

Nihil Obstat
Very Rev. Antonio Rafael do Nascimento, S.D.V
Superior General
of the Society of Divine Vocations
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INTRODUCTION

The present volume contains ten lectures that Fr. Justin presented from 1915 to 1951 to bishops, priests, seminarians, nuns and faithful at a diocesan and regional congresses. Consequently, all Bible quotations in this volume are taken from the Vulgata, a Latin translation made mostly by St. Jerome that became the official version of the Church. All references to the liturgy of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, the celebration of various sacraments refer to the pre Vatican II Rituals.

In the archipelago of the Justinian production, surrounded by the Eucharistic-Trinitarian love, these lectures are presented to the reader as unexplored atolls where the search for suggestive sceneries, hidden treasures and precious pearls becomes ever more exciting.

Besides this metaphor, the study of these Lectures offers us the unpublished version of a man who witnesses spiritual and pastoral problems of his time, but with an eye to the future. All the themes addressed with original competence refer to the axis of Justinian spirituality: Jesus-Host, Jesus-Gospel, Jesus-Church. This three-dimensional face of Jesus becomes the mirror of the Trinitarian mystery, the heavens' heaven of Fr. Justin.

The Lectures explicitly Eucharistic bring to us the face of Jesus-Host: *The Eucharist and the Child, Heavens' Heaven, Solemn Viaticum and Admirable Conversion.*

The face of Jesus-Gospel shines in the work of popular evangelization proposed in *Catechetical Missions*. The Lecture: *Holy Mass and the Mystical Body*, with the trilogy on the priesthood: (*The priesthood and the Agapes, the Clergy and the ecclesiastical vocations, and The young Clergy in his relations with the apostolate*) brings out in its entire splendor the face of Jesus-Church, victim and priest of love for humanity. The liturgy that Fr. Justin cares about with maternal tenderness becomes the ideal space and time for the total immersion of his soul in the ineffable Eucharistic-Trinitarian mystery.

The lecturer draws light and vigor from these sources to ascend the mountain of God's holiness and "to bring all souls" to divine union with God-Trinity. In the centrality of the Eucharistic mystery Fr. Justin develops themes of great relevance linked by the common thread of personal and community sanctification.

The critical reflection on the Lectures highlights the method and the merit in the choice of themes that are at the basis of the Justinian spirituality: catechesis and evangelization, liturgical and sacramental life, man's vocation to the Trinitarian communion, witness of charity in its most visible expressions (Agapes), service of all vocations and priestly fraternity with its repercussions upon pastoral action. Regarding the method, the approach is particularly innovative. Fr. Justin addresses the various themes with the authoritativeness of the witness and the profound knowledge of the realities to be lived.

The structure of the Lectures can be traced back to three directions: liturgical culture, ongoing catechesis and vocation's problem. Little by little as Father Justin penetrates the dynamism of the problems, his prophetic heart vibrates more strongly and does not give in to the temptation of Academicism of manners. His ability to deepen situations and to suggest solutions arises from his unmistakable style of educator and spiritual director... It is pre-

rogative of a saints to combine truth and charity. The relationship that most reveals him in this capacity is *The Young Priest and the Apostolate*, in which Father Justin works to reinforce a spirituality of communion between the young priest and the superiors in their pastoral ministry.

Accustomed to reading reality in the perspective of God, Fr. Justin espouses the principle of Christian pedagogy *fortiter et suaviter* - *with strength and gentleness* of St. Francis de Sales followed by the holy educator St. John Bosco.

The knowledge of Catholic theology with the support of the most updated exegetical and patristic research fosters the relationship of love stemming from the power of the sacrifice-sacrament of Jesus-Host that attracts all men making them “a monstrance and living tabernacle” of Eucharistic-Trinitarian love.

With gradual steps proper to human beings, *limited and successive*, Father Justin leads the listener to conquer an ever-deeper truth up to the goal of the divine union. To this end he often uses the word of God referring to it more implicitly than explicitly: a sign that he has assimilated it completely.

Starting from the first Lecture dating back to the year 1915, *The Eucharist and the Child*, Father Justin indicates in daily communion a powerful instrument of missionarity and entrusts it above all to children. The nourishment of Jesus-Host in the soul of the child is the most effective antivirus to avoid the spread of moral contagion caused by adults. The practice of daily communion is the table of salvation for the baptismal innocence of children at risk of common deviation.

Fr. Justin’s prophetic outlook sees the “daily communicant children” as the first evangelizing missionaries of the family and of society, and he bets on them to evangelize adults in a crisis of

identity. Starting again from children to heal the world of adults is one of the novelties proposed in these Lectures. This novelty today is shared by the Church and by the secular world.

Fr. Justin, like all the mystics jealous of their intimacy with God, does not like to exhibit himself, but when he is invited to lecture he manifests his charism as the ascetic of active life. So, in the lecture *Solemn Viaticum* he takes to defend the reasons of a social faith against the prejudices of man and affirms the primacy of the glory of God. His intervention is never against someone, but it is always an act of love due also outwardly to the King of the universe. Thus interpreted, even this Lecture, which among others may appear to be the most dated, retains its fascinating charge in spite of the changed spiritual sensibilities of our time. This Lecture is also a stimulating document for all the ministers of the Church to be devoured by zeal for the honor of God.

Revisiting the Lectures the reader sees in a golden thread all the motives of the intriguing and current spirituality of Father Justin. The mystical theologian of *Heavens' Heaven* coexists with the connoisseur of the centrality of the eucharistic mystery. The apostle, who lives his dream-torment for vocations, becomes an educator and mediator of priestly relationships in truth and charity. The liturgist, catechist and popular evangelizer concretizes priestly love in the works of mercy (agape). Around the eucharistic mystery Father Justin rotates the ensemble of the reasons that form his eclectic spirituality. God Trinity, the Holy Family and the Church, mystical body of Christ are the center of gravity of his spirituality.

In the Lecture: *Clergy and Ecclesiastical Vocations*, the Founder of the Vocationist Fathers and Sisters promotes the charism he received for the service of the Church. The Apostle of Divine Vocations searches and finds the answer to the perennial crisis of vocations in the very nature of the divine call. The salvation of

vocations is not to be found in external factors, but in the very nature of the priestly vocation, it depends exclusively on the holiness of the priests. The interpretation of vocation as tree destined to reproduce itself through its own fruit seems to be really inspired. The analogy with stem cells that serve to regenerate a human tissue undermined by an irreversible disease could well help us to grasp its deep meaning. For Father Justin, our service for Vocations becomes *the greatest need of the Church and of the world*. It is a service that warrants the commitment of all priestly and ecclesial energies.

The stakes are too high. It is about the survival of the Church and of the whole world. For Father Justin the problem is solved in one way only: becoming saints through union with God Trinity. Vocations are a means to the end. They are the best investment in which the whole ecclesial community must participate, in its multiple branches, dioceses, parishes, movements ...

St. John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Novo millennio ineundo* (n. 31-32) recalling that holiness is the measure of christian life recalled one of the cornerstones of the Justinian spirituality.

A special mention goes to the Justinian symbolism that appears also in the Lectures. The number three is loaded with meanings. It is primarily the symbol of the relationship with the divine mystery. In the Trinitarian Eucharistic mystery Fr. Justin sees the beginning and the end of every vocation to holiness. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family of Nazareth and the holy Church are visible areas of the Trinitarian relations. On the centrality of the Eucharistic mystery, Father Justin weaves the individual Trinitarian relations, *ad intra* and *ad extra*. In the Eucharist as *the synthesis of all the acts and states of the life of Jesus*, occurs the explosion of Trinitarian love and the Church is reborn as a mystical body through daily and unceasing liturgy, as a prelude to the liturgy of heaven. The soul establishes her relationship of love with God Trinity on

the model of the relations of the Holy Family of Nazareth and becomes a soul-daughter (Jesus), soul-mother (Mary) and soul-spouse (Joseph).

In the Lecture: *The Eucharist and God the Son*, Fr. Justin touches dizzying heights when he proposes to every soul *to be soul-mother* at the consecration in the Eucharistic celebration... The words: *This is my body*, translated mystically are equivalent to: *This is the Son that today every soul in grace generates spiritually on the altar*. All this happens because God the Father makes man a sharer in his immense mystery of love. These relationships with each of the three divine persons pass through the filter of the Church and find their reason for being in Jesus, head and mediator.

In all the Lectures that cover the ascetic-mystical and pastoral itinerary of Father Justin we find the seeds of his fascinating spirituality that is offered to the reader in his pyramidal format at whose vertex is God-Trinity, we find the harbor of love of every human relationship. This goal, at times implicitly but almost always in explicit form (*The Holy Mass and the Mystical Body*) is indicated in the development of each theme. The Banquet of the Word and of the Eucharist are *the two poles that bring the soul to touch the apex, every day more lofty and more intimate in Holy Communion, and in it begins to live the divine life, that is, the Trinitarian life in heaven, our "conversatio in coelis"*.

THE EUCHARIST AND THE CHILD

Let the little Children come to me (Mk 10, 14)

The Eucharist and the Child is the theme that opens the series of ten lectures presented by Fr. Justin to the clergy and to God's people at various diocesan and regional conventions. This convention took place on April 8, 1915 at Pozzuoli, where two years before, on September 20, 1913, Fr. Justin had been ordained a priest. For his first Mass he asked as the most beautiful gift the presence of all the children of Pianura around the altar. The Eucharist has always been the center of his apostolate.

As a young seminarian he used to gather large groups of children in the courtyards of his native town and, through his daily catechesis, he communicated to them his love for Jesus-Eucharist. At this convention he presented this theme as an expert catechist, without giving in to the eloquence of the academician. The lesson touched the heart of the priests, who a few months later published the beautiful and original lecture in the magazine "Annali della Lega sacerdotale per la Comunione frequente e dell'opera dei congressi in Italia." The Eucharist is the spring and the summit of spiritual life in the spiritual life of the children: This is the central point of the lecture whose starting point is given in Jesus' words: Let the little children come to me.

How do we explain Jesus' predilection for them? Fr. Justin makes it spring forth from the eternal act of the Father's love for the Son, for whom all things were made (Jn 1, 3).

The symphony of love that the Holy Spirit creates between the Father and the Son resounds in a different way in each soul. In the children that still emanate the odor of the baptismal innocence it is perceived differently than in the adults, without the profane echoes of sins, and it is reproduced in their lives in a different manner. Upon this intuition the author develops the lecture, which touching different aspects of pastoral, ascetical and moral theology, and psychic-pedagogy shows the multifaceted personality of the presenter, profound connoisseur of that tender age called childhood.

For Fr. Justin childhood is the ideal season where the seed of grace germinates

and grows fast. While in the adult the grace of baptism risks losing itself in the chaos of sin, in the soul of the child it invades, it operates at full speed.

Fr. Justin wants to defend at all costs the faithful soul of childhood from the inevitable barbaric invasions of sin. He explains the reason: The loss of baptismal innocence is always a fateful catastrophe, especially at that early age, for the resemblance to the first sin of angels and man. Catastrophe, in a very bitter way, painful to the Sacred Heart, because it is the first betrayal of an immensely loved person! In this reflection the reader will be able to recognize an autobiographical element. How many times in the not so distant future, the heart of the Father Founder will be wounded by the betrayal of young vocations! The poignant notes of the song: "Spento quel Falso Sole – Darkened that false sun" arise from a history of disappointment caused by a vocational abandonment.

Fr. Justin believes that the condition of the child is the most well disposed to become Christian cooperation with God, and to open itself to the action of grace. The effects of the gift of the Eucharist find fertile field in the child. In this season the Lord's life enables the youngster more directly and freely to feel the breeze of a vocation. The divine teacher, in open contrast with philosophers and politician of his time that used to focus on youths, preferred to focus on the children. Today like then the children are easy prey of violent exploiters of every kind. Ahead of his time, Fr. Justin perceives that we need to invest on the children restarting with them to save families and society.

In the most recent pastoral guidelines, children are still among the first evangelizers of today's society.

In this light, to this day, the Lecture is an eloquent document for the spiritual paths of the child's soul. Surely in the exercise of permanent catechesis and with the scent of Jesus-Host the dawn of life blooms and expands as a bud at the first kiss of the sun.

At the age in which the search and the capacity for pleasure become more evident in the child, Fr. Justin presents the Eucharist as the only reality adequate to satisfy both the needs of "raising from the pleasure of the senses to the delight of the spirit, from the thrill of union with creatures to the ecstasy of union with God".

The child cannot and must not take risk when the stability of building Christian life is at stake. The adult that returns to God leaves behind a mass of debris to be removed if he wants to rebuild the edifice of his soul. When the conversion coincides with the beginning of the use of reason, then on the foundation of the grace of Baptism is erected the construction of Christian life, without obstacles of rubble, without shocks of collapsing of underground empty spaces.

Where does the stability of the edifice reside? It resides in the practice of daily

communion, which represents a huge contribution to the solution of the vocations' shortage.

Moreover, a smile and a priestly caress will suffice to light up the spark of a vocation in the child nourished by the Eucharist, and they help to understand that vocations are "the greatest need of our time."

The lecture ends with a series of invitations that increasingly attract the child to Jesus-Host, and among them stand out the participation in Holy Mass and common Eucharistic adoration.

Overcome some linguistic redundancy and some interpretative models of the time, "The Eucharist and the Child" remains among the writings of Father Justin a milestone for its charge of passionate actuality, found today in the most authoritative documents promulgated by the Church on this topic.

The Eucharist is Jesus who repeats in every age and in every place what he said and did during the short years of his earthly life. The priests, prolongation of his person and of his action, reproduce in themselves his life with his intentions and dispositions. The priests also transmit to the peoples the treasures of his words and of his blood. As every word of the Lord, the command: *Let the little children come to me* express a disposition and an intention of the Lord that the priest must make his own. These words also communicate a good that the priest must give to all children. Jesus' disposition is love: Jesus' intention is the glory of the Father. The good that Jesus produces is the gift of himself; through this gift, love triumphs and God's glory shines forth. All this takes place because Jesus generously donates the gift, and because man, in general, and the children in particular receive it.

The disposition of the Lord toward children is love; the same disposition he has toward adults, sinners and saints, toward the Angels and toward the Father. This unique, universal disposition affects differently those upon whom it is lavished. All people recognize a special amiability in childhood. It is the amiability of little and tender things; it is the amiability of hopes and promises; it is the amiability of the renewals of life. I am not saying that Jesus in the infinite exquisiteness may be indifferent to this amiability

of childhood, but I say that Jesus, in the infinite highness of his sense, is taken by a higher amiability that we must gaze with him in the child's intimacy, no longer with corporeal eye and light, but with spiritual eye and light. Since all things were made for the Word, every soul is like a different musical note of the uncreated act of love that is the Father for the Son.

While the soul lives the unconscious life of infancy, Jesus regards and receives her with infinite delight, as an act of the Father's love, whose image and likeness the soul is. As soon as the soul enters with the use of reason in the free and conscious exercise of her faculties, she finds herself enveloped in the law of love. *You will love your God with all your heart*, a reflection of the uncreated act of love that is the Father.

The soul ordinarily produces many other acts, impulses and acts of love, which disturb with profane noises the divine music of love that deserved the complacencies of Jesus. No more complacency but pity, no more love but mercy, when, in the supernatural order, the soul is no longer a child who fulfills the promise of a flourishing life, but is like an agonizing old person, perhaps it is already a cadaver! Catastrophe always unhappy, but more in that first age, for the irreparable loss of innocence, for the resemblance to the first sin of angels and of man! Catastrophe in a very bitter way to the Sacred Heart, like the first betrayal of an immensely loved person¹, like the massacre of the innocents that stained the cradle of Jesus with their blood! Before it happens, and to prevent its happening, Jesus says, not by invitation, but by command: *Let the little ones come to me.*

¹ In this reflection we can detect an autobiographical note of Blessed Justin, who, in the song "Darkened that false Sun" (Vol. 8) and in "Tears" (Vol. 2) expresses all his disappointment and inner pain caused by the betrayal of a Vocationist Brother, in whom he trusted, and in whom he saw a valid future cooperator.

The sad causes of that ruin of the soul, on the thresholds of life, are partially in original sin, and partially outside of it. As a consequence of original sin there are deceitful tendencies in the soul, and some fallacious attractions outside of her.

Through Baptism the Lord puts right tendencies in the soul, and correct attractions outside of her. During the unconscious physical development of childhood, the soul remains enveloped by a whole sheaf of materiality, in which those unhealthy internal tendencies take place as in a favorable environment; the external fallacious attractions make a grip on the soul. *The grace of Baptism, however, is such that, alone, without any further aid from other sacraments, it is sufficient to sanctify heroically a very long series of multi-secular lives*². But the grace of Baptism is universally neglected and baptismal innocence is generally sinking! Does this happen due to the fatal necessity of things? Impossible! If, given the multiplicity of human frailty, there is no exemption from any veniality without particular privilege, there is no need of privilege for the exemption of serious sin, and therefore for the preservation of innocence.

God grants us this grace, not because we bargain it with hell, but because we preserve it and traffic it until the Day of Judgment. *Quam immaculatam perferas ad tribunal Christi - so that you may wear this white garment without stain before the tribunal of Christ* (from the Baptismal liturgy)! What a day when all Christians will live in the grace of baptism, unfolding it with the grace of the other sacraments, except for penance that supposes sin! Then, when every sinner will be dead the Church will be without wrinkles (Eph 5,7),

² Frederick William Faber, 1814-1863, and Oratorian of St. Philip Neri, a priest, converted from Anglicanism and established an Oratory in London that became a beacon of catholic life. He wrote many ascetical books that became a source of inspiration for Fr. Justin, and became required reading for the Vocationist students. Fr. Justin considers him as his spiritual father.

immaculate, holy in all its members, as she is in all her principles. In each member of the mystical body will flourish the life of its divine Head, in the full triumph of the kingdom of Jesus, in the most auspicious beginning of the new earths and the new heavens that we are expecting according to the teaching of the prince of the apostles.

Is this impossible? It will certainly be impossible with only our strength; it will be very possible with the energies of grace! It would be impossible to conserve the future generations in the baptismal innocence if we were to take direct and uninterrupted guardianship of every child. It is very possible if Jesus who works in the heart takes care of it. *Let the little children come to me!* Is there anything easier than leading them to Jesus? We really do not even need to bring them to Jesus; we must only make sure that we do not become an obstacle to their going to Jesus! Jesus does not want the children to go and stay with him simply so that he might shower upon them his divine tenderness. Jesus wants the children to be with him so that he might destroy in them the kingdom of sin and establish in them the triumph of the Church for the restoration of all mankind. With the command: *Let the little children come to me*, Jesus actually is asking that we bring to him all that contributes to his greater glory; he is aiming at the sanctification of all mankind.

Indirectly this is accomplished by means of the sanctification of the families in which the child conveys the good that he received from the priest and from Jesus. Families are very sensitive to what is good for their children, and through them they feel themselves well disposed and attracted to the priest and to Jesus. Through the ministry of sanctification of apostles and priests, the family mem-

³ **Ellen Organ or "Little Nellie of Holy God"** (August 24, 1903 - February 2, 1908) was an Irish child, venerated by some in the *Roman Catholic Church* for her precocious spiritual awareness and alleged mystical life. Particu-

bers perceive the example and the word of the Master, lower themselves to the level of the children, live among them, leave aside that which nourishes the pride of life, and participate in their candor with abandonment in the arms of God; they have the opportunity to cry their lost innocence, receive the example also proportionally heroic like those of Children Martyrs, and of Nellie Organ³ etc.

What is most marvelous is the fact that Jesus wanted and wants children for the sanctification of humanity. When did any philosopher turn to children to divulge a theory or form a school? Which king did ever enroll his children to fight his conquests? Young People! They are the necessary element sought by teachers and conquerors on account of their vivid intelligence and strong arms. But Children? Children all over the pagan world until recently were kept as semi-slaves, profaned in rites and impudent pleasures. Jesus is the first to call the children, to propose them as models of the saints and enrolls them as soldiers for the most important and demanding enterprises, for the battles and conquests of the kingdom of God. It is not the usual divine methodology of choosing weak and inept instruments to confuse strong and wise men of the world. God wants to make sure that no one may boast before him and that his creative power and his redeeming and sanctifying wisdom may shine forth over all things. It is proper of children to receive and form the kingdom of God; it is proper of children to give God perfect glory. *Talium est enim regnum coelorum - theirs is the kingdom of heaven; ex ore infantium perfecisti laudem - out of the mouth of infants you have perfected praise.*

It is necessary to deepen and enter into the mystery of the Lord's intention expressed in the command: *Let little children come*

larly dedicated to the *Eucharist*, the story of her life inspired Pope Pius X to admit young children to *Holy Communion*. The story of Little Nelly certainly reminded Fr. Justin of his own childhood and his attraction to Jesus-Eucharist.

to me. The glory of the Father is Jesus and all beings, *per ipsum, cum ipso, et in ipso est Deo Patri omnipotenti in unitate Spiritus Sancti omnis honor et gloria - through him, with him and in him to the almighty Father, in the unity of the holy Spirit, all glory and honor!* Our human action, our natural activity, when it is more distinct and independent, ordinarily does nothing but hinder and attenuate the action of God in us, even if it does not prevent or exclude it completely.

The ideal of our christian activity, more than activity in itself, is cooperation to the divine action. When a babe begins to exist, even though is a distinct being, he lives the life of the mother. Likewise when the child begins his conscious life, the use of his reason assimilates the life - so to speak - of the more developed reason of others. The activity and action of the child is not yet so distinct and naturally disposed to receive impulse from others. It is, however, in the best condition to become christian cooperation, when it is in a relationship of love with Jesus. This is the reason of: *Let little children come to me.*

Grace is God's action; it penetrates and works in us through the sacraments⁴ and mainly through the Eucharist. In the Eucharist the soul does not receive only various gifts and effusions of grace, but Jesus himself as man and as God who through Communion lives in the soul as he essentially is, the glorifier of the Father.

The effects of the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, are given to us to nourish and re-invigorate daily the life of the soul, until she reaches the fullness of the age of Christ. On the part of the sacrament the effects are infallible, however, the

⁴ See Vatican II, Sacrosantum Concilium, 47-59. Fr. Justin preceded the conciliar document on the liturgy. He lived his intimate union with God Trinity in an eminently eucharistic way of life.

adult communicant can prevent them or does not receive them in the superabundance of the gift of God because of his imperfect dispositions. In the child the effects of communion, naturally and supernaturally speaking, find for the most part free field to unfold magnificently. Let us stop for a moment to consider the grace of the sweetness of fervor in piety, which is a secondary effect of the Eucharist, it has in spiritual life the same function, importance and efficacy that pleasures have in bodily life.

Without pleasure man easily deviates from the natural goal of the life of the individual and of the species. In a similar way the soul cannot easily tend to her supernatural goal without sweetness of fervor in her piety. With the only difference that in natural pleasure we may and ordinarily we do abuse things that God left to our free will; while the soul cannot abuse spiritual pleasures because God reserved to himself to distribute to us the dose in due time and place. This is easily confirmed by the example of the saints ordinarily attracted through the way of consolations from the highest mystical states to the most crucified states of victims. We also see it in the symbolic manna, bread that came down from heaven having within it every sweetness, viaticum for the Hebrews in their peregrination through the desert toward the Promised Land. The adults perceive this effect very rarely and vaguely.

Their life, totally dedicated to the daily satisfactions as indispensable elements, tells us that they have not yet deeply experienced: *Taste and see that the Lord is good* (Ps. 34, 8). The sweetness of the Lord, the sweetness of fervor in piety in its intensity detaches the soul from earthly life. This sweetness, always, even when only lightly felt, has the capacity of detaching the soul from sensible consolations and gives her the taste of nausea that they deserve. Adult Christians generally have the senses of the soul weakened, atrophied, obstructed and mortified. This weakening is caused by the distance from sacramental reality, which regenerates spiritual life. The body develops as it moves away from the beginning of its

life; the soul, to the contrary, becomes less sensitive, less open to the action of God, I would say almost, less alive as it moves away, over time, from the baptism that has vivified her.

The senses of the soul are atrophied by the very growth of the corporeal senses, especially when these are hastened by the conscious exercise of the corporeal faculties, which, in the state of our fallen nature, are always detrimental to the soul. The senses of the soul are obstructed by the useless often-illicit use of sensitive satisfactions that profoundly disfigure the taste of the soul. They are mortified by heartbreaks and ruins of present sins, of habitual sins, lavas of fire in the field of the spirit. To make himself capable of the sweetness of God, of the habitual sweetness of fervor in piety, of the whole effect of the Eucharist, it is not enough for the adult to reconcile with God and to keep himself in his grace; this is already a lot, if the mass of the faithful practice it. We must die to the sensitive world and to ourselves in the austerity of Christian penance. There is nothing of this in the child, when he enters into the use of reason.

If the child's soul forms the delight of the Lord it is because she is the most well disposed to receive the delights of the Lord, that is, God's gift in its fullness. The child's soul is disposed to live of Jesus and to give to God, with Jesus, perfect glory. The Lord himself has disposed well the soul of the child, because if pleasure is always necessary, it is much more so during the first years of corporal and spiritual life. The instinct of life through sensitive pleasure or pain directs the child to all those acts or omissions necessary to stay alive. Likewise, grace through sweetness in the fervor of piety directs the soul to all those acts or omissions necessary for the union with God, who is her life. The adult in natural and supernatural life, in the occasional absence of pleasure, will be able to be guided by natural or supernatural reason. The child absolutely needs some kind of pleasure.

The Eucharist opens the life and the being of the child since the dawn, like perfume and splendor that expands the heart with the promise of filling it with greater joys, which will not satisfy it, but will make it capable of superior felicity. The soul in a forward divine progression is attracted, runs and flies on the way of the Lord. *Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri cum dilatasti cor meum - I run the way of your commandments for you have given me freedom of heart* (Ps119, 32). In this sweetness of fervor in piety we must trace the cause of the other effect of the Eucharist, which is the moderation of the disordered appetite for pleasure, which we call concupiscence. Grace does not destroy nature but elevates it. Likewise, the Eucharist does not destroy this appetite and capacity for pleasure, but sanctifies it by elevating it from the tastes of the senses to the delights of the spirit, from the thrill of union with creatures to the ecstasy of union with God, with ever-greater effectiveness. The more one receives sweetness from the Sacrament, the less he feels the ardor of concupiscence. We have seen that the first condition is proper to the Christian child, and so is also the second.

Concupiscence is a vice common to all ages; in the adult it burns like a fire in whose light he sees people and things; in the child it is only a spark. How much easier and wiser it is to extinguish a spark, or to utilize a spark rather than a fire! Thus for children especially the Eucharist is the *frumentum electorum et vinum germinans virgines - wheat and wine of the elect germinating virgins*. Jesus therefore with the infinite desire with which he wants his talents to be received and trafficked, with which he wants to be repaid in his state of love, with which he wants to live in souls to glorify the Father, with this same divine desire he wants the children to come to him as they begin to use their reason so that they may be able to know and receive him from the moment they can distinguish the bread of the Eucharist from natural bread.

There is nothing easier for the priest to do than to put the child's soul in this current of divine sympathy towards Jesus,

from whom he will be serenely transported to God. This is the ideal conversion of man and humanity to God! When the adult is converted to God, even with those conversions that are at the basis of the great sanctities, how long he must wait to demolish, to expiate, and to purify himself! Conversely, when conversion coincides with entering into the use of reason, then, on the foundation of immense baptismal grace, the building of Christian life is elevated, without obstructions of rubble, without shocks of collapsed empty voids. When calling an adult to discipleship, Jesus will have to impose on him separation from relatives, from material possessions, often also from offices of responsibility, he will have to promise him a hundredfold of everything even in this life. The child, on the other hand, is free from serious attachments, for him the smile of his gaze and the caress of his hand are more than enough. Among these children who grow up around Jesus, who nourish themselves with Jesus, will come out many vocations to the priesthood, to consecrated and mystical life that are a great need, the greatest need of our time.

The child of our time, in reality, does not always correspond to this type; this means that he is not a child as it seems, but he is an adult in the knowledge and experience of evil. He did not meet with Jesus; he did not feed on Jesus entering into the use of reason. If he had had this blessing, his holy life would no longer surprise us, as we are not surprised by the heroism of young martyrs in the first centuries of Christianity. Those from childhood fed themselves with the body and blood of the Lord and won the tyrants with a martyr's death. These too will face many tyrants and will win if they live a Christian life. In theory, in our time, no one is opposed to the admission of children to Holy Communion.

The families do not raise difficulties that cannot be easily dispelled by the authoritative word of the priest. Yet too many children still do not receive Jesus at their tender age when they enter the use of reason, or do not frequently return to Jesus, or do not

remain with Jesus. The common duty and necessity of educators and children wants them to receive Communion at the right time as they enter the use of reason, and continue to receive communion with Jesus Eucharist frequently, even every day. Although it has been established that the solemnity of the first Communion should be repeated more than once a year, there are still cases that many children must defer Holy Communion several days if they want to participate in that very dear feast. Therefore, among those who form or follow the happy catechetical movement developed everywhere, we must mention the issue that the first private communion does comply with the spirit of the pontifical dispositions. Those who want to continue the solemnity of the first communion insist especially on the holy impressions that the feast leaves in the soul of a child, and that they may continue in the soul a beneficial influence throughout life.

If we reflect on what one communion more and one communion less mean, without much discussion we will say that the first communion feast should continue to be celebrated several times a year. In case that, in order for a child to participate in the First Communion, the communion should be deferred, we say let him make his first communion privately. The effects of even one communion are too much greater than all the effects of all the holy emotions; it is not plausible to defer those in order not to lose these. There are some difficulties perceived, even though they are not spoken about, to admit children to daily communion. It is not frequent the case of priests, or catechists who purposely invite the children to receive Holy Communion every day and come to the aid of their inconstancy, encouraging them with pious initiatives to persevere.

Some fear that irreverent habits may be formed towards the Blessed Sacrament from the buoyancy of the child. In the end it is the irrelevance of the little ones that animates a lot of priests in their relations with the children. We do not appreciate what is

done for them, as we do not appreciate what is done for young people, families and society. It is the little attraction for all that is small, which does not require much talent, does not give the opportunity to appear, does not offer correspondence or retribution. The amiability of children may draw a smile, it could attract a caress, but it is not enough to fascinate our entire lives.

If one day our zeal becomes charity, and not a mixture of natural activity and vanity, we will feel the need to begin every form of apostolate with the children. If one day our faith will be stronger, we will fear even more the irreverent habits that could be formed in the children that receive Holy Communion every day. This, however, should not encourage us to alienate them, but should make us feel the obligation to inspire and motivate them to receive the Eucharist every day in a crescendo of faith and love. Let us therefore leave to the happy priestly inventiveness the choice of means to obtain that all children receive fervently daily communion. We propose now the most common and effective means: 1) Liturgical participation in the Holy Mass; 2) Communal adoration; 3) The Association of Holy Childhood.

Since before being a sacrament the Eucharist is a sacrifice, the better we participate in the sacrificed body of the Lord, the better we participate in the entire divine drama of his sacrifice, with due knowledge of its parts, rites and symbols, with a more intimate union with the priest in the liturgical prayer and action.

What the Council of Trent imposed on the parish priests, that is, to explain the rites of Holy Mass to the people to obtain a more lively participation in the holy mysteries, the current catechism with the prayers that conclude the various parts, all taken from the missal, with its appendix on holydays and liturgical year, with translation of the ordinary of the Mass points out that we must start this liturgical preparation in the first religious education classes. Pope Benedict XV has endowed with particular approval

and blessings the manuals of liturgical prayers for children, and the bishops have started to add liturgical catechisms to complete the dogmatic catechisms. Bring the children around the church, the sacristy, show to them the liturgical vestments and sacred vessels and explain to them their symbolism. Repeat with the children the ceremonies and prayers of the Mass and you will get a more delightful attention than you would get from a seminarian who is studying liturgy. Do they perceive the mystical sweetness emanating from everything that is sacred and blessed? If it is only an effect of natural curiosity, it should not be neglected, as it can be an occasion and foundation for growth in piety.

The adoration that the children do in common is not only loving attention to our Lord, it is also preparation and thanksgiving for the communion of the previous and following morning. It is a realization of life under the gaze of the divine Guest; it is a re-confirmation of all the good feelings received during catechism classes, confessions, and communions. It is favoring the passive assimilation of the divine food; it is especially the preparation for the necessary awakening of the public cult. Since not only troubled individuals but also masses move away from God, the intelligent and loving participation of the people in the liturgical cult begins to be absent.

The elderly generations now still send their representatives to the church somewhere more and somewhere less numerous. The new generations pass with indifference by the doors of the temple. We must therefore take them by the hand in the years in which they easily let themselves to be steered and get them used, and make them fall in love with community worship. It may be enough for children to fall in love with adoration in common if it is done with external solemnity; to get them used, however, it is necessary to do it frequently.

We must take advantage of the years in which the child is not

yet yoked to work, when much of the day is free to form him for these practices; later, it would be almost impossible that on the one day when he can rest, he may give the good God something more than the Mass, unless he learns by experience how to find rest for the soul in the visit to his Lord.

The Association of Holy Childhood is not, as it might seem at first sight, extraneous to the Eucharist, but is joint to it both with regard to the priest and to the child. We priests must make our own the words of the Lord: *Let the little children come to me*. We cannot administer the holy sacrament to a Christian child without thinking with affliction to the millions of children that Jesus calls, to whom we also wish to administer the sacrament, and who, in the meantime, are agonizing far away from it.

The Christian child to fervently receive the body and blood of the Lord must communicate charity to his spirit. The apostolate, more than fruit of charity, which to be produced in tender plants needs many long seasons, is an essential element of charity. Apostolate can never be separated from charity, not even at its beginning, not even in children. The children have to get used to the two forms of apostolate, prayer and material cooperation in the forms that are appropriate to them, and all this is done in the *Work of Holy Childhood*, which therefore makes them dearer to Jesus and initiates them to being Catholics of action. For all this, it is not enough the pastor not even the cooperation of the parochial vicar. For this apostolate, chosen laypersons are really needed especially for the teaching of catechism, which, in its entirety, includes all the formation of the child.

Cardinal Capecepatro hoped to see the Pia Opera of Saint Dorothy flourish in Southern Italy, taking advantage of the good will of many pious souls for these ends. We can conclude that like any other work of faith, this one of the sanctification of children through the Eucharist is such that, it could fill and absorb

the whole life of a priest very nobly. That is why we hope and propose that every priest take care of it. In every parish someone should be appointed who in a special way becomes the children's chaplain; he will help the parish priest in this branch of ministry by:

1. Directing and promoting catechetical schools, even private ones, and providing, from time to time, elementary lessons of practical liturgy.

2. Making sure that every child receives first communion as soon as possible, and visiting the families of the parish for this purpose in due time.

3. Working to ensure that every child is able to attend and communicate daily at Mass, together.

4. Leading them together, often, I would say every day, to simple adoration and with some solemnity at least once a month.

5. Promoting among them the Association of Holy Childhood and other pious associations, taking special care of those who show inclination to the priesthood and religious life. Preparing the children for the examination over the entire catechism, which is presided every year in each of his parishes by our Most Reverend Bishop.

THE LITURGY AND THE CLERGY

Perhaps none of the ten Lectures of Fr. Justin has received more consents than this. The presentation was interrupted by thunderous and repeated applause by the priests present at the conference on 30 April 1925; exactly ten years after the first Lecture, held in Pozzuoli on "The Eucharist and the Child".

Father Justin was expressly requested by Bishop Petrone to develop the theme "The Liturgy and the Clergy". The bishop knew the young parish priest of Pianura as a special expert in liturgical renewal, which, from France and Belgium had arrived to Italy with the first pioneers and official promoters, the Benedictines of Filalpia (Savona). The text of the Lecture was published on their prestigious liturgical magazine in July of the same year.

One month after its presentation the Bishop of Pozzuoli published the Lecture in the diocesan magazine "La Voce della Verità". In the year 1959, Mons. Antonio De Felice, parish priest at Torre del Greco published it in the parish bulletin "Vox Domini", defining its author "inspired, a precursor's voice".

Undoubtedly the instances and intuitions of the fifty points of which the Lecture is composed, we find them today with full citizenship in the documents of Vatican II and in the most recent lessons on the liturgy.

On the basic principle that the clergy exists for the liturgy Fr. Justin develops the specific function of the liturgical service that creates the boundary line between the priest, minister of worship, and the layman. The beginning of the lecture focuses on the two main aspects to be achieved: 1) To prepare the clergy with the study of liturgical norms to enter the heart of the mystery that is celebrated. 2) To stimulate the priests to become apostles of the liturgy.

Every Vocationist knows how zealously their Founder conducted the liturgy in its various stages of preparation and execution. In the "Offertories of the Precious Blood" that the Vocationists are obliged to pray every day, Fr. Justin writes: Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit we offer you the precious blood of our

Lord Jesus Christ so that you may grant us the perfect knowledge and observance of all the liturgical laws ... and the perfect apostolate of prayer, action and sacrifice of all the liturgical laws.

Faced with the ignorance and indifference of the faithful in liturgical matters, many priests must say: "mea culpa". The non-active participation of the people of God in liturgical celebrations is to be attributed exclusively to the ministers of the cult who abdicate their task of educating themselves and of educating the faithful to grasp the true meaning of the liturgy. We find the echo of this reflection in the document of the Synod of Bishops about priests who, by virtue of their ministry, have the grace and the responsibility of being living instruments to realize the centrality of the mystery of the Eucharist. So we read in the document of the Synod of the Bishops that was held in Rome in 2005: "Despite the many benefits brought about by the liturgical reform of Vatican II, one of the most difficult problems is often the transmission of the true sense of liturgy, and even the temptation of a return to the old formalisms or of venturing into the naive search for the spectacular, sometimes it seems that the sacramental event is not grasped".

For Father Justin the scope of the liturgy must not be limited to the sacred ceremonies and the external celebrations of divine worship, but must include the whole ecclesiastical arrangement of prayer, sacrifice, sacraments, which are the three essential parts, constitutive of divine worship.

Having cleared the field of the stereotype of a liturgy characterized by external rituals, the author professes an integral liturgy that projects man into the divine sphere, a "propter Deum" liturgy, which includes in the Glory of God the salvation of the whole man. "So the clergy and the liturgy must form one whole that is realized in a twofold moment: of preparation, in study and teaching, and of execution in the apostolate and above all together in the Holy Spirit, unifier and vivifying".

The complete and permanent formation of the future minister must aim to ensure that he becomes the interpreter and privileged witness of divine worship.

