

served in almost every case a practical purpose. In after years these things continued to be used, even when they no longer served a utilitarian purpose; and in course of time Catholic piety and devotion have attached to many of them a mystical and spiritual significance.

It may assist in raising our minds to heavenly things during Mass to consider both the origin and significance of the ornaments of the church and the ministers thereof.

THE ALTAR

This is the principal and only essential piece of furniture in every church, for on it is offered the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ in the mystery of the Mass.

The altar represents Christ, the Chief Corner Stone.

That part of it on which the Holy Sacrament rests should be of stone, and beneath it should be one or more relics of the Saints.

The remaining parts of the altar may be of wood or stone.

In the primitive Church the Christians frequently assembled at the tombs of the martyrs to celebrate Holy Communion. The tomb, if large, would have served as the altar-table, or else a small table would be erected near or over the tomb which contained the martyr's bones. An early decree forbids the celebration of Mass at the tomb of a Saint unless the body be there,

and this may have led to the placing of relics under the consecrated stone of Christian altars.

THE CROSS

The altar cross or crucifix proclaims what is performed on the altar, and reminds us of the unity of the Sacrifice of the Mass with the Sacrifice of the Cross.

THE CANDLES

At least two candles must be lit at Mass. At Sung or High Mass the number is often four or six, and sometimes others are added. In primitive times Christians had to worship in catacombs, caves, and in the darkness of night. Candles were then a necessity, but as the Church emerged into daylight with the cessation of persecution, these memorials of the age of persecution and martyrdom were not abandoned, but retained in public worship.

Lights on the altar remind us that Christ is the very true Light of the World, and the candle, consuming itself in giving light to mankind, is a symbol of Christian charity and devotion. Lights carried in procession are a sign of joy and welcome, as the virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom carrying lamps.

INCENSE

Incense is symbolical of prayer, ascending upward and spreading itself over all. It is also

sacrificial, and proclaims that as we hallow our devotions by self-oblation, so priest and people must also be hallowed as they enter into the Divine Presence.

THE VESTMENTS

The linen cloths upon the altar, altar cloths, corporal, purificator, symbolize the linen clothing which was bound around the Sacred Body of Jesus in the tomb. Fine linen symbolizes the righteousness of the Saints (Rev. xix. 8).

The linen amice is a garment placed upon the head and tied around the neck of the priest. It is a very ancient garment. It symbolizes the cloth which was used to blindfold our Lord when he was buffeted and spit upon.

The alb is a long white garment, reaching to the feet, formerly called the "coat," and may remind us of our Lord being led to crucifixion in his own garment (St. John xix. 23). We may also think of the "white and glistering garment" of our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The girdle for the waist, the stole for the neck (an ancient symbol of authority), and the maniple for the arm, originally a napkin, speak to us of the cords which bound the Lord to the pillar of the scourging.

The chasuble, or outer vestment, originally called the *pænula* or cloak, probably such as St. Paul wore (2 Tim. iv. 13), speaks to us of the gorgeous robe in which Jesus was arrayed

in mockery in his Passion, and the cross or pillar embroidered upon the back shows us that he who would follow in the footsteps of Christ and seek for union with him must humbly bear the cross of discipleship and hardness which is the badge of discipleship for those who would follow Jesus Christ along the narrow path which leads to eternal life.

These vestments were the everyday dress of a man in the time of our Lord's life on earth. If we allow for a slight change in the shape of the chasuble, when we behold a priest in Eucharistic vestments we see a man dressed as our Lord and his Apostles dressed.

In course of time fashions changed and men adopted new forms of dress, but the clergy, in ministering at the altar, retained the old Apostolic form of dress, thus emphasizing the Church's origin and continuity.

The alb (Greek, *chiton poderes*; in Latin, *tunica talaris*), called the coat (St. Matt. v. 40, St. Luke iii. 11, St. John xix. 23, Rev. i. 13), is therefore a scriptural vestment worn by Jesus himself. The same is true of the chasuble (Greek, *phelones*; in Latin, *pænula* or *casula*), called the cloak (2 Tim. iv. 13, which shows that St. Paul wore it); and if, as is highly probable, the generic term garment (Greek, *himation*), called in Scripture the cloak, refers to the chasuble, then this vestment also, together with the alb and girdle, was worn by Jesus Christ (St. John xiii. 4, xix. 23,

Rev. i. 13, St. Matt. xxvii. 31), for when Jesus left the upper room and was led to his death he was wearing both the *chiton* and the *himation* (St. John xix. 23).

The bread of the Eucharist is usually unleavened, and in the form of wafers, because there can be little doubt that Jesus used unleavened wafers at the Last Supper, for no Jew was permitted to have leavened bread in his house at the Passover.

The wine of the Eucharist is fermented juice of the grape, and a little water is mingled therewith in memory of the blood and water which flowed from our Lord's side. It also symbolizes the inseparable union of the Divine and human natures in Christ's person.

Thus, when a Bishop or priest celebrates Mass, he not only does what Jesus did, but wears what Jesus wore when he instituted the Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Holy Mass.



THE DRAMA OF THE HOLY MASS

ACT I PREPARATION

SCENE I JUDICA ME

THE Drama of the Mass begins. The priest, deacon, and sub-deacon, together with the servers and acolytes, approach the altar and make a solemn reverence. The three sacred ministers stand on the floor of the sanctuary before the lowest altar step, the servers and acolytes kneel on the ground on either side, and all make the sign of the cross as the priest invokes the Holy Trinity. Many times during Mass the Holy Sign is made, to remind us that the Mass is, in all its parts, a showing forth of the sacrificial life and death of the Son of God. Psalm xliii. is recited: "Give sentence with [or Judge] me, O God. . . . Thou art the God of my strength. . . . Send out thy light and thy truth . . . that I may go unto the altar of God. . . . Put thy trust in God. . . . He is the help of my countenance and my God. . . ."

FALLEN MAN

As the curtain rises on the opening scene of the first Act of the Drama, we behold man—man in his fallen state. Friendship with God forfeited, Paradise lost, man, once the crown and perfection of all creation, fallen by his own fault and condemned to sorrow and toil and woe in this vale of tears.

In the ministers of the Mass, standing and kneeling humbly on the ground, not yet daring to ascend the altar to begin the Sacrifice, we see dimly over the ages that are past—we see Adam and Eve cast out of Eden, and we hear the faint echoes of the penitential cries of the Patriarchs of old, never daring to approach God without a sacrifice in their hands.

Let us, during this scene, think of the promise of a Redeemer to Adam and Eve—the heartfelt longing of the patriarchs as they prayed God to “send forth his light and truth,” and the faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of his promises.

Let us behold him, using the words and ways of men as the medium through which he wills to touch their hearts and convince their minds. Man, cast out of Paradise, could no longer walk and talk with God as of old, on account of sin. Man must pay the penalty of sin, the withdrawal of God’s fellowship, and man was condemned to “work out his own salvation,” to see God

“through a glass darkly.” Justice must be satisfied, but after that Love remains, and ever calls us to the altar of God.

SCENE 2

CONFITEOR

At the conclusion of the psalm, priest and ministers say together the Confiteor (Confession). First the priest, bowing low, makes confession to God, to Blessed Mary, to the whole company of heaven, and before his brethren. It is an acknowledgment of sinfulness against God and man, and as he says three times “through my own fault,” he strikes his breast in humility and abasement, for it was sin that cast man out of Paradise, it is sin that keeps man from the altar; it is on account of sin that he will presently offer the perfect sacrifice to God.

After the priest, the ministers and servers say the confession, also smiting their breasts. There follows a mutual prayer for absolution, and then the priest ascends the altar and kisses the consecrated stone, praying for purity of heart and mind for himself and his people, that they may worthily offer the sacrifice.

THE JEWISH CHURCH

At the Confiteor we behold the ancient Church of God, the Jewish Church, serving God with prayerful expectancy, offering in surroundings

of richness and beauty the sacrifices of the Law. Daily the priests offered the sacrifice amid clouds of incense. Two kinds of sacrifice they offered—the bloody sacrifice of animals and the fruits of the earth, and both these types find their antitype in the Mass. From the time of the Fall, man, conscious of sin, has accompanied his confession with oblation, as did Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So the Jewish Church offered her sacrifices on account of sin. As we see the priest and ministers thus confessing their sinfulness at the foot of the altar, let us think of the High-Priest entering into the Holy Place, confessing his own and his people's sins. Let us behold the priests and people of Israel, weeping and confessing their sins between the porch and the altar; and as the priest ascends the altar steps we see the prayerful expectation of the pious ones of the Old Covenant rewarded, for Christ leads his people up to the Throne of God by the steps of sacrifice.

Israel catches a glimpse of the coming redemption in the visions of the prophets and seers, throughout the ages, until finally there comes the perfect revelation of God to man. The purpose of that revelation is union—the reuniting of God and man in Christ; so the priest, as he approaches, kisses the altar stone, the type of him who is the Chief Corner Stone. This act of kissing signifies the union of the priest with Jesus Christ, for only in virtue of the

union of his priesthood with that of Christ does he presume to enter into the holy place to offer an oblation.

