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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

Volume 3 = THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Mass as a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Luke 5:8.

Strange, indeed, for Peter to say this. For my part, although I must acknowledge myself unworthy to be in the presence of Jesus Christ, yet the prayer I address to him is quite contrary to that, and I say: O Lord, remain with me; go not from me; do not abandon me; for I am a sinful man! We cannot be grateful enough to our Saviour for his wonderful goodness in remaining with us to the end of the world in his bodily presence, and offering himself every day in the holy Mass as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins.

- I. The holy Mass is an infinite thanksgiving for the infinite goodness of God in our regard;
- II. The holy Mass is an infinitely powerful means of receiving continually all imaginable fresh benefits from God.

In the Old Law sacrifices of thanksgiving were instituted, by which the faithful testified to God the grateful feelings of their hearts for all the good things they received from him. God himself prescribed to the Israelites certain feastsdays in the year, on which the people had to assemble and offer sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for different special benefits; such, for instance, as their being brought out of Egypt, freed so miraculously from the heavy yoke of Pharaoh, and settled in the promised land; their being wonderfully fed in the desert with the Manna or bread from heaven; their having received the Law through Moses; their having been so often assisted in a most wonderful manner by God to gain the victory over their enemies, and many similar favors. Every year they had to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving to God in memory of those benefits.

Christians, how many good things have we not hitherto received from our loving and most generous God! Ah, what am I saying? What good thing is there that we do not owe to Him? What have we within or without us, that we must not with thankful hearts ascribe to the inexhaustible goodness of God? Consider yourselves, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot; are you not simply made up of benefits received from God? From the first moment of our lives to the present, can we find a single instant in which we have not enjoyed the fruits of the divine liberality? “What shall I render to the Lord,” we should all say with David, “for all the things he hath rendered to me?” (Ps. 115:12.) Ah, yes, what return can I make the Lord for all the benefits he has bestowed on me? Must I not, then, acknowledge with the same David in all humility: “My substance is as nothing before thee?” (Ps. 38:6.) “What wages shall we give him?” we may well ask, as the younger Tobias said

to his father out of gratitude to the companion of his journey. "Oh, what can be worthy of his benefits?" (Tob. 12: 2.) What can I give to God that will be an adequate return for his goodness to me?

There is something I can do. I am not so poor as I thought. I have in my power a hidden treasure which is infinitely pleasing to God, and which he cannot refuse to accept; a treasure that is not only equal to all benefits he has ever conferred on me and all creatures, but even surpasses them, and is infinitely greater than all he can give to creatures outside himself. For this treasure is as great as he himself is, and it is the flesh and blood of his Son Jesus Christ, my Saviour, united with his divinity; of that Son who is equal to him from all eternity. This treasure I have daily in my hands, and can present it to him, not only as a complete but a superabundant return for his goodness. For whenever we assist at Mass with due attention and devotion, we make the divine Generosity and Goodness an infinite return for infinite blessings; for therein we offer to the Almighty the Author of all good, who comprises in himself all riches and treasures, and that is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of the Eternal Father. This is what David foresaw in spirit when he asks: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" For he at once answers: "I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will sacrifice to thee the sacrifice of praise; in the courts of the house of the Lord, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem" (Ps. 115:13, 17, 19). This is one of the chief reasons, says St. Irenaeus, why the Son of God instituted the Mass; namely, "that we may not be ungrateful to God." Our Lord knew well our poverty and impotence, and that of ourselves we had nothing to repay God for his goodness to us; in this wonderful manner, then, he has left us a gift that we can daily present, as he himself has given us to understand in the institution of this sacrifice. For the holy Evangelists say, and the priest, too, says after them, immediately before the consecration: "Who, the day before he suffered, took bread into his sacred and venerable hands, and having raised his eyes to heaven, to thee, God, his almighty Father, giving thanks to thee, blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples." The priest admonishes all of this act of thanksgiving in the words, "Let us return thanks to the Lord our God;" and when the server has answered, "It is right and just," he continues: "It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation, that we should always and in all places give thanks to thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, through Christ our Lord," whom we now offer thee by way of fitting thanksgiving for thy benefits to us.