Fr. Justin does not spare criticism to the Ratio Institutionis of the seminaries that places the study of sacred liturgy in a state of subjection to the other sciences such as dogmatic, patristic, moral and spiritual theology. The theory of communicating vessels is also valid in the relations between the various theological disciplines. Dogmatic theology cannot be separated from sacred liturgy, "source of the ecclesiastical tradition from which it also draws dogmatic in the priestly life. The liturgy must be the great and permanent study that absorbs every other, just as divine worship is the great and permanent occupation that absorbs all others".

A clergy better prepared in the liturgical field, says Fr. Justin, "overflows into an ideal liturgical teaching, ideal for the people; it flourishes in the various forms of liturgical apostolate and produces the divine fervor of divine worship". With the

liturgical science the priest must take possession of the liturgical sense that is communicated to him by the "coexistence with the saints".

"Liturgical science and liturgical sense are the necessary principle of every apostolate".

The speaker's warning stands louder against any liturgical flattening: "Let us raise up the divine worship which in many parts is very low on account of ignorance and common negligence". Criticism against liturgical abuses by excess or defect is also addressed to spiritual directors who are called upon to put a little order in the jungle of devotions that do not increase but diminish the liturgy of divine worship. Fr. Justin exhorts the directors of souls not to offer them "eucharistic sparks, golden hay and drops of dew but to introduce them to the sacred fires, to golden mines, to the sources of living water, putting in their hands first the liturgical books with their biblical devotions, elevations of prophets, the divine psalter".

Moreover, why not "revitalize every action of life with the power of the sacraments and their imitations (sacramentals)" sacramentalizing every creature with various blessings not only for solemn and rare occasions but also for all the uses of life?

Father Justin points out the "most grievous fault" of God's people in their lack of active participation in the liturgy and suggests the remedy: "Now, let the people take again their place with their priests, let them pray, offer and communicate with the prayer, the offering and the sacrifice of Christ. Thus the people will enter, maintain and progress in the divine worship". From this starts the explicit invitation to the laity to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the priests and with the parish community. The liturgical year that Fr. Justin divides in nine Lents (9 Periods of forty days) and seven Pentecosts (7 periods of fifty days) is presented and lived not as a historical remembrance of the salvific events of the past but as a total immersion in the Trinitarian love through the Easter mystery.

Meditating again upon this Lecture the reader may comprehend today all its prophetic depth absorbed by the Church in her spiritual heritage. To us remains the exemplary lesson of a man who made of the Divine Liturgy the prelude of his Trinitarian heaven for universal sanctification.

1. The clergy exists for the liturgy, because, to use the very words of Canon Law, the clergy is distinct from the laity, specifically for its totally particular destination "*Ad cultus divini ministerium - to the ministry of divine cult*".

2. The clergy is given the government of the Christian people in order to attract all souls to this liturgy, since divine worship is precisely the supreme, universal, unique goal of all creation.
3. In the Liturgy we find the reason of the distinction between laity and clergy, and within the clergy the distinction between ministries and sacred orders according to the various levels of consecration to the divine worship.
4. Sacred liturgy helps us to understand the distinction between clergy and laity. "Liturgy" is a word almost unknown to the majority of the lay people, and certainly not understood in its integral sense by the clergy.
5. The ignorance of the people reveals and accuses lack of teaching from the clergy; and this reveals and accuses, I do not want to say a fault, but certainly an erroneous conscience concerning the liturgy.
6. "Sacred ceremonies are necessary for the carrying out of sacred functions. In sacred functions the ordained ministers are actors, the people are purely spectators. It is enough for the clergy to study and carry out the sacred rites, the people do not need anything else". Many think so, even if they do not say it.
7. Apart from the error of considering the people as mere spectators in sacred functions, even if the priest had studied, taught and diligently observed all the sacred ceremonies, could we consider, for this, that he studied and taught the divine liturgy?
8. The sacred ceremonies are only an external manifestation of the religious life of the Church in the divine service. As divine

liturgy we must understand the total ecclesiastical organization of prayer, sacrifice and sacraments that are the three essential components of divine worship.

9. The Spirit of God through the Church unifies and vivifies all religious studies, all sacred objects and all sacred actions through authentic and integral liturgy. The human spirit following its original deviations brings divisions, and therefore diminishes, profanes and kills the Divine Liturgy.
10. Of the liturgy we can say what can be said of the sacraments, its essential part, because the great majority of liturgical objects and acts have been instituted by the Church *"in aliquam sacramentorum imitationem - in some kind of imitation of the sacraments"* according to the expression of law of the Church.
11. In order to have a sacrament the matter only is not enough. It is indispensable, for the validity of the sacrament, the form and the minister, with sufficient intentions and convenient attention Likewise for the divine liturgy the material and exterior element is not enough, something more important is needed.
12. In the administration of the holy sacraments, a sacred minister must do his very best to ensure at least its validity (and rightly so). Dealing with the eternal interests of souls, since *"sacramenta propter homines - the sacraments are for men"* much more we must apply all our faculties to know and to fully observe the liturgy. With the same truth and strength we can say *"liturgy propter Deum - the liturgy is for God"*.
13. The glory of the Lord and the salvation of souls converging in the exact same needs, are entrusted to the divine liturgy, and to the priestly ministry that almost becomes one with the

liturgy. They can be considered as liturgy and clergy, liturgy and priestly ministry in a twofold moment: The first, as preparation and teaching, the second, as execution in personal practice and in the apostolate; and above all they are one in the unifying and vivifying inner spirit.

14. All the studies and especially those of the sacred sciences that precede the sacred ordinations aim mainly to enable the minister of God to exercise divine worship. Likewise every form of apostolate aims only at leading souls to the exercise of divine worship.
15. These sacred studies must not be considered as foundation-basis, that once laid underground, are forever sufficient to sustain the entire building. They must be considered as foundation-root that must be alive, work and ever more sink deeply in the soil in order to nourish the plants for the continuous productions of fruits.
16. The intellectual vision and growth cannot and must not end with the priestly ordination. It must continue until it becomes supernatural intuitive vision, which is achieved completely, only with the entrance into paradise.
17. In the seminary curriculum, liturgy does not occupy the first place, which is given to dogmatic theology, since it is the foundation-basis and the foundation-root, in force of its place and function, precedes the building of the edifice. In the priestly life it must be the great and permanent study that absorbs all others; just as divine worship is the great and permanent occupation that absorbs all others.
18. The study of liturgy must never be separated from the study of theology to which liturgy brings a great treasure of themes and proofs as a wellspring of the Church's Tradition, and

from which, in turn, the liturgy receives basic support and root-nourishment, according to that axiom: *Lex credendi legem statui supplicandi* - *The law of faith established the law of prayer.*

19. In this truly priestly study we see with priestly vital satisfaction, every liturgical act blossoming like a flower from a dogmatic truth, as from a natural stem. We see every liturgical act bringing, as its own fruit, new light and sweetness to the correspondent dogmatic truth, true nutrition of the soul.
20. Is there a better and more necessary preparation to each cycle of the liturgical year than the study of the corresponding treatise of theology? And vice versa, is there a better and more necessary revival of the series of truths and dogmatic articles than the corresponding liturgical practices?
21. This is the ideal liturgical science of the clergy, which, after having reached the living and progressive fullness in the priest, overflows into ideal liturgical teaching for the people, blooms in the various forms of liturgical apostolate and produces the divine fervor of divine worship.
22. Liturgy is not a purely theoretical, but a practical science; it requires not only the knowledge of the principles but the applications exercise that are not left to whim of the individuals, but according to the inspirations that direct the Church. Liturgical science must be combined with the liturgical sense, and this is not learned from books, it is communicated to us through our connivance with saints.
23. The internal history of the Catholic Church is, at the same time, the whole history of liturgy as it has been understood, lived and performed by the Fathers, the Saints and Religious Institutes especially the monastic ones. On the other hand, the study of history places us in touch with them. From them

that still live in their works, in their disciples, and much more, in the liturgy of heaven, from them is sensibly transfused into us the liturgical sense, that we, in turn, must transmit into the people of God.

24. Liturgical science and liturgical sense are the necessary origin of the liturgical apostolate. Every form of apostolate somehow must be able to be called liturgical, for its goal, which tends to lead all souls to divine worship. Here, as liturgical apostolate we intend all that is used by the same divine worship, well taught and practiced, to attract the souls that are far away.
25. *When I am lifted up, I will draw everything to myself*, says the Lord (Jn 12,32). Let us elevate the cult that in many parts is flat due to ignorance and common negligence. In divine worship it is Jesus himself who rises up above the souls, divine love of attraction, divine love of elevation, divine grace of elevation. But this divine cult is nothing more than the liturgical cult in its purity, in its integrity.
26. We do not speak of real abuses, offensive of the purity of the cult. We like to suppose that they are all eliminated by the faithful obedience of the priest to the wise and vigilant directives of the Pastor. But we cannot but deplore the fact that divine worship does not take place in its integrity, somewhere by underdoing and somewhere overdoing.
27. First by excess. How many additions of pious, extraliturgical practices! Individually taken are praiseworthy, useful, approved. Why do they have to jam, distort and stifle strictly liturgical practices with their accumulation? This is not an increase, but a detriment to the true liturgy.
28. A small example. How many saints inhabit the churches... and

very well! And many times the holy titulars of the individual altars, the holy martyrs whose relics are on the altars, are forgotten or completely ignored. The clergy will have to keep them and make others hold them in that regard required by the liturgy, in the consecrations of the churches and of the altars and not to allow overcrowding them with statues.

29. Perhaps there is no church where there is no reproduction and exercise, especially during Lent, of Jerusalem's Via Crucis, the holy city of yesterday. And why must the historic stations of Rome, the holy city of today, with the corresponding Lenten prayers, remain a historical memory, barely mentioned in the missal?
30. And when good souls growing everywhere in number and perhaps even in favor of grace, ask guidance for prayer, why do the priests give them only eucharistic sparks, golden straw and drops of dew, while they should introduce them to the sacred fires, to the mines of gold, to the springs of living water, putting again in their hands the liturgical books with their biblical devotions, the elevations of the prophets and the divine psaltery? Small examples and nothing else.
31. And by default, reasoning from the least to the most what a wealth and abundance of sacraments, not utilized and perhaps ignored! Father Faber calls the sacrament of marriage the most daring invasion of grace in the field of nature. Nowadays the world that surrounds us, the whole world of action in which we live is invaded, occupied, transformed by liturgical grace.
32. The Church exercises and carries out her power and liturgical law, multiplying the sacramentals, in imitations of the sacraments, giving rise to a continuous proof of spiritual vitality and motherhood. Is it perhaps only to increase the volume

of the ritual through which the Church attracts, elevates and spiritualizes every element that can serve man, in his divine liturgy, sacramentalizing every creature?

33. The Holy Church wants to add to the natural virtue of creatures a supernatural value and efficiency, to perpetuate and universalize her religious teaching, and to help in all possible ways souls to sanctify themselves by spreading, intensifying divine worship with these sacramentals¹, which are not solely for solemn and rare occasions, but for all circumstances of life, so that the priest could continually radiate around blessings upon blessings on things and people.
34. How good it would be to add at least to the holy festive parish Mass the solemn aspersion to the people! How much need there is at least currently to repeat, even in public, the Exorcism² against Satan and the rebellious Angels! How good it would be to establish, at least within the church's precincts, the processions to ask for rain, good weather, freedom from storms, in times of scarcity or hunger, mortality and war, in any tribulation and in thanksgiving, instead of mumbling that the listing of the collections does not arrive on time! How good it would be to sanctify our visits to the sick with the blessing of the sick and to crown solemn catechisms with the blessing of

¹ "Sacramental" is a material object, thing or action set apart or blessed to manifest the respect due to the sacraments and so excite pious thoughts and increase devotion to God. The Catholic Church currently defines sacramentals as "sacred signs which... signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the **intercession** of the Church. By them men are **disposed** to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and **various occasions** in life are rendered **holy**."

² Pope Leo XIII published the Exorcism against Satan and the rebellious Angels. The Holy Father exhorts priests and lay faithful to say this prayer as often as possible, as a simple exorcism to curb the power or influence of the devil over us.

children: in a word, to know deeply and to use sacramentals extensively.

35. More serious is the defect when nothing is accomplished at all, or the main important liturgical functions are carried out in an incomplete way, in general for lack of capable personnel - The use of children in many liturgical acts is ancient and legitimate. Children do not fail to come and the *chorales pueri* - *the children choir* are easily formed by the priest who has liturgical science, sense and zeal.
36. The main defect is the lack of participation of the people in the liturgy. The liturgical apostolate is not complete in its form and in its efficacy if it does not come to actively unite the people to the clergy in the divine office and in the divine mysteries, distinctly and proportionately always, but also actively.
37. In the liturgy of the sacraments, the people play the part of the receiver and we know how they must have good dispositions, on their part, to fruitfully receive them. The liturgical prayer par excellence, The Liturgy of the Hours, is considered alien by many people and also by some ministers. The notion that the Liturgy of the Hours is prayer seems really lost. Many look at The Liturgy of the Hours with a smile of compassion. The project to surround God with a choir of laypeople, which together with the clergy, in the canonical hours, fulfill the *Opus Dei - the Work of God*, is seen as a dream and utopia. Let us use some of the Hours as morning, midday, evening and night prayer. The Office of Readings could be used in lieu of some holy hours.
38. Father Adrian Crea³, founder of Canons Regular of the Im-

³ Adrien Crea, 1828-1917, a French priest who through great difficulties and oppositions in 1865 founded the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception.

maculate Conception, first in the parish constituted mostly by iron foundry workers, then in the diocese of which he was Vicar General, and later wherever his religious are called, he obtained many admirable effects through the liturgical apostolate of which we speak.

39. The active participation of the people in the divine mysteries, in the holy sacrifice, is not difficult. Today the clergy works to find collaborators amongst the people for the various works of his ministry. The priest feels the need to unite the people to himself; for a long time the priest had forgotten the right of the people to be more united to him in the same ministry, in divine liturgy. Now the people should retake their places around the altar with their priest. Lay people should pray, offer, communicate in prayer to the offertory, to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Thus they will enter, persevere and progress in the divine way.
40. In the clergy and in the people there is a divine hidden talent that enables them to reach this science and liturgical sense, this piety and liturgical life. It is the same grace of the priestly order that gives the clergy the right to all internal and external graces, to worthily fulfill the office imposed on him by the Church; an office that with a single and sacred word says: Liturgy.
41. Through the grace of the sacrament of Baptism, amongst all other graces, we also share in the priesthood of Jesus. Through baptism we become members of Jesus' mystical body and we are endowed with all actual, external and internal graces that enable us to exercise all the acts of this general priesthood of the faithful within the holy Church. All these acts are equally summarized in a single and sacred word: Liturgy.
42. Both for the clergy and the people it is the grace of the sacra-

mentals that enrich the liturgy and, at the same time, from the meritorious value of the prayer of the Church they derive the value that cannot be found in all other acts of private devotion.

43. There is nothing more false than considering the various liturgical actions, commemorations of the past, according to the mundane use of this word "commemoration". In the technical-liturgical language the meaning of "commemoration" is given to us by the one who said: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem - do this in memory of me*. Commemorations that are real, living, divine renewal and reproduction of the divine mysteries in the world and in the souls. It is like every spring that does not represent or remember only, but reproduces and renews all the past springs.
44. Thus, Advent and Christmas, Epiphany, Passion and Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus are progressively renewed throughout every liturgical year, in every pilgrim soul in the world, living in the Catholic Church: *Donec occurramus omnes in virum perfectum; in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi - Until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ* (Ep 4, 13).
45. The same Spirit, who prepared the world for the coming of the Messiah with the holiness of the patriarchs and of the prophets, works in the souls the expansion of holy desires that constitute the spirituality of the Advent liturgy. The same Spirit that formed the humanity of the Incarnate Word in the virgin, forms the new man according to Jesus Christ and directs him toward Jesus following a ray of mystical stars, in the liturgy of the Christmas cycle.
46. The same Spirit that led Jesus into the desert to score victo-

ries against temptations introduces the liturgical soul into the austerity of active and passive purifications of Lent. The Spirit that led Jesus to offer and immolate himself as victim for the world, places in the soul the need of consecrations, reparations and immolations following the red banner of the crucified King that the liturgy expounds during Passiontide. The same Spirit who associated to himself the Virgin Mary in the whole work of redemption, now leads all souls to unite themselves to the Holy Virgin in all phases of spiritual life.

47. This Holy Spirit with the Easter liturgy introduces us to a new world, to new heavens, in a celestial conversation, in the very temple of the soul, where the Most Holy Trinity resides as in his own kingly palace, where God is to be courted with an infinite chorus of spiritual bouquets and hosts, with the highest reproduction of the interior life of our Lord Jesus Christ.
48. True integral liturgy starts with dogmatic theology and reaches asceticism, the summit of Christian morality. All the series of prayers and sacraments, which according to the ecclesiastical sequence constitute the divine liturgy, must be carried out and developed intensely and ardently in the soul, and externally with dignity, easiness, and sweetness of liturgical behavior and liturgical modesty every day and every year.
49. Every priestly soul, whether member of the clergy or of God's people, certainly possesses the wisdom, intellect and science of these truths. When the soul considers them more closely and explicitly, a divine counsel that she hopes to practice with piety, fortitude and fear of God imbues her. I would like to propose publicly such a counsel in the usual form of vows, the first in the more interior order, and the second in the more external order.
50. 1) Let everyone commit himself to a particular devotion to

the Holy Spirit in order to achieve the divine fervor of the divine worship through a great application to the liturgy.

- 2) Let everyone give plenty of space and great importance to a systematic exposition of the monthly liturgical "case" as it is already done by the clergy, in order to stimulate the deepening of the study of the liturgy in its interior and exterior element in order to increase a well-understood liturgical apostolate.

CATECHETICAL MISSIONS

From April 17 to April 20, 1928 was celebrated in Naples the Catechetical Regional Congress. The congress was an answer to the necessity of giving to the people a religious formation in the catechetical format that Fr. Justin had made the focal point of his apostolate. Fr. Justin was asked to give a lecture on "Catechetical Missions. "No one better than he - wrote Msgr. Cafaro in the diocesan bulletin of Pozzuoli, La voce della Verità - could present such a theme... He spoke of something already experienced in his parish: His Vocationist Sisters go from house to house, through courtyards and streets establishing in the open air schools of catechism. The Congregation of the Vocationists was born from a priest that taught catechism everyday.

In the presentation of the lecture, Fr. Justin aims at a higher goal: searching and cultivating vocations from among the children, in a level ever more perfect and integral. The starting point of the presentation is Jesus' mandate to the apostles: Go and teach all nations (Mt 18 14).

St. Paul refers to the missionary command of the Lord when he writes to the Romans: Faith ex auditu - faith comes from preaching. In the lecture we read: The instrument of the word needs a minister or interpreter: an apostles that talks and an evangelist that writes

It is a most sacred duty of the priest to preach the word of God every day. The catechetical missions are presented and proposed as extraordinary instruments in proclaiming the word.

Considered in the supernatural order, a catechetical mission corresponds in the natural order to the cycles of the seasons (Summer and Autumn) in which abounds the production of fruits.

In the social-familial order with his work, man must make sure to make the necessary provision of food to feed the family for the entire year. Likewise in the

spiritual field, in particular periods of his life, man must provide for himself an abundant reserve of the word of God.

This is the aim of the catechetical missions. How do we define a catechetical mission and which are its primary objectives? A catechetical mission is a period of time during which the missionaries upon explicit mandate of the bishop evangelize a parish community through catechetical instructions and liturgical celebrations.

The catechetical instructions for the evangelization of the people of God must involve the various social classes of a territory and the different age groups. It starts with the children to get to the parents, young people, students, workers and professionals.

The contents of the preaching must deepen truths of the Church (Dogmas), the commandments of God, moral, liturgical and pastoral urgencies. The mission must cover at least a year to bear its fruit. What is actually the main objective of the mission? Fr. Justin expresses it this way: "vigorous reawakening of souls from the sleep of sins". This goal is obtained by subtracting spaces to religious ignorance: "The sleep of the sleeps, the chain of chains, the disorder of the disorders of the poor souls."

All founders of religious institutes (Fr. Justin included) have always considered the mission as the soul of their charism. In past times the founders of religious orders in planning their missions tended to sanctify first the local clergy from whose work, example and doctrine depends everything else. Likewise the catechetical missionaries with the superior of the mission will have the task of forming local catechists and to establish a permanent school of catechesis, which at the end of the mission will continue their service to the parish.

To be effective religious instruction must reach everybody. No one should be deprived of salvation! Salvation passes through some channels: The banquet of the word and the banquet of the body and blood of Jesus. The practice of the sacraments is intimately connected to the level of knowledge and assimilation of the word of God. What tools do the missionary possess to transmit to all categories of faithful this religious instruction? First of all, they must treasure all the experiences of the apostles of the past, if they want to form armies of catechists for the service of dioceses. With the help of the Holy Spirit the catechetical missionaries will be able to inspire and form so many fervent, mystical, and apostolic soul-mothers that will effectively cooperate with the diocesan and religious priests in the work of evangelization.

Thus, evangelization will be a task of the entire parish community, and the local church will be in a state of long-lasting mission. It is desirable in every parish a stable mission coordinated by a responsible missionary, outstanding for knowledge

and integrity of life. Both knowledge and integrity of life are necessary to prevent the failure of every good program and initiative. The world does not need programmer teachers, but testimonies of the word that are "saints and sanctifiers".

Fr. Justin concludes his presentation praising the great mission preached in Great Britain at the end of the seventeenth century by the Venerable Michel de Nobletz, and he ascribes its great success to the catechetical method used. Through an historical review, the lecturer mentions the catechetical missions carried on in France and Italy by holy evangelizer like John Eudes, Vincent De Paul, Louis M. Grignon de Montfort, Paul of the Cross and Alphonsus de Liguori. On this road paved by many milestones of Catholic holiness walks also the Society of Divine Vocations born from the zeal of a humble parish priest who made of his life the most beautiful catechetical mission.

Our Lord has set the ministry of the word as an ordinary tool to call souls to faith, and to nurture in them the life of grace. *Fides ex auditu, auditus per verbum Christi - Faith comes from hearing, hearing from the word of Christ* (Rm 10, 17). This tool is divinely proportioned and corresponds to the nature and acts, to the beginning and end of supernatural life, and it is ordained to its transmission and development. Life is Jesus himself who proclaims: *I am the way, the truth and the life* (Jn 14,6). For those who have lost this life: *I am the resurrection and the life* (Jn 11,25). For those who want to progress in life: *I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly* (Jn 10, 10). *Haec est vita aeterna ut cognoscant te (Pater) et quem to misisti - Eternal life is this: To know you (Father) and the one you sent* (Jn 17, 3).

The word is like the living image of the Divine Word; it is like the external echo on the interior Word: It is a created and human sound of the uncreated Divine Word. The Incarnate Word tasks his ministers and continuators with this ministry of the word. Jesus spends all his public life to familiarize through his example the apostles with this special mission entrusted to them: *Docete omnes gentes - Teach all nations* (Mt 28, 19).

Therefore, as much as eternal life is necessary in the souls, so much is the ministry of the divine word necessary for souls. It is a question of life and death. Neither the child's nor the adult's soul can breathe this life by herself. The Lord has established that in the supernatural order, no less than in the natural order, life is communicated to us by others and the elements of life are supplied to us by the outer world. Man has organs that transmit life to others, but he receives his assimilatory organs from the outside; he has no productive organs of life for himself, nor organs that produce foods for his own life. Thus it is necessary that the ministry of the word, written or oral, be exercised to every soul, both child and adult, by a minister of the word, the apostle who speaks, or the evangelist who writes.

The apostles, aware of their mission, are also aware that they must dedicate themselves to prayer and to ministry of the word. They become ever more aware that they are in the world for the ministry of the Word, and so they free themselves from every other occupation, in order to dedicate themselves exclusively to prayer and preaching. Even when it was question of the agapes, exercise of so many virtues for the faithful they protest: *It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food* (Ac 6,2). *Nos vero orationi et ministerio Verbi instantes erimos* - *We will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the Word* (Ac 6, 4). Others will provide what is needed for natural life. We will devote ourselves to the great means of supernatural life: The word of God! We will dedicate ourselves to prayer to draw the word from the heavenly sources and replenish ourselves, up to the fullness, of the inner word, and then administer it naturally to the souls, *ex abundantia cordis* - *from the abundance of the heart*.

From the abundance of the heart we observe that in natural life, we are in a continuously feeding function, and the example of breathing would suffice. All the care, the travails and the wor-

ries of the life of individuals and families converge to the need for a perpetual supply of food. We are not content at all with what nature and the environment day by day offer. We take the periodic fact of the natural production of the different seasons of the year, as a warning and an invitation to make provisions as abundant as possible to ensure the necessary and the convenient for every day of the year.

In the supernatural life, we recognize as word of God *omne verbum quod procedit ex-ore Dei* - every word that comes from the mouth of God (Mt 4, 4). Because we believe that it is the necessary aliment for the souls, we must proclaim more often the word of God, in the ordinary form of catechesis, homilies, sermons and all other forms of religious instructions. Above all we must see the need, more than the opportunity, of the extraordinary means that we call catechetical missions.

In the supernatural order a catechetical mission corresponds to that which on the part of nature is active and autumnal production, the supreme effort of the inferior creature at the service of man. In the natural order, the catechetical mission corresponds to what every good father of family does to provide the annual provisions with great prudence for the government and maintenance of the house.

The Catechetical Mission would therefore be for every assignment of the family of souls, for every good ecclesiastical pastor, the annual period of more production, let's say, of divine word and together the annual collection and provision with which it assures the Christian people, almost individual by individual, the daily bread. In this there is no fear of excesses, nor is there any difficulty in finding the right means, while it is never possible that the ministry of the divine word is too much. The harvest, however copious, will never be superfluous. Supplies regardless of how abundant they might be, will never be overwhelming.

Every soul, even in the supernatural life, is provided, so to speak, with assimilatory and secretory organs, to assure that from ordinary pasture she will take those aliments, which are needed day by day. It is necessary that the pasture be very abundant, so that the aliments for the life of souls may exceed rather than being scarce. All the deficiencies of this spiritual pasture of the bread of the divine word can be found either on the part of the one who administers it, or on the part of those to whom it is administered, or on the part of the quantity and quality of the same food. It happens that it is not administered with the frequency that would be necessary to reach everyone always. It also happens that not all are docile to the reiterated invitations of the Lord to this banquet of the divine word. This may also be due to the fact that those who administer it cannot prepare and adapt it to the various levels of capacity of the various categories of souls, children, adults, etc. It may also be due to the fact that the listeners lack the conditions of spiritual health necessary to feel hungry and thirsty for this super substantial food; or the spiritual appetite is not stimulated enough. Many times and in many places, the harrowing scene keeps repeating itself that - *parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis* - the children asked for bread and there was no one who broke it for them (Lam 4, 4). It is also true that at times and in many places, this bread is offered to everyone abundantly and celestially and we continue to see the irritating scene of the rejection with which the Jews offended the manna in desert: *anima nostra iam nauseat super cibo isto levissimo* - our soul is already disgusted by this very light food.

We affirm and maintain that Catechetical Missions are the most appropriate and effective remedy for all objective and subjective deficiencies regarding the ordinary pasturage of souls, both on the part of the quality, and on the part of the quantity of the bread of the divine word; both on the part of its distribution and of its assumption, and together they are the best stimulant of the spiritual appetite of the divine word. At least indirectly, the Catecheti-

cal Missions also stimulate the zeal of ordinary ministers of the word. Everyone knows the effectiveness of the sacred missions to the Christian populations.

Our Lord has inspired, and his vicar has affirmed the foundation of many religious institutes that consecrate themselves to this particular form of apostolate, which we call sacred missions to the faithful. The code of canon law mandates the pastors of souls to procure to their people the great benefit of a sacred mission, at least every ten years.

These sacred missions propose a vigorous reawakening of souls from the mortal sleep of sins, the breaking of so many chains of bad habits that bound them to Satan, and the periodic purification of so many moral disorders that accumulate and worsen in them gradually. In general they are very fruitful. The cause of their success must first be sought in the supernatural factor of divine grace; and then in the evangelical and apostolic forms with which the word of God is proclaimed in the sacred missions that imitate and reproduce those of the apostles initiated by Jesus himself. It also influences the fact that these missions are something extraordinary and this usually strikes and captivates with the attraction of novelty - *ab absuetis not fit passio - there is no stimulus in what is routine.*

Is not the ignorance so general and so serious of the things of God, even the most basic and most necessary, the sleep of sleeps, the chain of chains, the disorder of disorders for the poor souls? So as to awaken them from other dreams, break other chains and eliminate other disorders we resort to the extraordinary means of a sacred mission. For this major evil, main cause of all the other moral evils, the exercise of a real catechetical mission is required.

In fact, in the other sacred missions, according to the wise norms left by the founding saints to their missionary institutes,

first we try to remove religious ignorance with more or less catechetical instructions and then to rebuild the spiritual building of reconciliation with God and re-establishment of the life in God with the various meditations, preferably on the theme of the Last Things. The success of the mission depends largely on these instructions. If the spiritual fruit of the mission is due to these instructions, how much more can't we expect from entirely catechetical missions?

I repeat, by catechetical mission we mean only the one in which the missionaries expressly receive and follow exclusively the mandate to evangelize a people, only with instructions and catechetical lessons given to the various classes of people, children, youth, adults, students and workers, teachers and parents, etc. in a time when no preaching is held in the parish, nor any religious functions that are not strictly related to the same mission, and for a number of consecutive days sufficient for an accelerated, intense, but complete course of Catholic doctrine: Theory and practice, dogma, morality and liturgy. Missions that are said to be catechetical both for the matter and the themes presented within the parameters of catechism, in a very popular, possibly dialogued form, which has been very effective and have become properly of the catechism.

Dogma and moral, sacred history and liturgy can be treated simultaneously in the same catechetical mission, or in other periodic catechetical missions. In addition to having a dogmatic and moral catechetical mission, we can have Catechetical-Liturgical Mission, a Catechetical Ascetic-Mission, and a catechetical-apostolic mission, depending on the specific theory or practice of the great science of salvation that we want to teach catechistically, always founded on dogmatic- moral theology.

The essential in our opinion is that this mission be held simultaneously with all classes of people in the same place, ensuring

the intervention of all to the respective instructions and lessons. At least for a few days, the whole town becomes one single school of the Master Jesus, having all the souls as scholars and disciples, and the environment, saturated with catechism, eases and favors the learning. It is still essential that the catechetical mission be held with much greater frequency than the ten-year mission, obligatory for the sacred missions. The catechetical mission must be annual or at least every two years, so that it can reach its special goal.

The missionary catechists in the first days will become aware of the general state of the souls of the place especially of children and young people regarding religious education: Not through reports of others but through repeated personal findings. This will ascertain the truth, and will equally and effectively serve to control and to incentivize all local teachers of catechetical education. In the other missions the founding saints took care to sanctify first the local clergy, on whose work, example and doctrine, everything depends. The missionary catechists will pay special attention to the local catechists. The superior of the catechetical mission will give them particular lessons. And as a permanent remembrance of the mission he will leave them a group of catechists that he has formed, enthused, organized, sufficient to meet the needs of the souls of the place.

With the help of the local catechists the catechists-missionaries commit themselves to call everyone to those accelerated and extraordinary courses of religion. They will teach so eloquently by the strength of their example that no longer will be sufficient one catechist for the good of all souls. Likewise, one priest will not be enough for the pastoral care of the souls entrusted to him. A catechetical school, more or less numerous, more or less disciplined, more or less well-formed will no longer be sufficient. Missionary catechists must make sure that religious instruction reaches each and every individual, and that no one will ever be deprived of the fundamental means of salvation.

We should consider as a wandering and lost sheep, close to the extreme ruin, not only the sinner far from the sacraments, not only the sick person that is near death without the due dispositions to eternity, but also the ignorant of the things of God and far from the sacred doctrine. So we must go out looking for the lost sheep and bring her back to the pastureland of the divine word. How many fewer wandering, lost and killed sheep we would have to track down and return to the fold, if we would go out to seek, to call and lead the ignorant to religious instruction! Like good mothers, who do not see their children at the common table and know that they voluntarily refuse to eat, get alarmed on the condition of health of their children, we also rightly get alarmed when we do not see the souls crowding at the banquet of the holy sacraments, of the divine Eucharist.

Let us reflect and recognize that if the souls do not come first to the banquet of the divine word they will never come to the banquet of the body of the Lord, or they will come without proper dispositions. The practice of the sacraments, the exercise of good works is always dependent and in direct proportion to the religious instruction of the faithful! Therefore the first task of the catechetical mission, and the first good lasting fruit must be to convince everyone of the necessity of religious instruction; to convince the clergy and the clergy auxiliaries of the necessity to call everyone effectively to religious instruction, giving first a convincing good example.

This will certainly be easier for catechetical missionaries who are strangers to the environment. The novelty of the thing, the curiosity of the people, the extraordinary nature of the mission disposes the souls to better respond to the sacred appeal. I cannot mention here the many practical means, the many pious industries that the missionary catechists can and must use to really reach their holy purpose. Certainly they will treasure the experiences and examples of many apostles of all times through whom

divine providence has come to the rescue of the needs of souls. This requires in every diocese a recruitment of apostolic souls who have a particular catechetical vocation and a particular catechetical formation before they can receive and commit themselves to a catechetical mission.

This requires that an uncommon apostolic spirit animate individual missionaries and the whole mission. Well, if it is true that every work of the holy Church in general, and in our case, these catechetical missions in particular, aim at and achieve a supernatural goal, it is also true that we must count on supernatural means for the nourishment of every soul without wasting treasures of talents, time and money. Strengthened by these supernatural principles we can be sure that if the need for religious instruction becomes ever more serious and general with the multiplication of souls in every village there will be fervid, mystical and apostolic souls, motherly souls who can gloriously carry on any catechetical mission; who will make it the ideal work of their whole life, bringing to it treasures of natural and supernatural energies.

Naturally all members of diocesan and regular clergy can be mobilized for these holy wars, for these apostolic works. Many precious auxiliaries can be found in the Catholic laity, both male and female. How many splendid examples, in our days, around ourselves, of marvelous cooperation in the ministry of the priest by great souls of our laity!

All pontifical guidelines and norms governing the organization of various forms of catholic action imbued by this hope, tend to this goal and prove this reality. The Lord who raises these apostolic souls disposed all beings in heaven and on earth in some kind of hierarchy. He wants always that some depend on others neatly and concentrically to the One in heaven and to the One on earth and therefore it happens, that souls, also endowed with great talents and divine inspirations, both among the clergy and

among the laity, not for cowardice, but for inner discipline must depend on others.

In general the souls do not move until after repeated invitations and strong urging from the competent authorities. So it is necessary that the sacred pastors should seek, call and gather, encourage, improve and direct these catechetical missionaries in this holy enterprise, personally, or through their delegate for catechetical works. This is the official designated to give the most effective help to the individual parish priests in the organization of catechetical teaching in the parishes; he is responsible for the execution and direction of the annual catechetical missions in the parishes; he is above all the person in charge of recruitment and formation of the catechist missionaries chosen from all the parishes.

The Bishop's delegate for the catechetical programs must be constantly on apostolic journey throughout the parishes, as in ongoing catechetical mission. More than any other priest he must be aware and sharer of *sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* - concern for all churches; he must be the daily strengthening presence for every priest entrusted with the care of souls; he is chosen from among diocesan and religious as the most zealous, enlightened, and active in his apostolic zeal.

It is necessary in scarcity as in abundance, in smallness as in the greatness that everything be reduced to unity and that this unity be not simply unity of regulation but unity of person. For the life and prosperity of every unifying and vivifying ecclesiastical work and institution, the catechist must be competent; he must also be able to attract others by the example of his life, if he wants to be successful in the work for the salvation and sanctification of souls. We need God; we need the saint, if we do not want the failure of any great program and initiative.

In the seventeenth century a French priest, a true genius of saint and missionary, saw that Britain had a serious need to be properly re-evangelized. The ignorance of the things of God with all its most dire consequences permeated everything. He planned and put on a great general perpetual mission *sui generis*. In reality all the other missions of any century and of any kingdom resembled each other so much that we would not be able to find any substantial difference between those preached in France by St. John Eudes, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louis Grignon Maria Montfort and those preached in Italy by St. Paul of the Cross, by St. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, by our St. Alfonse de' Liguori and those that are preached nowadays in every catholic town or city.

The mission preached by Venerable Michele de Nobletz, imitated later by Ven. Julian Mannoir, is totally unique, it was eminently, predominantly - I would say - exclusively catechetical mission. The missionaries kept going from village to village, from city to city establishing schools of catechism. With the aid of large charts, printed symbols and stories, with a long, white pointer in hand assisted always and everywhere by pious women, he catechized in depth those semi pagan populations, totally ignorant in religious matters.

Around them, edified by the great spiritual results achieved, gathered elderly priests, doctors, vicar generals and also some bishops: about one thousand catechetical missionaries were mobilized for he mission. They were ready for every call, disciplined as many religious dependent in all on the two venerables mentioned above; for about thirty years they offered this spectacle of a catechetical mission, unique in the world, unique in the history of the church, until now.

Now this catechetical mission must be imitated, reproduced, perpetuated everywhere! The minimum Society of Divine Voca-

tion, established in the city of Naples, in the diocese of Pozzuoli, opens perpetual catechetical mission in its every residence and in every region where it establishes a house. This Society was the result of the daily catechism classes of a seminarian and then of a simple priest before becoming parish priest. To all its religious members and to its internal and external associates, with the same gravity of the duty of prayer and of daily study, it makes a sacrosanct obligation also of the daily exercise of the word of God in catechetical forms. Its catechisms should be the most integral in their genre, because they do not aim to give just any religious instruction, but without sacrificing the sacred doctrine, they want to form the souls to reach all the supernatural efficiency of the Word of God, revealing to every soul her vocation to holiness, and cooperating in making of every soul not only the good citizen and Christian but the elect of the Lord, since the glory of God needs saints - the Church needs saints - the world needs saints.

The needs of the souls are numberless. It is not enough to just provide somehow. They must be provided in the best ways possible. The needs of the souls are perpetual, so it is not enough to provide once. They must be provided always, repeatedly.