SCENE 3

CENSING THE ALTAR

The priest, deacon, and sub-deacon stand on the top altar step, and as the censer is held up, filled with incandescent coals, incense is poured on and a cloud of fragrant smoke ascends to heaven.

The priest censes the altar, first in the centre, then to the right and then to the left. He then stands and faces south while the deacon censes him. This teaches us that as the altar is hallowed by prayer which incense symbolizes, so the ministers of the altar must be sanctified when they approach God. As the priest offers, he prays, "Let my prayer come before thee as the incense."

ZACHARIAS IN THE TEMPLE

Mary is not alone in receiving a heavenly visitation, for as Zacharias the priest was offering incense in the temple, Gabriel the Archangel appeared to him also. As Mary is to be the God-bearer, so Elizabeth, her cousin, is to give birth to him who shall prepare the way of God.

As the altar is censed, we behold Zacharias

at the altar, and we see God, in his love and care for his people, leaving no detail unperformed, but fulfilling, not only his promise of a Messiah, but also the predictions of his Prophets, that Elijah, who ascended to heaven as the type of Christ, should again visit Israel in the person of John the Baptist, to turn the longing gaze of his people to him who came from heaven to redeem them, and who would return to heaven, their Great High-Priest, to intercede for them and all mankind in the holiest place of all.

Zacharias had prayed, and his prayer had been heard, and soon the Lord, whom he and his predecessors in the priesthood had worshipped in the Holy of Holies of Israel, would descend into his holy Temple, the spotless womb of Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth.

As we behold the Archangel Gabriel appearing to Zacharias, and bearing a message of God, through the medium of the ceremonial law of the ancient Church of God, let us pray that we may hear the Voice of God speaking to us of redemption and sanctification and acceptance, through the mystic ceremonies and rites of the Catholic Church.

SCENE 4

INTROIT

The priest turns to the altar near the south end and reads the Introit, which is a passage of

Holy Scripture and part of a psalm. The word "Introit" means the "entering in" of the priest to begin the Mass. He has just "entered in" by ascending the altar steps. This was originally the beginning of the service, as at one time the preparation was said in the sacristy.

The first part of the Introit is repeated by the priest, after the Gloria Patri. The whole is usually sung by the choir. The Introit is found in the Liturgy as early as the fifth century.

THE ANNUNCIATION

At this scene let us see the fulfilment of the ardent desires of the holy ones of the Old Covenant. With long and earnest expectation they had prayed for the time when the dawn should break and they would "enter in" to the inheritance of God's children—the Messianic Kingdom, their "Rest"—and as the Introit is repeated we hear the Saints of Israel cry again and again, with an almost impatient longing, "Come and save us—make no long tarrying, O God"; and, lastly, we see in the Introit the promise fulfilled. Gabriel the Archangel is sent from heaven to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We read, "He went in unto her"—truly a wonderful "Introit"—and as Mary humbly places her will into the hands of God, so God himself is incarnate in her womb, God "comes in" to his own, to be their Saviour and Redeemer.

See the vision of the prophet Isaiah fulfilled, "A virgin shall conceive." Behold that virgin now, Mary of Nazareth, making her choice, behold her placing her own will into the hands of God that she may be the instrument of God's "coming in." Eve disobeyed, and sin entered into the world. Mary obeyed, and God entered into the world of flesh.

The priest "enters in" to celebrate Mass in obedience to our Lord's command, and we too "enter in," because he has said, "Do this." God gives us peace through obedience, and in obedience we see the cross, as Mary did, and, like her, let us see in the cross the triumph of Love.

SCENE 5

KYRIE ELEISON

After the Introit, the priest bends low and pleads nine times for mercy.

"Kyrie eleison."

"Christe eleison."

"Kyrie eleison."

"To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost"—the ninefold prayer ascends, as the nine choirs of angels have never ceased to pray and praise God as an atonement for the sin of Lucifer and his angels who rebelled against God.

We pray this in Greek as a relic of the ancient liturgy of Apostolic times when Greek was the principal language of the Christian Church, and by doing so we proclaim the universality of God's mercy. As the ancient Greeks, the Gentiles, by their longing for a revelation of the Divine Wisdom, helped to prepare the way of Christ, as well as Israel of old, so we show that God accepts the prayers and the works of all men, Jew or Gentile, through the merits of Jesus Christ. The Kyrie eleison is very primitive and was in general use in the fourth century.

PREACHING OF THE BAPTIST

As we contemplate this scene, the final one in the first Act, we see John the Baptist preaching repentance.

"The Word of God" had come, he was "dwelling amongst" men in the village home at Nazareth, yet his "time" of revelation to his people had "not yet come." For thirty years after his "introit" men had to wait with prayer, patience, and penitence.

We look up as "Kyrie eleison" is chanted and see John, preaching by Jordan. He calls the people to penitence and confession of sin. "Your redemption draweth nigh," "now is the day of visitation," "he comes after me"; and they came and confessed and washed in Jordan, that they might be clean to receive him. Thus the curtain descends upon the old dispensation

to the accompaniment of penitential prayer from the devout of Israel and the earnest seeking after the Divine Wisdom by enlightened Gentiles, for in God's purpose the world, Jewish and Gentile, has reached "the fulness of time."

ACT II

REVELATION

SCENE I

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS (PART I)

SCARCELY have the sad strains of the Kyrie eleison died away than the priest raises his body erect, bows, extends and lifts his hands towards heaven, and exclaims, "Glory be to God on high." The sacred ministers and servers say this hymn together and the choir and congregation sing it. The priest, deacon, and sub-deacon stand together in a line on the top altar step to signify that men must be united in their offering of praise to God. They stand thus also at the Creed, for men must be united in their faith, and at the Sanctus, for they must be united in their adoration, and again at the Communion, for the act which unites God and man must also unite men with one another. The Gloria is referred to in the Apostolic Constitutions of the fourth century.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

As we behold the opening scene of Act II, let us try and catch a glimpse of the angel choir heralding our Lord's birth. In the blackness of a winter's night there appeared a multitude of

the angelic host praising God; and although the inhabitants of Bethlehem knew nothing of the great event, the simple shepherds on the hills heard and believed the message, and they went and found the Babe and worshipped him.

Look up, and as you behold the priest and his ministers grouped around the altar try to see the great vision of redemption which was vouchsafed to the poor shepherds. See them, in obedience to the angels' message, going to the stable; see them grouped in awe and wonder as they behold the Heavenly Babe and his Mother. Hear the song which they sang in their hearts as they knelt, "We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee." Try to see in this scene, as they saw, the great revelation of God to man, and in that revelation the promise of redemption.

SCENE 2

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS (PART 2)—THE BAPTISM
OF CHRIST

The second part of the Gloria, beginning "O Lord, the only begotten Son," gives us a vision of thirty years later. St. John the Baptist is preaching repentance in the wilderness and pointing men to him who was coming after him.

After successive revelations of himself, at

Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas, and later, at the age of twelve, in the Temple, Jesus hides his glory for eighteen years.

Try to catch a vision of that Holy Home at Nazareth—Jesus subject to earthly parents, Mary and Joseph caring for him and watching him with ever-increasing wonder and awe.

Think of St. Joseph, breathing his last in the Arms of the Incarnate Son of God, and now see Jesus, as he approaches the river bank, meek, yet full of dignity, as he is revealed to the Jews as the promised Messiah. "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," and the Voice from heaven testifies to the truth of St. John's witness. Picture to yourself the scene in the mind of the aged St. John the Divine as years afterwards he wrote those words: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." As the hymn ends, priest and people make the sign of the cross, as a reminder of *how* the Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world.

SCENE 3

THE COLLECTS

At the end of the Gloria the priest kisses the altar stone, the symbol of Christ, and turns to the people and says, "The Lord be with you."

The priest has been speaking to our Lord, and now he turns and speaks to us. As he does so, he stretches out his hands to symbolize the invitation of Christ to sinners, "Come unto me." We answer, "And with thy spirit," for we unite ourselves with the priest and with him offer our sacrifice of praise to God. Then the priest, standing by the south end of the altar, bows to the cross and says, "Let us pray"; for he in his turn unites himself with the congregation in his action. One or more prayers are then read, called Collects, because in them the special petitions of the people, for that day, are gathered up into one prayer and offered in the presence of the people "collected" together. As he says the Collects, the priest holds his custom to pray with extended hands, as Moses did on the Mount, while the Jews were engaged in battle. This should remind us of the Arms of Jesus, stretched out on the cross, as he hung there, gathering up to himself his people's sins and offering the greatest prayer ever offered to God. At the conclusion of the Collects the priest bows to the cross on the altar.

JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS

During the reading of the Collects let us picture to ourselves Jesus in the wilderness. We see him now revealed to the Jews, both by the Baptist and the Voice of God from heaven,

as the Anointed Messiah, preparing for his ministry by retirement from the world for forty days. As you see the priest, with hands outstretched, behold Jesus praying in the desert, seeking communion with his Father, and therein finding strength to resist the tempter. Jesus could be tempted, and he was, but he shows us that, as it is part of our nature, which he shared, to be tempted, it is not part of our nature to submit to the temptation. Jesus knew that he had the power to do all those things the devil tempted him to do, but he knew also that God was with him and that there was no need to fear the devil. See him, in this scene, showing us that it is in the strength which comes from communion with God in prayer and sacrament that we can overcome fear and resist the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil.

SCENE 4

THE EPISTLE OR LESSON

After the Collects, the priest reads quietly, and the sub-deacon aloud, the Epistle or Lesson. This is a portion of Scripture taken from the Old or New Testament. If it is from the Old Testament or the Acts of the Apostles or the Revelation of St. John, it is called the Lesson, otherwise it is called the Epistle, being taken from one of the New Testament Epistles. We sit

to listen to the Epistle or Lesson, for it is the Voice of God in his Church teaching us the way to please him. After the sub-deacon has read it, he goes to the south end of the altar and kneels, and the priest blesses him to signify the reward awaiting those who faithfully teach God's people. The sub-deacon then removes the altar book to the other end of the altar.

JESUS TEACHING THE PEOPLE

While the Epistle or Lesson is being read, we should see Jesus teaching the people and his disciples. Remember how our Lord constantly took passages from the Old Testament and on them based his teaching. He took the Old Law and showed it to the people in a new light. He raised it and spiritualized it, and by doing so he showed that he was the Son of God. Again and again we see him taking the passages from the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the other books, which spoke of him and foretold his passion and death. So now behold him sitting on the Mount teaching the people the New Law, but asserting his authority to do so by reference to the Old. See him in the synagogue reading from the Prophets and applying their words to himself; see him in the Temple as the lamps are lit and the evening psalms are chanted proclaiming himself as the Light of the World and the Heir of David's throne.

Thus as the Old Testament is a preparation for the New, so the reading of the Lesson serves as a preparation for the Gospel, by teaching us how we must conduct our lives if we would receive into our hearts the full revelation of truth and holiness as Jesus sets it forth in his holy Gospel.

SCENE 5

THE GRADUAL

The Gradual follows the Lesson, and usually consists of part of a psalm or canticle, formerly sung while the deacon was ascending the "gradus" or steps to the place where the Gospel is read. When the priest has read this quietly, the sub-deacon removes the book to the other end (the north) of the altar. There the priest reads the Gospel quietly. While he does so, the deacon fetches the Gospel Book and places it in the centre of the altar, and then kneels in prayer.

The acolytes take their torches and stand before the altar, the thurifer enters, and the priest puts in and blesses incense, and all then wait for the Gospel procession.

THE OLD LAW GIVES PLACE TO THE NEW

The little ceremony of removing the book from the south to the north of the altar puts

before us the difference made by the coming of Jesus Christ; there is a change in the priesthood—there is also a change in the Law. The Old Covenant was a preparation for the New which fulfilled it. Until the coming of Christ the old religion was the true one, and Jesus did not abolish it all, but showed the people what it all meant. The first part of the Mass, then, up to the Gradual psalm, shows us a picture of a synagogue service, on which the first part of the Mass is largely based; for most of the first Christians were converted Jews, and continued to use a Jewish form of worship, but adding to it the reading of the Gospel and the administration of Holy Communion. We may, if we wish, behold in the removal of the altar book Jesus going up to the Mount to preach the Gospel, and thus show the passing over from the obscurity of Judaism to the bright light of the Catholic Faith.

Then, as the deacon brings the Book of the Gospels, the acolytes raise their lights, and the incense is blessed, we think of how, in the early ages of the Church, the copy of the Gospels was the Church's most cherished possession. It is placed on the very spot where the Body and Blood of Jesus rest, and from the altar the deacon receives it from the priest, showing that the written Word of God comes from Jesus Christ himself. The Gospel must be received and obeyed as the Voice of God,

and must not be changed, criticized, or tampered with.

As the deacon is blessed by the priest we see a vision of power from on high, which all who would preach the Gospel must seek and receive from God through his Church.

SCENE 6

THE HOLY GOSPEL

From the earliest times the reading of the Holy Gospel at Mass has been regarded as one of the most solemn parts of the service. Apart from the Consecration and act of Communion, it is undoubtedly the greatest part, and has always been attended with very solemn ceremonies which possess a very deep significance.

The Gospel procession forms up and goes from the sanctuary towards the nave—*i.e.*, from God to man—and the people stand to receive the good news from God. Incense is borne before it, to show that the way of the Gospel into our hearts must be prepared and sanctified by prayer. Lighted candles are borne on either side, showing that the Gospel of Christ brings light to souls in the darkness of sin. The procession groups on the north side of the chancel, the sub-deacon holding the book facing south and the deacon facing north; for the Word of

God went from Jerusalem to the north first, for the north was the region of pagan darkness. At the announcement of the chapter, priest and people sign themselves with the cross, first on the forehead, to show that the Gospel must be accepted by the intellect; secondly on the lips, to show that as we believe the Gospel, so we must proclaim our Faith before men; and thirdly on the breast, to signify that we bring our affections and emotions, both spiritual and earthly, into subjection to the will of God, revealed in his written Word. The book is then censed and the Gospel is chanted or intoned, firstly that it may be the better heard by the people, and secondly to make less prominent the human personality of him who proclaims it. At the conclusion of the Gospel the sub-deacon carries the book to the celebrant, that he may kiss the sacred text. As he goes, the sub-deacon salutes neither the ministers nor the altar, after which the deacon offers incense to the celebrant. A sermon may follow here or after the Nicene Creed.

SPREADING THE GOSPEL

This scene, one of the most solemn in the Mass, presents to our minds a picture of the missionary work of the Church. We behold, first, Jesus himself going up and down Palestine preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God; we see him training his Apostles and

disciples and sending them forth two and two; we hear his great command, "Go ye out into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"; and we see those Apostles and Evangelists, filled with the Holy Ghost, preaching the Word before kings and people—preaching in the streets, the synagogues, the temple, the courts, and the houses, fearing nothing, and counting it a joy to suffer for the Name of Jesus.

Let us try to see the missionary work of the Catholic Church in its true light. The Church's missions prove the vitality of the Church—they are its source of life, for the non-missionary Church and the non-missionary Christian are in a state of spiritual deadness and decay. Remember that we are the fruits of missionary work, and as the heathen are to-day, so were we until Catholic missionaries brought us life and light in the Gospel of Christ. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, and as we hear the Gospel read we see the countless host of men, women, and children who shed their blood for witnessing to the Gospel. In all ages the missionaries, both at home and abroad, sow the seed, and men in after ages enjoy the fruit. God's Word comes to us that it may return to him, not empty, but bearing the response of loving hearts and obedient wills. As we hear the Gospel proclaimed at Mass, let us ask ourselves what it takes back from us; and as we see the sub-deacon

go in haste to take the Gospel back to the sanctuary, let us see the Apostles returning to our Lord and telling him all that they had said and done, looking into his Face to see his smile of approval. So, at the Holy Gospel, we too must look up into his Face as we lay our reponse before him.

SCENE 7

THE CREED

The priest returns to the centre of the altar, extends and raises his hands, bows his head, and intones, "I believe in one God." The deacon and sub-deacon stand on either side of him, and together they say the Creed while the choir and congregation sing it. This Creed is fuller and more detailed than the Apostles' Creed, and most of it was authorized at the Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325. In the primitive Church it was called the "Symbol of Faith," and the word "Credo" ("I believe") was often exclaimed by the holy martyrs as they were led to torture and death as a "sign" or "symbol" of their steadfastness. Priest and people kneel at the memorial of the Incarnation ("And was Incarnate"), and at the conclusion of the Creed all make the sign of the cross to show that as Jesus Christ sealed the New Covenant with his

Blood, so we will seal our profession of Faith with the sign of sacrifice and, if need be, with our own blood.

The Creed is always recited standing, to show that we are ready to do battle for our holy Faith and to defend it as the holy martyrs, who died because they would not deny one jot or tittle of the Catholic Faith, but stood and looked all men in the face and boldly proclaimed, "I believe."

ONE HOLY CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Truly the last scene of Act II is a glorious one. We look up and behold passing before our eyes a glorious panorama of the Holy Church of God throughout the ages. We have heard the "Holy Gospel," we have seen it go forth, the light of the world, in a cloud of the incense of prayer, and here we see the fruits of the preaching of the Gospel—the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the Holy Catholic Church, among men. The Church of God, no longer national and exclusive, but Catholic, Universal; built on the foundation of the Apostles—therefore Apostolic; united in her faith and worship—therefore One; and never ceasing to produce holy men and women and little children, sanctified and sealed by the divine grace which dwells in the Church, and flows to all and each of her members through the life-giving Sacraments. What a scene it is! We see the Holy Church

throughout the ages and throughout the world—the twelve Apostles, the Evangelists, the Martyrs and Confessors, the Virgins and the Matrons, all of whom confessed the faith we confess at Mass. We see the great Fathers and Doctors contending for the truth before General Councils. We see the great religious orders arising and spreading throughout Christendom. We see all the holy dead who have passed to their rest firm in the Faith and fortified with the last Sacraments. We see the Bishops, priests, deacons, the religious, and the faithful laity of our own day, praying and contending for the Faith, ministering to the sick and afflicted, and holding up the standard of the Cross—and all professing, with us, the same Faith, all nourished and fed with the same Sacraments, and all dying with the hope of resurrection to eternal life.