And indeed, my dear brethren, we thus fulfill to the utmost all the obligations that gratitude imposes on us. For if true gratitude requires that we should often think of the benefits received, how can we find a better means of recalling them to our memory than the holy Mass? For therein the greatest of them all, without which the other graces and gifts of God would help us in no way, and which is the foundation and origin of them all, namely, the great work of our Redemption, the sufferings and death of our Saviour, is not merely represented as in a figure, but is really renewed and continued in a mystic manner. Therefore our Lord said, when instituting this sacrifice: "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke 12:19), let it remind you of the sufferings and death by which I freed you from eternal death, and gained all heavenly gifts and graces for you. Again, if true gratitude requires that I should express my thanks to my benefactor, and praise and honor him, how could I do that better than in the Mass, in which Jesus Christ, the High-Priest, in our stead offers his heavenly Father, by way of most humble and perfect thanksgiving, an infinite honor and adequate praise; in which we, united with our Head as his members, offer the same thanksgiving to the sovereign God? Finally, if gratitude requires us to render some service, or present some gift in return for the favor received, where can we find a more costly present for our good God than his own beloved Son, whom we offer to him in the Mass? Thus, by merely hearing Mass, provided we are not wanting in attention and devotion, we completely fulfill, and in the most perfect manner, all the obligations and duties of an infinite gratitude.

II. There are three ways in which we go to work when we wish to obtain a favor from a king or prince: we try to get some good friend to say a word for us, or we present a petition setting forth our wants, or else we endeavor to win the sovereign's favor by gifts and presents. The higher the person who undertakes to plead our cause, the more in favor he who hands in the petition, the more costly the gift offered, the greater is the chance of obtaining the desired favor. But if these three things are united, then, indeed, there is not the least doubt that the sovereign will accede to our wishes. In all these ways together, my dear brethren, the holy Mass is a powerful means of obtaining all imaginable favors and graces from God. For, in the first place, our advocate in the Mass is an infinitely great lord, who holds the highest place in the favor of the Almighty, and that is Jesus

Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, “always living to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7:25), and to put in a good word in our behalf. That is what he now does in heaven, seated on his throne of glory at the right hand of the Father, where he fills the office of advocate and intercessor for his children, whom he redeemed on earth; but in the Mass he intercedes for us in a special manner, that is, with the utmost humiliation, self-abasement, annihilation of himself in the sight of God, just as he prayed for us with outstretched arms on the cross to his Father; for, as we have frequently seen already, the sacrifice of the Mass is a renewal and repetition of that of the cross. He prays for us with the powerful voice of his five sacred wounds, the marks of which he preserves in his glorified body and never do those wounds shine so brightly as in the Mass, when he presents them to his Father. He prays, too, with the mighty voice of his merits, which, infinite as they are, he offers to God for us. Can we, dare we think, that the petition of the Son of God, of his sacred wounds, of his precious blood, of his infinite merits, will make no impression on his Father’s heart? Can there be any grace or favor too great for them to obtain?

Again, it is the same beloved Son of God who presents our petition and supplication in this holy sacrifice to his heavenly Father; for the prayers that we say while hearing Mass, and those that the priest says in his own name and that of all present, he unites with his own most powerful prayers, and thus offers them to his Eternal Father. Hence the prayers we say during holy Mass are much more efficacious in obtaining favors from God than those we say on other occasions and at other times, and a single memento that the priest makes at the altar for one who is absent is far better for the latter than even a long prayer that he might say for himself. Now, if every prayer of the just man has the right to the fulfillment of that magnificent promise that Jesus Christ makes, “Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23), how much more powerful will not that prayer be, how much more speedily and efficaciously will it not be heard, when it is offered, not only in the name of Jesus Christ, but in union with his most holy prayer, with his sacred wounds, with his precious blood, with his bitter Passion and death, and with his infinite merits, and is thus presented by his own hand to God!