Every new generation comes into this world with original sin and its consequence of ignorance of intellect and weakness of will. Every new generation needs to be regenerated from original sin through holy baptism, and sanctified and fortified in the will by prayer and the sacraments in general, likewise must be incessantly taught the science of God. Every year the pastor repeats the blessing of the baptismal font for the regeneration of new Christians. Every year the bishops repeat the consecration of the sacred oils for the other sacraments. Every day we renew the Eucharist for the sacrifice and for the spiritual banquet of the souls. In a similar way all the voluntary catechetical missionaries (priests, laymen and pious women) on the day of the Ascension must gather from all parts of the diocese around their bishop,

who in the name of Jesus, and in the person of Jesus, will bless them after transmitting to them the mandate to teach religion. *El-evatis manibus benedixit eis! Euntes... docete* - [Jesus] raised his hands and blessed them. *Go and teach* (Lk 24,50).

All together *perseverantes unanimiter in oratione cum Maria Matre Iesu - Persevered, joined constantly in prayer, together with Mary the Mother of Jesus* (Ac 1, 16), they will await the holy day of Pentecost in a retreat of intense, immediate, cultural and spiritual formation. On Pentecost Sunday, after the invocation to the Holy Spirit their designation as catechetical missionaries and their appointment will be announced to the various parishes for the yearly mission. Both these functions deserve a place *inter Missarum solemnias!* After the celebration of the priestly ordinations, there is no greater celebration for the Church than this consecration, blessing and mandate of the catechetical missionaries.

Conclusion

Considering the absolute necessity of religious instruction for the people it is necessary also the use of extraordinary and ordinary means to assure a greater efficiency;

Considering that a truly periodic catechetical mission is the most opportune extraordinary means to insure the use and intensify the effectiveness of the ordinary means;

Considering that the result of a catechetical mission will depend mostly on the zeal and competence, and on the specific preparation of the catechetical missionaries, it is strongly recommended:

That in every diocese, the delegate for the catechetical programs dedicate himself to recruiting and organizing committed

and authentic catechetical missionaries from among the clergy and the members of the groups of Catholic Action.

That in every parish every year is held the catechetical mission to the various categories of people. The catechetical mission must be offered by missionaries from other than the local parish and never simultaneously with other preaching.

That a Catechetical Mission Center be established as a diocesan organism for the intellectual and moral formation of catechetical missionaries, consisting both of clergy and lay Catholics.

Guidelines of Procedure for Catechetical Missions¹

CHAPTER I

1. They are a more solemn and intense catechetical instruction to the various classes of people, made ordinarily by a group of catechists.

2. Ordinarily three lay catechists and a priest catechist go together, and they stay in the same place for no less than a week.

3. The lay catechists will present no less than three catechesis every day to the various groups of children and young people in different times, and possibly in different places.

4. The priest catechist will give only one catechesis per day to adults and to the people in general, because he must be available for the confessions of all the catechism-goers.

5. Each catechist, following the cyclical method should make sure to present to his audience proportionately all the Catholic doctrine though in such a short number of days.

¹ These Guidelines were not part of the Lecture: Catechetical Missions; they were published by Fr. Justin in the Magazine of the Society of Divine Vocations, *Spiritus Domini*, January 1933, pages 17-19.

6. Each catechist will try to keep the attention increasingly alert and always impart better lessons with all the aids of pedagogy and art and his own pious industries.

7. But above all, every catechist must make of every catechesis a true oratory, making it very prayerful and letting the audience sing joyfully, and especially teaching the science of prayer.

CHAPTER II

1. The people will be informed beforehand of the beginning and importance of the catechetical mission; the missionaries will be received and accompanied to the church by the parish priest at the sound of the bells.

2. In church, after a brief prayer, if the people are present, the missionaries will be presented with a few words of the parish priest and the catechist priest will give a brief introduction.

3. They will leave the church at the appointed time all together or in two groups according to the conveniences of the place, they go through the streets calling the children and leading them to the parish church.

4. When they arrive to the parish church, the priest, rector of the mission, will solemnly bless the children according to the formula of the ritual and then he will assign the groups of children to the catechists.

5. Catechism lessons will be held in the same or in different churches or even in other convenient places, depending on the circumstances of places and people, provided that one group does not disturb the other.

6. If in addition to the assigned children, other people like to

attend the catechism classes, excluding any danger and superficiality, they are allowed to participate, but all the care of the catechist is for the assigned group.

7. Each catechism presentation begins and ends with prayers; every day of the mission begins with the Holy Mass for the children and ends with the Eucharistic Benediction imparted especially for them.

Solemn Viaticum¹

The Lecture read at the first Eucharistic Congress of Pozzuoli, Naples in 1931 was printed in "Proceedings of the First Eucharistic Congress of Pozzuoli" with the following note: "The topic is fully developed and frequently applauded with bows of the head when the clapping of hands does not break out... the wish of a return to the old way of bringing the Viaticum solemnly and with participation of people is received with thunderous applauses. Strange to say, this is the only Lecture in which Father Justin challenges priests and faithful that "on account of coward fear and human prudence, in a country deeply rooted in Catholic culture, have adopted the practice of bringing the Viaticum to the sick in private and almost hidden form". Against them the protest of the mystic Fr. Justin goes on, invoking with a humorous irony a formal process against both the "sick" and the "ministers" of the viaticum.

The incrimination of sick may oscillate between the vile fear of contagion to the much more grievous accusation of gross religious ignorance. The priests are charged with a much heavier accusation: Before God's tribunal they must respond to insufficient zeal and sloth. Fr. Justin carrying on the double role of public prosecutor and defense attorney for the glory of God, asks the immediate restoration of the public and solemn administration of the Viaticum according to the prescriptions of the Roman Ritual, of the Code of Canon Law, and above all the demands of faith and of Christian piety. The reasons usually adduced in favor of the private administration of the private Viaticum, according to Fr. Justin, are superficial and pretentious reasons, since Canon Law considers only one case for the mandatory private celebration of the Viaticum: Local and general interdict.

¹ Viaticum (traveling provisions) is a Latin word used by the Church to indicate the administration of Holy Communion to a person who is dying, or when there is probable danger of death. Viaticum should not be deferred too long in sickness lest the dying lose consciousness. It can be given as often as such danger exists, and is required of all the faithful who have reached the age of discretion (Cf. Catholic Dictionary).

So, why shouldn't we consider solemn viaticum a positive divine right? Fr. Justin fears that the abuse of taking the Viaticum privately becomes a habit that later will be difficult to erase, and this will happen. We must therefore re-examine and act against this practice. The glory to God and the growth of faith in Christian people demand it. The parish priests are urged to overcome prejudices, senses of fear and personal discomforts to end the controversy triggered against the solemn Viaticum. Otherwise we may cause the weakening of the Eucharistic devotion also in the soul of those who in force of their office are required to maintain and promote ever more and better the cult of the divine sacrament and to care for the souls bringing them to Jesus-Eucharist, and bringing Jesus-Eucharist to them.

This is the heart of the problem: to increase the love for the Eucharist, even in a solemn form. Among the ways of solemnly honoring the Eucharist are listed the processions established by the Roman Ritual according to the times and the festivities of the liturgical year. The first place belongs to the mother of all processions, that of Corpus Domini [the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood]. To this regard it is good to recall that Father Justin, parish priest of Pianura, would not grant his permission for the procession of St. George if he were not assured of the solemn preparation for the procession of Corpus Domini; until 1955, a few days before dying he insisted on leading the procession and on carrying the heavy monstrance not withstanding the fact that his body was plagued by Herpes Zoster and devastated by a galloping leukemia.

Even other processions produce a lot of spiritual advantages. To the procession of the solemn Viaticum are connected the opportunities of salvation that the Lord grants by the social expansion of faith, without counting the spiritual blessings of which the sick become instrument. Grace works through the sick, who in turn receive comfort by the faith of those who pass by and of those who participate in the public and solemn Communion, and thus experience their communion with the entire Church. These people, at the end of their life, will experience their entrance into heaven like the return of Jesus to his temple.

Amongst other things, Fr. Justin points out that the common sense of the faithful disproves the view of those who oppose the Solemn Viaticum.

"We are blessed to live at the time in which shines before us the miracle of love of Christ the King. The ideal of his kingdom of love is ever more actualized especially in the practice of daily Communion, which is the font of all fervor of Christian life, and upon which rests the triumph of the Lord's Kingdom".

The Feast of Christ the King had been established a few years before this lecture. In Italy were already present and active both the Liturgical and Eucharistic movements. Aware of these powerful signs of ecclesial reawakening Fr. Justin insists on urging a return to the practice of the Solemn Viaticum. "Let us turn to the old practice of solemnly administering Holy Viaticum".

The most common objections to the solemn Viaticum rise from the phenomenon of urbanization that creates inconveniences and distractions. The situation is further aggravated by lack of participants in this solemn procession. The saddest note comes from "the repugnance of the sick and their family toward the Viaticum, a legacy of religious ignorance".

Father Justin dismantles the castle of the various objections, one by one, and overturns their sense by making them occasions of evangelization. So Jesus-Eucharist, solemnly accompanied "in the hubbub of the city and with the horde of the road" makes the effect of a beacon in the sky signaling with its big eyes of light, and talks through its colors, immediate stops, and enlightening directions ... "The passage of the great King offers moments of religious peace". As for the presence of a sufficient number of faithful, it is necessary to provide with the members of the various confraternities operating in the parishes, but especially a group of children who form "a small army of Altar Servers willing to serve as a court to the King of the world". Then ... why not stimulate in man "the attraction for beautiful things, for holy things, especially when they present themselves with something difficult, I would even say heroic? Who dares to say that man is not predisposed to holy things, even the highest, and who humiliates him to the point of asking him only a minimum in the service of God? Has not man been created for the holy things, even the highest by his God"? It is a lesson for those ministers that do not drive the faithful to the ascensional peaks of holiness.

The number one enemy of the solemn Viaticum is religious ignorance. Fr. Justin indicates the winning weapon against religious ignorance: "the diffusion of the light of Christian doctrine with permanent catechesis and the fervor of charity that are obtained with the practice of frequent Holy Communion to the sick, even those not grievously ill, to make them daily communicant... at home".

Concerning this apostolate, the Founder of the Vocationists remarks with a sense of fine satisfaction: "After all, the Vocationists are not superfluous"! And he proposes to take the Viaticum in a solemn form to the sick, every first Friday of the month (day destined to become ever more the great day of God's mercies". (This practice was observed in Pianura with great participation of people at least until 1955).

With this wish-program ends the lecture. This lecture, stripped of the external choreography for the changed religious sensibility and recomposed in its theological and pastoral meaning, does not appear as a vintage machine, but shows all its actuality in proclaiming the primacy of the glory of God over the prejudices of man. And as all the psalms end with "a glory" so Fr. Justin glorifies Jesus-Eucharist present "in every worshipper and daily communicant".

Maybe we should start an informal process against those who, in a fully catholic country, enriched by centuries of faith and Christian piety, in any way took part in introducing the use or abuse of taking the Holy Viaticum, in a private and quasi-hidden form. Up to that point the good Christians thought it impossible not to surround our Lord, when he was taken out of the church to the sick, with the small but very devote pomp, which was a small exchange for a great outpouring of love, as a small compensation for the great external humiliation of the Lord, who comes down from his throne, comes out of his royal palace to go to his poor servant's humble abode.

Reasons of cowardly fear and detestable human prudence, both on the part of the sick and their families, and on the part of unenlightened and un-zealous ministers, formed, on the wave of some public calamities, a gray, lukewarm and sickening common opinion according to worldly spirit. They succeeded in provoking some norms of public safety. The local ecclesiastical authority, to avoid greater evils, had to tolerate that the Eucharist could be brought to the sick without the usual solemnity; but only during those circumstances of public special calamities.

Now that, thank God, no fear of death or persecution disturbs the serenity of our judgment, it would be appropriate to initiate an informal process to those motives of vileness and false prudence, with the certainty of being able to demonstrate their insufficiency and unreasonableness. In this way we make at least repairing reproof and protect ourselves against them and prevent that others may present or impose them upon the major motives of faith and Eucharistic piety, should those or similar circumstances be repeated. May the Lord deliver us!

Those reasons appear to us to be insufficient and unreasonable in a Catholic country, even on occasions of possible contagion and of unjustified but compatible with the degradation of the people,

for the ongoing threat of death, which loomed then. Now, thank God, those false, non-existent motivations do not worry us at all, and we are in a Catholic country, in a certain general revival of faith and Christian piety. Today should seem superfluous to speak of convenience and necessity of bringing the Holy Eucharist in an eye-catching way, both as Communion of Viaticum in the most serious infirmities, and as a devotional communion in less serious and ordinary infirmities.

What surprises us today, or better, what pains us is the fact that in many places or almost everywhere, even though the causes that rightly or wrongly started the practice of bringing holy Communion to the sick privately do not exist anymore, this abusive effect has continued and continues. Some good Catholics today could see as strangely pleasant, and some priests could find lazily difficult to return to the external solemnity of the Viaticum, as it was done in the past. To the contrary, those who have a little zeal for the honor of God, a little sense of apostolate, and a minimum catholic mentality will consider impossible that such an abuse may become a legitimate tradition. They will consider the external solemnity of the Viaticum as another act of external worship, established by the Church for the glory of the Eucharist, almost as a positive divine right, against which there can never be the possibility of prescription. Canon Law in its second canon declares and establishes that all that concerns rites and ceremonies to be observed in the celebration of the Mass, the administration of the Sacraments and Sacramentals, and all other sacred functions, all liturgical norms contained in the approved rituals of the Church retain their obligatory value. In our case, since we are dealing with the administration of the most august Sacrament, and especially in the most important and momentous circumstance of human life, in which Holy Communion is extremely needed, we must observe the prescriptions of the Roman Ritual, which are true and authentic liturgical laws.

The Roman Ritual, first of all, mandates that this divine Sacrament should be brought *publice et honorifice* - in a public setting and with honor; secondly, it expressly forbids to bring it privately or covertly: thirdly, it goes on to describe and prescribe minutely the modality of the external pump, with which it determines how to understand and practice that law of the *publice and honorifice*. It is also true that the Roman Ritual considers and declares the possibility of some just and reasonable reason for administering the Viaticum other than *publice and honorifice*. The Code of Canon Law indicates a case and only one, in which it must be carried out privately, and this is the case of a local and general interdict. Evidently this is a case very serious and exceptional, however, we agree that in addition to this, there may be other fair and reasonable causes that allow us, and even obligate us to bring the holy Viaticum privately.

Who is responsible for judging, which and when practically there is really this cause, this really just and reasonable cause, to bring privately the Holy Viaticum? Let's say that it should not be left to the criterion of the minister of the Eucharist, mainly of the parish priest. In the case of a cause that is repeated or that can be repeated often, it is up to the local Ordinary to determine if it is really just and reasonable to allow the administration of the Viaticum in private form. From the complex of liturgical-Eucharistic legislation, it appears clearly the intention and the spirit of the Church to defer to the Ordinary everything related to the worship of the Eucharist, beyond the cases contemplated in common law, as for example, in the case of conservation and solemn exposition in non-parish churches. In isolated and infrequent cases the decision is left to the judgment of the minister of the Eucharist, and in our case, of the parish priest. I would like to distinguish that it is up to the parish priest, not as an ordinary man with all his human misery of sloth, but as the priest and pastor of souls, with all the light and ardor of zeal. As such, he will be guided by the supernatural criterion and instinct to judge every thing always from

the side of God, so that he will never consider just and reasonable cause for the private Viaticum his personal inconvenience and discomfort, or the human respect and the foolish apprehensions of relatives. The priest should arrive at such a decision moved only by the duty of avoiding the danger of irreverence and of profanation against the divine Sacrament, in non-Catholic environments, or in periods of grave hostility toward religious events even in catholic countries.

If we start finding just and reasonable causes for bringing the Viaticum privately, for reasons other than the honor of God, in very short time we will end up multiplying these causes so rapidly and repeatedly that taking the Holy Viaticum “in public and solemn form” will become ever more rare. Doing so soon the norm becomes the exception, and the exception becomes the norm, as lamentably has already happened, with clear disobedience to the prescriptions of the rites.

The expedient to which we began to resort only to avoid offense of irreverence to the Blessed Jesus, ends up being a greater offense of irreverence; what is worse, is the fact that this offense is not committed by the enemies of the faith or by bad Christians, but by the faithful, by the priests, and by the pastors of souls.

The priest, in virtue of the great power of Sacred Order has the duty of consecrating the Body and Blood of the Lord, and offering it as a sacrifice to the Trinity and as a sacrament to the souls. Likewise, his greatest duty of ministry, first of all and above all, consists in promoting and making sure that the cult of the divine Eucharist is always more elevated and intensified.

When a priest is installed as pastor and assumes the responsibility of the administration of a parish and of the pastoral care of the souls, in the public and solemn installation ceremony, he affirms all his sacred duties, and before ascending the pulpit to

preach the homily, before sitting in the confessional to administer the sacrament of confessions, he ascends to the altar to publicly acknowledge and accepts his great duty of offering the sacrifice for the people. In the very rare case when, within the ceremony of the installation, the tabernacle is opened and the ciborium is uncovered, (for reasons other than the administration of the sacrament), the priest should gaze and embrace the Eucharist, and through the vision of faith he should receive in his mind and heart the Sacred Species, to symbolize that he takes possession of his role as head of the guards of honor of the King's Body, of the divine Body of his Lord and God. Thus he professes before heaven and earth, acknowledges before his Bishop and his people that his first duty is to maintain and to always more and better promote the cult of the divine Sacrament and that his pastoral care for the souls will consist essentially in bringing them properly to Jesus-Eucharist, and bringing Jesus-Eucharist properly to them. As a priest, and even more as pastor he has the sacred duty and the glorious privilege to foster, maintain and increase the public and private devotion to the Eucharist, and not only in the sacred building of the church but also outside of the church.

The many abuses introduced in some regions, even not far away from us, in our time force the bishops to enact norms upon norms to bring the sacred processions to the respect of the proper rules and their sacred purposes. It would be a grievous mistake to interpret these guidelines as restrictive of the public devotion and as prohibitive of the sacred processions. The norms enacted by the Bishops aim only at correcting errors, abuses, profanations and possible superstitions, to which the ignorance of the people may lead the popular religiosity.

The Roman Ritual dedicate an entire chapter to religious processions, and establish almost as many processions as are the "collect prayers" the more common needs of life. In addition to the processions for certain days, as the one for the day of the Purifica-

tion, Palm Sunday, the Major Litanies on the feast of St. Mark, the Minor Litanies on the triduum of the Rogations for the Ascension, for the solemn translation of relevant relics, the Ritual considers and establishes processions to implore for rain, for good weather, for time of famine, for time of pestilence or calamities, for time of war, for any tribulation and for thanksgiving. For the divine Sacrament of the Eucharist the Ritual considers and establishes the processions within the church for the Last Supper liturgy on Holy Thursday, and the external processions for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood after Pentecost. In addition to these the Ritual prescribes other minor Eucharistic procession in occasion of the Holy Viaticum to the sick. They can be called processions because the Ritual describes how they must be organized and carried out with external solemnity and honor. We call them minor processions to distinguish them from that of the Corpus Domini, and because the Eucharist is carried in the ciborium and not in the monstrance, and because they do not have the tone of triumph, but of penance. It cannot be denied that processions well organized occupy a place of relevance in the external, public devotion of the Church.

The promotion and implementation of all the processions approved and encouraged by the Roman Ritual helps immensely to intensify the popular piety, to fill the world with religiosity, to super-naturalize the entire life in the common and various needs of life: the need of rain and good weather, the need of providence and peace, need of healing and good health, the need to give thanks and propitiate God. Much more helpful will be the frequently multiplied minor Eucharistic processions for the treasure of indulgences granted to those who accompany the solemn Viaticum; for the multitude of various acts of religion practiced internally and externally by those who accompany or encounter Jesus-Eucharist; for all the supernatural effects produced by the presence and passing of the divine humanity of the Savior; in short, for all the high and social edification of every procession

devoutly implemented, and especially the Eucharistic procession that usually are the most devout, as they are the most sacred for the One who walks in our midst.

We have not mentioned yet the great advantage to the sick person who has occasioned all this. Brotherly love induces the participants to think and help the sick, who in the extreme hours of life needs a public and solemn profession of faith and love, and of communion with the Church through the public and solemn Eucharistic Communion. (May the entrance of the sick into heaven be as the return of Jesus in his temple. May the presence and indulgence of Jesus await at the doors of eternity those who have accompanied him!).

While all the beautiful procession indicated in the Roman Ritual, strictly speaking, are not mandatory, unless explicitly mandated by the Ordinary, those that we have indicated as minor Eucharistic processions are rigorously mandatory in force of the prescriptions contained and promulgated by the Roman Ritual, which in the case constitutes a law. In the priority of duties as significance of obligation after that of bringing Holy Viaticum to the terminal ill, comes that of bringing it publicly, solemnly and processionally.

Reducing the number or the solemnity, or even worse, completely eliminating the solemnity of Holy Viaticum, is in truth a diminution of the public and external veneration due to the Blessed Sacrament. It is defrauding both the sick and the faithful people of many spiritual benefits; consequently is no small fault for those who have as their first duty to promote the eucharistic devotion of the faithful, the kingdom of Jesus in the world, and the spiritual good of the souls, both individually and as people.

Thank God, nowadays shines before us the vision of Christ the King, and the ideal of his kingdom of love becomes more and

more a reality in the practice of daily communion, font of all the fervor of Christian life and in which consists the triumph of the Lord's Kingdom.

This leads us to the intensification of the Eucharistic devotion. More than the many more or less enlightened extra-liturgical initiatives, more or less edifying in their implementation and certainly less effective in the desired fruit, this requires the observance of all the norms contained in the liturgical books about the Eucharist, and amongst all others, these that require that the Holy Viaticum be brought solemnly and processionally, *publice et honorifice*. This event by its very nature and by its frequency raises so many expressions of homage also external of faith and adoration; it receives such a great tribute of love! It is a sacred rite in which, more sensibly and more sensibly than ever, Jesus Christ appears as King of time and eternity, arbiter of life and death, supreme judge of eternal sanctions. Therefore, let us go back to the original practice in administering the holy Viaticum solemnly. Why should appear now difficulties that were not there before or were overcome in the spirit of faithful Eucharistic discipline?

The difficulties should not even appear, and much less should be dug up on purpose. If serious difficulties should arise, they should be solved silently, prudently and lovingly by the zeal of the glory of God, but with an increase, not diminution of the external glory of the Lord. Finally, these difficulties can generally be reduced to the lack of personnel accompanying the Lord, to the inconveniences of long distances, to the infernal confusion of certain streets of certain modern cities and above all to the repugnance that certain sick people and families feel for the Viaticum in solemn form.

As for the lack of accompanying personnel, it may be, if ever, at certain times more incompatible of the day, while at other hours, it will be easy to have it and have it in abundance. In most ordi-

nary cases, the parish priest will be able to decide that the Holy Viaticum be brought at hours that are easier for the faithful who wish to accompany him. To ask and administer the Holy Viaticum, one must not wait until the sick is - *in articulo mortis* - at the point of death; it should be administered when the sick person appears *in periculo mortis* - in danger of death, which usually implies a certain width of time.

It is not at all intended that one must always wait for the most convenient hour for the faithful that accompany the priest, with some danger even only probable for the sick in question, which must be the first concern in this. We mean that most of the times, the interest of the sick is compatible with the convenience of the faithful that accompany the priest; their prayers, greatly benefit the sick. The Ritual treating the accompaniment of the holy Viaticum suggests that the people be called through the church bells, and particularly mentions to call the members of the Society or Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament that, among other obligations, have the duty to accompany the holy Viaticum, solemnly brought to the sick. The spirit of these prescriptions is evidently that of promoting the external honor of the Lord even in case of the holy Viaticum; this cannot be left to the discretion of the people, regardless of how faithful and devout it may be; it must be properly organized in each parish, and that for its perfect functioning it must be entrusted to some organization or society. This is not too difficult when in each parish there is the group of Altar Servers, groups of Catholic children, ranks of young girls, clubs of young people and groups of men and women of Catholic Action, united for the purpose and animated by the spirit of helping the clergy. Once organized, a good nucleus of devoted guards of honor of the Blessed Sacrament, the other difficulty of the inconvenience of certain hours, and of certain special distances, will also disappear.

Let us keep in mind the attraction and the natural stimulus

that men feel alive and strong for beautiful and holy things, especially when they present some challenging element of hardship, I would even say heroic.

Who dares to say that man is not inclined to holy things, even to their highest level? Who lowers him to the point of asking him only the bare minimum in God's service? Didn't God create him purposely for the highest holy things? This far away Viaticum in the country, on the mountains, excites not only the echoes of silence and the inspiration of the poets, but more the devotion of the noble soul, of the faithful soul who loves the opportunity to test and prove her love through self-denial and sacrifice. And even the difficulty of the street of the modern metropolis, with its stream of passengers, with its hubbub of vehicles of every kind, rather than scare and prevent, must attract the minor Eucharistic procession of the solemn holy viaticum.

Behold, the traffic light with its large eyes that with its colors orders immediate stops and practical directions! Behold, on his little throne the austere militiamen with the staff of the command ordering immediate stops, practical directives: and all obey. They demonstrate that it must not seem impossible to get the tribute of a pause of reverence by each passenger at the passage of Christ the King, the God with us. The hubbub of the city may have sacred moments of religious peace, and the horde of the road will appear Christian. The thought and the passage of the King of kings will shower some of his blessing upon the streets of the world that is his.

As to the repugnance that certain sick people and their families have toward the solemn Holy Viaticum, it is generally so full of faults that it deserves only to be despised and fought. It is so strong, however, that it will not disappear if not before the progressive diffusion of the light of Christian doctrine and the fervor of Christian piety that alone can purify the domestic and social

environment of every fog of human respect, of unreasonable apprehensions and unconscious aversion of the supernatural; that repugnance reveals all things. Practically this repugnance in itself does not constitute a serious and reasonable cause to justify a private and secret Holy Viaticum. When a priest is asked, in these cases, he must not easily give up; he should try and make every effort to help them to overcome that repugnance with all the good reasons suggested by the zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. If this repugnance were such as to make fear the much greater inconvenience of the refusal of the Sacrament, then the priest will not see in it a serious indisposition to the same holy communion, but only a greater spiritual infirmity perhaps caused by the same physical illness more than anything else. It will be possible to remedy it with greater compassion and condescension, as we usually do with the sick from whom it is useless to expect heroic acts of fortitude.

In these cases the priest will think that the Jesus who with benevolence welcomed the nightly visit of Nicodemus - private and secret visit on account of fear - will not disdain to go and visit privately and secretly his child seriously sick physically and spiritually. The priest, the pastor as a consequence of these painful incidents should feel greater impulses to instruct and enkindle greater fervor in his people while they are in good health so that they will be in a state of better spiritual health and to always have, especially at the end of their life, at the doors of eternity, all due attention of faith and love toward our Lord, overcoming every difficulty and repugnance even at cost of sacrifice, of every sacrifice.

What will be most helpful to achieve the objective that we propose and to eliminate for ever these difficulties that we may encounter at the end of our life, is to introduce more frequently the practice of bringing solemnly Holy Communion to all the sick people of the parish, even when there is no danger of death,

when strictly speaking it is not a Viaticum, but only a devotional Communion. We need to do something more for the Lord who has loved us with infinite love, and especially in the most divine Sacrament. In addition to bringing Holy Communion to those in danger of death, we also bring communion to non-terminal sick or shut-ins. This practice is becoming more and more common.

Maybe, those sick people who receive Holy Communion at home were daily communicants; their sickness would seem and become more painful if it causes the privation of their daily great joy and glory. They want to continue being daily communicants at home. If they were not daily communicant prior to their sickness, the enlightened zeal of faithful souls, who surround them, helps them to see in that sickness the best opportunity to introduce them to the practice of fervor, which is daily Communion, for the need of strength and consolation. By relenting the rigor of natural fast for those who are sick, holy mother Church shows clearly how she would like to see extended to the sick, and especially to them, the practice of frequent and daily Communion. (In the near future, how many priests are needed to distribute Holy Communion in the church and at home! Truly the Vocationists are not unneeded!).

Evidently it would be impossible to bring Holy Communion solemnly to so many sick people. Such a practice would also diminish the solemnity of Holy Communion in form of Viaticum. However, the solemn Communion to the sick of the parish, as we usually do at Easter time and, at times, even during the parish Mission, should become more frequent in harmony with the growing frequency of Holy Communion.

Solemn Communion to the sick can be monthly, on the day, in which modern catholic piety, according to the directives of holy mother Church, combines the devotion to the Sacred Heart with the devotion to the Eucharist, in order to render to Jesus a greater

homage of love and of reparation of love. The first Friday of the month is destined to become ever more the great day of God's mercy of love, and of man's reparation of love, in the fusion of man's heart with the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. The solemn Communion to the sick of the parish could be the high point and external integration of the special devotions usually done in the morning in the parish church, and the best beginning of the days of solemn Eucharistic adoration, where in this way, souls are attracted to the altar.

So, considering well the prescriptions of the liturgical books, specifically the Roman Ritual, and the ever great growth that is taking place and must take place in the Eucharistic devotion,

We urge to:

- 1) start again, where it was stopped, the practice of bringing solemnly *publice et honorifice* - publicly and with honor - the Holy Viaticum to the sick in danger of death;
- 2) introduce the practice of taking solemnly every month Holy Communion to all the sick of the parish, and precisely on the first Friday of the month.

Clergy and Ecclesiastical Vocations

The Bishop of Anagni, Attilio Adinolfi, asked the participation of Blessed Justin to the Eucharistic Diocesan Congress, which took place in the city of the Popes from the 10th to the 14th of May 1933.

Afterward the same bishop published the Lecture defining it: "So beautiful, so genial, and so new that we decided to publish it". The structure of the lecture is based on Jesus expression: "Every tree that does not bear fruit is cut and thrown into the fire" (Mt 3,40).

Fr. Justin builds upon this gospel icon the plant-priest parallelism that becomes the basic idea for the development of the theme.

The Lecture is divided into two parts:

In the first, the image of the tree destined to reproduce itself in order to survive, recalls that of the plant-priest called to bear his fruit (another priest). Father Justin immediately clarifies that the most fertile soil for the success of this regenerative operation is the holiness of the clergy. The worker capable of preparing, cultivating, maturing the harvest is only the saint ... and the saint, in its highest meaning of a soul consecrated totally to the service of God and of the Church, is only the priest. St. John Paul II recalls the equation priesthood-holiness when he writes: "Holiness is the highest measure of Christian life ... the perspective in which the whole pastoral journey must be placed"¹.

*In the second part, the lecturer exhorts the priest to follow the *modus operandi* of Jesus who seeks out and forms the apostles, and at the same time, indicates the most apt ways to raise and cultivate the germs of divine vocation, especially amongst children.*

Let us now try to open the treasure box of the lecture and try to touch with clean hands the treasures that it contains.

¹Novo millennio ineunte, n. 31

"The effort of every priestly life must converge to the production of the fruit-priest... because in the economy of grace, without this spiritual offspring there can be no good in the world". Faced with the recurrent vocations' crisis, Father Justin goes to the heart of the problem and points out the solution: "Every priest must consecrate his life to the service of ecclesiastical vocations, offering his practical cooperation, perfecting it and intensifying it in the respective spheres of action". The message is directed to those priests, who "live in the fullness of grace and in the splendor of doctrine".

Only this army of chosen priests guarantees the production and the quality of the fruit. Certainly, not the priests that suffer an identity's crisis or are lovers of little and less! Father Justin is categorical: "The plant eaten by worms in its roots, or all cut off in its tops and branches, next to wither if it is not already dead, cannot bear its fruit". Fr. Justin is convinced that the copious harvest is not a risk for quality and specifies that it is a further opportunity for a better selection of candidates.

"The quantity does not prevent the perfection of quality". He launches a prophetic warning for the current operators of the pastoral of vocations who are perplexed by the deluge of vocations coming mainly from the countries of the Third World or South-East Asia. Do social disadvantage and poverty give rise to vocations like mushrooms after rain? Could rain-poverty have the face of providence carried on the wings of freedom by the Spirit that blows where he wants?

Regarding the number of workers engaged in the vineyard, for Blessed Justin, they are always too few. The zeal for vocations, for all vocations, persuades him that the only way for the priest to perpetuate himself is to sanctify himself in the search and care of vocations. Just like a father who continues to live in the generated child. Generating vocations is the most beautiful fruit of priestly holiness, "the very first object of the priestly zeal to which all the sacred ministry must converge".

It is also the duty of the priest to involve the laity in vocational ministry, creating in the Christian environment "a perpetual teacher and evangelist, a luminous and ardent vocation mentality". The prophetic heart of Blessed Justin is today in the most significant documents of the pastoral care for vocations.

The second part of the lecture is an incentive for pastoral workers to follow the example of the divine teacher, who seeks and calls the elect of the divine vocations. The divine call includes three moments or ascensional stages:

The answer to a call (Who are you looking for?);

The request for formation (Master, where do you live?);

The mission that generates other vocations (I will make you fishers of men).

Fr. Justin insists on monitoring the culture of vocation, starting with the chil-

dren with whom the priest must establish a current of sympathy that leads to the formation of a small apostolic college. He is convinced that the seed of vocation sprouts more easily and bears its fruits in the world of children, still under the effect of baptismal grace, "for which they have a special taste for the things of God and a special relationship with Jesus".

For them it is worth spending all the priestly energies especially in the daily catechism "the sun of supernatural life".

The priest's life of piety, like the kiss of the sun for the bud, disposes and solidifies the child's soul to welcome with docility and generosity "the inspirations of heaven with which the vocation develops, strengthens and corresponds to its sovereign grace".

The lecture ends with the return to its ideal center: the research and the culture of vocations. For Blessed Justin this is "the most noble and necessary mission of the clergy that gives to the Church its greatest and most precious fruit, the priest".

Wanting to formulate an overall judgment of the lecture, it must be recognized that it offers the largest amount of stimuli and that it is the most up-to-date in the vocational field. It is undoubtedly the lecture that Fr. Justin feels most intimately connected to his apostolic charism of the divine vocations. Paraphrasing the longing of the mystic St. Teresa of Jesus, Fr. Justin can pray to the Blessed Trinity saying: Take away from me everything, but give me vocations.

His Excellency, Attilio Adinolfi, Bishop of Anagni prefaced the publication of this lecture with the following introduction.

"It seemed to me the most natural thing in a Eucharistic Congress and especially to priests to talk explicitly about priestly vocations.

To the hands and heart of the priest is entrusted the divine Eucharist: Mankind urgently demands to keep present and alive in its midst the treasures and mysteries of God from which it receives light and consolation in its hard earthly existence. Yet, it is widespread and painful the lament of the growing scarcity of priests. It is just to remind the priests with authoritative and paternal insistence that among their most sacrosanct duties, there is this imperious and indeclinable obligation to promote and arouse among the people zealous continuators of their ministry.

It also seemed natural to me that, having in the diocese a house of the nascent Congregation of the Vocationists, which has the particular purpose of encouraging and supporting vocations, to no one else but to the venerated founder should be entrusted the presentation of this theme.

And so it was. For the Diocesan Congress, with so much fervor and enthusiasm of souls celebrated from the 10th to the 14th of May, I invited the Very Reverend Fa-

ther Justin Russolillo. He graciously accepted, came and presented his lecture; this seemed to everyone, and especially to the Excellent Bishops present, so beautiful, so original, so new, so exhaustive, that it was decided to print it.

In fulfilling joyfully the commitment I had made, I express my heartfelt desire and my fervent wish that, through thoughtful and loving study of this lecture, one of the most appreciated fruit of our Congress not only for our diocese but for the entire Church, may follow an intense, thriving and constant work, so that in the fields blessed by God, among the abundant and promising harvest, we may always enjoy the sweet spectacle of numerous and fervent workers. Anagni, June 15, 1933, feast of Corpus Domini. Attilio Adinolfi, Bishop of Anagni”.

Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut and thrown into the fire (Mt 7, 19). It is not only licit but a must to take this quotation in its most profound meaning and apply it to the priest and priestly vocations A plant produces many things, and all are of some use for man, leaves, flowers, wood, shade, perfume and so on; What is most expected from a plant, the one thing to which all its parts are ordained, from the roots to the last leaf, the one thing for which the plant exists is primarily and essentially the fruit. As a fruit, in its complete sense, we intend the reproduction of the plant.

The fruit is the uppermost and last effort of the plant. This is always connected with some kind of sweetness, even to our palate and it is destined to the seed, or better consists in the seed. The plant transmits all its vitality to the seed, and enwraps it in easily assimilable substances, prepared throughout an entire season with vegetative motherly tenderness, so as to predispose it to reproduce the plant.

The glory of the plant will consist in producing fruit in large quantity and good quality so as to be able to surround itself, during its life, and leave afterward the glory of an entire plantation, of which it was the operating principle.

Likewise the plant priest will produce many wonderful things in the various ecclesiastical services, in the various works of apostolate, in the various priestly ministries, in his various cultural ramifications. What is mostly expected from the priest, the thing to which must be ordained all his actions, his own fruit that he must produce is the priest, the fruit-priest produced by the plant-priest.

The priest must also produce fruits of penance for himself and for the whole world of souls. It is recommended that the priest accumulates many and precious merits in order to increase the treasure of the Church. It is desirable that the priest leaves after his death holy works of every kind in order to continue in his name some apostolate until the end of the world. He has all this spiritual fructification in common with all Christian people. The specific and proper fruit of the priest, to which can literally be applied the divine statement: *I chose you and commissioned you to go out and bear fruit that will last* (Jn 15, 16), is the fruit-priest.

This is especially and properly the fruit that remains and reproduces the plant-priest; in it the priest remains and perpetuates himself in the Church to give life, nourishment and increment to any other plant to produce good fruits.

It is so true that the fruit-priest is what must properly and especially be produced by the plant-priest, if every minister of God wants fullness of holy life and fullness of apostolic zeal. Wherever and whenever the priest exercises his ministry, even without wanting or intending it directly and maybe even without realizing it, he arouses vocations and surrounds himself with priests that imitate him. He leaves behind priests that continue his mission, first children of his life; they are his greatest and most beautiful product, even though he may not have directly wanted and thought, even though he might have placed the effort of his intention and action in other spiritual fruits.

What a larger quantity and more beautiful quality of these glorious and delicious fruits he would have produced, had he applied himself directly to it!

Certainly it is not enough, it is not convenient, it is not licit for a man elevated at the heights of reason and faith to produce unconsciously, by instinct or natural necessity his special fruit. He must deliberately and constantly aim at the production of his fruit converging to it all his priestly life. All holy works, all the needs of the souls, all the exigencies of God's glory expect from him the fruit of life, that is, the holy priest. In the present economy of God's grace there is nothing good in the world without the priest.