Such is the glorious scene, not only presented to our gaze, but in which we ourselves participate, as we recite the profession of our Faith. Thus we stand, not alone, but compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, the people of God, from the foundation of the Church until now.

Thus we stand and testify with the Church Triumphant in heaven, the Church Expectant in Purgatory, and the Church Militant on earth; and as we gaze on the magnificent spectacle of the Church of God, confessing him before angels and men, we hear the Voice of Jesus

saying, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." Such we are, Spirit-filled witnesses to the Faith once delivered to the Saints, upholding the old truths revealed by God, and proclaiming them boldly in an age of infidelity as we raise our hands to defend the Truth by the power of the saving sign of our redemption.

ACT III

REDEMPTION

SCENE I

THE OFFERTORY

THE first scene of Act III at once strikes the keynote of the whole Act, and that is sacrifice. Once again the priest kisses the altar and turns to the people with the age-old salutation, "The Lord be with you." Seven times during the Mass these words are said, and they may remind us that as God is with us, so he brings to us the sevenfold gift of his Holy Spirit, by whose operation we plead the Sacrifice of the Cross and feed upon the Bread of God. The sacred vessels are put upon the altar, and the priest takes the bread and offers it to God, making with it the sign of the cross. Wine is poured into the chalice and a little water, which he blesses, praying meanwhile that as God has regenerated our humanity by taking it to himself, so by the mixing of the wine and water, symbolizing the Divine and human natures joined in Christ, we may partake of his Divinity. This is a very ancient prayer, and was in use as early as the second century. The wine and water are then offered to God and placed upon the altar, while the priest bows low. He then raises his hands and, looking up to heaven, prays for the

Sanctifier to descend upon the Sacrifice. While the priest is making the offertory of bread and wine and water, the people's offerings of money are collected. In the early ages of the Church the people made their offerings in kind—*i.e.*, bread, wine, oil, incense, etc.—and this practice continued until the thirteenth century. The bread and wine would be offered at the chancel gates and carried up to the altar. The priest would take as much as was needed for the Eucharist, and the rest was taken away to be given to the poor. Now we give the money to pay for the altar bread and wine and to be given to the poor. The form of offering is different, but the principle remains the same—that what we give at the collection is given to God as a sacrifice, either for his altar or for his poor. We should therefore give as much (and not as little) as we can, for our gift is placed upon the altar and offered to God. We have heard the Gospel read; we have declared our faith in the Creed; and the fruit of our faith should be the offering of our goods, by which we are reminded that it is *our* sacrifice as well as his which the priest is offering.

The sub-deacon then takes the paten or little plate which held the bread which now lies on the linen corporal and holds it covered with a veil which covers his shoulders, arms, and hands. This is a relic of the old days when the sub-deacon held a large dish of bread covered with a cloth to protect it from flies, etc.

Incense is now brought in and blessed, and the priest censes the bread and wine and then the altar. Incense is the symbol of prayer, so we cense the oblations to show that our offerings are hallowed by prayer. Then the priest, deacon, sub-deacon, servers, and congregation are censed, for we offer not only our goods, but also ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a living sacrifice, so, therefore, they too must be hallowed. The priest then goes to the south end of the altar and washes his hands, saying part of Psalm xxvi: "I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to thine altar." This was very necessary in the old days, and is still necessary when the censer has been used. It should remind us that God requires of us cleanness of soul and body when we approach his holy altar. The priest then returns to the centre, and bows, and prays to the Holy Trinity to receive the Sacrifice in memory of our Lord's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and in honour of our Lady and all the Saints. Then, kissing once more the consecrated stone, he turns to the people and asks them to pray that the sacrifice which both he and they are about to offer may be acceptable to God, and then, turning to the altar, he says a short prayer called the "secret" prayer. We should now be on our knees, uniting our own prayers with those of the priest and preparing our souls for the next great scene as the Drama moves onward and upward towards its climax.

According to the English rite of 1662, the Offertory is followed by the Prayer for the Church. This is a long intercessory prayer in which the priest first asks God to accept our offerings (the bread and wine on the altar, the money given by the congregation, and the prayers of the Church). He prays for the Church Universal, for the King, for the Bishops and clergy and all faithful people, for the sick and for the departed.

When the people will receive Holy Communion, the Communion devotions (Exhortation, Confession, Absolution, and Comfortable Words) here follow, according to the English rite, and after the Sanctus and Benedictus, the Prayer of Humble Access is said.

Suitable meditations during the Prayer for the Church will be found in Act III, Scene 3, and for the Communion in Act IV, Scene 2.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH

The picture which is set for our meditation in the first scene of Act III is Jesus preparing himself and his Apostles for the cross that is daily growing nearer.

It was at Casarea Philippi, just after the third Passover and nearly a year before his Crucifixion, that Jesus took his Apostles into quiet retirement and gave them the first intimations of his approaching Passion and Death. We see

Jesus, having at last escaped from the crowd of four thousand which he had fed, sitting quietly, with his disciples around him, gently questioning them as to what the people thought of him, and then we hear him ask the disciples what *they* think of him; and Simon Peter makes his great confession of faith, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And then we see him revealing to them his approaching death (St. Matt. xvi. 21). So, as we have said the Creed and confessed our faith in him, he now shows to *us* the manner of his death.

Then we see him, a week later, in Galilee, again prophesying his death (St. Matt. xvii. 22). A third time he foretells his Passion and Death, as he and his Apostles are preparing to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover (St. Matt. xx. 17).

Thus, as the priest takes the bread and wine at the end of the altar and carries them to the centre, we see Jesus going from Jericho to Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish religious life, the city of the King of Peace, the city of the Temple of Sacrifice, and as the priest offers them to God to be the showing forth of the Death of Christ, we behold him, setting his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, where he was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Then, as we make our offering, for God's services and his poor, we see Jesus, on the way to death, yet ever mindful of the sorrows of men—see him healing the two

blind men near Jericho; see him bringing salvation to the house of Zacchæus, the publican; hear him setting forth the parable of the nobleman who entrusted ten servants with ten pounds.

Let us bear in mind that as the Gospel has come forth to us and Jesus has entrusted us with the work of spreading his Kingdom, and as we have declared ourselves to be his servants in reciting the Creed, so now he looks for his word in us to return to him, but not empty. The seed he has sown in us must bring forth fruit in the willing offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies, which we do at the Offertory. As the gifts and those who offer them are hallowed by incense, see Jesus praying for his disciples, see him "going before them, ascending to Jerusalem"; try, as the priest reads the "secret" prayers, to look down into the Sacred Heart of Jesus and see there the love which he has for men; try to see the yearning of his soul that his Apostles might understand, and let this great scene of the Drama of the Mass, which is fast approaching its climax, show us that we too must set our faces towards the altar. We must lay upon the altar consecrated lives, and learn that, as for Jesus, so for us, the price of all redemption, spiritual, moral, and physical, is the sacrifice of the taking up of the cross and following him through the gate of death to the land of eternal life.

SCENE 2

THE PREFACE AND SANCTUS

At the end of the "Secrets" the priest intones, "World without end," and then the Preface, "The Lord be with you," "Lift up your hearts." This part is called the Preface because it "prefaces" or leads directly to the Canon, the principal part of the Mass. This is a very beautiful part of the service. At each bidding of the priest the people answer, responding to his call and, as it were, ratifying all he says. This is a most ancient part of the Mass. It is found in the Liturgy of St. James, the oldest of the primitive liturgies, and was derived originally from the bidding which was made in the Jewish Passover, "Let us give thanks unto God," and probably used by our Lord himself at the Last Supper, for we are told that he "gave thanks."