If the best means of obtaining a favor from a great man is to make him presents that he will be pleased to accept, and experience teaches us that such is the case, oh, what wilt we not be able to obtain by the holy Mass from God, who is already so generous and faithful! For, besides the prayer of his divine Son, we make him a most costly present; one that is infinitely greater and more precious than all imaginable gifts and graces that we desire or can hope for from him; one that is even as great as God himself; namely, Jesus Christ, his own beloved Son, in his own flesh and blood. Let the divine Generosity and Liberality give us whatever he pleases out of the inexhaustible treasure of his graces, still, the present that we have first made him in the Mass is worth far more than all that he can give us outside of himself. Let him give us even himself, as we hope one day to possess him forever in heaven, still we offer him in this holy sacrifice a present of equal value, and not a whit less than what he has either given us, or will give us in eternity.

Can we, then, imagine that the God of goodness, who has promised an eternal reward to him who gives a cup of cold water to a poor man in his name, and who receives that cup of cold water as if it were given to himself, can we imagine, I ask, that such a God will refuse anything to him who offers him his own beloved Son? No; not without reason does the priest say after the consecration, in the name of all present, “That we may be filled with every heavenly grace and blessing through the same Christ, our Lord.” By these words the Catholic Church shows that we may have the utmost hope and confidence of obtaining by the Mass all supernatural graces that are necessary or advantageous for our salvation. And so it is; we can thus make sure of every heavenly grace: *of the grace of true repentance* for those in the state of sin; *of the grace of constancy in good* for those who are already converted to God; *of the grace of patience* for those who are suffering trials and adversity; *of help against temptations, daily progress in virtue, the grace of perseverance, and a happy death* for the just; there is not a single grace for which we should not ask, not a single one that we cannot obtain by this holy sacrifice. Moreover, we can by the same means obtain those temporal favors which are not injurious to our souls, such as averting calamities from a whole town or country, being restored to health even when health is despaired of, the increase of our temporal wealth, being saved from dangers that threaten our lives, success in our business undertakings, blessings in our domestic concerns; all of which we can obtain from the divine goodness by the holy Mass.

Is it, then, possible, my dear brethren, that the Catholic Church has been obliged to command her children under pain of mortal sin to hear Mass on Sundays and holydays? Did you ever hear that it was necessary for a magistrate to compel the beggars and poor of the town under a heavy penalty to go to some rich man who daily distributes generous alms? And what else are we but poor beggars in the sight of God? If we consider ourselves from head to foot, we shall find that we are nothing but poverty and misery, and that we are every moment in need of help from the hands of God; that our wretchedness, both of soul and body, constantly requires the divine assistance. But daily an inexhaustible treasury of graces and gifts is opened to us in the Mass on our altars, and yet we must be compelled to go on certain days to find it! Should not our poverty be a sufficient reason for us to have recourse every day to this infallible means of obtaining favors and graces? Come, then, in all your troubles and temptations, in all your doubts, difficulties, and dangers, come to Mass! Give your petition into the hands of Jesus Christ, that he may present it for you to his heavenly Father; and say to him with child-like confidence, when you wish to obtain any favor for your soul: Behold, O my God, the present I here offer thee is infinitely great; what I ask of thee is infinitely smaller and less valuable than what I give thee; thy Son has promised that thou wilt give us whatever we ask of thee in his name; wilt thou, then, refuse the trifle I ask of thee, although I make thee such a magnificent present? No, that cannot be. Ask and you shall receive! Much more shall you receive when you have the prayer and sacrifice of the Son of God interceding for you. Never let your work hinder you from this holy practice; the half-hour that you spend in it will certainly bring no loss to your business, but rather blessing and increase. If sometimes you are so busy that you cannot find time to hear Mass, or so ill that you are unable to go out, then go at least in heart and desire, and offer up in your thoughts to God all the holy Masses that are said on that day. This desire will not go without its reward from the good God, who sees the heart, and takes the good will for the deed. Amen.

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