Therefore, before the problem of the divine vocations, which is more frequently proposed to the clergy, and personally imposed upon him, it is not enough to lament more or less cordially the scarcity of evangelical workers; it is not enough to suggest to others, and perhaps to those who do not need it, or to those to whom we shouldn't ask, the means to make up for this deficiency; it is not enough to deplore more or less effectively the negligence and inertia of the people, or the cowardice and the in-correspondence of so many apostates of the vocation. It is necessary to convince ourselves of our own highest duty of consecrating our life to ecclesiastical vocations, and immediately to offer our own practical cooperation, and to study more and more how to improve and intensify it in the respective spheres of action.

Certainly we do not intend to talk to priests that need restrictions and threats of serious sanctions to be induced to do their duty, and who still have to struggle laboriously, and not always with a guarantee of victory, to contain themselves from sin and its near occasions. We do not intend to speak to priests that obstinately stick to the theory of the least possible, in the service of the Church, of the least effort in their inner life. We should first bring them to higher comprehension and more complete correspon-

dence to their vocation and then expect some real cooperation to the vocation of others.

The plant eaten by worms in its roots, or all cut off in its tops and branches, next to wither if it is not already dead, cannot bear its fruit.

We intend to talk to priests that are in the fullness of grace, in the splendor of doctrine, in the sanctity of the three characters of total consecration to the Lord and to the Church, in the known and lived dignity of God's intimate and chosen friends that they are.

To these priests according to God's heart, in whatever position or level in which they exercise their ministry, we remind them that they must and need to leave behind them the best fruit of their priesthood: Other priests, more priests and forever more priests. We hope you will not accuse us of worrying more about the quantity than the quality, since we have already specified to which priests we intend to talk and consequently what kind of priests we expect.

From the concept and ministry of the priesthood, with all our strength we absolutely exclude any opposition to God and his Church. Talking about vocation, it will be always alive and true the admonition of the Lord Jesus: *The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few* (Lk 10, 2).

When we say that the "harvest is abundant", we do not refer only to the one that is ripe and ready to be harvested; we refer also and much more to that harvest that the entire world of souls can and must produce for the glory of God, when definitely having overcome every sin, the gospel will be lived in its fullness to every aspect of human life and the kingdom of God will be affirmed over all the earth. The laborer capable of preparing, culti-

vating and bringing to maturity all this harvest is only the saint. Saint, in its highest and most correct sense of soul commissioned and officially and totally consecrated to the service of God in the Church, is only the priest.

With this understanding, we must keep in mind that the number in itself does not impede the perfection of quality; to the contrary, the selection of canonical vocations can be done better in a large than in a small number. It is fair here to notice that even not counting on the number, even not worrying about the number, because God can bring about salvation both through a few and through many (cf. K 14, 6), the admonition of the Master and Lord Jesus, "the laborers are scarce" refers directly to the number.

The Lord had permanently before his eyes the vision of the ever more impressive number of souls proceeding from the creating divine action, an oceanic perpetual flow springing forth and spreading from the throne of God. Likewise were present before the eyes of God's holiness the pressing exigencies of teachers and perfect teachers in the multiform and perpetual spiritual work in the souls. It was before the eyes of God's wisdom, which entrusted to human ministers God's kingdom on earth, the need of myriads of priests.

From the heart of the God-with-us comes the admonition: The harvest is plenty! It is such for the number of souls, their enemies and their needs. Much for the number of degrees to which they can and must ascend, and of the degrees of glory, which they can and must render to God! The workers are few and will always be few for the need, even if each were to do the work of Paul, Xavier and Vianney.

So if all the demands of the glory of God and all the works of the Kingdom of heaven claim priests, all the needs of the souls and of the holy Church amount to and are summarized in the

need of priests, we can rightly confirm that inspiring, seeking and cultivating vocations is truly the very first objective of the priestly zeal and the central work to which all the sacred ministry must converge. This work in the spiritual field can be compared with the great duty of spouses to have offspring in the material field.

Man can renounce to marriage for higher ideals, but once he has chosen and contracted it, he must use it primarily in view of having children, as charged by God for the conservation of the species.

Likewise, not every man must be a priest, but once he has been elevated and consecrated in this divine marriage with Christ, he must use his priestly powers to carry on his role of virgin father in the Church, to which he must retain and perfect the faithful, already regenerated in her, he must inspire, present and guarantee generations upon generations of holy peoples, and this can be done only by stirring, searching and cultivating vocations.

There are and there will always be great souls within the catholic laity that are so filled with supernatural life that they can communicate it to others with the edification of the word and of the example, with the power of prayer and action made more precious and fertile by the apostolate of suffering. Priests can never do enough to multiply these souls. The participation and cooperation of these great souls to the priestly ministry is the greatest and the most beautiful fruit produced by Christian lay people. It is a common duty of all lay Christians to materially and spiritually cooperate to the formation of the Levites; priests, however, must work for ecclesiastical vocations with greater zeal and at higher levels; they must dedicate more time and obtain better results, since they are bound to it by a grave and specific duty.

Every priest that looks back to his youthful years of interior and exterior, spiritual and cultural preparation to the milestone

of his ordination, will easily see himself as one who was helped from known and unknown, living and deceased benefactors, materially, at times, and certainly always spiritually, by many souls who pray and immolate themselves for the recruitment and the sanctification of the clergy. He cannot fail to fulfill his duty, to feel the need to reciprocate, in the person of other young little Levites, the benefit received, for personal reasons of gratitude, which in him are added to the other motives, which are common to all Christian people.

Like the fulfillment of any other duty that the priest has in common with the laity, so too this of spiritual and material cooperation in the formation of the Levites must rise up in the priestly forms of the magisterium and of the apostolate.

In every duty common to all Christians, as for example the duty of prayer, of penance, of obedience etc. there is a difference in the way it is fulfilled by the lay people and by the priests. It cannot be sufficient for the priest, it could not be perfect for the priest what is sufficient and perfect for the lay person, because the priest has received many more gifts.

This priestly fulfillment of every Christian duty must be so perfect, high and intense as to lead him, not only for obedience of state, but also for natural redundancy, to become a teacher and apostle of that same duty to the people and to the brothers.

So, practically speaking, in the spiritual and material cooperation of the clergy to ecclesiastical vocations, the priest must concern himself so strongly and so generously as to be first of all example and spur to all, but also and, much more, to become a perpetual teacher and an advocate among the people. So, he will form and guide a relative, luminous and ardent "Vocationist" mentality in the Christian milieu.

To stay on one practical aspect of the question, we notice and affirm that the Church needs priests, who in addition to the many qualities of holiness and doctrine need to be totally detached from their families. This detachment supposes independence from obligations for the long and burdensome period of seminary formation; from this we see the need of returning, or at least getting close to that gratuitousness wanted by the Council of Trent. It is up to the people of God to give to the Bishops the conditions and possibilities they had before violent confiscations of the goods needed for their many projects.

How can we conquer that certain hardness of heart with which the Christian people who are so tender and generous towards the many corporal works of mercy remain impassible before the greatest spiritual works of mercy, even better, the work that eminently summarizes all other good works, that is, giving priests to the Church?

The Priest must, and only the priest can form in the people the conviction and the opportune disposition to make the vein of material and spiritual beneficence flow in a perennial and abundant way in favor of vocations. The priest does this with the edification of his example first, with light of the continuous teaching nurtured with the flame of his intimate zeal for the glory of God. He should not limit himself to dealing with this only at the first Masses, clerical vestments, vocational days, but with the frequency and ardor of those who want to make it a dominant idea in those who surround him, the permanent idea that shines and burns in him, lighthouse and star of his life as an apostle of vocations.

With this material and spiritual cooperation to the formation of Levites, the good priest prepares himself to be worthy of an action more specifically his own, above any lay cooperation of an action more directly and intimately pertaining to the divine vocations. In no way should we want to ignore that vocations are

divine in the sense that they attract to God and above all in the sense that they are exclusively reserved to God.

Only God calls his chosen ones to the priesthood!

We cannot ignore that in every human-divine effect, which presents an external sensible part, only exceptionally and by way of miracle, the Lord works the whole thing directly, immediately and personally. Ordinarily, he uses the instrument-man, and in the case of vocations he uses the instrument of the man-priest, to transmit his will and his calling, and to communicate every grace, not excluding this truly sovereign grace of the divine vocation.

We can see this principle well revealed and applied in Jesus' way of calling the apostles.

The Lord did not limit himself to infuse in the souls of his chosen ones interior graces of internal divine attractions and motions toward his person and his work. After infusing in them these graces, attractions and motions, Jesus did not sit and wait for them to go and search and beg him to let them stay with him, as members of his family.

Jesus first used the service of John the Baptist, making him the precursor of the Gospel, of the Kingdom of heaven, and even more the precursor of divine vocations. Jesus desired that the first chosen ones should be gathered, polished and prepared by John and that from John they would receive the first invitation and impulse to follow the Lamb of God; as we can see in the first two apostles that left John and timidly started their first steps on Jesus' footsteps.

With these two Jesus takes the initiative and asks: "What are you looking for (Jn 1, 38)? With this exterior word Jesus strengthens the timid desire that the interior word had placed in their

heart; it is as a ray of sun that encourages the opening of that small and almost lazy seed of vocation, with that timid question: *Master where do you live?* Question that the divine grace of the vocation waited, as a sign of man's free correspondence, so that Jesus could say that firm, grave, sweet and great word: *Come: First Vocation.*

Having reached the appointed day, after having prepared them himself with his first examples, teachings and wonders, Jesus goes out on purpose to walk near the Sea of Galilee so that he could tell them, one by one and more directly and more expressly the firm, grave, sweet and great word: *Venite post me - Follow me* (Mt 4, 19).

He separates them forever from their families and professions, from their country and habits, to form them according to his heart: *Second Vocation.*

After further preparation of examples, teachings and wonders, and after having spent the night in prayer with the divine Father, he makes the official and definitive choice of his twelve apostles, and puts an end to the progressive series of his vocations, and opens the series of his missions, beginning to send them to preach, with great power also of miracles: *Third and last divine Vocation.*

In this third vocation, which coincides with the beginning of the mission, we seem to be able to see the canonical vocation; since this belongs to the most sublime part of the clergy that must teach and guide us, we will not fall into the temptation to talk about it.

In the second vocation and consequent formation, we seem to be able to see the course of higher studies prefigured and summarized, prior to the initiation to the ordinations. As this forthcoming, ascetic and cultural preparation has been with divine wis-

dom elaborated and disciplined in the venerable seminaries, we will stay away from the presumption to speak of it.

We pause between the last days of the Baptist's public mission and the first days of Jesus' public life to consider in the last pressing invitation of the Baptist and in the first and moving warning of Jesus the role of the first stirrers, searchers and cultivators of ecclesiastical vocations, which has become a duty of all priests and especially those who are responsible for the pastoral care of souls as expressed in canon 1353: *Dent operam sacerdotes, praesertim parochi, ut pueros qui indicia praebent ecclesiasticae vocationis, peculiaribus curis a saeculi contagiis arceant, ad pietatem informant, primis litterarum studiis imbuant divinaeque in eis vocationis germen foveant.* *The priests, especially the pastors, should pay special attention to the boys who show signs of an ecclesiastical vocation, they should cultivate in them the first germ of a divine vocation preserving them from the contamination of the world, forming them to piety, and providing the first elements of academic studies.*

Let us consider the life of a priest from the first days of his presbyteral consecration, when he starts his public life.

We no longer expect him to live an isolated life, as when he was in the seminary, when he only would look at the world through the window of the books; when he would look at the fields of his apostolate flying on the wings of good desires and was imitating Jesus in the mystery of his hidden life.

Now he must open himself to imitate Jesus' public life spending all of himself in the service of souls until he becomes eaten with Jesus-Host, devoured by men, according to the strong expression of Venerable Chevrier.

Now if the priest has to follow Jesus in his public life, he must obviously first of all imitate and reproduce, in a special way, what

has been the personal, principal and central work of Jesus in his public life.

And this was the search, the calling and the formation of the apostles and disciples - those seventy-two disciples who were a great host of friends of whom Jesus loved to surround himself; those twelve apostles who were like his own family that Jesus formed for himself and in which he wanted to perpetuate himself.

When he was teaching the crowds he always wanted the apostles very close to him, so that they would not miss any of his words, and then he introduced them to a more intimate knowledge of his teachings, explaining to them in private, what they had not understood while they were listening to him with the people.

When Jesus was praying, he withdrew from the crowds, but he always took the twelve with him, and even by standing aside, he did not interpose such a distance that he could not be observed.

All this in order to form them and, in a certain way, train them to the life of prayer, and preaching, and show them how to fulfill their ministry, to be more in touch with his person; to be in a continuous participation of his states, and in a continuous imitation of his acts. Thus he kept preparing them to become as many other Jesus, and to receive from the Holy Spirit, the same mission that he had from the Father.

This is the main, central and personal work of Jesus in his public life. Naturally, Jesus is showing the apostles how his public life can be imitated and reproduced in the priestly life!

The other traits and facts of the life of Jesus may not always be repeated in all the priests, nor with such resemblance, but this relationship of the disciples and apostles with the divine teacher.

In the early days of his ordination, the young priest spreads around a spiritual perfume of edification that attracts souls to him. Immediately some children and young people look at him, they shyly surround him at first, as if waiting for his first manifestation as a friend of children and young people, like Jesus.

It will be enough for him to turn towards them with a smile, and to give them a simple word, (and he will spontaneously say that word of Jesus "Who do you want?") and the souls will be opened to him with intense desire of his word, of his friendship, of his house, where to stay with him, live with him. "Where do you live?" and the relationship has begun.

If the priest wants it, as God wants it, soon he starts to form the sphere of spiritual friends in whom he can transmit what is good, and from whom he can be preserved from other spheres of friendships that may not have a good influence upon him. He has formed his spiritual family that will preserve him from any dangerous need and attachment to a natural family.

In addition to a great help for his preservation from evil, the priest will find in them his Altar Servers group for the regular and solemn liturgical celebrations; his young laborers in the daily work needed for the decorum of the house of God; his messengers to their companions, in their schools and families for other priestly cooperators

Above all, he will find in these youngsters the way to imitate and reproduce the work for vocations as Jesus himself organized and realized. With them the young priest forms his sphere of the seventy-two disciples, his small apostolic college, in which he will produce his priestly fruit for the Church and for mankind.

After those first meetings and spontaneous encounters, which are not always accompanied by the true vocation, starts the true

formation, how to imitate Jesus who personally seeks the apostles, and personally calls them to himself, and officially begins to train them; and he no longer leaves them until he has made them worthy of the divine mission with the Holy Spirit.

Following Jesus' public life almost step by step, the priest, also if not entrusted with the care of souls, will be led, must be led to evangelize souls, with catechetical teaching to every class of people, but primarily and mainly to children and young people; and immediately he has his inseparable disciples, his little ministrants.

The priest, who imitates Jesus, becomes essentially a perpetual preacher, and he will end up by teaching catechism every day with the help of all the subsidies offered to him by pedagogy applied to religious teaching.

He will do it with that zeal of active love for God and for souls, which generates a current of supernatural mutual sympathy between priest and faithful; he will teach by integrating the catechism with the oratory, much more than with the recreation; and if even with some recreation only as much as it is a way to increase the oratory without boring and profaning it.

The child's soul, a whole dawn of dreams, and the soul of the youth who wakes up in his golden morning, wants to find life according to his dreams so pure and beautiful.

The real recreation, not of the body that does not need it, but of the spirit of the child and adolescent is the story. Among the stories, those who most delight in dreaming and better educating and preparing for the reality of the greatest and most beautiful life of every dream, are the heroic deeds of the saints of the Old and New Testaments, of the great history of the Church, unique history and master of life.

It is precisely in these prayerful catechisms that Jesus makes the child feel the inner word, which will make him the chosen of the divine vocations. It is precisely in these prayerful recreations, in which the chosen child reveals his attitudes and inclinations to ecclesiastical life. No soul better than that of a child understands and follows the Lord, even without external calls. Jesus only recommends not preventing them, but letting them go to him! Only this is necessary with the children: that they are not impeded and they are not forbidden to go to Jesus.

Jesus did not explicitly and externally call children (and women), as he did with adult men.

It is enough to show Jesus to the children, Jesus in his doctrine, Jesus in his saints, Jesus in the sacred functions, and they will run after him, they will embrace him and they would not leave him, because of their almost supernatural instinct, effect of the still recent baptismal grace and supernatural virtues and gifts, not yet neutralized by the influence of evil. They have a special taste for the things of God and a special transport to Jesus, who reveals himself in sympathy and transport for his minister, the priest who welcomes them as Jesus. They open and show their different attitudes, dispositions and inclinations to the life of the Church to the things of God and of souls.

One day the ecclesiastical superiors will want to find those elements in the cleric to whom they are about to communicate the canonical vocation, that is, attitudes and abilities for the sacred mysteries, with full, serious and constant will to fulfill all priestly duties. In the child of catechisms and daily oratories, these elements are first sensed, then found, proved and confirmed in everyday experiences, in the proportions in which the child is capable, that is, in the richest forms of fantasy and sentiments that precede and prepare those convictions and decisions, as the flower prepares and precedes the fruit.

Thus, the seed of divine vocation appears in children, and the priest must cultivate it for the first years.

If this blessed seed delays to show itself, or does not show at all, would it be illicit or improper to solicit the child's heart, and, through the ways of the heart, urge the child's mind to turn to God's things, to apply to things of the Church, in a word, to consecrate oneself to Jesus?

It seems necessary to make a distinction between children and adults, and between religious state and priestly life.

Not everyone, not even the priest can invite or call an adult to the priesthood. Only those who have the fullness of the priesthood (i.e. Bishops) and have jurisdiction over the people of God can invite or call adults to the priesthood.

Parents, educators, lay people in general, and even those who, absolutely speaking, have the jurisdiction should not explicitly invite or call children to the priesthood because it is always inopportune as something premature.

On the other hand, the incorporation of the faithful in Christ and the participation in the divine priesthood of Jesus granted to all baptized justifies stirring all adult lay Catholics and proportionately also the children to priestly life as a growth in living Christian virtues and cooperation in the priestly works.

It is proper of the spiritual fathers as true directors of consciences to propose religious life to adults and to introduce children to consecrated life.

It is proper for all people to invite, call and encourage everyone to religious life, that is, to a more elevated practice of Christian virtues and more intense fervor of friendship with God. In

this, we have to imitate Jesus, who spoke about the evangelical perfection to all, not to a privileged group of a few; he spoke to the crowds, because in every state of life, it is somehow possible to practice the evangelical counsels. Every state or condition of life can produce those Christian heroes that are the first glorifiers of God and the greatest benefactors of the world.

Even when the environment they come from inspires a negative attitude toward, religious life, children are always those who oppose less difficulties, and always justify that saying of Jesus: *I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever, and revealing them to the children. Yes, Father, for that is what pleased you to do* (Lk 10, 21).

If the greatest and best cooperation of the clergy to the ecclesiastical vocations is to prepare the subjects to the canonical vocation, certainly no one will be better prepared than the young souls for a long time inflamed and trained to Christian asceticism. Their religious life, I would say, can be connaturally elevated to priestly and consecrated life. In the early Church, men dedicated to asceticism were preferred to all others and admitted to the priesthood, if they were not lacking of other necessary qualities.

In the parish and religious schools, the formation of the clergy was carried out with the study and practice of ecclesiastical functions. In more remote times, the catechetical schools flourishing in the main cities provided not only the scientific defense of Christianity but also the intellectual formation of the clergy. Later, inspired by the great ideas of monasticism, great Bishops gathered clerics around them, in community life, and gave to the older ones the opportunity of educating the younger ones.

It is the Church's intention that the adolescent, the future priest, in the age that is less exposed to the influences of the world

and is not yet mature for the conquests of knowledge, should be cultivated in the vocation, almost domestically, in the life and school of the parish. Later he will be entrusted to more competent and authorized educators in those great institutes specialized for the formation of priestly vocations, that are the seminaries.

In the meantime they live, as a mini apostolic college, around their priest, who must be industrious with all his intelligence: to *preserve them from the contamination of the world, forming them to piety, and providing the first elements of academic studies.*

First, he must *preserve them from the contamination of the world.*

This contamination is communicated through bad company. It will be easy for the priest to become the only friend of his youngsters, if he will not have companions dearer than his young disciples, and will love to keep them with him in his prayers, in the liturgical celebrations and in every priestly work.

The contamination of the world is communicated through profane shows. It is easy for the priest to keep children away from profane shows, not replacing them with other shows that even if they are good, they are always natural, and often they increase rather than quench the thirst for worldly shows. The priest should uplift the children's spirit through the enjoyment of the solemn liturgies that culminate in the spectacle of the cross in the divine sacrifice of the Mass.

The contagion is communicated through vain readings; the priest will preserve his children from them, not so much with pleasant, good readings; even though they are good, they are still in the natural order that sharpens rather than mortify the dangerous curiosity for other more profane books. The priest should entertain and delight the children with the readings of the lives

of saints, overflowing with sane emotions, and especially with the adventures of the missionaries, which are very apt to ignite with enthusiasm the good youthful spirit.

Ad pietatem informant. (The priest should form to piety the children that show signs of vocation).

The priest will be the children's friend, but not in order to attract them to himself, nor to relax with them.

Are not the priest's arms that must lead these children to their goal. It is not his heart whose beating they should feel, whose rhythm they should follow and whose life they should receive. The priest will feel and say with the holy precursor of vocations: *Illum oportet crescere, me autem minui - He must increase, I must decrease.* He will incessantly direct the mind and heart of the child and the youngster to Jesus. He will direct them to the divine adolescent Jesus, to Jesus living in the Eucharist in order to prevent those tenderly loving hearts from focusing on the priest-man and that the priest-man may find his joy in those tenderly lovable hearts.

He will initiate them to the life of intimacy with the Lord, proper to the priest. He will gradually introduce them to those practices of piety, which are the backbone of the life of prayer that must be found in the child, in a low and yet ever rising level.

Above all he will initiate them to daily communion, sun of supernatural life whose fullness they must reach. An entire youth of holy daily communions is the best preparation to a life of holy daily Masses. With Holy Communion Jesus effectively becomes the center to which the youngster directs all his action, and especially his academic studies in order to achieve that science which is the most nutritious element of the life of piety and zeal for the sacred ministries.

Primis litterarum studiis imbuant. (The priest should provide the first elements of academic studies for the youngsters that show signs of vocation).

It is desirable that every teacher, especially with children and adolescents, would fulfill his teaching ministry with priestly spirit imitating the one who said: *Do not call anyone teacher, because your teacher is only Christ!* It is even more desirable that the youngsters chosen of the divine vocations could find priests – I do not say capable (every priest is capable) – but willing to personally initiate them to academic studies, with priestly methodology.

The one who studies for the priesthood should distinguish himself from the lay student, starting in primary schools, to assure that the study of an aspirant to the priesthood would always be sacred, at least in the methodology, if not always in the subjects they study.

Nothing is so susceptible to being assimilated by religious piety as much as science and its study. On the other hand, in no other place or time, a vocation can run in greater danger than in school and in study, if conducted with profane and worldly mentality, even the sacred disciplines!

These are the special attentions with which the chosen little ones of the divine vocations are placed in the climate most propitious to the precious and delicate seed of the divine vocation, and their soul is formed to that spirit of fidelity, generosity and docility to the divine inspirations that develop and solidify the vocation up to the complete correspondence to its sovereign grace. Thus the priest will have accomplished his noble and necessary mission, he will have given his greatest and most precious fruit to the Church.

Considering that cooperation in searching and cultivating ec-

clesiastical vocations is one of the first, if not the maximum of the duties of the priest, and the principal characteristic of the public life of Jesus to be imitated, and considering that today's discipline of the Church provides the seminaries for the complete formation of the young seminarians, only in the field of childhood the priests can and must carry out their direct action in favor of ecclesiastical vocations, we hope and pray:

1. That all priests, especially parish priests, will commit themselves with example and word to form and guide the vacationist mentality among the lay faithful to cooperate spiritually and materially to the culture of vocations in the venerable diocesan and regional seminaries.
2. That in all parishes, the most competent and edifying priests will be entrusted with the care of the most promising children, chosen from the various stages of catechism to make with them like many small parish vacationaries, which are, at the same time, as irradiations and sources of vocations for diocesan and regional seminaries.

The young priest and the apostolate

This lecture was presented on August 1, 1933 in the main hall of the pontifical faculty of St. Luigi of Naples, on the occasion of the Congress of the Regional Seminary of Campania. In this theological university staffed by the Jesuits, Fr. Justin completed his theological studies and distinguished himself for outstanding piety and excellences. Three Jesuits were his spiritual directors. During the lecture there were such thunderous applauses that the participants at the conference had to plug their ears.

The lecture starts with a note of sourness for the situation of spiritual failure in which many young priests have buried their talents or have "even turned them to evil".

What can we do to free their hearts from the despair that suffocated or extinguished the first brightness of the apostolate?

Friend and educator of many priestly lives, Bl. Justin does not despair and questions the causes or alleged faults that negatively affect the exercise of the pastoral action of the young priest. The most important knots to loosen are the family, the envy of the confreres and the incomprehension of the superiors.

Before examining this kind of outbreaks of pastoral infection, the speaker goes to the root of the problem and asks himself whether "the failure in the young priest's apostolate is due to some inner weakness of his. If this is the case he should quickly undertake the way of humility and truth that will free him from his mistakes and raise him from his squalor".

We are only at the antiphon. The song follows immediately: Let the young priest cultivate a special relationship with the Lord, his God. Convinced that he is talking to an audience that walks in holiness of life, Fr. Justin warns that only the absence of dialogue with God can distress and disrupt the relationship of life.

As far as the obstacles that arise from the natural family, the young priest is

encouraged to create for himself an economical independence that enables him to escape from the prison of the domestic walls and safeguard the dignity and freedom of his apostolate.

For what concerns the people of God, field of his ministry, the priest has nothing to worry about. People are good! The priest has only to be humble and poor, a man for other, like Jesus.

A more serious problem may come from his relationships with women. The young priest should never start his ministry working with women. Is Fr. Justin an antifeminist? Certainly not! The recommendation has to be seen in the context of time, it sounds like an invitation to proceed with prudence in a minefield. The touch of exquisite sensibility exhibited by Fr. Justin towards the female universe is expressed in gratitude for the role of maternal collaboration carried out by the woman next to the priest: Women are the best disposed to every form and degree of true religiosity and well-cultivated and directed they usually become precious auxiliaries of all priestly works and the first collaborators of the clergy.

The most fearful challenges come from within the priestly planet and concern the relationship with superiors always ready to counter the spirit of initiative of the young priest. Fr. Justin warmly criticizes "that air of reformer and creator that the young priest assumes in the new ministry regarding popular piety" and urges him to recognize and renew the values present in popular religiosity. Also on this pastoral versant, the lecturer prophetically finds himself in perfect harmony with the most recent documents of the magisterium.

Regarding the relationship between the young priest and his superiors on the setting and monitoring of apostolic work, Fr. Justin indicates the path of patient and constructive dialogue, and recurs to the eloquent image of the humble and silent grain of wheat in the furrow waiting to sprout. Meanwhile, to get around the wall of incomprehension and sometimes ill-concealed hostility on the part of some superiors closed in the casing of their egoism, the young priest can "spend his energies organizing the parish Altar Servers, taking care of the decoration of God's house, fully observing liturgical laws, and opening himself to the whole diocesan pastoral care.

In order to avoid a situation of permanent conflict, Fr. Justin urges the young priest to cultivate with his superiors "A relationship of subject, disciple and son ... the priest is not for himself but for others, and this being for others is applied to the souls entrusted to us, but, unfortunately, we do not understand when it comes to the persons of superiors, to whom we are entrusted ". The lecturer also has at heart the peace of the superiors "who have not only the need, but the right to be object of esteem upon which true love is founded. To enter into this mentality, the young priest must abnegate his personality".

Only in this perspective will he be able to see the superiors as “the intelligent and loving instruments of God’s will”.

If, unfortunately, they do not show themselves in this way, then two ways are offered to the young priest in order to avoid the trap of sloth or of autonomous management of his apostolate.

The first path, indicated as ordinary, involves two categories of persons who must be the object of the apostolate of the young priest: the sick to be assisted, above all, with daily communion, (“What a beautiful field of apostolate is human sorrow!) and children to be nourished by daily catechism classes. These are the two fields of apostolate that the superior-parish priest will not invade, if for no other reason, because both these occupations are not materially profitable. “He too, the superior-pastor is a man” notes Fr. Justin with true spirit of finesse.

These two areas of apostolate, among other things, are also valid to sanctify oneself and sanctify others.

The second “extraordinary” way is to open the heart to the superior, choosing him as “Spiritual Father, to whom to confide the good projects as they come to mind”. This gesture of humility and openness will help the superior to lay down the armor of his individualism and will dispose him to look at people, things and situations with different eyes. With this recipe, evangelically without expiration date, Fr. Justin, incurable optimist, concludes the lecture, still valid today as a code of priestly brotherhood for the skilled workers who work full-time in the Lord’s vineyard.

What a pain it is always, for those who understand, to see uncultivated and undeveloped talents, and worse if buried or turned to evil, both by those who are endowed with them and by those who are supposed to take advantage of them and should have favored their development and their application.

This is especially the case with many young priests, rich with the talents of youth and science, invested with the powers and grace of the priesthood. They could and should change the face of the earth, and truly establish the kingdom of God in entire populations; and instead, after vain agitations more or less noisy,

they fall into discouragement, settle in vulgarity, become sterile in sloth, even if they do not turn to forbidden or profane activities causing much embarrassment and detriment for the community.

It is true that we must never despair of anyone and that - *usque ad noctem - until night* - we must hope in the power of God's grace, even extraordinary and miraculous. We like to repeat and console ourselves by repeating Jesus' quivering and tearful word: *Resurget frater tuus - your brother shall rise again* (Jn 11, 23).

Judging from what ordinarily happens, we can foresee that over time, with the experience of men and things, these discouraged and fallen brothers will stand up again and resume with confidence the sacred work of the apostolate, and bring into the Church those good and lasting fruits of divine glory, for which they were called, consecrated and sent among souls.

Every young priest is generally expected and welcomed with much benevolence, not only by the people, but also by the clergy. The first manifestations of his piety, of his zeal are followed with sympathy. The spirit of expectation of the Savior that was all the spirituality of the centuries preceding the coming of Jesus, now for another principle, in another form and in another degree, is always present in the souls. In the liturgical life of the Church this spirit of expectation is rekindled in the time of Advent and then in the octaves of the Ascension and Pentecost. Likewise, in the lived life of the Christian populations, everything is revived by every priestly ordination, because in the hidden and sure intuition, in the intimate and warm sense of the faithful, more than in the occasional sermons for first Masses, the new priest appears: another Jesus, from whom they finally await that greater good that they have waited so far, without being able to find it.

How do we explain then that a few months after the ordina-

tion, all that benevolence and sympathy of people and clergy for the newly ordained priest is vanished?

First a certain heavy coldness, then a certain chilling distrust, then a worrisome hostile impasse, hinders and blocks the newly ordained at the beginning of his apostolate and throw him into discouragement, inertia, and perhaps even into evil!

It is very expedient to attribute any lack of success with works and people to oppositions of the environment, to envy of the confreres, to abandonment of superiors. All this should never be supposed. All this, many times, is not there. All of this must simply be considered as a part of the priestly work that the minister of God must begin by tilling first and then cultivating the ground.

Otherwise, not to mention many other faults and inconveniences in which he could fall, our young friend will be tempted and led to see in all his failures, only the fault of others. Since almost always, these other persons either by age, by grade, by number, or by any other reason are superior to him, the young priest will believe that he cannot avoid it, and will therefore close his eyes on his own deficiencies and shortcomings. He will close his mind to many beautiful plans of apostolate, perhaps elaborated through a long series of authentic inspirations. He will close his heart to the hope of success, and he will completely die to the fervor and enthusiasm that is very much needed for every good deed.

On the other hand, if this young priest will see himself at fault for all oppositions of the environment, whether they come from the hostility of the confreres, or misunderstanding of the superiors, or from lack of correspondence of the people, attributing all his external failings to some of his interior decadence, he will enter into the vision of humility, that is, of truth. He will establish

himself in the disposition of humility, that is, of truth. This disposition will free him from his errors, will raise him from his degradation. He will overcome obstacles and he will bring to maturity, with new fervor, his fruits of good in the holy Church, precisely because he will become more pious, more holy and more saintly.

Evidently, in every relationship with the neighbor, in every action to be carried out, except in exceptional cases, he will be victorious over any difficulty and happy with every good result. If man faithfully cultivates his personal, special relationship with God his Lord, from which he can be animated, in all his things, with rectitude of intention, with prudence of direction, with fortress of perseverance and amiability in every circumstance, he will be guaranteed every good result.

When the relationship with God is not cultivated properly, even worse if it is interrupted frequently and periodically, and the person does not immediately reconnect it, but gets used to this state of moral disorder, all other relationships are deeply troubled or messed up, so that they turn out more to the disadvantage than to the good of the individual and of the community of the faithful.

To material man it will appear inexplicable the effect of failure or the disastrous effect of certain initiatives, of certain works, of many studies, efforts and expenses, of some entire lives. The spiritual man, who judges everything well, understands that there is no grace in the soul or that it is in constant contrast and danger. Even the words, the works, the relations of that soul will be graceless and lifeless, and like dead things, they will be more or less repugnant to everyone, and they will fall like dead things.

This applies especially to the priest whose specific relationships with souls must all be supernatural and most intimately connected, most essentially dependent on his personal relationship with

God. Apart from the effects of the sacraments that derive *ex opere operato* (in virtue of the intrinsic value of what is done), and a large part of the effect of the sacraments *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae* (in virtue of the dignity of the Church), we can affirm with certainty that every priestly action, every apostolate, in its initiative, in its fulfillment, and in its success, is effective in direct proportion of the priest's relationship with God.

We suppose this inner relationship of the young priest with his God. We suppose that our young friend is aware that the first fruit of glory of God expected from him is his own soul saved as a saint. Consequently we suppose that he is very attentive to his spiritual progress from grace to grace, and that he considers his apostolic relations first as means and then as effect of his union with God. With this supposition, we retain it easy and safe to overcome all the difficulties experienced by the young priests in the early years of their ministry, partially foreseeing and preventing them, partly by solving them and turning them to the good, and partly using them for the priestly ministry.

All external difficulties can originate either from one's own family according to the flesh, or from the people in whose midst the priest has his place of work and battle, or even from his fellow priests, and from his immediate ecclesiastical superiors.

As for his own natural family, the young priest will never be inculcated enough and recommended to make himself independent, limiting his close contact with those who compose the family and reducing to the strict minimum his financial contribution for personal expenses. The young priest must be well aware and convinced that he has already repaid very well his loved ones of all the pains suffered for his education by corresponding to his vocation. He has already greatly contributed to the human well being of all his relatives, with the prestige of the priesthood added to the honor of the family. He must not care at all and positively

despise, with the gaze to eternity, this criterion so vulgar and yet so common in the families of the people, according to which the more material goods he produces, the more one is esteemed and the better is treated in the family.

It is not rare the case of a young priest, who remains in the family, that after the first days of celebrations, he finds himself in a humiliating condition in front of his siblings, even minor in every respect, but who derive a greater income from their jobs and professions. In environments that are regulated by such materially practical criteria, the edification of the presence, of the word, and of the action of the priest is annulled. The serious feeling of domestic discomfort that he suffers, often leads him to forms of reaction not worthy of an ecclesiastic, and more often leads him into the degradation and abjection of the search for profit.

The very first problem every newly ordained priest must resolve, in theory starting from the last years of seminary life, and in practice from the day of his first Mass, is how to create a situation of independence, how to settle himself in a position of independence from his own family. He should not stop at sterile desires and good disposition toward a form of community life for priests, if ever it should be introduced, where it does not exist. He must practically form his own small religious house, which will help him in the flight from the world, in the detachment from the earthly family, and increases the edification of his person and the effectiveness of his action.

The young priest should not deceive himself if he finds in his family conditions of esteem, freedom and comfort, not at all impeding his priestly ministry, indeed very convenient to his decorum and favorable to his apostolate. These will not last! At the latest, after the departure of the parents for eternity, he too will fall into some kind of domestic slavery, which will make him end, with stormy and sad sunset, his days, which could have been so

beautiful and was meant to be more and more beautiful until its glorious end.

It is perfectly useless, and perhaps ironically cruel, to tell this to a priest who has been living in the family for some years. The young priest should and must be told, because the young priest can and must keep this in mind, if he really wants to live as a priest.

As for the people, generally, everyone who works with people agrees in recognizing that people are good, people correspond, people follow, and people give.

All the ignorance, lukewarmness and in some cases all indispositions and aversions of the people accuse the negligence, the discords, the bad examples of the previous clergy. They, however, are soon forgotten when the people see the firmness of virtue, the industriousness of zeal, the constancy of patience of our young apostle. At the end, the difficulties coming from people are not those that seriously challenge and discourage the young priest; these are usually exaggerated; in reality are much less in number and intensity, and they are meant to increase the ingenuity and ignite the combative fervor, with the sense of the arduous. They serve as good exercise for the activities of the young priest and they prepare for him many good satisfactions. They are inherent to every job and human battle, in the natural order, no less than in the supernatural order.

A serious difficulty that requires special attention and prudence is the apostolate among women of any condition and age, whether considered individually or collectively in associations.

Women are also souls and must be subject of pastoral care. Women are usually well disposed to every form and degree of true religiosity, and if properly cultivated and directed, they usu-

ally become precious auxiliary to all other priestly works, the first collaborators of the clergy.

This is why on one hand they constitute a special danger for the young priest, it is not convenient to dwell on this, as it is self-evident. On the other hand they deserve a particular respect, a higher and more delicate consideration and a more skillful trait.

It consists in the fact that regardless of all the possible reasons, advantages, guarantees, encouragement and necessities, the young priest must never start his apostolate with women, imitating God, who in his creation, redemption and sanctification always associated the woman to man, but never started with the woman.

The young priest should never work directly with women, without explicit and formal obedience from the ecclesiastical authority, in imitation of Jesus' public life, in which he allowed a group of pious women to follow him, but he did not directly call them. He never preached to them alone, and he always wanted them around his mother.