On Feast days and Sundays a special preface, or form of praise and commemoration, is said, called the Proper Preface. This is followed by the Sanctus, "Holy, Holy, Holy," when the bell rings and all kneel. This is taken from the Book of Isaiah, chapter vi., verse 3. At this point incense and lights are brought in and the sacred ministers stand together at the altar bowing low, for we think of the angels and archangels who veil their faces as they bow in worship before

God's Throne, and sing "Holy, Holy, Holy." The incense symbolizes the prayers of the Saints (Rev. viii), for we join in worship with the whole company of heaven. The Benedictus ("Blessed is he that cometh") follows the Sanctus. These are the words of the Hebrew children who welcomed our Lord to Jerusalem.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

This scene presents to our minds several beautiful visions. As the Preface goes on from praise to praise, until we unite with the choir of angels and saints in heaven in their song of adoration, and with the Hebrew children in their song of welcome, we see Jesus approaching the gates of Jerusalem. We have seen him comforting and healing blind Bartimæus on the Jericho road, and we go with Bartimæus in spirit as he followed Jesus, glorifying and praising God. We have seen him bring salvation to the house of Zacchæus, and now we see him entering the very gates of Jerusalem. Now, truly, the "Way of the Cross" has begun, for he rides on—in majesty, amid shouts of welcome and joy—truly, but for him, as the children's cries die away, he sees the cross looming ahead, and in the echoes of those voices he hears the shouts of the mob five days hence, "Away with him!" "Crucify him!" And we behold the procession

move on into the city, and we see the crowds, excited by false hopes, and we hear their "Hosannas!" The King of Peace has come to the City of Peace; see him riding to take possession of his Kingdom; see him riding to his Coronation and his Throne. But as we sing "Blessed is he that cometh," we sign ourselves with the cross, for his Crown is of thorns and his Throne is a gallows-tree. So we gaze upon the sight, and "with angels and archangels, thrones and dominations, and all the host of heaven," who veil their faces at the sight, we bow our heads and sing "Holy, Holy, Holy." Let us join our earthly homage to the endless homage and praise offered by the angels and saints, for this great scene bids us strain the eyes of our souls and see them now around the altar; and as the incense ascends, so their prayers and ours also ascend to the Throne of Godhead, as they and we await the lifting up of the Lamb of God in the approaching Sacrifice. The Church has always believed that angels assist at every Mass; for, as they never cease to worship God in heaven, so wherever his Body is, there the angels kneel and adore.

And now, as the curtain descends upon Scene 2, there is silence; no organ plays, no choir sings, only the gentle murmur of the priest as he begins the Canon: "Let all mortal flesh keep silence." The heavens are about to open, Christ our God is about to descend to earth.

SCENE 3

THE CANON

We now come to that part of the Mass which is called the "Canon." The word "Canon" is Greek and means "rule," or measuring rod, for this part of the Mass, which is concerned with the actual offering of the Sacrifice, is never changed, as other parts are, and in itself it has remained substantially the same since Apostolic days.

The prayers of the Canon are said in a low voice, for the minds of priest and people are fixed upon God, who wills to descend into his sanctuary through the operation of his Holy Spirit and by the word of man.

Before the actual Consecration prayer the priest says five short prayers.

He extends and lifts his hands, raises his eyes to heaven as Jesus did as he began his prayer (St. John xvii. 1), bends and kisses the altar, and prays, first that God will accept the Sacrifice of his people, offered on behalf of the Holy Catholic Church, the Chief Bishop, and all the clergy and people who profess the true Faith, in imitation of Jesus, who prayed not for the world, but for his disciples. Secondly, he prays for all God's people and especially for all present at the Mass, naming those for whom he desires especially to

pray. Thirdly, he places himself in communion with the Blessed Mother of God, the Apostles and Martyrs and all the Saints, asking for a place in their intercessions.

Fourthly, he prays that by virtue of the Sacrifice we may be preserved in peace and numbered with the elect of God. As he says this prayer, he raises and joins his hands and then holds them spread over the oblations. The bell is sometimes rung here to prepare the people for the Consecration.

Fifthly, he asks God to bless, approve, ratify, and accept the oblation of bread and wine that it may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

THE HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER

The scene which the Church presents to us at the Canon is that of Jesus offering his High-Priestly prayer to his Father. We find this prayer recorded in St. John xvii. 1-26. Jesus had just given his last valedictory address of comfort and exhortation to his Apostles, and followed this at once with priestly intercession for them. After the prayer came the Agony and the Sweat of Blood.

We may, if we wish, think of the Preface, "Lift up your hearts," as our Lord's words of exhortation to faith and courage; and the Sanctus, "Holy, Holy, Holy," as his prayer for their sanctification, "Sanctify them through thy truth."

Now, during the intercession of the Canon, let us see him, with eyes uplifted and hands outstretched, praying in preparation for his Passion, "Now come I to thee." In the soft light of the candles and amid the incense cloud, let us see him kneeling in the garden of Gethsemane. The trees cast heavy shadows all around, and the light of the Paschal moon shines through the branches.

See the disciples lying on the ground—asleep. How often have we allowed our minds to wander away from the altar during the silences of the Mass! See him now, in the moonlight, offering himself—Jesus the holy and unspotted sacrifice, Jesus the altar, Jesus the Victim, Jesus the Priest, subduing his human will to the Divine. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Often does the priest at this point, conscious of his sinfulness, filled with awe at what his priesthood is about to accomplish, feel a fleeting desire that he might stop there—but he cannot; the priest must not stop now; his human will must be submitted to the Will of God and the Church; he must go on to the Consecration and Communion. So, during the Canon, see Jesus, in Gethsemane, sweating Blood at the vision of himself as a Victim, submitting to the Will of God, drinking the cup to the dregs for us. See him, as the angel comes and gives him the Cup of Consolation—the Vision of Easter

and Victory—see him rising from prayer, strong, resolved, *consecrated* by prayer, as a Victim ready for the Sacrifice. "Rise up, let us go—the hour is come."

Look up, if you will, and see the priest with hands outstretched. He too trembles at what he must shortly do, but because he is conscious of sin, and yet for that very reason—the sins of the world—he must offer the Sacrifice and feed upon the Lamb of God.

The candles flicker through the cloud of incense which fills the sanctuary and tries to cast a veil over the vision of the Suffering Son of God. The sub-deacon kneels, the torches are raised, the cherubim and seraphim cover their faces with their wings, the priest bends low, silence—the silence of heaven—"The hour is come."

SCENE 4

THE CONSECRATION

The ceremonies connected with the consecration of the elements of bread and wine are so instinct with mystery and significance that it will be as well to describe them in detail, because very few of the laity are able to be near enough to the altar to see what is done. The consecration is the supreme moment of the Drama, and as the Mass is a representation in both word and act of the redemptive work of

Christ, so in word and action the manner of representation or re-enactment is both actual and symbolical. It is actual when the priest does what Christ did and says what he said, such as the breaking of the bread and the repetition of his words. It is symbolical when some incident is symbolized, such as the Crucifixion in the Elevation of the Host, and the Resurrection, when a particle of the Host is placed in the chalice.

The priest does what Christ did; he takes, blesses, offers, consecrates, and breaks bread and gives it to the people.

He says, in the first person, the words of Christ, for his priesthood is identical with that of Christ. Let us bear in mind that the Blessed Sacrament is not an empty memorial service and the consecration is not just a symbol of a past event, but the enactment of an ever-present reality—namely, the mediatorial work of Christ's priesthood. He is present at the earthly altar to do, on earth, what he is ever doing in heaven. In the Mass things are not just acted, but accomplished; we do not just imitate Christ, we actually offer him; we gaze, not at a picture, but at a perpetuation. The altar is Calvary, and there Christ is present, both Priest and Victim.

The priest recites the account of the Institution: "Who in the same night that he was betrayed took bread [the priest takes the Host]; and when he had given thanks [the priest looks

up to the cross and makes the sign of the cross over the bread], he brake it [he touches the Host] and gave it to his disciples, saying [the priest bends low over the altar and looks attentively at the bread]: "Take, eat; *for this is my body, which is given for you*: do this in remembrance of me." (He adores and elevates the Host, and the bell is rung.)

He then proceeds with the consecration of the wine, saying: "Likewise after supper he took the cup [he takes the chalice into his hands], and when he had given thanks [he looks up to the cross and signs over the chalice], he gave it to them, saying [the priest bends low, holding the chalice off the corporal and gazing into it]: Drink ye all of this, *for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins*; do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

The priest adores and elevates the Precious Blood, and the Bell is rung.

The acolytes raise their torches and the thurifer censes the Blessed Sacrament. The deacon stands at the right of the priest to assist him, and the sub-deacon kneels behind with the paten under the veil.

Once again silence falls, for a space, upon the Sanctuary.

[N.B.—The form of the Consecration Prayer given here is that of the English Church as set forth in the Prayer Book of 1662.]

THE UPPER ROOM

"And when the hour was come, he sat down and the twelve Apostles with him."

The hour. More than once we read of Jesus saying, "Mine hour is not yet come." Now his hour has come, and the Old Law, having but a shadow of good things to come, is about to be fulfilled and superseded by the New. We behold Jesus "blessing, sanctifying, and bestowing upon us" the "Good Things" for which we give thanks in the Canon of the Mass. As we bow our heads and try to focus all our thoughts on the miracle of the "Word made Flesh," on the altar, we may think of Jesus offering the sacrifice of our redemption as he gave to his Apostles his Flesh to eat and his Blood to drink, and, in commanding them to "Do this," making them sharers of his priesthood. See how tenderly he hands to each a portion of the Bread of Life, see how lovingly he looks at each one as he gives to them the Cup of the New Covenant. And Judas was there. He too was made a priest—he, too, received the Holy Communion. Try to picture the agony that wrung the Heart of Jesus as he says, "One of you shall betray me." One of them—one of his own whom he had chosen out of the world—is the son of perdition.

O faithless heart! How often have I, O Lord, dipped with thee in the dish!

How often has my hand been on thy Table, stained with sin!