Even in the case of a dutiful apostolate among women, in virtue of formal and explicit obedience, our young friend should imitate the high and austere trait of Blessed Cafasso and even more the behavior of our Saint Alphonsus, with the women of his family, (St. Alphonsus and his sister in law, the wife of Sir Hercules), with women consecrated to God, to be modeled on the ideal of the holy nun, and with those living in the world to be made princesses of heaven (St. Alphonsus to Madame Brianna Carafa).

Otherwise no one will see his relations as being good or appropriate, nobody will think well of his intentions, nobody will be able to guarantee him immunity from internal faults and external slanders. His own family, his confreres and the whole people will

surround him with a more or less mute general opposition; in this case the best thing to do is to give up immediately, (without the usual vain and proud fear that doing so would give credibility to the suspicions) and to change the subject and the field of his apostolate.

We come to the truly more fearful difficulties, which the little virtue and the lack of experience of the young priest, at times, make them insuperable. I am referring to the difficulties that the young priest will encounter among the priests, from his confreres and many times from those from whom he was expecting only encouragement and approval.

These difficulties can be aroused by what the other priests expect, ask for and do not obtain. This makes them perceive the young priest as being against them and as their enemy. This may also be caused by what the young priest intends to do in his ministry, or by all the ways and the complexity of circumstances with which he begins to do his ministry.

About what one expects and asks more or less openly from the members of the clergy, it is not really the case to talk about honors, missions or special tasks, because they generally are granted after many long proves of zeal and capacity in the sacred ministries. They cannot be found in the young priest, who is only beginning his service to souls. It is rather the case of encouragements and help of a material nature, and more distinctly of financial nature, for personal needs and for the good works that the young priest does because requested by his superiors.

Any knowledge, even not very profound of man in general, and of the priest in particular, should be enough to understand how useless, inappropriate, imprudent and inconvenient it is to expect and (may heaven free us) to ask for financial help to the clergy around us.

We are well aware that the greatest benefactors of humanity are found in the ranks of the clergy; in the moral order always and absolutely, in the material order almost always, but relatively so, the greatest benefactors of humanity are priests, living images of the most munificent heart of Jesus Christ, and courageous and faithful ministers of divine providence.

Practically, at least in the present time, to expect and ask for financial help to immediate ecclesiastical superiors, it is plainly useless, because they themselves are first oppressed by works that absorb all they have "*in re et spe - in reality and in hope*", so as to induce them to be the first ones, to reach out and to solicit (oh how!) public charity.

If we expect and ask for financial help from the confreres, which is the last thing we really want to do, even if we do not find a great preoccupation for the future which saddens the tepid priests and hardens their heart, we will encounter a more or less decent poverty, a more or less pompous comfort, or a rare richness that they want to shower according to personal initiatives. In any case, and in any way, we will always experience how exceptional it is to find a priest who benefits another priest.

On the other hand, if it is a matter of expecting what we think is due to us for work done, for damages we have suffered, or offerings for our ministry, then the most noble and most practical thing to do is to forget that there may be for us a title of justice. In the spirit of universal humility it is advisable to rely only on the title of charity, so without much ado, if we are given a little or a lot, if something is offered to us before or after, we will always receive with cordial gratitude whatever others donate to us.

In a word, about financial compensation by the clergy, adopt the principle: "Ask nothing", and there will be no need to add

"refuse nothing", because we are always willing to receive, and because others wouldn't want to give us anything!

But praise God! This system is what, in other ways, makes us draw more from the treasures of providence, especially if we, on our part, will give even only with a single mite, to anyone who appeals to our charity, especially to our confreres in the priesthood. We will accustom ourselves to remunerate promptly, at least doubly, every service rendered by one of our confreres; annexing to every material or spiritual work of the priest, a value that is greater than mere human labor, mindful of the Gospel principle: *Give and it will be given to you; a full measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing, will be poured into your lap* (Lk 6, 38).

As far as what the young priest intends to do in his ministry, the cause of misunderstandings, shadows, frictions and hostility between himself and other confreres, mostly older than he, and much more so if superiors, is in the appearance of novelty that may be present in his work, and in the accentuated affirmation of his personality that is noticed in his initiatives. A hermit used to tell us: *Every new superior feels that he must create anew the sun, the moon and the stars, as if the whole world had collapsed... only after a long period of time he realizes that in the hermitage there were already the sun, the moon and the stars and that functioned perfectly.*

The air and behavior of reformer and creator, ridiculous and funny for those who live outside of his influence, are painful and irritating for those who somehow must suffer it.

Some young priests seem to come to the parishes from the seminary with similar air and intentions. That venerable institution that has brought them to the dignity of the priesthood could melancholically and bitterly repeat the divine reproach: *On account of your sins my name is blasphemed!* So much is their disdain

for all that they find in the religious life of the people and their eagerness and itching to renew everything!

How wise instead is the ability to apply one's zeal, above all, not to end up breaking the broken cane, not to end up extinguishing the smoldering wick, but to continue and perfect what is already found in the devotional habits of the place, and to give new impetus to the good works that other workers implanted at one time.

With how much lightness, for example, we are led to see in the outward piety of the people, a complex of exaggerations and abuses, and almost a pattern of superstitions rather than a well-understood religiosity.

Certainly some exaggeration, superstition and abuse is also found in the poor humble people, since those who had the mission and duty to nourish them in worship failed to do so; while the people felt the need of sound doctrine and dogma, they remained abandoned to their own imagination and feelings.

All those practices of piety, all those religious manifestations had a sound beginning, and most of the time they retain their healthy content and meet the various needs of the people; they are like the external fringes and the irradiation of official worship.

All religious practices need to be considered positively, and studied with religious reverence by the young priests. They may need to be polished in the form, at times they may need to be purified in the substance, they must always be elevated in their ways and in the internal intelligence. This must be done with spirit of grace that does not eliminate, does not destroy but elevates. Even in the rare case that a practice should be abolished it should be done indirectly, with due respect, with intelligent and slow substitution of more useful forms, more appealing than the previous

ones and yet corresponding to them in their purpose and content, so that it will not appear a destruction but rather a new flowering and reproduction of the old one.

As in the process of learning, the respect for the predecessors is an affirmation of wisdom, a conciliatory grandeur, so in the ministry, the respect and understanding of what is already good in the religious practice of the people is a good principle of apostolate, and I say "principle" in terms of passing time, but also as development and soul of action.

In the liturgical functions the young priest can and must bring many new elements, even without any novelty, managing to be in charge of their preparation, and devoutly directing their execution, provided he is instructed and experienced in the respective laws.

Almost everywhere, due to lack of personnel, as we ordinarily say, many liturgical functions prescribed by the Missal and indicated in the Ritual are omitted. They should all be introduced in the parish religious life; this would be a welcome and edifying novelty.

Those liturgical functions and the few that are done now, always due to lack of personnel, were performed very poorly and with the passing of time they ended up being made very badly; through culpable negligence they became habits that transformed all deficiencies into false laws, and priests and people alike forgot the true laws of sacred liturgy.

The monthly liturgical "case" that, we believe, is held regularly in every diocese, together with the moral "case", cannot be sufficient for an adequate science and practice of the sacred liturgy.

So the young priest will do well to intrude in order to attract to

himself the most laborious but also the most important part of the organization and performance of the liturgical functions. He will work with the parish Altar Servers that he will find or train, more than with old and badly accustomed people. He will certainly be able to give liturgical celebrations, if not the splendor, at least that convenient decorum that meets the immediate complacency of the clergy, generates edification in the practicing Christian people, and recompenses abundantly for all fatigue and eventual opposition of incorrigible grumblers.

Starting by applying his zeal to the decorum of God's house through integral observance of the liturgical norms, the young priest will imitate one of the first traits of Jesus' public life. He should guard himself from the fault of many young confreres who, either out of human respect or out of indolence, end up doing the things of God like others, very badly. Doing so, he will have begun to overcome the difficulties of the practice of the apostolate.

This alone cannot be enough for the pastoral activity of a young priest, nor for the complex needs of God's people. Thank God, we are living at a time when every diocese is experiencing a full bloom of works that are irradiations or extension, or simply execution of the great and necessary works that the Holy Spirit guiding the Church elevated to the dignity of pontifical works; being pontifical works, they are also episcopal works, parish works, priestly works par excellence, and therefore universal, obligatory works with which every priest is sure to work profitably to his own sanctification and for the extension of the kingdom of God in souls.

There is no better choice for the young priest's activity than applying himself to propagate and establish in every parish, in every group of souls, these pontifical works, capable of absorbing the entire life of an apostle if taken seriously and comprehended integrally. Each parish priest must periodically report to the dioc-

esan center about these pontifical works. With useful emulation the pastors compete among themselves for a certain primacy of great efficiency of these works within their people. They are happy to see the young priest's interest and dedication in this work. Often pastors are happy if someone else carries on completely this task.

Since they are pontifical, diocesan and parish works, established and directed by others and totally centralized in the parish priest, in the bishop and in the pope, it is very easy for the simple priest, for the little worker to hide his own person in them, to disappear in the pictures of the collective activity, because in the official reports, it appears only the name of the pastor, of the decision-making person. This must be done not as servile adulation, not by politicizing prudence, but out of respect for authority. When dealing with authority, humility compels us to appropriate and make ours the sentiment and the word of St. John Baptist: *He must increase, I must decrease* (Jn 3, 30). When there is this blessed and holy humility, our work of application of statutes, of respect for hierarchy, of unselfishness without any personal advantage is not possible to encounter on our way serious difficulties except the ordinary, inevitable and insignificant human miseries: fertilizer of our good works.

What can we say about the young priest interested in promoting some personal idea, in carrying on some personal plan of action, in affirming his own spirit of benefic initiative in the holy Church?

May the Lord deliver us from minimally talking against apostolic and private inspirations, and from suffocating any spark of flames of the Sacred Heart infused in the heart of the young minister! We want to be, at the same time, the servants of the divine vocations and the promoters of the divine inspirations controlled by spiritual directors and blessed by the superiors.

How can we, or anyone, talk against the inspirations, since all that is good and beautiful, useful and alive in holy works, is all divine inspiration, and every saint and the entire Church is a child of divine inspirations?

Our young friend should be aware of the fact that every inspiration of holy works is sown in our souls as a seed in a furrow; it needs long seasons of rain, sun and continued labor of absorbing the humors in order to become a plant capable of producing flowers and fruits.

We cannot apply the saying of St. Ambrose to every inspiration: *The grace of the Holy Spirit does not know long pauses*. For every inspiration of holy works, works somehow out of the orbit of pontifical works, for new works we have the example of Jesus' hidden life. We have the example of Jesus' thirty years of preparation for three years of public life, for his work of universal redemption.

The young priest should develop his project for a long period of years; if not really for thirty years as Jesus did, he should nurture it for at least nine years as recommended by Horace, the little master of *Art of Poetry*; for a literary composition that wants to remain glorious: *Nonum prematur in annum - Let it mature for nine years*. After these many years you may believe that the hour of God has come to implement his project. By then he will have reason to believe that his personality has been completely macerated and absorbed by a higher personality, in the interests of the holy Church, represented by the superiors.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the Word of God, the personal thought and word of God, in becoming man for the kingdom of God in souls, assumed human nature, but nothing wanted of human personality. Every imitation of Christ should begin with this self-denial of human personality, for one who must be an instrument of God's works.

The lack of success in holy works is due to the lack of self-denial of one's personality. It takes a very skillful virtue and a very virtuous ability to find in each case and in front of every person, the way to disappear in order to exalt the one to whom all glory is due.

Illum oportet crescere, me autem minui - He must increase, I must decrease. This brings us to the last cause of possible difficulties in the ministry of the young priest, and not only of him, but of the whole complex of ways and circumstances that he intends to use to do good.

The most beautiful ways are those that most correspond to the truth of our being, and are the ones most animated by holy humility. Only these reconcile the soul of all, conquer hearts and make it possible for us from the part of God, who only bows and unites himself to the humble: *I can do all things in him who is my strength* (Ph 4, 13). On our part, humility enables us: *omnibus omnia factus sum ut omnes Christo lucrifaciam* - I became all things to all men so that I may bring all to Christ (1Cor 9:22).

Unfortunately it happens routinely that coming out of the seminary, and being free from the various disciplinary and scholastic habits of that sacred place, which he will miss many times, the young priest seems to lose the sense of being dependent, disciple, and son; of all he received throughout the many years of education and formation remains only the address and the sense of criticism that he now wants to bring from school to life, from books to men, from so many dead things to so many living things, without discernment and without discretion (once again resounds from the venerable regional seminaries the bitter divine reproach: *per vos nomen meum blasphematur* - on account of you my name is blasphemed!).

At a certain age and maturity, man is naturally father and somehow free to exercise his paternity and profession. In the case

of the priest, in reality, only in his blood family he is not and must not be dependent, disciple and son, and that precisely because he is a priest and must live his priesthood.

In the priestly family, in the priestly hierarchy, external irradiation of his supernatural relationships, he remains forever dependent, disciple and son; Jesus' image and likeness, the essentially and eternally son, in the divine and human nature.

The good priest must exhibit internally and show himself externally in the state and acts of dependent, disciple and son, toward all the confreres in the priesthood in general, and in particular toward his pastor and his bishop.

We do not say explicitly toward the Holy Father, the pope, because it is so evident and it would be useless to say it, and also because while our state of obedience is oriented to him, and our relationships of obedience are unified in him, practically and immediately our acts of obedience are directed to the pastor.

Do not seem to be authentic the priests that get so inflamed for the Pope and the Pope's feasts (and it is never enough, if we consider the true and proper catholic devotion to the Pope as foreseen by Fr. Faber) while they are unable to integrate the reverence for the Holy Father with the reverence and obedience due to the bishop and to the pastor!

Are they brothers of that Ciceruacchio, main organizer of the triumphs of Pius IX, and at the same time main conspirer against the Pope's rights?

It is easy and comfortable to celebrate a major superior absent while lacking in reverence and obedience to a minor superior present.

One is not a priest for himself but for others. This being for others ordinarily is applied to the souls entrusted to us, but it is not understood when it is question of the superiors to whom we remain entrusted.

There are priests capable of being devoured alive by the souls entrusted to them, and every time the superiors ask them to do something, will keep saying that they are taken advantage of. And yet, a priest is not priest for himself but for others, and this more true for the superiors than for the rest of the souls.

Charity compels the priest to be totally for others. Charity, justice and humility, for more evident and more numerous reasons, compel him to be totally for the superiors. Practically and immediately the priest must be of his pastor, for his pastor.

In general it is true that every man needs to be esteemed more than loved, or better, he should be first esteemed and then loved. True love can be based only upon true esteem. For the superiors this is not only a need but also a right, and even if they wanted, they cannot renounce to it.

We apply to the superiors, starting with the pastor, the apostolic invitation: *Honore invicem praevenientes - anticipate each other in mutual esteem*. In our relationship with the superiors and also with our equals we do not take that "invicem - mutual" as a simultaneous reciprocity. If we were to place as a condition "anticipating" each other in the expressions of esteem, without a very high level of humility on both parties, we would never have that "*praevenientes - anticipating*".

The young priest should willingly volunteer to undertake any ministerial work when it is still in its rough stages of sowing and other cultivations, carrying on the hard part, but somehow knowing how to withdraw at harvest time. He should leave every satis-

faction and honor to others, that is, to his immediate superior. He should be well aware that as all true inner glory must be rendered to the Lord God, so every act and manifestation of external honor must be rendered to the image of God, that is our neighbor and in a special way the superiors.

This tribute of esteem and honor will be spontaneous and perfect, when the young priest, considering himself in the ministry, subject, disciple and son more than the pastor's helper, will get used to doing what he intends to do, both obligatory and supererogatory, all on behalf of the parish priest before God and before men; he quietly disappears through self-denial of his own personality before men, in the anonymous mass of means, and before God in the sphere of the most intelligent and loving instruments of his holy will.

When praying the Liturgy of the Hours, when celebrating Mass, the priest presents himself before the Lord, not as a private person, but as representative of the whole Church. Being a representative of the whole church does not diminish the power of his intercession, but elevates it to the extraordinary dignity of mediator with Jesus Christ. Likewise in very form of ministry, the priest does not present himself to the souls in his own name, as a private person but as representative of the pastor, of the bishop and of the pope. He talks and operates in their name, and this does not diminish his authority, does not sadden his life, does not render unfruitful his action, but elevates, expands and enriches it in the life of the entire catholic Church, in the great kingdom of God whose minister he is.

Doing every good thing in the name of the pastor in whose domain we reside and act requires that the pastor must be fully aware of it, and that somehow he approves, wants, prepares and directs its implementation. Otherwise it would be like any other label, glued to the facts accomplished with the danger of serious-

ly offending any person who is not a dotage, unconscious of his rights.

Many times, however, it will suffice to mention an idea to see it derided, to show a willingness to see it spurned.

It is then necessary to either renounce to every thing, which is sloth, or to do it in one's name, which is imprudence and can be pride, or find the way to always have this union of thought and will with the superiors, and this is wisdom.

We can find two practical ways to overcome these situations, one ordinary and one extraordinary:

The first is: apply yourself to those works that rather than being a right are a duty of the pastor, which are mostly burdensome, humble, empty of external glory and offer no remuneration, or are very poorly remunerated. These are the activities that every man would gladly let someone else do, (even the pastor is a man, every pastor is a man!): These are the spiritual care of the sick and of the children.

What a beautiful field of apostolate is human suffering! It is not only a way of apostolate, but also field of apostolate. What a beauty! He can conquer all those who suffer to patience and unite them closely to Jesus Christ! He can enlighten them with the vision of eternity that is about to open to them its doors! He can provide them with the daily medicine of the Eucharist that makes them ready for the great passage and overflows with richness the emptiness of the previous life. He can wipe away any mortal fear of Jesus-Viaticum and transform the weak patients in valid collaborators in the apostolate.

Holy daily communion to all the sick of the parish, notwithstanding all the appearances to the contrary, can easily be done.

No priest will ever envy you in this ministry! No pastor will ever be less than pleased with this ministry!

For the pastoral care of the children:

I am not saying of the young, because I would not suggest it immediately to the young priest, because I fear that he may become less of the priest that he should be, and because out of excessive prudence he may be satisfied with very little for the good of their souls. I fear that the young priest, with excessive leniency may indulge in material things and become for the young just another opportunity for relaxation, forming a perpetual recreation center without a real oratory, as often happens.

I am talking about the pastoral care of the children from the age of first Holy Communion until their first adolescence. The young priest can accompany these children as they enter the mature age, if he has the needed talents, but without ever abandoning the first age. Special talents are required for the apostolate of every age of life and of every social class of people; I am sure that every priest has the ability for the apostolate of the first age and for their catechetical formation.

Many priests bury this talent, even those who are expected to provide it for various titles, and therefore they seem to be lacking this ability, but in reality all priests have this talent. Every adult man is naturally father and teacher, and he is father first of all for the little ones. The priest, in the spiritual field, is the mature man par excellence, able and obligated to transfuse in others life and science of life, and the children are the first others.

In addition to the pastoral care of the children and the sick, the young priest will easily find other occupations that offer great spiritual advantage without material advantages; he can freely

make these other occupations his own, in the name of the superior, and in them become saint and sanctifier.

Another way even holier and more effective to reach complete union of thought and will with the ecclesiastic superiors is simply that of condemning the practical error of those who deem better to stay as far away as it is possible from the superiors.

We should be industrious and creative in finding all possible ways to stay close to the superiors. Human and false reasons could easily persuade us that we have no need to approach them, or that they do not like it. We will make it an obligation for ourselves to visit them periodically, even for a simple act of respect. We will arrive at point of practically considering them as our spiritual directors, at least for what concerns our external life and our ministerial works. We will also make them our ordinary confessors so that with them first, and with them alone we share the internal development of our ideas and pastoral plans that blossom in us day in and day out, we do not know whether they come from the warmth of the human spirit, or from the fire of the Spirit of God.

With them there is no danger of getting erroneous practical advice, such as those given by certain directors who are sometimes unenlightened and always irresponsible of the lesser good effect of some of their human advice, which exacerbates subjects with superiors, as we have seen in many imprudent confreres.

Even if positive, precise laws do not require the explicit permission of this or that superior, for these or those works of ministry, it should always lead us to communicate with them all our things, at least exterior, for the fact that they are the shepherds of souls beginning with ours: they are the first ones in charge of the Lord's vineyard. The new priest is a new worker sent to work in the vineyard; evidently he will have to work in harmony and under the direction of the head.

The superiors are displeased and annoyed when they are faced with an accomplished act that seeks to force their recognition and approval. On the other hand, when the superiors are confronted with a priest who behaves as subject, disciple and son, who dispels every shade and reconciles every sympathy, they are moved by spiritual tenderness and facilitate the new priest to open the heart and show them the inner genesis of his own designs, subjecting his intimate intentions and dispositions to their scrutiny. At this point the young priest asks for directions from the superior and will abide by them and their conscience, ready to sacrifice everything with generous obedience. For ten years, the Venerable John Cohn suffered all sorts of oppositions for the Society of Mary from his Bishop, Msgr. Devie, until the humble priest asked him to listen to his confession, after which everything went wonderfully.

Spiritual direction is the supreme form of reverence and voluntary obedience to our superiors. In the spiritual direction more cordially and meritoriously than everywhere else takes place the *"eaden velle"*, and the *"eaden nolle"* (to want the same things and not to want the same things). Through spiritual direction the young priest can exercise a true ministry in the soul of his pastor, and sweetly pressure him to come out of the shell of his own individualism that does not allow him to see well people, things, works and relationships. Thus the young priest leads his pastor in the sphere of God and of God's things even the most sublime; he may also rekindle in him many past inspirations, un-corresponded graces and connects him with God at a higher level while constituting him God's instrument for a superior spiritual action in the soul of the same young priest, that we always suppose to be a saintly young man.

As a saintly young man the young priest will face and overcome all possible difficulties with the solution that is and will always be the one that best responds to the sublime principles of

the Gospel, contained in the precepts and counsels of Jesus, in such a way that even though he is called by men a secular (diocesan) priest, the reality of his interior and exterior life will be that of the religious of God, according to Jesus Christ.

As our highest recommendation to the young priest we remind him that the first field of ministry, the first weapons of conquest, the first works of zeal, first lever for the resurrection of the world are his spiritual things, his meditations, his examinations of conscience, his rosaries and spiritual readings, and above all the divine Sacrifice and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Maybe he started to practice them with inadequate knowledge of the rites, with partial intelligence of the single parts, without full union of spirit with the mysteries and saints of the day. He started reading them distractedly and continued to recite them with ever less attention. He was unable to fill them with all the newness of the life of the church; he was unable to apply them to all new needs of his time and of his world. No difficulty will ever impede him the ever more perfect prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours and the ever more perfect celebration of the Holy Mass. With these divine means he will become a true power in the holy Church, regardless of whatever evaluation of him others could make on the basis of external criteria: *Nemo adolescentiam tuam condemnat. No one condemns your adolescence.* He will prove in himself the effectiveness of St. Paul's principle: *Pietas ad omnia utilis est promissiones habens vitae nunc est et futurae - Piety is useful for all things, since it holds out promises for the present and future life* (1Tm 4m8).

Priesthood and Agapes

This lecture was presented at the Eucharistic Congress of Teano in province of Caserta in 1934 and was published by Fr. Justin in a booklet of the series Regnum Dei the same year.

The lecture starts with an exegesis of the Petrine expression "Royal Priesthood" referred to every Christian incorporated through Baptism to Christ, king, prophet and priest. It is an historical connection with the theocratic form of government of Israel, when the same person exercised the double function of king and priest with the prevalence of the second over the first: "Because the king is such only for the people, while the priest is such for the people and for God".

At the time of Samuel, after the people rebelled, took place the scission between the two functions: The king on one part and the prophet on the other.

Jesus unifies in his person the title of king and priest-victim. From this marvelous union of the king with his people on one side and the priest with his victim on the other come out that divine harmony of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, which is the Church. With the church starts that divine formation of new heavens and new earth" of which talks the apostle Peter.

The priest takes his place as a bridge between God-King and the people king, invested with the dignity of these two royal mandatories.

The Eucharist is the point of insertion of the fullness of the priestly powers. Only in giving the supernatural life springing from the Eucharist the priest-king transmits life to his people. To communicate the message of the king-father that contains also the motherly function, Fr. Justin uses the image of the bee-queen, which becomes the queen mother of the hive, because she gives life to all the bees.

The priest is like Moses who coming down from the mountain entwrapped by divine light makes Yahweh's wrath against his people cease.

God himself invests the priest of his full powers in the Eucharist and with his

blood and his flesh in that consecratory act that Bl. Justin considers "Almost identical in its implication to the yes of Mary at the Annunciation of Jesus' Incarnation, the closest in power to the incommunicable act of the creation of the world, and the most similar in love to the incommunicable act of the generation of the Son". In these reflections the mystical soul of the lecturer reaches vertiginous height. Through the act that transforms substantially the bread and wine the consecrating priest becomes echo of Mary-mother and of God the Father that generate the Son: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you". In this son there is all mankind, child by grace, and in the victim immolated and offered on the altar the priests sees all souls and entrusts them to the Father in the same sacrifice.

In the offering of the whole world to the Father the first place belongs to the poor, the widows and the orphans. In this service of charity, the priest manifests its paternity that becomes the halo of his priesthood and the link between the banquet of God's love and fraternal agape. This is the main point of the lecture developed in the second part with eminent pastoral prospective.

Blessed Justin observes that the institution of the Eucharist took place during the Easter meal "that was the most well known meal of the entire liturgical and civil year of the Jewish people and contained the most meaningful symbols of the history of Israel".

Within the ensemble of symbols and events recalled by the Passover Meal, the apostles were used to celebrate the Eucharist immediately before or after "that great and communitarian exercise of mercy that were the Christians agapes, true banquets of charity for God and neighbors". Amongst other things, the agapes served to strengthen the union within the Christian community, and to eliminate the inequalities existing in the civil society. The lecturer points out that "the agapes are the heart of the Eucharist and the highest synthesis of all the effects of the divine and human mediation of the priest". They are really the landings of every itinerary of charity.

Fr. Justin bypasses the question of the time of their celebration, whether before or after the eucharistic celebration, and the causes of their suppression. He, however, leans to the belief that they were celebrated after the Eucharist. He does not give much importance to the delegation of their services to deacons given by the apostles. Fr. Justin exhorts the priest not to lower his dignity limiting it only to the celebration of the sacrifice of the Eucharist, or to the exercise of his spiritual paternity (Confessions, spiritual direction etc.).

The priest must get his hands dirty like the Good Samaritan, opening his heart to the poor. If that does not happen, it is like subtracting all the rays to the sun, and reducing it to a simple mass of fire. To celebrate the perfect marriage between priesthood and agapes we must entrust ourselves to the omnipotence of God's grace,

enjoy every day the word of God, and the company with Jesus-Eucharist. "We must get used to consider the world as a great temple of God and the entire life as the celebration of a great Mass".

The lecture concludes with the invitation to incarnate the "royal priesthood" in the works of mercy, "without which the priest would be like Mary and Joseph without their Jesus and without all their domestic attentions needed to foster the growth of Jesus".

Father Justin with Father Faber attributes the cause of spiritual mediocrity and immutability in many parishes to the "lack of the loving exercise of charity, which must be preceded and followed by the holy eucharistic general daily Communion, preceded and followed by the communion of the holy word of God. On this double record of Jesus-Gospel and Jesus-Church is modulated the revival of the priestly soul in the unstoppable exercise of charity.

We owe to the first Vicar of Jesus Christ, to the prince of the Apostles St. Peter some rigorously appropriate and sublime words. It is he who first calls the flower of paradise "imperishable", and first of all gives Jesus' blood the name that has been consecrated to it "The Precious Blood". He is the first to call the catholic priesthood "royal priesthood". Even when dealing with the lowest degree of the Catholic priesthood, that is, of its participation to all Christians through the incorporation with Jesus Christ in Baptism, Saint Peter immediately transports us into the world of higher ideas and more sovereign facts.

From the highest dignity to which a man can be elevated on earth in the eyes of his fellow human beings, that is, the kingly dignity, St. Peter derives the name that can adorn less unworthily, the other dignity, the highest, to which man can rise, not only before his fellow men, but also before God, that is, the priestly dignity and speaks of the "royal priesthood".

The main difference between the king-man and the priest-man

(when the two dignities are divided into distinct persons), who, although both come from God with special election and vocation, the king is such only for the people; he will never be the king of his God. But the priest is such not only for the people, but also and especially for God. His highest priestly duties are exercised not so much on the people but on God.

The royal priesthood recalls first of all the historical fact of the remotest times of every people, when universally the same person was king and priest. He was king precisely because he was a priest, but with a marked prevalence of the priest over the king, signifying that ideal regime of theocracy with which the Lord God, creator and master of the universe, always intends to govern his people. The royal priesthood then says the strictly logical integrity of the office. On the one hand, both the king and the priest are essentially mediators between God and humanity. On the other hand, the many relations with God are reduced to the religious relationship. Since the priest must represent the people to God, no one can do it better than the one who represents God before the people. On the other hand, if the king is to represent God before the people, no one can do it better than the one who already represents the people before God, "royal priesthood".

Cursed be eternally that revolution of the Jews (See 1 Sam 8 4-7, 10-22) that grieved Samuel and the Lord, when rejecting the prophet-priest, wanted a king distinct from the person of the prophet and priest.

This ideal royal priest is only in Jesus, who rejoined in himself everything that had been separated, *qui fecit utraque unum* - that made of the priesthood and royalty a single thing.

He united in himself humanity with the divinity, in his divine person, thus he was constituted, by his very essence, representative of God and of man and universal mediator, to whom belongs

the supreme priesthood, no less than the sovereign kingship, for every intrinsic and extrinsic title.

In his kingship Jesus also unites in himself king and kingdom, forming with all his people one body, of which he is the head, and to which he transmits his very life.

In his royal priesthood, Jesus unites in himself the priest and the sacrifice; his divine person makes his human nature the victim of his sacrifice of which he is the suffering priest, consecrator and immolator.

From this wonderful union of the king with his people on one side, and from the priest with his victim on the other comes out the divine harmony of the kingdom of heaven on earth that is the holy Church. Spiritual life flows Jesus into the souls and begins the divine formation of new heavens and new earth of which St. Peter talks: *Novos vero coelos et novam terram secundum promisa ipsius expectamus, in quibus iustitia habitat - Relying on his promise, we are awaiting for new heavens and new earth, where uprightness will be at home* (2P 3,13).

Among men only the priest is raised to this grandeur of royal and pontifical dignity; this life-giving role is entrusted only to the priest. This divine work takes place only in the priest's action: *Solis presbiteris committi voluit - He conferred it only to the priests.*

The priest is the bridge between Jesus Christ, the first priest, because of his divine-human essence, and the people that is called "priestly people", because of its participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, to whom the people is incorporated. Even better, the priest occupies Jesus' place, between the divinity and the humanity, as another Jesus Christ.

The priest is between Jesus-King and the kingly people. He is

between the omnipotence God-King and the man, created purposely to be the king of creation: *Ut praesit - to govern the universe.*

Both these two royal chiefs invest the priest with their dignity, so that he may appear and be more and more worthily their authorized representative, and may more powerfully accomplish the mission of uniting the same two extremes, God and the people.

The priest's dignity of mediator must be exercised with all the powers attached to it, so that it may be beneficial and lead to the achievement of its goal. The priest must effectively join God and his people in his heart.

The priest, with his action, must effectively bring the people to God and God to the people.

The fullness of the priestly powers is fully exercised only on the Eucharist. He obtains this unifying effectiveness only with the Eucharist.

The dignity of spiritual king of the souls requires that the priest communicates life and the prosperity of life to his people. I intend both supernatural life and natural life, as condition and basis of that, so that he may be king because he is father. In the animal world there is a family and kingdom of small lives that enjoy a special liturgical mention in the Easter Proclamation, at the blessing of the Easter candle. At the head of that people of bees, only the one that gave life to all the bees is the queen bee. Only the mother bee is the queen bee! Only in this maternal and royal function is the effect of the glory of God and of man's happiness. Beauty of light at the altar of God and sweetness of honey at the table of man!

Fornari said of every man: "It seems that his members are a small body, and all the rest of the sensible universe is a greater

body, and like a paludament of the spirit, which envelopes and surpasses everything with his thought and his love". This may more correctly be said of the priest as mediator and representative of God and of the people, as king-father and head of souls, as the giver of life and director of the lives of the world.

If not always externally to the eyes of the body, always really to the eyes of the soul he appears in the magnificent attire of the High Priest, as God himself dictated by way of inspiration to Moses: In the priestly tunic that he wore he carried the whole world, and the glories of the fathers were engraved in four orders of stones, and the magnificence of God's name was engraved in the diadem on his head and at the appearance of these signs of his power, the rage of the Lord ceased.

Now it is precisely and only for this that the priest, with Jesus-Eucharist, infuses and increases divine life in all the people joined to him as his own body. This divine life requires as condition and produces by redundancy, also the well being of natural life. This divine life displays the breadth of priestly powers, which extend and take place within the whole universe of souls; the souls of which only God can be the father, the teacher and the life; the souls in whom only the divine Trinity can penetrate and inhabit.

The most mysterious part about the priestly power is the fact that God himself enters into its orbit.

There are solemn moments during the celebration of the sacrifice when the priest traces the sign of the cross not in order to bless the oblates¹, not in order to invoke help from above, but to

¹ This, and all other references and quotations about the holy Mass, refer to the Tridentine Mass, the Latin Eucharistic liturgy used by the Roman Catholic Church from 1570 to 1964.

affirm his power over the victim already offered and immolated, upon the very person of God Jesus-Eucharist. The matter that the priest can offer for his sacrifice is human life represented by the bread and wine that substitutes it better than any other element, and much more is Jesus Christ himself the Man God, head of humanity, his flesh and his blood and, by concomitance, his soul and his divinity.

The priest has at his disposal the consecrating act, which is identical, in its effect, to the “fiat - yes” of the Virgin in the incarnation of the Word; it is the closest, in its power, to the incommunicable act of the creation of the world; it is the most similar, in love, to the incommunicable act of the eternal generation of the Word.

In the supernatural soul of the celebrating priest passes a sanctifying current of sanctification of the Consoler Spirit enwrapping altar and oblates; likewise, passes an echo of the Virgin Mary and of God the Father. *You are my beloved Son, today I have begotten you* (Heb 1, 5).

God the Father and the Virgin Mary see in Jesus their Son by nature, and they also see all men as their children by grace. They welcome and accept all men with Jesus in their bosom and in their heart with the song and the embrace of love of the Holy Spirit: *You are my son, I have begotten you.*

God the Father and Mary want to lead all souls, through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, to the imitation of Jesus Christ, so that they all may conform to Jesus, as the only object of their delight, as the only Son of God and of Mary. Likewise, the priest, who takes the place of the Father and of Mary toward Jesus-Eucharist, sees in that Host all souls to whom that Host is offered as a sacrament, all the souls for whom the Host is offered in sacrifice; he awaits for them at the altar, he embraces them all in his arms, and he places them all on his paten and in his chalice.

On his altar, the priest elevates them all to God as in transubstantiation in God, in a unique sacrifice; he infuses, increases and perfects in them the life of grace, and divine union.

If there may be any preference between the universality of the souls he sees and wants around the altar, it will be for the poor, the widows, the orphans, the penitents and all those who suffer in the heart or in the body. Their sufferings make them more like the crucified, they are more united to his sacrifice and he renders them more worthy of his Eucharistic sacrament.

Is there anyone who does not suffer in the world of our exile?

“Every head languishes and every heart is dying”! Yet, the priest is a father for all; his paternity is superior to every other fatherhood in the order of the secondary causes, on account of that host that he consecrates and administers in the great family of Church, of which all men must be members. This spiritual, universal fatherhood constitutes his supernatural royalty. This great feast of life that he spreads and sustains in the souls is the halo of his priesthood.

If it is true that all the other duties of religion culminate in the sacrifice, it is much more true that the feast of life culminates at the dinner table, where only food is administered, without which every life languishes and dies. The food strengthens life for work and struggle. Food makes life more intense to the point of intoxication of joy.

The Spirit that unites nature and grace in the soul, the Spirit that united virginity and motherhood in Mary, united man and God in Jesus, united also the sacrament to the sacrifice, the communion to the consecration, and from the very beginning led faithful and priests to unite the agape with the Eucharist, the banquet of brotherly love with the banquet of God’s love.

The Lord did not only institute the Eucharist under the species of the most universal and necessary aliment, but he also administered it at the time of the Easter Meal. The Passover Supper was the most well known meal of the entire liturgical and civil year of the Jewish people and contained the most meaningful symbols of the supernatural effects of the mediation of the priest: The historical remembrance of the liberation from the slavery in Egypt, and from the slavery to sin: its prophetic remembrance of the conquest of the Promised Land that it prepared; its present effectiveness of viaticum for the long journey through the desert; its symbol of union with the lamb of sacrifice of the true religion, and much more the revelation of God's love that introduces us to the most profound intimacy with the divine life and persons, communicating to us the entire Jesus Christ.

This explains why the apostles and the first Christians, imitating Jesus Christ, celebrated and administered the Eucharist before or after that great and common exercise of works of mercy, that were the Christian agapes. They were true demonstrations of love for God and for the brothers, as indicated by their Greek name, later conserved in our language.

Banquets of divine and brotherly love, in the sacred assemblies of the Christians, to solidify the harmony and the union among the members of the same mystical body, and to re-establish, at least at the foot of the altar, the brotherhood destroyed in the civil society by inequalities of social conditions, and thus, to portray, prepare and carry out the reconciliation that is the most necessary and most vital union: the reconciliation of every soul with God, of all people with God!

They were banquets of charity, which provided for the needs of the poor, the widows and the orphans. At the same time everyone received the divine treasure for all spiritual poverty, the divine comfort for every tribulation, the divine friend of every

soul. This was also a way to profess that there is no better preparation to receive the supernatural gift of God than to share their natural gifts with the needy brothers. The agapes were also the best thanksgiving for the supernatural gift received by pouring into the bosom of the poor from their abundance the gift supernaturalized in its principle and in its ways.

In the Eucharist, crown of the agape, we have the highest synthesis of all the effects of the divine-human mediation of the priest that gives man to God and God to man. At the same time we have the most shining signs of his royal dignity of father of souls that he admits to the feast of life, in the double banquet of nature and of grace.

At the moment we are not much interested in figuring out how the scholars will solve the question of whether the Eucharist was celebrated before or after the agape, the banquet of brotherly love.

To us it seems intuitively evident that at the beginning the agape was celebrated before the Eucharist, for a more faithful imitation of the Savior who instituted and distributed the Eucharist after the legal supper. The experience of disorders, already lamented by St. Paul, later convinced the Christian community to celebrate first the Eucharist, to people who had been fasting.

It does not surprise us that afterwards, because of abuses that were introduced almost everywhere, the agapes were suppressed.

As it is infallibly true that the Eucharist is the banquet of God's love, so it remains true that there can be no better preparation and thanksgiving to the Eucharist, nor more perfect and integral Eucharistic worship, on the part of the priest and of the faithful than the exercise of charity for the brothers, felt and practiced according to the spirit of Jesus' sermon after the Last Supper, all spiring love for God and for the brothers; this love leads to the

fullest communion of goods, passively with God and actively with people.

We are also aware of the fact that excessive work, and the time consuming occupations of the agapes convinced St. Peter and the other apostles to withdraw from that work declaring: *Nos vero orationi et ministerio verbi instantes erimus* - *We ourselves will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word* (Ac 6, 4). Certainly, St. Peter did not intend to abolish that exercise of charity and mercy. He regulated and organized it, entrusting it to those members that the Christian community presented to them as fit collaborators of the apostles. Thus, while all the priestly functions for the people and for God remain in the domain of those who have the fullness of the priesthood, the office of presbyters is clearly outlined with their immediate helpers who are the deacons and the most worthy collaborators of the clergy designated - *ministrare mensis* - to provide and administer the food of corporal and spiritual life in the banquet of the love of God and of the love of neighbor.

We would like to make everyone understand, up to the most effective conviction, that, we cannot give a more fatal blow to the love of neighbor than separating it in theory and practice from the love of God. Likewise we cannot distort more the love of God than separating it affectively and effectively from the love of neighbor. Likewise we cannot lower more the priestly dignity in the eyes of the people and of God, than limiting him only to offer sacrifice. Doing so we strip the priest of the charity of neighbor and sterilize his spiritual paternity. It would be like subtracting all the rays to the sun, and reducing it to a simple, useless mass of fire. The priest would be like a huge unproductive hidden treasure.

Please, do not say that the many works of spiritual mercy are enough for the priestly ministry! They may well fill the day of the

priest, but, by themselves, they will never be able to fill the church with worshippers nor heaven with saved souls.

Interior mortification requires also corporal mortification of all our senses to become the perfect Christian abnegation. Active virtues, that is, the active exercises of external apostolate require passive virtues, or - to express it better - the ascetical exercise for personal sanctification. Likewise, our royal priesthood requires the exercise also of the corporal works of mercy, initiated, promoted and directed by the priest in the midst of the people.

The mere adducing the lack of means, the lack of cooperators, the lack of correspondence of the people, is a pretext of inertia, sterility and failure; it is an abjuration of the powers we are invested with, of the omnipotence of grace, of the marvelous fertility of the Host and the prodigious activity of charity that leads us to multiply ourselves for our neighbor.

All this, it is true, must always be prepared, directed, animated by the word of God, administered by the priest himself abundantly and wisely.

If the whole world must be, and it is, like a great temple of God, all life must be, and still it is not, a celebration of a great Mass.

The essential parts of the sacrifice: Offertory, Consecration and Communion, were preceded and followed by parts that may appear less essential, but they are necessary and mandatory both for the priest and the faithful, for the regard due to Jesus and for greater fruitfulness of the essential part's application to the souls.

The word of God is proclaimed to the people, in a loud voice, from the pages of the Old and New Testament. In order to fill the entire day with the Holy Mass, must precede the exercise of the word of God, from the living pages of the priest's life, from the

abundance of his mental knowledge and from the fullness of his priestly heart.

After Holy Communion will also follow, not a short, but a long and warm thanksgiving of works of charity, rays and offspring of the sun-Host that cannot remain without splendor in the life of man. This is the dignity of the royal priesthood seen in its proper light and in its full level. The priest is visibly for all people what Mary and Joseph are invisibly for the entire Church.

If a priest were to eliminate from his ministry the corporal works of mercy he would reduce himself to what Mary and Joseph would be without Jesus, and without the domestic cares to raise Jesus. There would be no longer the glory and the happiness of the Holy Family; there wouldn't be any more the glory and happiness of the catholic royal priesthood, but would remain intact his character and his powers, a very ordinary imperfect form of piety, of any private and very mediocre person.

With great psychological insight, the good Father Faber asks himself an explanation of the stationarity of so many faithful, of many priests, and we say, of many Christian communities, such as our parishes, which every day with so many sacraments receive abundant waves of infusions and increases of the life of grace; they should make extraordinary progress in perfection and in the apostolate. Why, then, do they now remain in such a mediocre level of goodness that makes us fear more back-sliding than progresses? One of the most convincing answers to the elegant ascetic question is: lack of exercise of charity for our neighbor in terms of works of corporal mercy. So, the lack of interior fervor, the failed exterior apostolate is due to the failed visit to the sick person, the lack of almsgiving to the poor, the lack of practical compassion for the suffering person.

How beautiful and comforting it is to see how many coun-

tries that seemed abandoned to the past, to barbarism, to death, through the zeal of civil authorities, are participating in all the benefits of the modern society: streets, aqueducts, light; and through the zeal of religious authorities, of many good and worthy parish priests, they are enriched with kindergartens, schools, catholic organizations and many other good initiatives.

Let us make possible the practical apostolate of the people, putting out of our treasure *nova et vetera - what is new and what is old* - and returning to the Christian word, agape, the loving exercise of all the forms of brotherly love that are centered in the Eucharist and say: Let us again join the agapes with the Eucharist. Let the priest offer to the people the integral Eucharistic banquet.

If we want the priestly dignity to shine fully in the eyes of the world and even more in the eyes of God; if we want every Christian community of every parish to bloom with supernatural life, bearing abundant fruits of apostolate, we should strive to bring all souls to the banquet of divine love by reminding ourselves that the mission of the servants of the banquet is not only to invite but also to compel everyone to really enter - *compelle intrare* (Lk 14, 23); and much more to prepare, as much as it is possible, completely this divine banquet. It is not enough to have *Coenaculum magnum stratum - a large furnished upper room* (Lk 22.12), Jesus wants the same for the decorum of the house of God and the splendor of public worship.

It is necessary that the general, daily Eucharistic Communion is preceded and followed by another communion, by a corporal and spiritual agape, preceded by the communion of the word of God and followed by the communion of brotherly love.

Communion of the Word of God is spiritual agape!

Every pastor of souls, and proportionately every priest should

know once and for all that the Sunday homily and the occasional preaching, is less than the minimum necessary in the ministry of the word. Every priest must seriously decide to start, as St. John Vienney, the daily, domestic, homiletic and catechetical preaching. So, spiritual agape is the daily communion with the word of God.

Communion with the love for our neighbor is corporal agape!

This corporal agape should be social and individual, in the sense that in every parish there must be, through the ministry of the priest, an ongoing charitable activity that requires the participation of all people. In addition to this, the priest that wants to be a true father for the souls, must indicate in details, and I would say, impose to every penitent and to every daily communicant the practice of charity for the neighbor that he can and must positively exercise. This practice or act of charity should not be limited to not desiring or doing evil to our neighbor, it must actually do what is good for our neighbor; not an abstract good, but concrete with actions that always start with the body in order to reach later the soul.

We solemnly promise and program this spiritual and bodily agape for the glory of the Eucharist and of the priesthood, convinced as we are, that only at this condition will we make of our Christian communities, of our parishes and dioceses that *gens sancta - holy people* - in which our royal priesthood will shine.

Heavens' Heaven

Heavens' Heaven is a collection of three lectures given by Fr. Justin Russolillo in 1937 at the Eucharistic Congress held in Parete, Province of Caserta in Italy.

Fr. Sabatino, the organizer of the Congress asked Fr. Justin to compose a song for the occasion, so that the people could sing during the celebrations. The Eucharistic-Trinitarian Hymn: O Qual Nuvola di Gloria [Oh, what a cloud of Glory!], written by Fr. Justin, became the official song of the Congress and it is still very popular within the Vocationist families and several towns in southern Italy.

The three lectures are entitled: The Eucharist and God the Father; the Eucharist and God the Son; the Eucharist and God the Holy Spirit. These three lectures were published in 1938 in a small booklet titled "Cielo dei Cieli". The content of these pages is a short theological and liturgical treatise on the Eucharist "behind the veil of the species".

Fr. Justin's reflections focus and develop the personal relations of the three divine persons and the Eucharist. The three parts: The Eucharist and God-Father, the Eucharist and God-Son, the Eucharist and God-Holy Spirit, were presented on three successive days; in the light of patristic, thomistic, and mystical theology each part illustrates the relationship of each divine person with the Eucharist and places the listener at the center of the Eucharistic-Trinitarian love.

The Father sends the Son Jesus into human history to take back to himself what was his, man created in his imagine and likeness. With his sacrifice on the cross, the Son becomes sacrament of the Father's mercy, and gives back to him the decayed humanity. The Holy Spirit, the kiss of the Father and of the Son, places man in the condition of becoming father and mother of Jesus with the announcement of the word and the banquet of the bread of life. In Heavens' Heaven we find the point of confluence of the mystical paths and impulses of a soul who dared to enter into the person of Jesus-Eucharist as soul-daughter, soul-mother and soul-spouse.

In the mystical literature we find very few saints that in their relationship with God went so deep and beyond...

We are gradually conducted to relate to Jesus so that he may be for us what he is for God the Father, and for Mother Mary: "the son"! Fr. Justin develops the thought that our relationship with Jesus is not complete if we are not able to become also "mother". In the third part, in the light of the gospel, he talks about the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, focusing on the work that is more proper to the third person of the Trinity, to what he is and what he does.

Fr. Justin in this work develops his basic spirituality that is based on our vocation to holiness and divine union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Eucharist in itself, and especially through Holy Communion, is the greatest expression and the highest realization of Divine Union. The Eucharist is the center and heart of our spiritual life; in it we see, feel, experience, and enjoy every word, work, act, state and mystery of Jesus' life. It is the beginning and end of our ascensional journey to the Father.

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Part I

The Eucharist and God the Father

The lecture is inspired by Jesus' invitation to the apostles: "Come after me, follow me".

In the Eucharistic mystery, Blessed Justin captures all the dynamism that saves the world.

He who said: "I am the way, the truth and the life", today we identify him with the Eucharist, "synthesis of all the acts and states of the life of Jesus".

"Apparently there is nothing more inert and passive than a host, and yet there is nothing more vehement and dynamic, nothing more powerfully active because there is nothing more divinely alive than a host...."

The Eucharist is the small leaven that the Blessed Trinity has thrown into the great mass of the world and all of humanity is in ferment". Jesus-Host is first of all the way that leads to the Father.

The Eucharist is the ferment that sanctifies humanity because everything in it "speaks to us about the Father, brings us to the Father, unites us to the Father". Blessed Justin thinks of the Eucharist as the divine mission of Jesus that is perpetuated in the history of the man to renew his relationship with the Father.

Man, advancing like a pilgrim in the world towards the celestial homeland, needs to get on the right road to find the house of the Father. Jesus makes it his mission to show us the right way in his person, equal to the Father: "Who sees me, sees the Father".

The first effect of the Eucharist is to communicate to us the life of the Father and make us "all one with the Son Jesus, all one son".

In the Eucharist we fully possess Jesus with a body that is immolated as the Son of man and as a savior, who carries all the souls and brings them to the mercy of the Father. With this reflection Fr. Justin penetrates into the depth of the Pauline

soteriology. *"He came Son of God to return son of man. He came as creator of everything, to return also savior of the souls. He came alone only to return with all human persons".*

Jesus assimilated so much the nature of man that all mankind has become like his garment, adhering to him not as a simple habit but as "the body with the soul, the word with the thought, the rays with the sun". By instituting the Eucharist, Jesus truly did things as only God can do. He brought each man to his own level in the relationship with the Father.

By incorporating us into him through Baptism, Jesus made us participate in the Father's life consortium, "principle and giver of all good".

Giving us back the divine life taken away by original sin is the first result achieved by the Eucharist in our midst. The price paid is very high: The blood of the Son flowing in the meanders of human misery to purify all mankind's history, the same blood that represents the line between the old and the new covenant. By immolating his life, Jesus can say: This is eternal life, O Father, to know you and the one you sent, Jesus Christ".

What is our role in the mission of Jesus-Eucharist that the Father reveals to us? Be invited guests to the banquet and to discover the supreme revelation and divine life that the Eucharist gives us.

Nourished with eternal life we turn in our journey upward towards the Father. But to enter into the flow of sacramental life, anticipation and pledge of eternal life, we must offer our active and total cooperation to Jesus-Eucharist, icon that sanctifies the daily fatigue of living. As we progress in our knowledge of the Father, we feel stronger the companionship of Mary, the mother of Jesus. "From the heavenly Father and from his earthly mother, we receive Jesus. From both of them we receive the most sublime gift, Jesus-Eucharist, the marvelous grace that makes of the soul God's heaven. In this heaven of grace, he builds a royal palace. In this royal palace, grace raises a triumph and on that throne the Father awaits the Son as he expected him from Calvary at the supreme moment of the sacrifice, and as on the morning of the ascension".

In the Eucharist Fr. Justin finds the access code to enter into the intimacy with the divine persons, the meeting point of Trinitarian love with man. While talking about man, the mystical theologian cannot but associate him with the charism that from within exclaims: Vocations.

With the classical icing on the cake, the service of vocations ends the first part of this lecture that finds its reason for being and its fulfillment precisely in Jesus-Host. "In the Eucharist the work that Jesus received from the Father was also accomplished: The formation of Jesus in every elect of the Father's glory, the ascension

of every elect of Jesus to the Father". In the eucharistic mystery, the source and peak of every vocation, takes place the exchange of the gift between Father and Son: The elect of the vocations that become the beloved of God-Trinity and of Our Lady of the Divine Vocations.

The Eucharist and God the Father

Let us accept and follow the great invitation of Jesus to every soul: *Come after me - Follow me!* At first, this invitation was addressed to a small number of people - the disciples and the apostles. Now it is addressed to all people; to each according to the way of life in which divine providence has placed him.

As with every word of the Lord, this word not only means something specific; it realizes what it expresses. *Come after me, follow me* does not only express an invitation, a sweet command, it also creates in us the effect of divine attraction.

This attraction is perceived and experienced according to Jesus' promise and prophecy: *When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself* (Jn 12:32). The higher we lift up Jesus in us, the more we will experience this attraction.

We feel this attraction every time, everywhere we see Jesus exalted in any way, shape or form. Thus seeing the edifying behavior of a disciple and priest, we feel the attraction to Jesus to the point of feeling the calling to a life of consecration or higher perfection. Jesus is exalted in the person of the priest and of the saint; the same happens when we see Jesus exalted in the Blessed Sacrament, especially in the more solemn Eucharistic celebrations.

Come after me and follow me. It is not simple: *Come to me, all of you who are burdened, and I will restore you.* It is not just any grace of

peace and rest that the soul finds in Jesus, like sitting at his feet, or resting our head on his chest. This grace may be granted to us only for passing moments, but is reaffirmed and stands out in Jesus' words: *I am the way!* The way that we must follow; the way that is clearly understood. Where does this way lead us? Even when Jesus says: *Come to me*, he does not reveal himself nor offers himself as the last stop on our journey that is why he soon adds: *Take upon you my yoke, carry my burden*; a yoke under which to walk! But, how far? A burden to be carried, but where to?

We understand well that life is a journey through barren deserts and mountain ridges, through every kind of obstacle and hostility of many enemies. Yet, we do not understand completely that Jesus is the way, our way.

We easily understand the other word, "I am the truth" since in Jesus we find all the complex of truths that we must believe for our supernatural life; he is the supreme revelation of the divinity.

We also understand his other word *I am the life* because only in Jesus do we find the fountain of supernatural life; he is the supreme communication of the divinity.

We do not seem to equally understand that he is also our way. The way we must choose and follow throughout our life on earth, as long as we are pilgrims on this earth, precisely in our condition as travelers on earth, before reaching heaven as our final, blessed goal. Yes, he has placed this principle and this word, *way*, thus revealing himself, affirming and offering himself as our way before all others.

It is not enough to take this word in the sense that he is the *Teacher*, whose lessons we must learn; and that he is the model whose examples we must imitate. Naturally, all this is implied

in the proclamation: *I am the way*; but there is something more, something we cannot miss if we want to have a complete and efficient idea of our supernatural life.

If we want a true picture of what is and must be our spiritual reality, we will find it in the words of our blessed Lord: *I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I am leaving the world to go to the Father* (Jn 16:28).

A continuous elevation and progressive return to the Father, which, in force of the grace infused in the soul, takes place and manifests itself in this ascension to the Father. This is the supernatural life.

If in addition to this picture we want a concrete vision, we must look for it in the most blatantly glorious events like the Assumption of the Virgin and the Ascension of Jesus into heaven; one in harmony with the other. Our life must be: assumption of the body and ascension of the spirit.

In his return to the Father, Jesus does not want to be alone, but attracts and takes with him the souls; to all those who had been invited: *Come after me, follow me*, now he explicitly sends the other message, which, at the same time, is exhortation, invitation, counsel and command: *Go, find my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God* (Jn 20:17). This is the way and its name is Jesus! It is masterfully revealed and well determined by the point of arrival, to which it leads, God the Father!

If it is true - as it is - that all the acts and states of the Incarnate Word are perpetuated in the Eucharist, it follows that first and foremost, we must see in the Eucharist the event that is like the epilogue and crowning of all his life and work, his ascension to the Father: our way to the Father.

All the gifts of spiritual life are stored up in the Eucharist, synthesis and fountain of all graces, since it is the real presence and the gift of the author of grace. We must see in the Eucharist the ascension of the souls to the Father with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus, his Son. This is the result of the action of grace, the supreme result of grace. The memorial that Jesus left us when he said: *Do this in memory of me* (1Cor 11:25) would be incomplete if the Eucharist would remind us only of his passion, death and divine sacrifice. This is the reason why we explicitly see and recall in the Eucharist also his divine resurrection and ascension into heaven, the glorious fruit of his sacrifice: *We... recall his passion, his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into glory* (Eucharistic Prayer 1).

In Jesus' passion and death we see the effect of sin... what men do to their Lord. In his resurrection from the dead and in his ascension to the Father we see the effect of grace... what the Lord does for us, in Jesus and in all his brothers.

As in the person of Jesus we must see, believe and consider not only the *man*, but also - and much more so - the Word of God, so that in the Eucharist we must see and contemplate not only what men do to Jesus, but also - and much more so - what Jesus does for us. Consequently we must think of this ascension to the Father of all the people for whom - throughout the ages - this sacrifice is offered and applied: Ascension to the Father precisely in force of and by virtue of the bread of eternal life, which is given to us in the Eucharist as communion with the divine sacrifice.

Oh! That small host! Apparently there is nothing less significant than a host! To find something similar to a host we must go down to the lowest creatures, even lower than an insect or blade of grass to the mineral world.

And yet... there is nothing more overwhelming and dynamic,

nothing more powerfully active, because there is nothing more divinely alive than a host!

It is the smallest piece of yeast that the Blessed Trinity has placed in the huge mass of dough that is the world ... and all mankind is in ferment. The devil threw into the world, through the forbidden fruit, the yeast of sin, and mankind was in ferment with corruption. This ferment is hellish torment of attraction to the devil and of falling from one abyss into another.

The Lord, God Trinity, divinely placed in the world the host, the yeast of virtue, and consequently all mankind into the ferment of sanctification. This ferment is a divine torment of attraction to Jesus, and then - with Jesus - of elevation to the Father. This becomes a torment if and when we do not correspond to it, because the Love-God pursues and besieges the souls until they surrender. It is a torment if and when we correspond only lukewarmly, since this gives us the wrong impression that the Love-God is satisfied with little; this may be so at the beginning and temporarily, but only in order to reach, absorb and possess everything in its entirety.

It remains a torment even if we correspond with all possible fervor, because the Love-God is infinite and is constantly expanding, replenishing and piercing, in order to ever more enlarge and fill the tremendous capacity of the soul, until we do reach the bosom of the Father, in the Eternal Sabbath.

We have to reach the bosom of the Father from whom eternally proceeds the Son by divine generation.

We tend to reach the bosom of the Father from whom - in time - has come to us the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, and Jesus-Eucharist to complete the divine mission.

We want to ascend to the bosom of the Father, to whom Jesus is returning with all the redeemed, in order to hand over the conquered kingdom of the elects.

The prophet Isaiah exclaims: *Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down saving justice, let the earth open up and blossom with salvation, and let justice sprout up with it (Is 45 8).*

This is true, and we say to ourselves: Oh! If you, my soul, with strong faith would apply yourself to the interior vision of the mystery of the Eucharist! Oh! If you, my soul, would open up not only the veil of the eucharistic species, but also the very dense veil of your ignorance of sacred science, the veil of your sloth in applying the sacred knowledge to your life, and the veils of your lukewarmness in living the sacred science to your life of prayer. If you were to open these veils you would find yourself facing the divine reality of the Son of God the Father; you would not only be attracted and totally immersed in humble adoration, but you would find yourself elevated and carried by the currents of supernatural life, to the divine relationship of sonship with the Father. In this divine relationship is condensed the whole being of the Son, the whole work of Jesus Christ within us.

Everything in Jesus, and in Jesus-Eucharist talks to us about the Father, elevates us to the Father, unites us to the Father. Whether we contemplate the Eucharist as a divine, perpetual mission, as the sacrifice of the New Law, or as the sacrament of life, it always talks to us about the Father. The Eucharist elevates us to the Father, and unites us to the Father. The Eucharist is Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God the Father, who became man to re-establish our relationship with the Father, to teach and encourage us to live that relationship with the Father, and ever more nurture this relationship with the Father.

Before any thing else we consider the Eucharist as a divine,

perpetual mission. When we talk of Jesus, it is not possible to use the terminology that applies to us while pilgrims on earth, nor in our final state after death.

Our human condition - as beings on our way - implies the condition in which we can be tested and be either victorious or losers. Every descendant of Adam, born in the state of original sin, finds himself in this situation. The fact that we are beings on our way to the Father implies the possibility of spiritual progress, and only in this sense can the life of the blessed Virgin, conceived without original sin and confirmed in grace, be considered as a permanent way.

Speaking of Jesus, during his life on earth, when he willingly submitted himself to suffering and death, we cannot speak of his passing or transient condition, but only of him as being on a divine mission. St. Thomas says: *while on earth Jesus was a 'comprehensor', because he enjoyed the beatific vision; this enjoyment, - through divine dispensation - was contained and retained in his mind; he had to obtain this blessedness in other faculties, in his soul and his mortal body, and in this sense Jesus was also a viator* (Summa, Part III, Quest XV, n. 10).

When we talk about the person of Jesus, we are talking about things that are really special and entirely deriving from his will as Savior, and Savior at the cost of suffering not of an ordinary necessity of a test wanted by a superior will; consequently it would be very inappropriate to talk about a state of 'viator' in Jesus. It is much better and more correct to refer to it as a state of mission. Now - in one way - this mission has been completed, as the whole life of the Savior, with his death, resurrection and ascension to the Father, and - in another sense - with all truthfulness we can say that it still continues as perpetuated in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Divine Eucharist places us in the real presence of Jesus, and of his divine mission in the world... the first divine mission.

Every divine mission consists of three elements, and each one of these elements talks to us about the Father, elevates us to the Father and unites us with the Father.

First element: the origin of a divine person, who proceeds from another divine person.

Second element: a mission to be accomplished by the divine person, who is sent.

Third element: a work to be accomplished which is worthy both of the divine person who sends, and of the divine person who is sent.

All this is present in the great happening of the incarnation of the Word, and in the epilogue and synthesis of all acts, states and mysteries of the Incarnate Word, i.e., in the Eucharist. In all this we are elevated to the Father and united to the Father, in Jesus and with Jesus. The second divine person eternally proceeds from the first through generation, and because of this the first person is really the Father, and the second is really the Son. This is the first element of the divine mission: the origin in eternity of one person from the other.

God the Son, by the will of God the Father and through the work of the Holy Spirit, has come among us to assume our human nature, to become true man, as he is true God. This is the second element of the divine mission: the mission in time, outside of the divinity.

He has been sent to us by the Father. He has come to us becoming a man for a purpose worthy of God.

The object of this divine mission is "the good". Even for God there can be no other object but the good.

For us, the objective or goal is to achieve either a specific good, or the absolute good. For the Lord, who is in himself infinite goodness, the object cannot be to achieve some good but always and only to communicate some good.

The purpose of creation, redemption and sanctification, the triple-unique divine work of the one, triune God, is to communicate to souls the one divine good, the divine life. This is the third element of the divine mission.

In the prayer of priestly preparation for Holy Communion we say: *Lord Jesus Christ, by the will of the Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit*, thus we express the divine origin of Jesus by another person; *Through your death*, i.e. the mission in time: the incarnation, passion and death of Jesus or the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the New Law.

You gave life to the world, i.e. the purpose of the divine mission is to give life to the world, to each individual soul and through them to the world. The Eucharist is the sacrament of life.

We usually consider only the “Lord Jesus Christ” as the object of the divine mission, and thus instead of honoring him perfectly, we kind of diminish, cut him in half in our knowledge, and consequently in our adoration, as well as in our devotion and imitation, with great loss for our sanctification and for the glorification of the Lord God.

If we consider Jesus in the full, integral concept of his divine mission, we will be sanctified by it and God will be glorified.

Let us contemplate with all our faith, Jesus in his total entirety; let us long with full hope for the complete, total possession of Jesus in his entirety. Let us finally embrace with perfect, intense charity the entire Jesus. If we achieve this, we will be attracted and

carried with him to the Father. We will feel and be with him - not so many sons of the Father - but as the only son of the Father! This is the great purpose of the divine mission of the Incarnate Word. This is the mandate that he received from the Father, who sent him. This introduces us to the Eucharist considered as a sacrifice.

Why did the Son of God come into this World? What did he want to accomplish becoming a man like us?

Did he come to us in order to go soon back to the Father? Would this serve a purpose worthy of a divine mission?

Coming into the world he has taken a body and soul like ours, but not a human person like ours.

He began by taking a human nature like ours in order to attract to himself, one by one each and every living, human being.

The human nature that he took forms his physical body. The human persons that he attracts to himself form his mystical body. His physical body is a divine reality in different ways.

He has come in order to return to the father, even though not in the same way he had come. He has come as Son of God in order to return to the Father also as Son of Man. He has come as king of heaven and of the angels, so that he may return to the Father as king of the universe and of men. He has come as Creator of everything and he returns as Savior of all souls. He has come alone and he returns to the Father with each and every human being. In all fairness, I may consider the created world, in which I live, as my garment, since the whole created world is like the vestment for man, the king of creation.

My garment is wherever I am; if I walk, my garment walks; if

I go through dusty roads my garment gets dusty; if I go through mud, my garment gets muddy; if I elevate myself in space, my garment flies all around me and with me.

We may consider all souls as Jesus' garment; a garment not adhering externally like clothes to the body. The souls may be considered as Jesus garments - more or less - like the body is the garment of the soul; as the word is the garment of thought, as the rays are the dress of the light.

That is why he has come to attract all souls to himself.

He has come to attract all souls to himself not to bind them to himself through any bond of affection, or in any other bond possible among human beings. He wants to unite all souls to himself in a way and in intensity possible only to God. He is always the God who reveals and donates himself. Even though he wanted to come down to our level and become like one of us, he continues to reveal himself as infinitely superior to us in his works and in his ways, because he cannot cease being God.

God wants to do things always in a godly manner. He wants to be conceived and born as a man, but always from an ever-Virgin Mother. This is God's way of doing things!

Again, he wants to redeem us and he can do it with a simple act of his will, however, he wants to do it with an infinite effusion of merits, at the cost of his own blood, the godly way!

He wants to prepare for us an eternal feast in a perpetual banquet of love, but he really wants us to eat and drink his own flesh and blood, the godly way!

He wants to bequeath to us an eternal, living memorial of him-

self, of his life, death, resurrection and ascension, really his whole self. He wants to do it within a mystery of real presence, which is a web of miracles. God's way!

He wants to attract all souls and unite them to himself in such a way that we become one life: his life! He wants us to become one relationship with him in his person: The relationship of Son of God! He unites himself to the soul in such a mysterious way that it can only be called "incorporation"! God's way!

Why so much, and so mysterious a union? Because he had to give us life! He found us in a condition of death and perdition, in a condition of slavery to sin and to hell. He had to give us life!

The highest form of life is God's life, origin and fountain of every other life!

He wanted and could have infused in us so many other levels and forms of superior life - like that of angels - but within a mystery of predilection, he wanted to give us his own life. God's way!

One's life can only be communicated either by generation or by incorporation! (Here, we are not talking about hypostatic union). God's life by generation can only be communicated within the divinity, between the Father and Son.

Outside of the divinity, divine life is communicated by participation. Jesus, the Incarnate Word, communicates divine life to us by incorporation. To get a very imperfect image, we could think of the food we eat, which by assimilation becomes part of our life. The food we eat, by the process of assimilation loses its own being and becomes part of our life. If the elements we eat were free and aware of what is going on they would prefer to retain their inferior level of life, rather than lose their own existence in order to share in a superior level of life. In our incorporation into Jesus, we

retain our entire being, all our nature and all our person, which is elevated, transfigured, deified in the Lord God, in Jesus Christ.

This is the reason why he came. This is the mandate that the Father gave to Jesus in sending him to us. Jesus himself says explicitly: *This is the command I have received from my Father* (Jn 10 18).

Jesus was given the command to give us supernatural life, participation in his divine life, union with the divine nature, relationship with the divine persons.

When we talk about life, and divine life, we must necessarily think of the Father, because only the Father is the eternal source of divine life within the Trinity.

The Father, the principle of love brings him to communicate life in its fullness, with the whole sweetness of love. The three divine persons communicate this infusion of divine life to us. The three divine persons act as a unique principle of grace. It remains true, however, that the Father is the first principle and source of divine life. The Father is life itself; he has granted that the Son and Holy Spirit also be life. All divine life proceeds from the Father.

Every thing at all times reveals the Father to us, leads us to the Father and unites us to the Father. Divine life had been communicated to us from the beginning of creation through our elevation to the supernatural level. The fact that we lost it, that we may still be able to reject it, is the result of our sins, and consequently it is our fault.

This is a fault of infinite gravity since it offends the divinity, the Trinity. Indeed if we do not want to lose sight of the distinction of persons, we can say it is an infinite offense against the person who is the source of life, the principle of life, the giver of life: God the Father.

God the Father is infinitely offended by our rejection of his life, because he is always infinitely eager to communicate life since he is eternally in the act of being Father.

It was imperative to remove sin so that this divine life might flow again.

This is the command that the Son received from the Father in his divine mission. The Son has fulfilled it through his sacrifice on the cross.

He has claimed all souls by incorporating them to himself. Meanwhile the faults of all mankind have taken away his life.

Accepting, wanting, offering his death out of love for the Father in the souls, Jesus has taken away all our sins, every offense against the Father, thus he has re-opened the flow of life that comes to the souls from the Father. The flow of life goes from the Father to the souls through Jesus' passion and death, in his blood shed in sacrifice.

He has left at our disposal the renewal of this sacrifice. He has given us the possibility of offering it whenever we want, and of applying it to the souls that need life. With the renewal and offering of this sacrifice we wipe away each and every sin committed by men.

Souls are incorporated into Jesus through baptism, and - thanks to the theological virtues - form the *holy people, royal priesthood*. Through the ministry of the priest and in union with the sacred ministers they offer the divine Eucharist. The Eucharist is a sacrifice to the divinity considered expressly in God the Father, to the entire Trinity in the first person, the Father.

It is impossible to think of life and of the communication of

life without thinking of the Father author of life and principle of generation. So also it is impossible to think of the sacrifice, the Eucharistic sacrifice without thinking of the divinity, of the Father to whom it is offered.

The Eucharist is the sacrifice that - with the death of Jesus - takes away the death due to our sins. It is the sacrifice that cancels the offense against God with the merit of the immolation of the incarnate Word. It is the sacrifice through which we receive once again divine life. The eucharistic sacrifice necessarily elevates us to the Father, leads us to the Father and unites us with the Father.

Jesus graciously confides to us: *The Father loves me, because I lay down my life ...No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will (Jn 10 18). I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10).* Adorable words! Adorable confidence!

The Father loves me, because I lay down my life sounds as "I would not be worthy of the Father, I would not be fulfilling the will of the Father, I would not satisfy the love of the Father if I were not offering myself in sacrifice for you." What a splendid revelation of God the Father! He is always in the act of being a Father generating the fullness of life with the whole sweetness of love. St. Ignatius was moved to tears every time that in the celebration of the Mass, opening his arms and lifting his eyes to heaven he invoked: *Te igitur clementissime Pater.* Because of this Fr. Faber is right when he says that in the Christian revelation there is no more moving mystery than the mystery of the Trinity!

We are looking at the Eucharist considered as the sacrament of life. We are full of confidence in Jesus' proclamation of the mandate received by the Father, in his divine mission.

The command I received from the Father is the mission: that they may have life and live it to the full that the souls may live! We are full

of confidence and totally interested, because it is a question of the utmost importance, and because we start to see the need of our cooperation. *That they may have life* is to be referred to the first infusion of grace. We were granted this first infusion of grace in baptism, when we were infants, without our personal cooperation.

Whenever we need this first grace as adults, some cooperation - at least in form of convenient preparation - is needed on our part.

That they may have it to the full, always more abundantly, expresses the progressive growth of divine life, of grace and charity within our soul that already enjoys supernatural life. This growth is a must, and it depends largely on our positive cooperation; just like in our natural life, as adults we must nourish our daily life, foster its growth and perfect it with the works of a human being, in order to live a life that is not routine nor mediocre, but always better in every aspect.

But is it a question of life? Is it the Son of God who is teaching us? Once again every thing is elevating us to the Father, leading us to the Father, uniting us with the Father, the source and principle of life. He is always in the act of transmitting life in the fullness of which we are capable of absorbing, with whole sweetness of love.

It is Jesus who said: *The Father loves me because I lay down my life... so that they may have life*. After having completed in a bloodless way his supreme sacrifice with the institution of the Eucharist, on the eve of his bloody sacrifice on the cross, having raised his eyes to heaven, to the Father he says: *Father the hour has come glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; so that, just as you have given him power over all humanity, he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him* (Jn 17 1).

Is this a hint of Jesus' kingdom? We can certainly think so! Should we think of the prophetic, messianic psalm: *Why this uproar among the nation...?* Oh! Why is the whole world in the ferment of sin, of death, and consequently of corruption and moral decay? All this is manifested in the most foolish rebellion to the Lord. The very same Lord who has said to me: *You are my Son, today I have fathered you* (Ps. 2 7). "Today" here means the eternal present. *Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations as your birthright, the whole wide world as your possession. With an iron scepter you will break them, shatter them like so many pots.* Yet, this fiery, scary psalm ends with a loving exhortation: *So now, you kings, come to your senses, you earthly rulers, learn your lesson! In fear be submissive to Yahweh; with trembling kiss his feet* (Ps. 2:8-9). Embrace the Son of God! Kiss this divine Son! Spare yourselves and be pardoned!

In Jesus' words, however, the kingdom received from the Father, the power of the Son of man is exercised in a different manner.

He has absolute power of life and death; but he exercises it only as power of life! Jesus says: *You have given him power over all humanity, so that he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him.* In these words Jesus talks only of life with clemency and tenderness of love.

What has happened in the time that passed between the tremendous Psalm 2 that threatens justice and sanctions of death against the rebels, and the priestly prayer of Jesus that announces life for all? The offering of Jesus' sacrifice, already completed in its bloodless form, and just starting in its bloody form, in the bleeding Heart of Jesus.

This sacrifice marks the passing from the Old to the New Testament as the divine love of the Father and of the Son triumphs with his life over the immense evil of mankind's death.

Trying to focus the attention and increase the interest of the soul who seeks life, and an ever superior life, Jesus adds: *Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (Jn 17:3). We like to add: And the One whom you, Father with the Son have sent: the Holy Spirit!*

Eternal life that comes from the Father, through the Son, is this: the knowledge of the divinity, the knowledge of the Trinity in the divinity, and more specifically so in the Father.

Evidently Jesus is not talking only about knowledge, limited to the intellect. Since it is the Lord Jesus who is talking, and as in his person there is every perfection, so in his teaching he talks of things in their outmost perfection. Here, then Jesus talks about the perfect knowledge of the Father.

Perfect knowledge is only that, which after having filled the intellect with the splendor of the truth fills our will with the ardor of charity in order to impregnate our entire life with the fervor of holiness. This is perfect knowledge. This is the knowledge in which consists eternal life.

As life comes to us from the Father through the Son, so the knowledge, which is the seed of life, comes to us directly from the Son.

It is God who said: 'let light shine out of darkness,' that has shone into our hearts to enlighten them with the knowledge of God's glory, the glory on the face of Christ (2Cor 4 6). Thus we have the supreme revelation of the Father: Jesus Christ.

We can reach this conclusion with our own reasoning. Who makes us aware of our own selves? When do we begin to have a consciousness of our existence? When do we begin to have a consciousness of our thoughts? *Cogito ego sum - I think therefore, I exist.* The consciousness of my thought reveals myself to me.

When do I reveal myself to others? I reveal my thoughts to others when my thought, translated into words, is manifested to them.

What happens in us, what is good, true beautiful in us, happens and it is true, first and foremost, in its highest level, in the one of whom we are an image and likeness. It follows that even in the divinity, the revelation of God himself is his thought and his Word. The revelation of God the Father is God the Son, and the revelation of God the Father to us is in the Incarnate Son. This explains why when Philip exclaims to Jesus: *Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied*, Jesus says: *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (Jn14 8-9). He who sees me sees the Father!*

We can easily and correctly see in these divine words an imperative: *He who sees me must elevate himself to the Father; he who comes to me, must unite himself to the Father, otherwise he does not really know me, he does not understand me, he does not possess me.*

We can and must attribute to these words an exclusive value, because Jesus himself said: *No one can come to the Father except through me (Jn 14 7)*. This is to be understood that no one can go to the Father through a simple, human knowledge, and much less through perfect knowledge, except through the Son. As a matter of fact: *No one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Lk 10 22)*.

Jesus reveals the Father to those to whom he chooses to reveal him, and he does this with his being and his actions. Every word and action of Jesus, every act, state and mystery of Jesus is a revelation of the Father.

Since Jesus is the supreme revelation of the Father, and the Eucharist is the supreme revelation of Jesus, it follows that - in the vision of faith - the Eucharist is the supreme revelation of the Father.