"Lord, is it I? Thou art here now, and thou knowest all things—is it I?"

The bell rings. Bethlehem, the House of the Bread, is with us.

Let us now gaze upon this scene of the Upper Room; let us pray that the lot of Judas may never be ours; let us cast ourselves, our souls and bodies, in adoration at the feet of the Saviour, and in the silence of our hearts hear whisperings faintly caught and feel a hand outstretched in the dark.

Jesus speaks to us—"It is I, be not afraid"—and as we stretch out the hand of simple faith and grasp the Hand outstretched, we feel in that Hand the mark of the nail, and the Voice of Jesus says: "It is I myself; handle me and see."

SCENE 5

ELEVATION OF THE HOST

When the priest has repeated the words of consecration over the bread, and the Holy Ghost has caused it to become the Body of Christ, he kneels and adores. Then, still holding the large Host between the finger and thumb of both hands, he slowly raises it until it is above his head, keeping his eyes fixed upon it as he does

so. He then replaces it on the corporal, and kneels and adores. When he has consecrated the wine, and the Holy Ghost has made it the Blood of Christ, the priest kneels and adores, and then, taking the chalice by the stem in both hands, he raises it above his head, replaces it upon the corporal, and kneels and adores.

The bell is rung three times at each elevation to let all in the church know that Christ is being lifted up as the Sacrifice for sins, and to call them to bow their heads and worship. As the Mass is the showing forth of Calvary, so the Body and Blood of Jesus are lifted up, as they were upon the cross.

CALVARY

Nineteen centuries ago a Roman officer stood upon a hill superintending a threefold execution. A strange darkness had descended upon the earth, the ground trembled and the thunder roared, and at the ninth hour out of the darkness had come a cry: "It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And the darkness cleared and the thunder ceased, and the Roman officer looked up and beheld the Elevation of the Host—the Victim lifted up, sacrificed, dead. And he smote his breast and said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

That is the scene that now unfolds itself before us. We too look up as the bell rings and "look upon him whom we have pierced." We

"behold him smitten, stricken of God and afflicted"—Jesus the immaculate Host, the spotless Victim, the Sacrifice of sacrifices, fulfilling thus the typical sacrifices of Judaism and the blind sacrifices of the heathen. What a sight is this! Yet men can still look on, indifferent and scornful, as the soldiers who sat at the foot of the cross and played with dice.

The Sacred Host and the Precious Blood are lifted up for God to accept and ratify and for us to behold and worship. Thus was Christ lifted up on Calvary, and even so does he plan to draw all men unto himself. Behold the Sacrifice of Love; as the bread and wine are consecrated separately, as the separation of the flesh and the blood means death, and as they are offered up to God, we behold Calvary. We see the cross, standing out black and grim against the lowering sky; we catch a glimmer of white raised on high—a body; we see the grief-stricken figures bowed at the foot of the cross. The last dying cry of the Son of God pierces the gloom. He hangs there, the great elevated Host—both offering and offered—alone. The bell sounds the last time, the chalice is lowered on to the Altar. The thorn-crowned Head bows forward, the Body droops, the last peal of thunder, betokening the anger of God, dies away. He is dead. As the priest murmurs the prayers of the Canon, we hear the gentle sobbing of the holy Mother as she gazes at the world's first crucifix.

Now the thurifer and acolytes gently leave the Sanctuary; their task is finished. So we see the crowds leaving the Hill of Calvary.

The deacon of the Mass moves first to one side, then to the other, of the priest. He steadies the chalice as the priest signs over it; he lifts and replaces the linen pall over the Precious Blood; he supports the arm of the priest when he genuflects. So we behold St. John and Joseph of Arimathæa gently lowering the Body of Jesus from the cross and covering the sacred limbs with fine clean linen.

SCENE 6

CONTINUATION OF THE CANON AND
"MEMENTO" OF THE DEAD

After the Elevation the priest continues to say the prayers of the Canon, quietly.

First he makes the "Anamnesis," or memorial, of our Lord's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, in virtue of which he prays God to accept the "pure Victim, the holy Victim, the spotless Victim, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Cup of everlasting salvation."

Then he prays that as God accepted the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech, so he will accept the much better sacrifice of Christians. Then follows an ancient prayer

that God's holy angels may bear the Divine Gifts to the altar in heaven. It was an ancient belief that the substances of the bread and wine were carried up to heaven by the hands of angels, and in return God sent down the substances of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in their place, that those who partake at the altar may receive, not bread and wine, but Jesus Christ himself.

The priest then joins his hands and prays for the faithful departed, mentioning by name those for whom he desires especially to pray. After this prayer he strikes his breast and humbly prays for fellowship with the holy Apostles and Martyrs, and ends with an ascription of praise to Jesus Christ, from whom alone we receive pardon, sanctification, life and blessing, together with the gift of the "Good Things," his Body and his Blood, of which the Old Covenant had but the shadow, but of which the New Covenant has the substance.

Now the priest takes the Host in his right hand and the chalice in his left, and makes the sign of the cross three times with it over the chalice, offering praise to God the Father, in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, "through him and with him and in him," to show that our praise and worship must be offered through Jesus Christ, our Mediator of redemption. He signs twice between the chalice and his breast, and holding the Host over the chalice, he elevates both slightly. This is the little elevation.

THE BODY OF JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB

The sad little procession wends its way down the hill-side to the Garden. We behold Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus carrying the Body of Jesus, followed by St. John with Our Lady, now truly the Mother of Sorrows, and the other women. We see the holy Body wrapped in linen and anointed and placed upon the stone slab, even as it now lies upon the linen cloths of the altar which cover the consecrated stone. The stone is sealed, the guard is placed at the door, and all is still. The Son of God awaits yet another hour, the hour of Resurrection, but it is not yet. As we meditate upon the Body of Jesus in the tomb, so let us see his Soul, the Soul which agonized in the Garden, welcoming the penitent thief into Paradise, and comforting the Fathers of the Old Covenant with the promise of salvation.

See the Soul of Jesus in the realms of the holy dead, comforting Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech, with the promise of entering into his rest; and as the priest kisses the altar stone and prays for the ministry of the holy angels to bear the Divine gifts to heaven, behold the angels sitting at the head and feet of the Body of Jesus in the tomb, and know that even now they kneel around the altar of God.

Then as the priest bows his head, joins his

hands, and prays for the faithful departed, try to see a vision of all the holy souls in Purgatory. Jesus has come, God the Holy Ghost has brought him, and we know that those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

O wonderful vision! Look up and see all the holy dead around the altar—see them assembled at the place of meeting, even as once, perhaps, they assembled in the flesh.

Behold them gazing with awe and adoration at the Sacrifice lying upon the altar, for that Sacrifice, whenever it is offered, brings to the faithful departed, refreshment, light and peace, joy and consolation. The Sacrifice of the Mass brings them nearer to God and, more than anything else, advances their final perfection. So as the curtain descends upon Act III, let us wait with Mary Magdalene, patiently wait through the stillness of the Sabbath calm, ready with the sweet spices of our love and devotion, to approach and kneel at his feet. Not yet—just a little while, and then we, in the company of Saints and Martyrs, arrive at—Consummation.

NOTE

In some churches it is customary for the priest to say the Prayer of Oblation aloud, after the Consecration, concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

Suitable meditations during this prayer (if said in this place) will be found in Act III, Scene 6.

ACT IV

CONSUMMATION

SCENE I

THE COMMIXTURE AND PAX

THE curtain descended upon Act III as the priest was praying that he and all faithful people might be admitted into the company of the Saints. He now says aloud the Lord's Prayer.

At the end of the prayer, when the people add the final petition, the sub-deacon ascends to the altar and hands the paten to the deacon and removes the humeral veil. The priest takes the paten, makes the sign of the cross with it upon himself, kisses it, and slips it under the Host, praying meanwhile that God's people may be delivered from all evils past, present, and to come, and that through the intercession of Blessed Mary and all the Saints, by the mercy of God, we may be free from sin and secure from all distress.

He then uncovers the chalice, genuflects, and, holding the Host over it, between his fingers, breaks it into two parts as he says, "Through the same Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord." Then, placing a part in his right hand on the paten, he breaks a small piece off the part in his left hand, saying, "Who with thee and the Holy Ghost

liveth and reigneth, God, world without end."

Then, making the sign of the cross three times with the particle over the chalice, he says, "The peace of the Lord be always with you," and all present reply, "And with thy spirit." The priest then drops the small particle into the chalice, saying, "May this commingling and consecration of the Body and Blood of Christ be to us that receive it effectual unto eternal life. Amen."

This action is deeply symbolical and signifies the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the consecration under two forms separately signified his death.

The prayers which follow are the priest's devotional preparation for receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. He genuflects and strikes his breast thrice as he says, "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us." This petition is repeated twice, after which he prays that as Jesus Christ gave his peace to the Apostles before his death, so he will grant peace and unity to his Church.