Consequently the Eucharist is the sacrament of life in the sense that in it we reach perfect knowledge of the Father. Likewise, the Eucharist is the perfect knowledge of the Father in the sense that in it we receive life, and the increase of life. This giving, infusing and increasing life is the Father in action. That adorable act that generates the fullness of life with infinite sweetness of love!

The Eucharist is the sacrament of life also in the sense that in it we receive the nourishment of life and growth of life; the bread of life for the long journey of our ascensional return to heaven, to the Father; the flesh and blood of the Son of God.

Practically, this second sense is even more important than the first. Even in this sense the Eucharist reveals the Father to us, elevates us to the Father and unites us to the Father. Who can decide what the Son should do but the Father? Who can send him to us except the Father? Who can give him to us if not the Father? As Jesus himself emphatically proclaims: *In all truth I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread, for the bread of God, is the bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world* (Jn 6 32-33).

We love to contemplate these brightening words! When we go to receive the Eucharist, we know that we are receiving Jesus from the Father himself. Receiving Jesus, we cannot think of the Father of the Son of God without also thinking of the mother of the Son of God, who became man! From the mother of God and from God the Father, we receive Jesus.

Jesus can receive a worthy welcome only from his Father! As from the cross, I seem to hear from the host the voice: *Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit* (Lk 23 46). This explains why the state of grace is needed to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. There must be grace in the soul, that is, the Father must be in the soul to receive his Son!

Grace transforms the soul into God's heaven. In this heaven, grace builds a royal palace. In this royal palace, grace erects a throne. On this throne seats God the Father and he attends his Son, as from Calvary at the time of the supreme sacrifice, or as on the morning of the Ascension!

The Eucharist is the supreme act of adoration to the Trinity. Holy Communion is the supreme act of adoration to the Trinity indwelling in our soul. I, poor human being, cannot receive Jesus, if the Father is not in me to welcome him in the bosom of his divine complacency.

I, as a priest, cannot give Jesus to just anybody who comes by. I need to think not only of the Guardian Angel, at the side of the communicant, but also of the Father, present and living in the act of welcoming the Son in the soul of the communicant.

Welcoming Jesus, his Son by nature, the Father welcomes us too, since we are incorporated into him, and - through grace - have become sons of God, because the Father wanted us as his children. The Father makes us enter in our own innermost being and in the most intimate essence of his being. There we find the banquet hall that the Father has prepared for the Son, and there takes place the celebration of the wedding feast of the soul with the Blessed Trinity in Jesus Christ. There, as in the mystic nuptial bed, the soul receives the fecundity of holy deeds for the kingdom of God. There, the soul has the experience of how true is the spiritual sweetness deriving from the Eucharist, as its spring, because only with and through the Eucharist, do we reach the bosom of the Father.

Oh! How important it is that every priestly soul renews herself completely in the resolution, or vow, to ever more contemplate for herself, and make known to others these eucharistic-Trinitari-

an truths, which are springs of immense good for us, and of great glory for the Lord.

It is very important that every faithful, while approaching the altar, while participating in the divine sacrifice, while receiving the Blessed Sacrament, be united to the divine complacency of the Father for the Son, as at the Jordan River, as on Mount Tabor, since no other thought or feeling can please Jesus more than this. *This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on him. Listen to him* (Mt 3 17 & 17 5).

Finding his favor in Jesus, listening to and receiving the Son of God, the communicant should unite himself to Jesus in his ascension to the Father and in the intention of his Sacred Heart: *I do not seek my own glory, but the glory of him who sent me* (Jn 8 50).

The communicant should unite himself to the divine disposition of the Sacred Heart, who says: My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work (Jn 4 34).

Thus, day after day we will see in our life the fulfillment of the divine work, which is the formation of every elect according to Jesus, the formation of Jesus in every elect, the realization of the ascension of every elect with Jesus to the Father, to the glory of the same Father.

Part II

The Eucharist and God the Son

The Word Incarnate revealing to us the identity of a Triune God, not only is the foundation of the Misterium Fidei, but it also poses himself as the root of our life of relationship with the Trinitarian mystery.

The first question concerns the setting of our relations with God-Trinity. Is it more convenient to start from the adoration of the only divine nature, or from the distinction of persons?

For a series of reasons proper to the human being, limited and successive, Fr. Justin, in his approach with God-Trinity, prefers to model his relationship in a distinct way with each of the divine persons. The accentuation of the personal relationship with the individual relations, explains Fr. Justin, opens new horizons to the soul, which can understand “that, for her individually and in a degree and way all her own, God is Father, God is Son, God is Holy Spirit”.

The soul receives the grace of the personal and distinguished relationship with the Blessed Trinity directly from Jesus because “he is the Word that in the divinity reveals the divine Epiphany”.

Fr. Justin discovers in the Eucharist “the compendium and the epilogue of the revelations of the truth, the maximum of everything, the maximum of the gifts from the Lord, and above all the highest degree of union with God-Trinity”.

The life that the Father gives to the Son, by divine generation, he also gives it, in time, to all ages by grace through the Son, exemplary cause of all humanity.

The Father, giver of life, calls all beings from nothingness to existence and out of love “of that one, he is their Father and we are his image and likeness”.

By creating man, the Father demands from him the free consent to accept his divine life of which the Eucharist, sacrament of life, is the peak. In communicating the divine life, God the Father manifests himself first of all as the Father of the Son-Jesus, and wants every man to be his image and likeness also for the Son.

In the hands of the Son-Jesus, the Father entrusts all his powers and prerogatives, which include the functions of judge, pontiff, king, teacher, pastor and savior. Jesus judge emits sentences in the name of the Father and instructs on behalf of the Father: "What I have heard from my Father, I transmit it to you".

Jesus as good shepherd feeds the sheep of the Father. The royal power that he possesses ("I am king", confirms to Pilate) does not touch the family sphere nor does it make us think of encounters or moments of friendship. On the contrary, royal power is the exercise of authority; it inspires respect and creates distance.

Fr. Justin wants to experience a different, more intimate Jesus. He aspires to a higher degree of relationship, which satisfies the demands of a loving heart. Jesus must be for each of us "what he is for God the Father, what he is for the Virgin Mother: Son."

It is the mother's relationship that the mystical heart of Fr. Justin wants to realize with Jesus. Jesus must be born within us. We must dare to enter into this relationship of fathers and mothers of Jesus. It is as if divine fragments (geniuses) of paternity and spiritual maternity were scattered in man's heart by the creative act of God. In this sense, we can also understand the messianic announcement of Isaiah: We were given a child; a son was born to us.

In the world of nature we are born children, but we become fathers and mothers when we freely choose to enter into another state of life.

On the level of grace we are offered the opportunity to cultivate the relationship of father and mother with Jesus, mirroring ourselves in the divine fatherhood and in the motherhood of Mary.

Our relationship with Jesus is not complete, it is not perfect if we content ourselves with being his redeemed, subjects, ministers, friends and even brothers, if we do not come to realize the mother, and to consider him our son. Jesus himself wishes to enter into the condition of son and be accepted as such by us. "Whoever does the Father's will is my mother".

To make Jesus grow within us, we must unite ourselves to the will of the Father. If we transfer our relationship of father and mother to Jesus in the Eucharist, then we really find the way and the place of his birth. Then we are like Mary and our heart is Bethlehem.

The priest, like every Christian, incorporated into Christ as a priest through baptism, in the words of consecration, gives a new life to Jesus, gives him birth on the altar. It is as if he were saying with God the Father and with mother Mary: "You are my Son, I have generated you today".

In addition to the eucharistic context, spiritual motherhood towards Jesus can

be exercised in many other ways. Fr. Justin indicates two ways in particular: The banquet of the word that generates Jesus in the listener. (Faith depends on preaching).

How many Jesus were born from the preaching of Fr. Justin! The second way of becoming Jesus' father and mother is achieved through daily communion. These are two wombs, the word and the bread, which give birth to a new Jesus every day.

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The Eucharist is *Mysterium Fidei* - the mystery of faith. This mystery requires our most complete profession of faith not only in the incarnation of the Word, in his passion and death for us, in his resurrection and ascension into heaven, in his real presence in our midst, but also in the first and greatest mystery of the divinity: the unity and Trinity of God.

According to revelation, and within the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church, our faith requires that *ut unum Deum in Trinitate et Trinitatem in Unitate veneremur, neque confundentes Personas, neque substantiam separantes* - that we venerate the unity of God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in the unity, without confusing the Persons and without separating the substance.

This faith is the basis, the foundation and the root of justification as well as of our entire religion and of our life of relationship with the Lord.

Consequently our faith must be manifested in every external expression of adoration and in every form and level of prayer, according to the axiom: *Lex credendi legem statuit supplicandi* - the norm of faith dictates the norm of prayer.

In our liturgy and in our prayer we must express not only the unity of God as far as nature is concerned, but also the Trinity of God as persons. We like to say: *Always the Trinity in the unity and*

the unity in the Trinity. As human beings, when we talk, when we listen, when we offer or give, when we ask and when we receive, we direct ourselves always to the person and not to the nature of the individual we deal with, to the person in that nature, but always to the person.

Whenever and wherever the divinity works something *ad extra* in his creatures, the divine work is unique; there is one divine nature, notwithstanding the fact that the three divine persons are at work, since they work as God - in nature - they are one; but even there, as always one cannot ignore the distinction of persons, even though they are working as one single principle. If it were not so, the theological terminology attributing divine perfections and operations to the distinct divine persons, would make no sense.

The foundation of this correct terminology of appropriation of divine perfections and operations is ultimately found in reasons of divine convenience, corresponding to the distinction of the divine persons.

To the divinity, considered in his unity we offer our homage of adoration, thanksgiving and reparation, especially through the sacrifice, which is the supreme act of adoration. In our case the sacrifice is none other than the sacrifice of Jesus Crucified and Jesus Eucharist.

We are united with the divinity considered in its unity, through our participation in the unique divine nature.

The distinction of the divine persons must be evident both in the liturgy and in our union, in the sense that in the practice of our devotion, there must be some religious acts more appropriate for the Father, some for the Son and some for the Holy Spirit.

Divine union, through grace, is participation of nature and must be personal. It is so because the human being is a person and three divine persons are the divinity. We say that this divine union must be realized in a distinct manner with each divine person. We live divine union and we cultivate it in a different way with each one of the divine persons. The way we relate to one divine person is distinct, somehow different, but not totally different from the way we relate to the other divine persons.

It is not easy, nor proper for us to suggest the way we should relate with God in our religious practice, whether to let prevail the concept of unity - always keeping in mind that in the unity there is the Trinity of persons, or let prevail the concept of trinity - always keeping in mind that in the Trinity of persons we see and worship the unity of nature.

It seems that the more we actually keep in mind the unity and the trinity, as a unique mystery, the more perfect will be our religious practice.

Our Liturgy, our relationship with God is a deep expression of the human and divine personality. Considering that the nature of a human being is successive, and reflecting on how for a particular soul, specific things are always of greater efficiency than general ones, we are inclined to give a spiritual preference to the Trinity in the unity, rather than to the unity in the Trinity. At the beginning of her spiritual journey the soul practically tends to direct herself to the Lord God in his unity, because at this stage she is moved by the spirit of fear and by the law of duty, and does not invest all possible spiritual interest in her spiritual practice; religion does not yet impregnate, shape and direct all her interior life and her external activity.

As the soul progresses through spiritual ascensions and becomes more filled with the spirit of love, she invests all possible

spiritual interest in the relationship with God; she places all her being in the divine union and all her activities in the divine apostolate. The soul then lives and feels her personal relationship with each of the distinct, divine relationships, which are the three divine persons. From experience we know that this focusing of the personal relationship with the three divine persons opens new horizons for the soul, and elevates her to new ascensional heights; it becomes like a personal divine epiphany for the soul. This happens when the individual starts to really understand and experience that in a very exclusive and personal manner, God is father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit!

The souls usually receive this epiphany through the Eucharist; in God, it is the Word, the one who reveals! Of anybody else we say: *Non erat ille lux - He was not the light*, but a sign, and hint of light.

We focus on Jesus considering him as the Savior that he really is, this, however, is only one aspect of his work. If we consider Jesus in all his work, and his divine person in both natures, he stands out more as the one who reveals, both in the divinity and in the humanity.

The Eucharist is the summary, the epilogue, the synthesis of the divine revelations of the truth, and of all divine effusions of love.

The Eucharist provides for us the special, unique homage, sacrifice and adoration that we must establish and develop ever more with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In the divine Eucharist we have the maximum of everything! The maximum of the divine presence with us! *Non est alia natio quae habeat deos appropriquantés sibi sicut Deus noster adest nobis - Indeed no other great nation has its gods as near as Yahweh our God is*

to us (Dt 4 7). St. Thomas appropriately applies this biblical text to the Eucharist, in both the liturgy of the hours and in the Mass for the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Mankind, in and through the holy Catholic Church, the only true religion, offers the greatest adoration to the divinity in the Eucharist, as the eternal sacrifice of God-Man.

In the Eucharist as sacrament, we have the greatest of God's gifts and the highest possible level of intimacy of the divine love for us.

In the Eucharist, we have the best and greatest opportunity to understand and practice divine union with the divinity, and the distinct (not totally different) way to nurture it with each divine person.

In the Eucharist everything elevates us, re-connects us and unites us to the Father, because the Eucharist is God the Son in the supreme revelation and communication of the Father.

The divine distinction of the first person in the divinity is made possible only and exclusively by the eternal generation of the Son. Everything else is so perfectly the same among the three divine persons, that it is the same thing.

As we elevate ourselves to the Father, we cannot consider him in any other aspect but that of his divine paternity, in the act of his eternal generation. We cannot but ask him for the gift of life; we cannot connect ourselves to him in any other way but accepting life from him.

With infinite sweetness the Father gives divine life in all its fullness to the Son by nature, and then, in time, to the souls, proportionately and by grace.

The Father in the divinity is the principle that gives; he gives eternally without ever receiving from anybody; he gives all himself; he gives all his life to his eternal only begotten Son by nature, and then he gives it to so many people, but in them he sees the image of his only begotten Son; on account of his love for his only begotten Son the Father is Father for all souls. Through Jesus, exemplary cause of everything, the Father calls each soul from nothingness into being. Likewise, for Jesus' glory, the Father created us in his image and likeness.

So, we elevate ourselves to the Father, we unite ourselves with the Father in everything that has to do with life, or is needed for the development and realization of life at its various stages and levels. Everything that pertains to life, and to supernatural life is participation in the divine life.

We cannot give anything to the Father that would add to his being, to his happiness. We can only present to him this ability to receive, our willingness to receive, our hunger and thirst for life. We can only present to the Father our unlimited and connatural disposition to expand and grow in supernatural life, as he himself wanted us and created us.

Even when we have the impression that we are giving something to the Father, in reality we are receiving. In what we seem to offer, we are only presenting to the Father an empty container, in order to receive new graces of life. This eternal receiving on our part becomes eminently true in the same eucharistic sacrifice, which we offer to the Father as the supreme expression of our adoration. As matter of fact, this divine victim is given to us by the Father, and we offer it in order to receive ever greater effusions of divine life in us and in all souls; all these effusions are proportioned to the intensity of our participation in the sacrifice and of our communion with the divine victim.

The divine Eucharist, as sacrifice, in which we offer Jesus in lieu of our own selves, represents every soul and all mankind in the act of opening up through his death the boundaries of our limitations, in order to more and more receive the divine good of the glory, love and will of the Father.

All our internal, religious acts, if we were to keep in mind the distinction of persons in the divinity, if we were to direct them explicitly to the Father as Father, they would consist in asking and receiving everything for us and for others; they would be a perpetual petition for us and intercession for others.

This life that the Father gives to us ever more abundantly, is given to us not only because he is God the Father, but precisely because he is the Father of the Son, of that Son, in the sense that in giving us his life he wants us to be as many living, personal images of himself for the Son.

So the Father directs us to the Son, as the object of every complacency, of every sweetness, of all attentions, of all attractions of our being in love.

We want to see all that our life must be in relation to the Father in Jesus' words: *Ascendo ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum, Deum meum et Deum vestrum - I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God* (Jn 20 17).

Likewise we want to see all that our life must be in relation to the Son in these divine words: *Filius datus est nobis, puer natus est nobis - a child has been born for us, a Son has been given to us* (Is 9 6).

Behold, the Epiphany of the Son, to which we are led by the star of the Father, by the angel of the Father. Here we are facing a marvelous spiritual novelty, in a spiritual world that is already full of wonder: *A child has been born for us; a Son has been given to us.*

We should not restrict the meaning of these words as if they were addressed to humankind only in a generic sense or to humankind only as far as it is represented in the Blessed Mother. It seems that in order to prevent such a restrictive interpretation, responding to the question of the person who tells him: *Your mother is here looking for you*, Jesus asks: *who is my mother?* And stretching out his hand towards the disciples he says: *Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is... my mother* (Mt 12 39-40).

Concerning our Lord Jesus Christ we must distinguish between the object of public worship and private worship; concerning the functions and missions of Jesus, we must distinguish between those which derive from his own Person and those which he does in lieu of the Father.

Only thus can we really understand the special adoration due him, and the special relationship that we have with him, as well as the religious, personal acts through which we can live and practice such a relationship.

In the Eucharist, because of the divine presence, we may contemplate the glorious splendor of the Man-God; we may contemplate it behind the veil of the sacred species, a real web of wonders; as we can contemplate it behind the veil of the precious Blood shed for us on the cross, so now we can contemplate it as an eternal fountain of rivers of light springing forth from the sacred wounds.

This glorious splendor of the Man-God is formed by his supreme functions corresponding to his supreme dignity as savior, teacher, king, priest, judge, attributions to which he is entitled for so many reasons.

Each and every one of these various aspects of the glory of the Lord is a legitimate foundation to his cult, and it is the object

of a special relationship of the soul with the Man-God. Each and every one of these attributions can be related to the souls, and can be object of prayer to the Lord. Each and everyone of these attributions are like the spring of a particular spirituality; many of these aspects or functions as a matter of fact do give life to large religious congregations, who consecrate themselves to glorify the Lord in that light. Each and every one of these titles may give origin and growth to great devotions that blossom around the adorable humanity of Jesus-God-with us.

We do not find in any of these titles the supreme object of our relationship with the incarnate Word. We do not find in any of them those intimate, personal, religious acts with which we can live and cultivate our intimate, personal relationship with Jesus, because while each and everyone of these titles expresses a certain dignity, function and glory of Jesus, none of them is the essence of Jesus personality, from which all the other titles derive.

Jesus is judge of men and angels, of the living and of the dead. Every moment his tribunal is crowded with many souls that moment after moment, pass from this earth to eternity, as the harvest that the earth produces for heaven.

Jesus exercises this function as judge in the name of the Father. The Father has removed from himself any act that might cause fear in the souls; any act that is not fullness of Fatherhood and sweetness of Fatherhood. As the Father gives life to the Son, so he communicates to him all divine powers.

While on one side the assigning of places in heaven is reserved to the Father, on the other Jesus says: The Father judges no one; he has entrusted all judgment to the Son (Jn 5 22). So while Jesus is the judge, he is always judging in the name of the Father. His sentences sound like this: *Come, blessed by my Father... Go away, you cursed by my Father* (Mt 25 33-41).

Today or tomorrow the Holy Spirit may inspire someone to be apostle of a devotion to Jesus-Judge, supreme judge, judge of last appeal for angels and men, for the living and the dead. Such devotion would be a very effective refrain to our human passions and a stop to neo-paganism with the repressive and preventive power of the eternal sanctions. This inspired apostle of the devotion to Jesus-Judge will not neglect in any way, in the doctrinal and devotional part, the idea of the Father whose place Jesus exercises in his dignity and function as judge.

It is not under this aspect, we were saying, that we find per se, directly and essentially Jesus, the incarnate Word, and it is not under this aspect that the Eucharist gives us Jesus, our Lord.

Jesus Christ is the great and only teacher of truth for all men. This dignity of teacher and this teaching role appears to derive directly from his person; it is intimately connected with his person.

He is the eternal Word of the Father! Teaching is an activity proper of the Son. Jesus proclaims himself as teacher.

With the same solemnity, jealousy and exclusivity with which he proclaims the universal fatherhood of the Father, he asserts his supreme and universal magisterium. *You must call no one on earth your Father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven* (Mt 23 10). St. Paul adds that from him comes every other paternity on earth.

Likewise *you must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master*. Your one and only teacher is Jesus the Lord. In the great theophanies at the Jordan and on Tabor, the Father reveals the Son to us as such when he says: *ipsum audite - listen to him*; become his disciples, because he is your teacher.

With this, we are in the presence of the essential dignity and

function of the incarnate Word and of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Here is how he proclaims it: *One is your teacher, Christ.* Likewise of his teaching he says: *Mea doctrina non est mea, sed eius qui misit me Patris. The word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me* (Jn 14 24).

As the teacher that he is and proclaims himself to be, Jesus does not want us to stop at him, because even his teaching is a revelation and communication of his Father. Jesus is the teacher, precisely because he is the divine Word. He is the Word of the Father!

The teaching function in Jesus is universal in the sense that it directly affects all masses of people, every age, all human beings of every level or condition, and indirectly each individual.

As the particular teacher that we need, as interior director of our spiritual life, he refers us and sends the Holy Spirit to us. *Ille vos docebit omnia, et suggeret vobis omnia quaecumque dixero vobis - The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you* (Jn 14 26).

He will apply all my principles and criteria to your individual cases. He will suggest to you, moment by moment, what my teaching is and how to apply it specifically to the circumstances of time or events of your every day life.

We would love to know the Jesus of the individual, more than the Jesus of the multitudes; Jesus as an intimate friend, more than Jesus as a public figure; the Jesus of Bethany or of Nazareth, more than the Jesus of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem; Jesus as he was for Mary of Magdala, for Mary of Nazareth, more than what he was with the excited or cursing crowds; the crowds that were crying *Hosannas*" or *Crucify him!*

Behold, Jesus the good shepherd, who goes out in search of

the lost sheep, who gives his life to snatch them from the grasp of death, who nourishes them with his flesh and blood. The good shepherd and Savior!

Did we finally arrive at the real Jesus? Is Jesus truly the Father of the prodigal son, who is waiting for the ungrateful son, and when he sees him coming back offers him such a great honor, and with so much love? Behold, this is the truth.

The lost sheep, the prodigal son, the invited guests to the banquet, in which they refuse to participate, the workers in the vineyard who refuse to give the produce of the land to the king, they all symbolize the sinner, mankind in different states of turmoil, in various levels of guilt, in various dispositions of indifference or apathy, of hidden hostility or open rebellion toward the Lord God, our Father.

In every case and circumstance the Lord God sends his messengers to call, to invite to conversion, to save, in order to unite to him all his children. After having sent many ambassadors, he finally sends his Son.

We have to see the Son of the Father in all our missions, both the ones that end up in tragic failure and the ones that are crowned with a happy ending.

To the rebellious tenants of the vineyard at last he sends his son. The Father expects them to respect his Son even though they have been harsh, or even abused the messengers. *Verebuntur filium meum - They will respect my Son!* Sadly enough we know how those ungrateful, greedy tenants respected his Son! They treated him the same way, miserable, ungodly people treat him today! They killed him!

At the side of the prodigal Son, in the determining moment of

his conversion, when he starts his return to the Father, we must feel and see the invisible presence of the Son, who manifests himself in the words: *Surgam et ibo ad Patrem meum - I will leave this place and go to my Father* (Lk 15 18).

Only the spirit of the Son can inspire such humility and such confidence; only the spirit of the Son can rekindle that flame in order to console the Father! Certainly we will not see the image, nor feel the presence of Jesus at the side of the older son, who while always obedient has so little understanding for the heart of his Father, trying to make him feel the burden of his paternity and embitter his victorious sense of fatherhood.

In the good shepherd and in the father of the prodigal son, we see the fusion into one unique symbol the goodness and work of the Father and of the Son. It is clear however, that Jesus always makes the point of elevating us to the Father; even while talking about his sheep, he stresses the fact and affirms that he has received them from the Father. The Father loves the Son because he shepherds them not like a mercenary, but as a true Son, to the point of giving his life for them.

We have not yet reached Jesus, in what he is, in what he has, in what makes him most distinctly and exclusively himself.

When will we finally arrive at him? Since ultimately Jesus is one God with the Father, he is also the first principle and the ultimate goal of the spiritual ascension of the soul, of the journey of our life. We come to Christ the King! Here we have some magnificent modern, liturgical and apostolic forms of devotion. At the outset we say that they are social forms. They concern the kingdom of heaven on earth, the kingdom of the Lord God, and so all people, all social relationships, all the expressions of life.

Again, we seek first and foremost the Jesus of the individual,

the Jesus in the intimacy of our hearts, the Jesus of our supernatural family.

Every king, while remaining always king does not live or exhibit his royal dignity and function in the intimacy of his family, with the friend of his heart, with his own mother.

If we wish to allow private, personal forms of devotion in Jesus' kingdom, we say that Jesus even as King elevates us to the Father, he leads us to the Father, and he shows us the Father. The human heart is never as free as when it is animated by the true spirit of prayer, which is ultimately the Holy Spirit in the act of spreading his gifts, fruits and beatitudes.

I am king and I could ask and immediately have twelve legions of angels from my Father! He is the one who told me ask and I will give you all the nations as your possession. It is the Father who has made me king in Zion.

The Father has sent him to conquer again the kingdom, which had been invaded by the enemy. At the end of time, Jesus will return the kingdom of the elects to the Father; the kingdom, which has been conquered by Jesus with his blood, has been made prosperous and worthy of the Father.

The soul, who in her private devotion, would like to cultivate this relationship with Jesus King, will get closer to the heart of Jesus, considering, honoring and calling him her King.

We are now in the presence of Jesus in his supreme function as head of mankind, founder of the Holy Church. He is the type of the eternal priesthood. In this dignity and function are contained and worthily crowned all other dignities and functions; while all other dignities and functions are mostly related to men, this one

leads directly to the divinity, to the Trinity in its principle, the Father!

The priesthood of Jesus expresses better than anything else the dignity and function of Jesus as the only mediator between the Father and the souls. The priesthood is the essence of divine mediation in its specific and highest acts of sacrifice and communion. The priesthood is sacrifice to God, one of the two ends to be connected, and communion to man, the other end.

We are saying that Jesus as priest and victim represents the whole world, both socially and individually; more directly and more properly he is priest and victim for the collective community. As priest and victim, more so than in any other of his dignities or functions, he elevates us to the Father. It couldn't be otherwise, because regardless of the way we look at him, or the light in which we consider him, he is always the Son. Consequently by nature he is always the one who reveals the Father to the souls, and leads the souls to the Father.

Everything in Jesus is equal to the Father, because he is one God with the Father! But everything in him is for the Father, because he is God the Son.

We see all the attributes of the divinity as being dependent, emanating and rooted in the fact that God is the only independent, uncreated, self sufficient being: *I am who I am*. Likewise we see all the attributes, functions, dignities and glory of Jesus deriving and rooted in his being *God the Son*.

He is Son of God by essence, both in the divine and human nature. The Son of God is the Son of Man. *Puer natus est nobis, Filius datus est nobis*. Only in his *being the Son*, Jesus is most distinctly and most clearly himself. As Son, Jesus is the object of our particu-

lar relationship. To Jesus, as the Son, are directed all our religious acts so that he may be for us what he is for the Father, and for Mother-Mary, and we may be for him a living and personal image of the Father, and of Mother Mary. It is always true that *A Son has been born for us, a child has been given to us*. All this is true especially in the Eucharist, the God with us, the God for us, our Jesus Christ!

Jesus is certainly our savior and teacher, our king, judge and priest, our all; but above all and in everything he is the Son of God.

Our relationship with Jesus is not complete, is not perfect if we do not go beyond our being redeemed, disciples, subjects, ministers, friends and brothers, until we become his “mother”!

Oh! How many Christmas nights have gone by! How many times the mystery of the incarnation has been renewed and taken place in our little world and under our own eyes! Oh! How many times as priests we have given a new being or presence to Jesus in the Eucharist and in the souls, without forming in us, without having the heart and the life of the mother pounding within us!

We have seen him, we have contemplated and glorified him in his dignity and function of teacher and king, judge, savior and priest, but we did not love him as being totally, exclusively, personally ours.

He has been shining before us, in the sky of our faith, as the Son of God, God with the Father in the union of the Holy Spirit, but he is not yet for us the Son of Man, of that humanity that we share, of that man that is each one of us!

Before the manger and the cross our being has remained mute; his glories and triumphs have filled us with joy only at the sur-

face, his suffering and his joys have only brushed us, they did not cause in us those profound repercussions of a mother's unlimited love.

On our own we could have taken the initiative, the idea to understand him. Oh! How legitimate is the passage from us to God and especially from us to God the Son! Because we are not just any effect of the First Cause the (and it is always not only proper, but it is a must to go from the effect to the cause), we are his personal, living image. The personal, living image enables us to know and understand the one who is represented by the image, much more so than the effect can enable us to know the cause.

We come into being as sons and daughters, not as fathers and mothers, nor as spouses, but uniquely, exclusively as children. Essentially, we are as he was in his human nature. Even as adults when we develop other relationships, in the depth of our being we are always "sons".

We need a mother; we want to find a mother in our superiors, in our sisters, in our friends; we come to expect some kind of motherly love also from those who depend upon us or from us. We want some kind of mother, some motherly qualities in the servants, disciples and dependents. Everywhere and at all times we want to be treated with motherly care and love.

More than each and every one of the children of men, Jesus is the Son of Man, because even in his divine nature he is the Son, the Son of God!

It is not enough that Jesus be in himself the Son both in the divine and human nature, to give us the right to feel authorized to cultivate toward him this relationship of spiritual motherhood. He must somehow consider himself, in some supernatural reality, our Son. Otherwise our internal religious acts corresponding to

that relationship and status could not be natural and spontaneous.

We are all born only as children. Later on one may become father or mother, when we voluntarily embrace another relationship, thus originating that relationship.

By nature we are inclined or made capable of becoming father or mother; but this is not a necessity of nature for the individual. Becoming father or mother remains a free election on the part of the individual. The same happens in the supernatural world.

We are all pre-disposed and empowered to become mother of the one who is the Son of all mankind, and who wants to be the child of every soul to whom, by grace, is given a share in divine nature; he wants to be the Son of every soul, who is the image and likeness of his Father.

We ought to freely and willingly want to initiate and cultivate that relationship with Jesus, which is the image and likeness of the relationship that he has with God the Father and the Virgin Mother. In order for this relationship to be real, something must happen through which we give a new existence to Jesus, so that he, who is the Son of God and the Son of Man, begins to be our Son.

In the great sphere, in the immense skies of God's grace, we are allowed to call ourselves and really be sons of God. (We are children of God, especially in relation to the Father). We are also granted the privilege of being called mothers of God the Son from the very mouth of Jesus; if Jesus calls us his mother, somehow, in a spiritual reality, we must be able to be such. *Whoever does the will of my Father, this is my mother*, proclaims Jesus! He makes such a proclamation comparing it or contrasting it to the very divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary.

Your mother is here, looking for you! My Mother? He says, certainly not ignoring nor denying his beloved Virgin Mother! My Mother? Who is my Mother? Who can exercise this function of mother toward me? Certainly the one who has exercised this function of Mother, giving me life! First and foremost the Virgin Mother, and then, behold, a new spiritual reality: *He who does the will of my Father is my mother.*

He establishes the following progression: he who does the will of my Father is friend, brother and mother! He who does the will of my Father, means he who unites himself with the Father.

He who is at the first stage of union with my Father is my friend; he who unites himself at a more advanced stage is my brother; he who unites himself perfectly (as far as it is possible on earth) with my Father becomes my mother.

It is easily understood that through grace we become friends of Jesus, since grace is inseparable from charity and charity is essentially a relationship of friendship. It is likewise well understood that through grace we become brothers of Jesus. After all grace is for the soul participation in the divine nature that the Father gives to the Son through generation. Thus by grace we are brothers of the one who is by nature Son of God the Father.

But, how can one become his mother?

To unite ourselves perfectly to the Father means to be united to him in his status and nature of Father to the Son, and through grace being made capable of somehow giving a new existence to the Son.

Labor est ante me, donec intrem in sanctuarium Dei - How difficult it is for me, until I enter in the sanctuary of God (Ps 73 17). I am facing

a great difficulty. This difficulty will be solved for me once I enter into the sanctuary of God.

Before the tabernacle, before the Eucharist, are solved all the theoretical and practical difficulties for the soul who truly enters into sanctuary, for the soul who truly gets into the tabernacle, in Jesus himself! Jesus, and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, is always the supreme revelation of the Lord God Trinity.

In the Eucharist, man is elevated to the priesthood and gives a new existence to Jesus, the sacramental presence!

The priest is not simply the minister of the kingdom of God. He is not only the mediator between heaven and earth. He is much more, much more than the angels, much more than St. Joseph, the Vice Roy. He is very close to the Virgin Mary and to the eternal Father, precisely in their relationship of fatherhood and motherhood.

We are not sure; we are unable to determine whether this giving a new, sacramental existence to Jesus comes closer to the act of creating or to the act of generating. It is a fact that through consecration, the church, the Christian people, those who participate in the divine sacrifice, but most of all the celebrant can somehow and with truthfulness say to Jesus with the Father and with the Virgin Mary: *Filius meus est tu, ego hodie genui te. Filius meus es tu! You are my son, today I fathered you* (Heb 1 5).

He can say to his consecrated host: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te*. With my word of sacramental consecration, like the eternal word of the intellectual generation, in the divinity of God the Father, *Today, I have fathered you*.

How important it is for all the faithful to cultivate their participation in the priesthood of Jesus, which we all receive in baptism,

and that special, direct union to his sacrifice in order to have a greater part and exercise this supreme, most sweet relationship with the divine Son, Jesus Christ!

Behold the *Son who has been born to us, the son that has been given to us!* Behold Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

How wonderful it is to see how the altar recalls Bethlehem, the house of bread, and the tabernacle recalls the manger all the time (even the house of God, as kept in some places where there is little faith, may evoke the image of the stable and the night!).

How rightly the preface of the Eucharist is the same as the one for Christmas! Behold our child! He needs everything; he is entrusted to us for all his needs! God the Father and the Virgin Mary have entrusted him to us completely. We cannot leave him alone or treat him badly!

Wherever the altar is not surrounded by motherly hearts, Jesus is simply abandoned, left alone, a little victim.

Only the Mother, and the pious women, who are a reflection of the mother, and that young, affectionate disciple, John, who loves Jesus like his mother, is at the foot of the cross! The same happens around the altar.

Those who take care of so many things concerning the liturgy and the house of the Lord will obtain many supernatural effects.

Only the heart, which is simultaneously virgin and mother (and through the grace of the Holy Spirit even a poor sinner can become such) can be passionately in love and do all that Jesus personally needs, in order to cover him with infinite sweetness, lavish upon him all tenderness of love, and surround him with an eternal court of glory, a family of loving hearts, and bring to

him endless scores of souls who dedicate themselves to perpetual adoration, to daily communion with a totally eucharistic spiritual program.

All of the foregoing must occur so that every fervent faithful, every chosen of the Lord may ever more enter into that motherly relationship, exercise that motherly function, even outside of the priesthood.

For even though you might have ten thousand slaves to look after you in Christ, you still have no more than one father, and it was I who fathered you in Christ Jesus by the gospel (1 Co 4 15). But wow! Did not Jesus say: *Do not call anyone your Father?* The imperative and the prohibition of the Lord are still valid, because the Father is only one; but the ones who unite themselves to the Father become one Father with him toward the souls. Does the same happen toward Jesus? St. Paul seems to say: *Through the Gospel, I preached to you, I have generated you; I have generated you to supernatural life, I have given you a new existence that is why I am your Father.*

In the supernatural life the soul acquires a new existence in God; or is it God, and in our case, God-Jesus, who acquires a new existence in the soul? In reality, they are both true!

Reflecting more and more on this, we can understand that in the supernatural world; Christ lives in us more than we live in him; the same Apostle Paul says it: *Vivo iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus - I am alive, yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me (Ga 2 20).*

If I can say to the souls I have evangelized: *Per evangelium ego vos genui - I fathered you by the gospel (1 Co 4 15)*, much more I can say to Jesus: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te - you are my son, today I have fathered you (in this or that soul),*

To the voice that comes from one among the crowd and that proclaims: *Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you* (Lk 11 27), Jesus answers: *More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it* (Lk 11:28). By listening to him we welcome him as a Son, and caring for him we nurture him as a Son in a function and a reality like that of the Virgin Mother.

Even more blessed are those, who after having welcomed me, become for him father and mother in the hearts of people, through that form of generation, that is the preaching (as St. Bede explains so well in his homily on this passage), Jesus wants to live in each and every soul! This happens every time that someone accepting the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tries to give to Jesus this new, individual existence, this new life in a soul. Oh! What a most glorious, most blessed opportunity is offered by grace to the souls in the their particular relationship with the Lord!

So, we can never separate the banquet of the Eucharist from the banquet of the Word. The same Jesus is present in both of them, in differing form, but the same Word of God.

Both in the banquet of the Eucharist and of the Word of God we can receive him and at the same time communicate him to others; again, the same Word in different forms.

Not only the most perfect souls, the most mature in the spiritual order, but each and every soul can long for, aim at establishing this relationship, exercising this function of mother toward Jesus; everyone can be the servant who - when the banquet is ready - will go time and again, to insist and pressure all he finds to come to the divine Eucharist. We can always find people that know less than we do about the faith; we can always find people who practice God's love a little less than we do; for them all we may be catechists, evangelists, missionaries of the word, everyone, in every occasion, in every situation.

With the apostolate of Eucharistic Communion and of the Word of God, we reach our highest relationship with the Word of the Father, the Son of God and the Son of man. We achieve the most perfect union with Mother-Mary and with God the Father. This is what we hope to achieve in the Holy Spirit.

Father is the one who is always giving; the one who gives always with divine fullness, with divine sweetness, because he is essentially God the Father. The Son of God is the one who receives, and receives always with divine fullness, with divine sweetness, because he is always and essentially God the Son, both in the divine and human nature.

Giving and receiving are equally divine within the Trinity.

God wants always, to graciously receive, so that we may always have something to give to God the Son. God the Father is always giving us his life. God the Holy Spirit is essentially the Gift for us. He is the gift to his creature, the gift of God to God in his creature!

In the Eucharist, more than anywhere else Jesus presents himself to us as being in need of everything; to him we can and must always offer all that we possess outside of Holy Communion, and all of ourselves in Holy Communion. As Jesus is an eternal oblation to the Father, we want to be an eternal oblation to the Son.