The priest then kisses the altar stone and, turning to the deacon, lays his hands on his shoulder, the deacon placing his hands under the priest's elbows, and says, "Peace be with thee." The deacon replies, "And with thy spirit." The deacon passes the salutation on to the sub-deacon in like manner, and from the sub-deacon it passes to all the assistants, clerical and lay, in the sanctuary and choir, in order of

rank. This is called the "Pax," or Kiss of Peace, and is a beautiful little ceremony, signifying the love of Jesus for his children and the mutual love he bids them bear one to another. Then the priest, with the deacon on his right and the sub-deacon on his left, prepares to communicate. All three genuflect; the priest holds the Host in his left hand and smites his breast with his right, as he says, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my soul shall be healed."

THE RESURRECTION

While Jesus hung upon the cross, the first and the last of the Seven Words were a prayer to his Father in heaven. As the priest recites the Lord's Prayer, according to the "divine example," we may picture to ourselves Blessed Mary and the other holy women, with St. John, spending the Sabbath day, Holy Saturday, in prayer to the Father. Picture them in seclusion, not daring to appear in public for fear of the Jews, seeking consolation, as Jesus had taught them, in confidence in the Fatherhood of God. So they prayed, and so we pray, to be delivered from all evils past, present, and to come. Picture Blessed Mary leading the intercessions and consoling them by her example.

When the Sabbath has drawn to its close,

the women take up their boxes of ointment, and, hiding them under their veils, they steal silently forth into the night to embalm the dead Body of Jesus.

Look up and see the scene now. It is the coldest and darkest moment of the night, just before the dawn. The holy women stumble over the rough stones and peer towards the tomb. The stone is gone! The soldiers are gone! See Mary Magdalene run into the cave—"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre." See her running to Peter and John, and behold their terrified gaze as they hear the news—the Body gone! have they stolen the Body? . . . or . . . or . . . can it be that . . . ? See them arise, hasten, run. They gaze upon the stone slab, the linen clothes, the napkin—"they saw, and believed." Soon we see Mary Magdalene come; she kneels and, with bended head, she weeps: "They have killed him, but surely they might have left me his Body." (The priest is bowed over the altar; the Precious Body is raised and dropped into the Cup of his Blood—Resurrection! He stands upright and genuflects in adoration.) As she weeps, Mary becomes conscious of a Presence; see her glance round through tearful eyes—perhaps it is the gardener come to take me to him. "Sir . . . ?" "Mary!" "Master!"

The Body and Blood are reunited; the Soul of Jesus and his Body are again united. Lift your eyes now and behold the pledge of Life. "He is

risen." What she longed for, but hardly dared to hope, she sees. Mary the penitent sinner is the first to see him in his risen Body.

As we behold this scene, let us pray for those who do not believe in the Presence of the Risen Jesus in the Sacrament of his Love.

"Certain women of our company which were early at the sepulchre made us astonished." Do not some Christians regard the faith and devotion of Catholics with astonishment? They behold devout Catholics going "early to the sepulchre," fasting; they hear of devout souls seeing a vision of one who is greater than the angels, and they go, perhaps, to Mass to "see the service," and behold an elaboration of ceremonial and strange behaviour, "but him they see not."

We cannot see the Sacrificed Lamb, the Risen Lord, in the Drama of the Mass without faith.

"He is risen, as he said." Say now, as you behold the scene, "Thy word is true from everlasting. O give me understanding." Hear him say, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." His word is true: he has come upon his altar, and he is coming to dwell in and comfort our souls, presently, in a few minutes now—"Surely I come quickly." Open your heart to him and say, "Come to my heart, Lord Jesus; there is room in my heart for thee." The Risen Jesus, Soul and Body reunited, waits now upon his altar to enter our souls and say, "Peace be with thee."

SCENE 2

COMMUNION

The priest receives the Holy Communion, first the Sacred Body, then the Precious Blood, with the particle in It. The Communion of the priest who offers the Mass typifies the consuming of the Victim of the Sacrifice, which under the Old Law was often accomplished by fire. The act of Communion completes the Sacrifice, which would not be properly consummated if it were omitted; therefore the celebrating priest must always communicate, even when he says Mass two or three times in one day. It is not necessary to the Sacrifice that others should communicate, but at least one baptized person must be present whenever a priest says Mass, to represent the faithful and to make the due responses, or, as the Apostle St. Paul says, to say "Amen" at the "Eucharist," or "giving of thanks."

Ideally, all should receive Holy Communion when they attend Mass, but circumstances often make this difficult or impossible. If the faithful will communicate, they approach the altar as the bell is rung at the priest's Communion; the deacon or some other says the "Confiteor," or Confession, on their behalf; the priest turns and gives an absolution, making

the sign of the cross, to show that all forgiveness of sins comes to us through the cross, and then he distributes the Holy Communion to all at the altar rails.

When the Communion is finished, the priest consumes what remains of either the Sacred Body or Precious Blood of our Lord, cleanses the chalice and his fingers with wine and water, which he drinks, and the sub-deacon carries the vessels to the credence table. Priest, deacon, and sub-deacon now stand one behind the other near the south end of the altar for the Communion and post-Communion prayers.

THE UPPER ROOM

Once again we behold the Apostles—but only ten of them at first, for Judas is dead and Thomas, in his grief and depression, has hidden himself away. They are in the Upper Room, the same room where they had gathered with Jesus on the previous Thursday to eat the Passover. In that room he had washed their feet, in that room he had given to them the Sacrifice of the New Covenant in the Sacrament of himself. In that room he had ordained them priests of the Catholic Church, his mystical Body. Now behold them in silence and perplexity, not knowing what will happen next, the doors and windows barred for fear of the Jews; see them waiting—waiting.

Suddenly, without warning, "Jesus came and

stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you."

Not only is his Body risen, but It is spiritualized; walls and doors, bolts and bars, cannot impede It. No longer is It subject to the limitations of matter. The *modus operandi* of the Body of Jesus is no longer according to the evidence of the senses. True flesh and blood still, the marks of the Passion there, real to the touch and sight, eating and drinking as other men, the Body of Jesus is raised into a higher state, a state in which It can reach the soul. Thus the Sacred Humanity of Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament in spite of the assurances of the "reason" or the senses, for Jesus is One; his Body and Soul are united and cannot be separated again. So in Holy Communion we do not receive his dead Body, neither do we receive his Spirit alone, but in the realm of the supernatural, into which his Body is now raised and into which we enter at Mass, his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, and Sacred Humanity, are present and given to us, and taken and received by us, in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. The act of Communion is the climax of the service.

As we approach the altar we behold the Apostles kneeling at his feet in the Upper Room. We behold Thomas, at first disbelieving in his Resurrection and his Real Presence, and then stretching forth his hand and touching the Risen Body, and kneeling in adoration as he realizes

the truth, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God."

We have offered our goods to God at the Offertory. He can, if he wishes, take from us all we have. We have offered Jesus at the Consecration; God can take our lives if he wishes. Now, at Communion, we offer that which God will never take by force—the will. That is really our own. Here, indeed, do we take our share in the Drama, here we make our self-surrender, here we identify ourselves with the Victim—"not my will, but thine, be done." Here we must sacrifice the reason and the senses and stretch out the hand of faith firmly and steadily, for the reason and the senses say, "There is a small circle of Bread"; but the faith must submerge the reason, the senses, and the will, and say, "There is God."

What a Drama! Worshippers feeding upon their God. Oh! take care! Within that small White Circle beats the fiery Heart of God. There is power, there is love. Look up as you kneel at the sanctuary rail and see Jesus in the midst, hear him say, "Handle me and see." See—yes, we may see now, for here the past becomes the present, heaven and earth are one.

"Make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them," cries God, and from the sanctuary of the Blessed Sacrament he comes into the sanctuary of our hearts.

It is done. Drama, action, duty—God and man united. Our souls must be placed unreservedly

at his Feet, that henceforth Jesus may be the motive power of every thought and feeling, every act and every word, for "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Now, as you rise and return to your place, and as the priest cleanses the vessels and moves to the south side of the altar, see a picture of the Christian, after his Communion, returning to his life in the world, yet not of it.

Let us see ourselves returning to our daily life, our home, our work, our school, our play, fulfilling the duties of everyday life, kneeling at our bedside, and lying down in peace and taking our rest. Jesus has come to us to live in us and to shine in us and to illuminate the darkness of the world. He has come to us that we may do his work and reflect the light of the glorious Gospel of the Love of God.

Never again will we return from Holy Communion with thankless hearts, never again will we lie down in bed with prayerless lips, for we have put our fingers into the prints of the nails and thrust our hands into his pierced side, and our eyes have gazed upon our "Lord and our God."

SCENE 3

THE POST-COMMUNION

The act of Communion, the climax of the Sacrifice, being now accomplished, the Mass

moves rapidly towards its close. The priest reads a short text called the "Communion," and then goes to the centre of the altar. He kisses it, and turns to the people and says, "The Lord be with you," and then returns to the south side, bows to the cross, and says, "Let us pray." Then, with hands outstretched, he says the Post-Communion Prayers, one or more, according to the day or season.

At the end he bows again to the cross, closes the book, and returns to the centre of the altar.

EMMAUS

Behold the two disciples walking with Jesus to Emmaus. They know him not, although he has talked with them. True, their hearts have burned within them, but they were "slow of heart to believe." See them, as he made to go on, constrain him to come in and tarry with them. "Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent."

The Drama of the Mass is drawing to its close as the priest says the thanksgiving prayers after Communion. See now, Christian Soul, the vision which is meant for thee. Thy short day also is drawing to its close, the wings of death cast their shadows over thy path. What wilt thou do when the darkness descends if Jesus is not with thee?

Behold thyself upon thy bed of death, life slowly ebbing and the shadows of the valley

closing around. Try to picture thy last Communion on earth as the priest holds before thee the Sacred Host. How then wilt thou cry out, "Abide with me, O Lord, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." And with feeble lips thou wilt murmur thy last post-Communion, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

As the eyes of the two disciples were opened and they knew him, so let us pray that we may never fail to "discern the Lord's Body" in the Holy Communion by an unworthy reception.

As their hearts burned within them, so let us pray that our hearts may never be thankless when we have sat at meat with him and he has taken, blessed, and broken the Bread of Life for us. As he vanished out of their sight, so we cannot be always before the altar; but although we see him not, although the Holy Mass and its visions be ended, yet he comes to us that he and we may never part. "I in you, and ye in me"—that is the desire in the Heart of Jesus. Lift the eyes of faith and see him beckoning us onward, knowing that he "will never leave us or forsake us." Let us pray now for those who know him not in his Sacrament, those who pass him by, those who lack the Catholic Faith and to whom he is an unknown Guest in Communion. Let us pray for those who can see no more than an empty ceremony with bread and

wine in the Eucharist, for those who endanger their souls by formal or unworthy Communion.

Let us pray for those who have never known the relief and joy of Confession and Absolution before their Communion, and whose hearts, uncleansed from sin, can only burn with fear as they approach, or else drive them away from the Table of God.

"O gracious Lord, who givest thyself to be the food of our souls, pour thy grace upon those who know not thy Divine Presence, that, cleansed from sin through the ministry of thy priesthood, they may feel their hearts burn within them, as with joy their eyes are opened and in the Breaking of Bread they know thee, their Saviour and their God. Amen."

NOTE

In most Anglican churches it is customary to say or sing the Gloria in Excelsis after the Post-Communion Prayers and before the Blessing, instead of after the Kyrie eleison.

In this case we may think of the great forty days, between the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, during which he instructed the Apostles in things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Much of what the Apostles did and said after Pentecost was, no doubt, what Jesus had taught them during this time, for Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of Heaven, the Holy

Catholic Church, upon the earth. We may, if we wish, think of this during the singing of the Gloria.

Think of the Church glorifying God, both in heaven and upon earth, and preaching the Gospel of peace and goodwill to men. Think of the Holy Church throughout all the world praising, blessing, worshipping, glorifying, and thanking God. See the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world, in Holy Baptism, Holy Penance, Holy Communion, and the Anointing of the Sick. These are Sacraments of the Church which glorify God by giving to men the graces and blessings he died to win for them. Conclude with an act of adoration to Jesus Christ on his Throne of Glory and in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

SCENE 4

THE BLESSING

The priest kisses the altar, turns and, extending his hands, says, "The Lord be with you." He remains facing the people, and the deacon, turning and standing towards the right, also facing the people, says, "Ite, missa est," which may be interpreted, "Go, the Mass is finished."

In penitential Masses the deacon says, instead of "Ite, missa est," "Let us bless the Lord."

The people respond to either, "Thanks be to God." The priest turns to the altar, bows, and says a short prayer to the Holy Trinity, that the Sacrifice which he has offered may be acceptable. He kisses the altar stone, extends and raises his hands, glances up to the cross, and then bows and says, "May the blessing of God Almighty [he turns to the people and makes the sign of the cross with the right hand], the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always."

All kneel, sign themselves, and respond "Amen."

THE ASCENSION

"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them." That is the scene to which we lift up our eyes as the Drama fast draws to its close.

We behold Jesus and his Apostles. He knows that he is about to consummate his redemptive work by taking his humanity to his Father.

The Apostles, still "slow of heart to believe," do not know; they still expect an earthly kingdom. "Will he now confront the Jews and Romans and claim the kingdom?" So we may read in their minds as they gaze upon him. (The priest looks up, turns; a rapid sign of the cross—it is done.) Even so, as he lifts his hands, he is taken up—a cloud receives him out of their sight.

As we gaze towards the altar, the priest's hand lowered, the blessing done, we hear again the words, "The Lord be with you." What? Has he not just gone from us? An angel carries on the Lord's message: "This same Jesus . . . shall come. . . ." Look up now, see the Apostles arising from their knees and returning to Jerusalem with great joy, in the consciousness that he is with them always. The Ascension is the pledge of our Lord's universal presence, for as his incarnate life did not end at the Ascension, so its power to redeem never ceases to operate in the souls of men.

His natural Body is replaced by his mystical Body, and in that Body he blesses us and sanctifies us. Think of him lifting up both hands to bless his Apostles on the Mount, and try to picture to yourself Jesus in heaven, lifting up holy hands, supplicating for us, laying his triumphant manhood upon the Throne of God, to be the propitiation for the sins of our manhood.

SCENE 5

THE LAST GOSPEL

When he has given the blessing the priest goes at once to the Gospel side of the altar and reads the last Gospel, St. John i. 1-14. The deacon stands behind him at the Epistle side, and the

sub-deacon holds the text, facing the celebrant. At the words "The Word was made flesh," all genuflect.

Priest, deacon, sub-deacon, and the other ministers form up before the altar. The acolytes take up their torches, all bow (or genuflect, if the Blessed Sacrament be reserved there), the sacred ministers put on their birettas, and the procession moves from the altar and returns to the sacristy.

The Mass is finished. The sacred Drama is consummated, and as the candles are extinguished, the vessels removed, and the altar covered, the ministers of the Mass remove their robes and the curtain falls upon the Drama of the Holy Mass.

"LO! I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS"

As the priest stands at the Gospel corner of the altar to read the last Gospel, and as we hear the wonderful summary of the great mystery of both the creation and redemption of the world, we are given a vision of the eternity, the majesty, the power and the love of God. We see God the Holy Trinity planning, creating, visiting and redeeming the world, and fulfilling both his own desire to dwell among his people and his people's desire that their God might dwell amongst them. The existence of God is an eternal present, as his Being is an eternal present indicative. We behold him as the Great I AM, with whom is

no past or future, and in the centre of this vision we see the ceaseless activity of God, without beginning or ending. We see that all the works of God, the events in his earthly life, and the operation of grace in the Church, are but the manifestation in time and space of one eternal reality in the Mind of God. Here we see how God, in his love for us, submits to the limitations of time and space that we may enter into the scheme of his redemption. The Mass shows us in a way we can understand what the "fulness of time" meant for him and for us. God has no other chronology but "the fulness of time," but for us it must ever be a matter of hours and days and years and events which reach us through our senses, and so, for this reason, in His love for us, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Thus, in the Drama of the Holy Mass, Mother Church has, as it were, taken us by the hand and led us through the ages from Eden to Bethlehem. She has led us, with Jesus, through the cities of Judæa and Galilee to Jerusalem. We have trodden the sorrowful Way of the Cross to the summit of Calvary, where we have seen him die. We have followed the sad little procession to the tomb, and sat with the holy women through the stillness of the Sabbath. We have held him by the Feet on Easter Day, we have felt our hearts burn within us as he has been made known to us in the Breaking of the Bread.

Then Mother Church has led us to Bethany,

and on the hill, the altar of God, "in the which it pleaseth him to dwell," he has blessed us from the midst of the cloud, and as we have knelt in the after silence we have resolved in our hearts to be ever with the Apostles in the Temple blessing and praising God.

And then, in the final scene of the great Drama of the Holy Mass, beloved John takes us right back again to Bethlehem, there to kneel with the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph and the pious shepherds and the holy angels, and adore the "Word made Flesh" in "the House of the Bread," the Holy Sacrament of God's eternal Love, where he abides with us "always, even unto the end of the world."

The Drama of the Holy Mass is finished, and the redemption of mankind has been shown forth before God and man. The Mass is the centre of our worship here because it is the extension of the Incarnation and enshrines his Presence, and therefore the worship of the Blessed Sacrament is the worship of God.

The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is the centre of the worship of heaven, for he is present in his Body there, where "he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

In like manner he is present at the earthly altar, in his Body, ever to do on earth what he ever does in heaven.

Jesus our great High-Priest, Jesus our Paschal Lamb, offerer and offered, sheds abroad the

Love of his Sacred Heart among men through the Blessed Sacrament. From our altars power and love radiate, and the mystic Humanity appeals to our humanity, "Come and eat of my Bread, and drink the Wine that I have mingled."

The Drama of the Mass is over, yet it never ends. Finished at one altar, it commences at another. Wherever the Catholic Faith is preached, there is the Mass, and where the Mass is, there is Jesus "in the midst," with us "always"—"For from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 11).

THE END