He is our eternal oblation to the Father in order to be the powerful intercessor for all mankind's needs, perfection and blessedness. We are an eternal oblation to Jesus, in order to be with him an eternal, powerful glorification of the Trinity.

The mother is the only one who offers herself with true fullness and sweetness, as the image of the fullness and sweetness of God the Father! In this ongoing oblation, he wants us to be his

mother. We want it too, and we hope to achieve it in the Holy Spirit.

We are given the privilege of giving a new existence of Jesus both in the Eucharist and in our neighbor. Likewise Jesus wants always to receive from us in our neighbor love and tenderness with the same fullness and sweetness that a mother has for her child.

Sublime, supernatural Christian ideal! To receive always from God! To give always to our neighbor!

To God the Son in his humanity, and especially in the Eucharist and in our neighbor, his mystical body, is due all glory, love, honor and service. In this vein we understand Jesus' words: *In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me* (Mt 25 41).

The Holy Spirit, with his gift of piety, implants within us a divine tenderness of motherly love in our relationship with God and with our neighbor. In this same Spirit we want to be able to relate, to love and to serve Jesus in our neighbor. Amen.

Part III

The Holy Spirit and the Eucharist

This lecture consists of two parts. In the First part Fr. Justin contemplates the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Trinity, placing special emphasis on the human event of the Incarnate Word flowing in the Eucharist. The second part presents the Holy Spirit working with man, perpetual worshipper and daily communicant, to bring him to divine union with God-Trinity.

The eucharistic pneumatology of Fr. Justin perfectly reflects the biblical datum and the theological reason that see in the third divine person "The Spirit of truth of the Father who generates the Word that reveals the Father in the very act that proceeds from the Father". Fr. Justin makes his own Father Faber's definition of the Holy Spirit: "The limitless limit of unlimited freedom". The divine life that springs from the Father, through the Son, does not end in the Holy Spirit but finds in him the outlet to reach all of creation, especially "the intelligent creatures, Angels and men who come together with the divine persons and relations".

The life-giving action of the divine Spirit is manifested in creation "with the Trinity's smile of love to the lower creatures, and with the breath of love of the Trinity to the higher creatures". Hovering "in the beauty of the universe and in the universe of beauty", the Holy Spirit seems to disclose the supreme flower, Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, the final cause of all things.

The Holy Spirit is present in all the states and mysteries of the life of Jesus, from birth to hidden life, from public life to the painful experience of Calvary, from Tabor to ascension. Upon the root of Jesse, Fr. Justin glimpses the flower of Jesus-Host.

"In the bud that emerges from the root of Jesse, we may be allowed to foresee Jesus in that flower as Jesus-Host, because the Eucharist is like the supreme flower of the Lord's life, and for us, over the centuries of time, Jesus is especially Jesus-Host".

On this flower and supreme fruit resides the Holy Spirit in its fullness: In the desert, Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit engages the fight against Satan. He then presents himself to the Jordan for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire,

symbolically expressed by Fr. Justin "In the flood of hosts, in the divine union of the Lord with the whole world". Proclaiming his messianicity in the Synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus reveals the presence of the Holy Spirit who consecrates him to inaugurate the year of mercy from the Father, healing the wounds of broken hearts and freeing man from all forms of slavery.

Man experiences all the effects of the messianic era in the Eucharist, from where they arrive to the souls. In the struggle against the world and the abuse of freedom by man, God, lover of life does not destroy man but sends the Son who uses the strategies of the heart to ensure us the love of the Father on the altar, excellent symbol of Calvary and his suffering and resurrected humanity. The Holy Spirit works with all his power not letting Jesus die on the cross alone: "Tabor rises above Calvary, joy blooms from suffering, and on the tree of the cross hangs this flower of the host matured by the warmth of the Spirit".

The same divine power that sustained the humanity of Jesus is assured to the priest and to the souls "who come to receive the divine communion, and offer themselves to the Lord with the same spirit of love with which Jesus has sacrificed himself". The supreme joy that Jesus feels on Mount Tabor is not just "a parenthesis of light among so many shadows or a moment of relief among so many travails: it is like the luminous door that gives rise to new panoramas... It is like the source of a great river of celestial joy flowing from the throne of divinity". It represents Jesus "as a new state, the normal condition in which all the chosen souls must be".

Mount Tabor is the status symbol, the ideal place where the soul cultivates her personal relationship "in the higher degrees of prayer, of the most intimate relationship with the Trinity". The luminous cloud that covers the Father and the Son also becomes a symbol of the Holy Spirit, "the sensitive sign of their sigh of love, breath of love, embrace of love".

The vocation of every man is to enter that cloud. That cloud envelops Mary, "the first ciborium and monstrance of Jesus". In that cloud shines a host in which Jesus lives. Mount Sinai and mount Tabor are the two symbols-icons that recall the altar and the Eucharist. The physical body of Jesus and the mystical body, the Church, of which Mary is the perfect image, are both effects of the Spirit that vivifies man. In the Eucharist, as in a coffer, the Holy Spirit has enclosed all his gifts and fruits.

What is man's response to this flood of Trinitarian, ecclesial, Marian and eucharistic love brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit? There is only one answer: To live the life of the Spirit, to feel his breath, to support his sanctifying action concretized in many inspirations. "Inspirations are like so many particular irradiations of the general law and of love and obedience to the Lord, with which he himself wants to take over our life". These intelligent instruments of the divine will

that man must use with docility, fidelity and generosity, represent "the religious act" most corresponding to one's own sanctification.

In the final part of the lecture, we see "The Holy Spirit for what he is and does" for the soul: "He generates and forms that mystical nuptial relationship between God-Trinity and the soul, for which the soul becomes for the Lord the soul-spouse and for souls she becomes the soul-mother. The most important mission that the Holy Spirit accomplishes, through Mary, is "to form Jesus in every Christian, and to bring every Christian to Jesus as a perpetual worshipper and daily communicant.

In this way, inhabited by the Spirit of truth, the world truly becomes a flood of saints and holy works.

In the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the only divine person from whom no other person proceeds. From the Father proceeds the Son; from the Father and the Son, proceeds the Holy Spirit.

To use the expression of Fr. Faber, the Holy Spirit is the unlimited boundary of the unlimited Trinity. From all eternity, he is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of love of the Father who generates his Word. From all eternity, he is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of the Word who reveals the Father in the very act of his proceeding forth from the Father.

Even though everything is eternal and co-eternal in God, it remains true that only the Father and the Son are the principle of another person in the divinity.

Divine life finds in the Holy Spirit not the seal that shuts it up or ends it, but the outpouring, the opening that allows the free flow of this divine life in and through all intelligent creatures, both human and angelic, because God, in his infinite love has wanted them to be sharers in the divine nature, associates in the divine works and united to the divine persons.

This appears clearly from the very beginning of creation; when everything was in darkness and chaos; when neither light nor the sons of light (the angels), neither the earth nor the temporary inhabitants of the earth (men) had come into existence. Scripture says: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind sweeping over the waters" (Gn1 12).

The Spirit of the Lord was floating freely as a dove sitting on its eggs in order to open up from the created elements the whole world of beauty and the beauty of the whole universe, since all this flow of life was going to be like a smile of love of the Trinity over the inferior creature; a breath of love of the Trinity over the superior creatures; all was going to be work of the Trinity in the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit!

It is true that the whole world, all creation, being a work "ad extra" is equally common to all three divine persons of the Trinity. It is also true, however, that even though they are one God, and act as one God, they are ever three distinct persons, and this distinction in their being is always echoed in their work.

In the work of creation we see and feel a hint of the omnipotence of the Father, who through the wisdom of his Word, in the bounty and love of his Spirit calls all things into being, out of nothingness. Everything comes from the Father, through the Word, in the Holy Spirit!

In that creation, even though still formless, dark and chaotic, there was the germ, the seed of all mankind, which one day would be dignified and elevated by the incarnation of the Word.

We can see creation, as in the vision of the knowledge of the Lord, because the holy humanity to be taken up by the Word was present in the mind of the creator from all eternity, as the ultimate

cause of all things, as the exemplary cause of all spirits, as cause of merit for all the elect.

In that formless and chaotic void we can see as the first veil, and thus the first epiphany, the first Eucharist of Jesus.

And so, we have the Father, high above; below we have a sign of Jesus and in the middle the Holy Spirit, floating between one and the other, as we see later in each and every one of its manifestations, because he is the Spirit of love of the Father and of the Son.

In that beauty of the universe, and in that universe of beauty over which hovers the Spirit displaying it in front of us, we seem to be able to see the supreme flower of the beauty of the universe, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, the Word made flesh through the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Oh! How rightly we sing in the liturgy of the solemn blessing at the baptismal font: *“Deus cuius Spiritus super aquas, inter ipsa mundi primordia ferebatur, ut iam tunc virtutem sanctificationis, aquarum natura conciperet... ut tuae maiestatis imperio sumat unigeniti tui gratiam de Spiritu Sancto - O God, whose Spirit from the beginning of creation breathed over the waters, so that from the beginning water might have the virtue of sanctification... so that water through an act of your majesty could receive the grace of your only begotten Son, from the Holy Spirit”*.

When, in the fullness of time, the first divine mission takes place in creation, and the second person of the Trinity, by the will of the Father, assumes his human existence, ad extra of the divinity, the Holy Spirit is revealed as the only worker of this masterpiece of humanity. The Holy Spirit cannot be called Father only because the humanity of Jesus is of a different nature.

From the beginning the Holy Spirit is continuously the only in-

spirator of every move of Jesus, as a perpetual confirmation of his presence, as an ongoing fulfillment of his work in the incarnation.

Let us take note of it. At the beginning of every new stage in the life of Jesus, whenever he introduces us to a new mystery of his life, there is a revelation of the presence of the Holy Spirit; there is a confirmation of the revelation of the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is no surprise, if we consider that everything in Jesus is work of goodness and love, everything is an act and status of goodness and love, and everything is a communication of goodness and love. All this divine mystery of goodness and love finds in the Spirit of the divinity, in the Holy Spirit, its reason for being. Everything that is goodness and love in the works of God is properly attributed to the Holy Spirit.

There is no greater praise for holy men than to be known as being filled with the Holy Spirit, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. So, we read of Joseph in the Old Testament: "Where can we ever find another man so filled with the Spirit of God?" Of the prophet Daniel it is said: *I heard of you that the Holy Spirit of God is upon you* and so on.

It was not only convenient but necessary that the greatest possible relationship with the Holy Spirit, the moving force and inspiration of the whole life, the fullness of his presence and action should be verified in the Man-God-Jesus. This is so, not only because he was the most holy of the saints, the most elect of all the elect, but because his divine humanity, end-product of the divine mission, was in a very special way the direct work of the Holy Spirit, who formed that most sacred body, who created that most sacred soul. The one who is principle of being is also principle of action, and of all subsequent development of being and action.

What we see in the history of intelligent human beings, who served as instruments of God in some of his works, must be also true - and at a higher level - of the Holy Spirit!

These creatures of the Lord, who served for the realization of some of his projects, are not abandoned after they complete their missions, as may happen with things that we discard after we have used them, because they are disposable. Rather, they are consecrated forever to that divine mission, to fulfill it whenever people may need it again. This consecration is like a reward, a form of gratitude from the Lord to his creature. Wisdom says he treats the souls with reverence. These creatures acquire experience and expertise in the execution of the divine mandates.

We see this in the Virgin Mary, in St. Joseph, in the Precursor, in the Apostles, when it is a question of realizing in the souls those same supernatural effects that were the object of their mission on earth.

Jesus as God is eternally begotten by the Father. Likewise, we can say that Jesus as man is the work of the Holy Spirit, in the sense that everything in Jesus, both his interior and exterior life, is full of the Holy Spirit, takes place in the Holy Spirit. Everything in Jesus, the Son of God, proceeds from the Father and is simultaneously directed to the Father, in the one person of the Incarnate Word.

We find the revelation of the work of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Incarnation in the mystery of the Annunciation, and at the end of his private life when he begins his public life with the most humbling profession of the need for penance in the Baptism at the Jordan.

At the Jordan, in the presence of John the Baptist, over Jesus as

he prays coming out of the water, the skies are opened, the veils of his humiliation and of his emptying are lifted, the voice of the Father is heard, and the Holy Spirit is seen visibly coming down and resting on Jesus' head.

The Holy Spirit of truth led Jesus to that supreme humiliation of professing himself a sinner and in need of penance, because he had taken upon himself the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit of love led him there, because Jesus wanted to merit with his act and teach us with his example that all souls need some humiliation and penance, so that they may be able to elevate themselves to the Lord.

John the Baptist, who preached a baptism of repentance, was the precursor of Jesus. While announcing the baptism of repentance, he became a prophet of sacramental baptism saying: *He will baptize you by fire and the Holy Spirit.* Jesus baptizes in the fire of the Holy Spirit, the most internal fire, because there is nothing more intimate than the Holy Spirit, and yet, he is the most purifying fire, because there is nothing purer than the Holy Spirit.

Jesus will give this baptism of fire and of the Holy Spirit!

The sacramental baptism, door to the Catholic Church, is a gift of the Holy Spirit who later will give himself in its fullness to the believers in the sacrament of Confirmation. In a certain sense baptism is also an Eucharistic gift.

Baptism of fire and of Holy Spirit for the whole world is the abundance and availability of consecrated hosts; baptism of fire and of Holy Spirit is the divine communion with the Body and Blood of the Lord.

In Communion, more than Jesus coming to bury himself in us,

we dive and immerse ourselves in him, and consequently in his fire and in his Spirit.

The exciting and glorious scene at the Jordan comes to a close, because Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit to the desert to be tempted by the enemy: *ut tentaretur a diabolo - to be tempted by the devil* (Mt 4 1). They were facing each other for forty days, and yet Jesus did not engage the devil in battle. It was the Holy Spirit who was taking the initiative as the Spirit was leading Jesus. On the example of Jesus - thanks to his merits - the Spirit leads us too into the desert to be tempted, but he does not want us to place ourselves in the state of temptation, he does not want to take the initiative in engaging the enemy, he does not want us to provoke the enemy.

It is good, great to be determined and to proclaim our willingness to fight the devil, and to be always ready to fight the enemy, everywhere, both in ourselves and in others. We should have this disposition to fight against the devil with true hatred, because he is the real enemy of our souls. We should not start, however, any provocation, because this would place us in a disadvantageous position; such an initiative may not be immune of faults since it implies a certain presumption on our part.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, for forty days being put to the test by the devil (Lk 4 1). Thus the gospel of St. Luke reveals the role of the Holy Spirit in this period of Jesus' life.

One day, talking about the liberation of those who were possessed by evil spirits, Jesus said: *I expel demons by the power of the Spirit of God*. We can likewise think that with the same Spirit who led him into the desert, throughout those forty days of temptations, Jesus fought and defeated the spirit of Satan. This was undoubtedly a short period in the life of Jesus considering its duration, but it was as intense as the rest of Jesus' life.

Ordinarily Jesus' life is known and honored in its various parts, that is, the private life, the public life, the sorrowful life, the glorious life and all of them together are contained and honored in the Eucharist.

The part of Jesus' life, which may be called the penitent and militant life, as well as the hermitic life may pass unnoticed. In this little noticed part of Jesus' life there seems to dominate and stand out more than in the others, the Lord's purpose of giving us a good example. Our formation seems to be the main reason of this part of Jesus' life!

This part of Jesus' life is also present in the Eucharist. There, Jesus continues his solitary life in the desert. He has remained in the world primarily in order to fight and expel from it the infernal enemy. Certainly the main reason why he comes to the souls is to keep them immune from the returns and from the influence of the enemy.

Jesus makes the point to assure us that he is at work in us so that we too may be filled with the Holy Spirit. He wants his faithful people to be confirmed by the grace and presence of the Holy Spirit, before they start the big spiritual fight against evil, and normally even before they start to nourish themselves with the bread of life, the bread of spiritual strength, the Eucharist.

For the sake of the souls, Jesus leaves the desert and the immediate fight against the spirit of evil. He comes out to the souls that in more than one way may be considered as a desert even more scary and distressing than the desert of temptations. In the souls, goes on the most tremendous fight against the spirit of evil, which becomes an ally of the spirit of the world. Both the spirit of evil and the spirit of the world try to take over the human spirit.

The Spirit of the Lord is always victorious over the Spirit of evil. The Lord will be equally victorious over the spirit of the world, if

the human spirit elevated and strengthened by freedom, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, places no obstacles before the Lord. On account of his freedom, the human spirit is image and supreme likeness of the Spirit of God; yet it is only by abusing his freedom that man can resist God's will.

In the fight against the devil, God did not want to directly and personally engage him, as St. Leo so beautifully stated: *The war engaged for our liberation is fought with great and wonderful sense of equity; the all powerful Lord did not come to fight against that most cruel enemy in the majesty and splendor of his divine nature, but in the humility of our human nature.* The Lord follows this system on account of his spirit of love. The Lord never personally fights against his creature, regardless of how rebellious and hostile it may be! In order to fight against his creature, the Lord should hate it, since it is impossible to really fight against somebody without hating him.

The Lord does not, and cannot hate anything that he has created! If he hated them, he could not want them and consequently they would be annihilated. Everything that exists is created and sustained by his will!

For the Lord it is not possible to hate someone or something without annihilating it, because this would be equal to wishing them something evil. God, who is solely and purely goodness in his being and operations, cannot desire or want anything evil for his creatures.

Yes, God hates with infinite hatred sin, which is evil in its essence. When the Lord, however, sees sin in his creatures, and must fight and annihilate it in them, he entrusts this task to other faithful, chosen creatures that are filled with the zeal of love.

So it happened in heaven, when the rebellious angels had to be thrown out; so it happened on earth, from the moment the sad

tyranny of sin started in the earthly paradise, from which Adam and Eve had to be expelled.

When a divine person wanted to personally come down to destroy the tyranny of Satan, to fight against sin, he did it in his human nature. He did it as only the loving Spirit of God could do it. He planned and realized it by taking upon himself the burden of all the sins of the world and their consequences. In his blood and through his death he triumphed over the devil and over sin.

To reach the human spirit, enslaved by sin and accustomed to abuse the gift of freedom, the Lord follows the way of the heart. He approaches and gets close to the human spirit with his heart; thus he reveals to us the wisdom and piety of the Holy Spirit, who leads him into this new field, with this new divine strategy.

He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all the eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them: 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening'. And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips (Lk 4 16-22).*

This is his program, the entire program that he will carry out throughout his public life:

- To announce the good news.
- To heal the wounded of heart.
- To give sight and light to the blind.

To free the captives.
To lift up those who were oppressed.

All this is presented as the effect of the Holy Spirit, as the consequence of the anointing and consecration of the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus, the third person of the Trinity reveals himself first and foremost as the "Consoler".

Jesus did not come to teach us a doctrinal system, to establish a school or a kingdom. He came to give divine life and give it ever more abundantly from the Father, in the Holy Spirit.

There is no life without the Spirit.
It is necessary to heal the wounded heart.
A wounded heart is a dead heart.
A higher vision is needed for supernatural life.
A higher freedom is needed for this superior life.
All this is donated by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit heals the wounds of the heart with interior consolation. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the vision of the mystery of God. No one knows what is in us but our spirit; nobody knows what is in God but the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit that makes us free from all material things and from the dark, inferior spirit of evil, of the world, of the flesh and of the blood.

As a practical matter, we see, feel and experience all these effects in the Eucharist; when we feel Jesus-Eucharist consoling the pains of our heart; when through the veil of the consecrated host we will enjoy a wider and higher vision of the perfections and favors of the Lord; when with the strength of the bread of life we will be able to break our chains and enjoy the freedom of the children of God; when we will experience that spiritual sweetness

which springs forth from the Eucharist, as its natural fountain. Then and only then, will we be able to think of God the Consoler, who - in the fullness of his gifts, fruit and beatitudes - resides in Jesus and from Jesus communicates himself to the souls.

Isaiah said: A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse; a new shoot will grow from its roots. On him will rest the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of wisdom and insight, the spirit of counsel and power, the spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh. His judgment will not be by appearance, his verdict will not be given on hearsay. He will judge the weak with integrity and give fair sentence for the humblest in the land (Is 1 1-4).

In that new shoot, which is a new flower, we see Jesus and Jesus-Host! Since the Eucharist is a new shoot, the most beautiful flower of the life of Jesus, and for us throughout the centuries and throughout history, more than anything else Jesus is Jesus-Eucharist.

Upon this most precious flower, on this supreme fruit resides the Holy Spirit in all his fullness. Through this flower of supreme beauty of the divine truth, through this fruit of supreme sweetness of divine love, he manifests his presence in the world. He wants to fill the world with consecrated hosts in order to fill it with his own presence and establish it in peace and justice for the happiness of the souls and for the glory of the Father.

*Here is my servant whom I uphold.
My chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have sent my spirit upon him.
He will bring fair judgment to the nations.
He does not cry out or raise his voice.
His voice is not heard in the street.
He does not break the crushed reed,
or snuff the faltering wick.*

*Faithfully he presents fair judgment.
He will not grow faint; he will not be crushed
until he has established fair judgment on earth (Is 42 1-4).*

The Holy Spirit will establish justice with his sweetness of love, with his work of consolation of love.

Justice is holiness. Holiness consists in love and only love generates more love. Only the Spirit-Love, who is the Holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son infuses this love in the hearts, spreads this love throughout the world, through Jesus Christ, and Jesus-Eucharist.

The same Jesus who - after his ascension - will entrust to his disciples and apostles the mission of universal sanctification, through the consolation of human suffering in all its countless forms, now wants to give in person a taste of himself to all the places he intended to visit.

He entrusts to them the mission of bringing peace, healing the sick, announcing the good news of the kingdom of heaven. When they return from their first mission the disciples are filled with joy. *The seventy-two came back rejoicing. Lord, they said even the devils submit to us when we use your name. He said to them: I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Look I gave you power to tread down serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy. Nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven (Lk 10 17- 20).*

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit seeing the first fruits of the priestly triumphs in the ministry of his disciples. *Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit he said: I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children (L 10 21).* It was the exultance of joy, which is a fruit

of the Holy Spirit and which Jesus was manifesting to those who were present in order to attract them to him, and then take with him to the Father, in that same Spirit of love of the Father and of the Son.

In addition to the joy of the victories over the devil, of the healing of the sick, and of the consolation of the heart, there is another joy much higher, more intimate, more supernatural; compared to this one, any other joy is like an insignificant spark, a tiny little sign, something that should serve only as preparation for real joy. It is the joy of the face-to-face vision of the divine beauty, the direct enjoyment of the divine sweetness! The joy of being transfigured into him!

The transfiguration of the Lord should not be considered simply as a spark of light in so much darkness, and as a moment of joy in the midst of so many trials. It must be considered as the bright door that gives access to the vision of new worlds, new spheres of superior life; as the spring of a huge river of celestial joy, as the one that springs forth from the throne of God.

The transfiguration represents both for Jesus and also for the souls, not an exception, but a new state, which is the normal condition of the elect at the highest levels.

The fact that Jesus' face became brighter than the sun and his clothes whiter than snow, did not add anything to his human nature. It was the removal of the veil, which had kept hidden the splendor of his beauty; it was an admission of his chosen, beloved disciples to the knowledge and enjoyment of his intimacy, of what he really was and is for the disciples.

Should we think and admit that Jesus did all this that he conceded them this vision only to prepare them to face the scandal of the cross? In this case all other apostles should have been invited

to Mount Tabor, all the other apostles should have been admitted to that vision, so that no one could falter or fall before the scandal of the cross. In reality, only three were invited and admitted.

Or, at least, the Lord should have allowed those three, in their enthusiasm, to talk about it to other apostles and disciples. Instead they are peremptorily forbidden to talk to anyone about the transfiguration before the scandal of the cross, before the resurrection.

We can safely establish the fact that the invitation to ascend Mount Tabor, is not meant to be - at least directly - a preparation to ascend Mount Calvary.

Mount Tabor is a mystery onto itself; it is the revelation of another state of Jesus and of the souls; it contains the revelation of what the Lord is for his loved ones, for his elect. It contains the revelation of what is in store for those chosen souls, who have definitely defeated sin, and have generously started the ascent of the holy mountain, with constant progress in the life of virtues, and have finally reached the highest peak.

It is the revelation of the condition of the soul in the higher level of prayer, in the most intimate relationships with the Blessed Trinity.

Certainly, the divine work of sanctification in ordinary souls, whose life is a continuous series of alternating deaths and resurrections, of ups and downs, of small correspondences and frequent abuses of God's grace, it is different in the most fervent souls, who always live according to reason enlightened by faith, according to the superior gifts of the Spirit of sanctification, as are the souls that ascend Mount Tabor!

These souls are not exceptions, they are exemplars, the first

fruit of what all mankind must be; they are the souls who are as God wants them to be.

They are the souls that ascend the holy mountain with constant efforts and violence, which are divinely rewarded by the Lord.

They reach a point where they live, under the dominion of grace, a life of total love for God, a relationship with the Blessed Trinity.

The efforts and the violence needed to overcome the attacks of the enemy, to keep oneself under control, produce the internal peace of the conquest, the joy of victory, and give beginning to a new life, which is a prelude of paradise while we are still in this world.

Then in the souls as in the life of our Lord, at the beginning of every new phase there is a revelation of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

Behold, a bright cloud surrounds Jesus and his beloved disciples, and within the cloud the Father's voice is heard. Usually people ignore the fact that the bright cloud is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, it is the sign of a very special presence and action of the Spirit.

It is not only the dove that hovers between the Father and the Son, but also the cloud that envelopes the Father and the Son, symbol and sign of the Holy Spirit, as if he were the sensible effect of their breath of love, of the embrace of love from which comes out the flame, which is still another symbol and sign of an even greater and more special presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

During the exodus, when the Lord gave his holy law, after

three days of solemn purifications at the foot of Mount Sinai: *Now at daybreak two days later, there were peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, dense cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, and, in the camp all people trembled* (Ex 19 16).

The whole Mount Sinai was in smoke, because the Lord had come down in the midst of fire; the smoke was going up as from a furnace; the mountain was frightening and the trumpet blasts kept getting louder and louder, and lasting longer and longer.

Moses entered the cloud and ascended to the summit of the mountain and remained there forty days and forty nights. In the Spirit of the Lord and from the Spirit of the Lord he received the holy law!

At the first consecration of the temple built by Solomon, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so much so, that the priests were unable to stay inside it and offer their priestly services, because the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. Solomon then said: *Dixit Dominus ut habitaret in nube - Yahweh has chosen to dwell in the thick cloud* (1Kg 8 12).

Oh! Tell the soul who is hungering and thirsting for the Lord what the cloud in which the Lord dwells really is!

For the soul who is hungering and thirsting for the Lord, it is not enough to look at the sky and implore: *Rorate, coeli, desuper et nubes pluant iustum; aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem - Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down saving justice, let the earth open up and blossom with salvation* (Is 45 8). Here the heavens represent God the Father, the clouds represent the Holy Spirit and the earth represents the Virgin Mary. Understanding this is not enough for the soul who is hungering and thirsting for the Lord. This soul wants to ascend into heaven, dwell in that cloud in which the Lord lives!

Could it be that the whole of creation is the cloud that veils, hides the Lord? Certainly the Lord is present in all his creation, but it is not there, where he wants to attract the soul to himself.

Is it the Holy Catholic faith, the Christian heroes, the saints of God this cloud that veils, hides and at the same time reveals the Lord? It is certainly so. But, Oh! How many people have faith and honor the saints and yet do not reach perfect divine union, they do not live in the Lord.

It is the cloud of which speaks the prophet Isaiah:

*Look! Yahweh, riding a swift cloud,
is coming to Egypt.
The false gods of Egypt totter before him
And Egypt's heart quails within her.*

It is the Virgin Mary who, filled with the Holy Spirit, becomes the Mother of Jesus, the first ciborium and monstrance of Jesus.

It is the cloud of the Spirit of prayer; it is the incense of adoration, of sacrifice and of reparation, the cloud in which the Lord lives.

In that cloud shines forth a Host!

It is the white bright cloud of the host that veils, hides and at the same time reveals and gives us the Lord as gift.

Divine holiness is the cloud in which the Lord lives, because his temple is holiness itself, that is the Holy Spirit himself.

The body is the temple of the soul. The soul is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the temple of the Father and of the Son.

In this temple the excess of light is such that no natural eye can stand it. At first it gives the feeling of a sacred fog; then the elect little by little gets used to it as grace increases; he is introduced to contemplation in a higher level of prayer and divine union, all through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

The altar and the Eucharist recall to our minds Mount Sinai and Mount Tabor.

The clear, marvelous revelation of the law of God is all summed up and contained in the two commandments of charity; the love of God for the soul, and the love of the soul for God finds their best expression, their most efficient exercise and their most tangible proof in the Eucharist.

As Jesus came to us only through the power of the Holy Spirit, so it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that we go to Jesus. His physical body and his mystical body are both the effect of the same Holy Spirit, present and working in Mary and in the Holy Church.

Ordinarily and for many good reasons we tend to see the altar as representing Calvary, because on it takes place the renewal and perpetuation of the sacrifice of the cross. And that is correct!

Calvary represents another major phase in the life of the Lord, the mystery and state of the sorrowful life of Jesus, and therefore in it must also be revealed the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit, as always.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews, speaking about the priesthood of the Old and New Testament, reminds us that *the Holy of Holies is entered only once a year, and then only by the high priest who takes in the blood to make an offering for his own and the people's fault of inadvertence. By this the Holy Spirit wants us to see that*

as long as the old tent stands, the way into the holy place is not opened up" (Heb 9 7-8). Now, Christ has come, as high priest of all blessings, which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, not made by human hands, that is, not of this created order, and he has entered the sanctuary once and for all (Heb 9 11-12).

That tabernacle, not made by man, was his sacred humanity, entirely work of the Holy Spirit in Mary. In addition to this, the consecration and oblation of Jesus-Victim, and the effusion of his most precious blood took place through the Holy Spirit. Since, the letter to the Hebrews continues: *the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer, sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement, may restore their bodily purity. How much more the blood of Christ, who offered himself blameless as he was, to God through the eternal Spirit, purifies our consciences so that we can worship the living God (Heb 9 13-14).*

If in every Holy Mass, in the Eucharist-sacrifice, we correctly see Calvary and the renewal and extension of that holocaust, we must also see in it, with the eyes of our faith and with the sense of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, this divine reality of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the consecration and oblation of Jesus through the eternal Holy Spirit; consecration and oblation in which Jesus offers himself unblemished to the Father!

This divine action of the Holy Spirit, who forms the humanity of the incarnate Word, is continued, revealed and affirmed in each and every phase, period and state of Jesus' life; it is likewise extended to the eucharistic life, to his sacramental state. We may deduce it from the fact that the Eucharist, being the summary of all the life and mysteries of Jesus, becomes also the summary of all work of the Holy Spirit, in the humanity of Jesus.

More directly, the action of the Holy Spirit is revealed in the ministry of the priest to whom it has been entrusted, and on

which depends the Eucharist, in its consecration, oblation and distribution.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders in its various levels is primarily for the Eucharist. As the minister to the altar going through the higher levels of the sacrament of Holy Orders, he needs to be invested and filled with the Holy Spirit. To the deacons, it is said: *Be Co-ministers and cooperators of the body and blood of the Lord. And then: Receive the Holy Spirit. Send, we beg you, Lord, the Holy Spirit upon them. Shower upon them the Spirit of your blessings.*

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, that is, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, was an absolute condition and an essential requirement demanded by the apostles for the ordination of the first deacon. They say to the members of the Church: *You brothers must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to which we can hand over this duty* (Act 6 3-4). The highest compliment paid to the first deacon, who remains forever an exemplar and inspiration for the sacred ministers, is the statement: *they elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.* To the deacons is entrusted only the ministry of charity, the banquet of the Word and the assistance to the priest in the celebration and distribution of the Eucharist. In order to be able to just get close to the Eucharist, the deacons need (and is required of them) the special presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Much more so for the priest; for the complete investiture and the perfect exercise of the divine, tremendous powers over the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist and in the souls who must be part of and form the mystical body of Jesus.

After the laying on of hands by the bishop and priests, the ordaining minister prays solemnly: *Shower over them the blessing of the Holy Spirit... renew in their inmost being the Spirit of Holiness;*

Come Creator Spirit ... May they arise filled with the Holy Spirit. During the solemn rite, while the Holy Spirit is being invoked, the new priest's hands are anointed and he is given the sacred power to celebrate the divine sacrifice.

At the conclusion of the sacred rite, once again the bishop says: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum- receive the Holy Spirit*, in order to confer on the new priest power to forgive sins, and thus once again make Christ present in the souls, who had died on account of their sins. All this is said and done in imitation and continuation of what Jesus himself did with the first apostles, the first priests. *As the Father sent me, so I send you (Jn 20 21).*

There must be certain identification between Jesus and his priests so that each one of them may be another Jesus. Consequently, the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit is needed.

The Holy Spirit, who formed the body of Jesus, will form, by coming upon the apostles and priests, the other Jesus who first must receive and then continue the mission of Jesus.

Behold, the Lord breathing upon his priests and pronouncing those divine consecrating words: *Receive the Holy Spirit*. And as if this were not enough, he wants them united in prayer with the blessed Mother in the cenacle, before starting the exercise of the priestly powers that had been already conferred upon them; before they receive the new, great, solemn mission of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, so that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit and transformed into Jesus.

Only after Pentecost, do the apostles start to consecrate and offer the body of Christ in the divine Eucharist, and to form his mystical body, the Church, with the preaching of the Word of God and the conversions that followed their prodigious preaching.

Through the priestly ministry clearly appear the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Eucharist as sacrifice and as sacrament, not any less than it was present and acting in the incarnation of Jesus and throughout the course of his life, and in the sacrifice of the passion and death.

Naturally we see Jesus not only as a victim, but also as the high priest. I would dare to say that more appropriately we see in Jesus the main principle of his priesthood, his highest priestly act: the sacrifice. We proclaim it in the liturgical Easter song: *Amor Sacerdos immolat*. The priest-love, the love that acts as priest offers the sacrifice!

And Love in divinity is the Holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son.

The Holy Spirit leads Jesus to Calvary, not in order to leave him dead on the cross, because his sacrifice aims always at the glorification of the divinity in the sanctification of souls, and consequently at the elevation of all souls to the *gaudium* - joy - of the divinity. From Calvary to heaven!

Mount Tabor stands above Mount Calvary. Out of pain springs up joy, from death comes life, from humiliation glory; from supreme bitterness blossoms the supreme sweetness. On the tree of the cross shines the flower of the consecrated host, which is blossoming up from the lymph of the Holy Spirit. On the cross hangs this fruit of the consecrated host, which has been ripened by the warmth of the Holy Spirit. Oh! How necessary is the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit in the souls, when they approach the altar to unite themselves to the sacrifice of Jesus, to receive Holy Communion!

The communicant must offer himself to the Lord with the same

spirit with which Jesus sacrifices and offers himself. What value would any sacrifice have without the spirit of love?

The communicant must receive Jesus with the same spirit with which Jesus offers himself to the soul. How could any soul be united to Jesus without the Spirit of love?

The soul must know, must feel that this love is not just more or less a sweet feeling, nor a simple attraction of the heart toward the good, which is God. The love is the effect of the divine person of the Holy Spirit present and acting in the soul through grace and charity; this grace too is given to us, this love is infused and showered over us by the Holy Spirit, living within us.

With this Spirit then the soul will receive the Eucharist, supreme flower and fruit of the Holy Spirit, present and acting in Jesus.

In the Eucharist are summed up all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Holy Communion we enjoy all the beatitudes of the Holy Spirit. With the Eucharist the communicant receives in himself and offers to his neighbor and to the Lord God all the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

From what we learn from revelation and from theological reasoning about the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in Jesus - in all his acts, states and mysteries - we may deduce what religious acts are more appropriate to the third person, in what he is and in what he does.

He is the Spirit, and as such, he is the vivifier (the one who animates - the one who gives life). He is the one who gives supernatural life, and consequently, he is like the soul of the soul, life of life!

It follows that the religious act which best corresponds to the Holy Spirit as the vivifier, the one who gives life - is exactly our living of him, as if through a supernatural breathing, a supernatural throbbing with which we can let out all imperfections and all traces of the spirit of the flesh and of the world.

Living of the Holy Spirit, we fight all infiltrations and manifestations of the spirit of the world and of hell, and we attract to us the perfection and action of the Holy Spirit.

As Spirit, he inspires. This is the distinct work and personal action of the Holy Spirit: he inspires.

Strangely enough, most Christians know that they must fight and reject all temptations; they know and accept that this is their duty; they however do not know, and consequently do not understand, that it is their duty to accept and follow all good inspirations.

It is true that for what concerns evil, we have the negative commandments which are in force *pro semper et quoad semper* - everywhere and under every circumstance, while for what concerns the good to be done we have the positive commandments, which bind us only when they affect us in the circumstance in which we find ourselves at the particular moment. Yet, they are binding commandments!

The inspirations are like many particular irradiations of the general law of love and obedience to the Lord. They are like many particular, personal applications of the positive or negative command given to the community by the legislator. Were it not so, we should assume that the Lord giving us his commandments wanted to deprive himself of any other act of authority, with which he could order or dispose of his creature.

The Lord is always present to his creatures. Likewise he always intervenes throughout the entire course of human life; precisely through the Holy Spirit and his inspirations he intends to direct all life. Fidelity and docility to the divine inspirations are the religious acts that best correspond to the action of the Holy Spirit in us and to what he does in us.

He is not only the Holy Spirit. Essentially he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, that is why, more than anything else, he inspires. We can have a pallid image of the inspiring of the Holy Spirit from the blowing of the wind, which, by the way, is a sign and symbol of the same Holy Spirit.

Oh! How much good and with what a wonderful strength he inspires, blows with a flow of life that circulates from the Father to the Son! He carries all souls that he vivifies and inspires from one divine person to the other, with one divine person to the other.

He is the Spirit of the Father! And we perceive him in the eternal giving of life that comes from the Father. We perceive him present in our constant asking and receiving from the Father.

He is the Spirit of the Son! We perceive him present in the eternal receiving of life that the Son accepts from the Father. We perceive him present in our offering and giving all of ourselves to the Son of God, to the Son of Man, in his humanity, in his Eucharist, in his epiphany, which are the souls, as far as somehow they need us for their supernatural life.

The Spirit is all that is most intimate, most hidden within us; and yet he is the one who gives life and value to every act. Likewise the Holy Spirit hides himself in the human being, and then reveals himself when he elevates us and enables us to ask with the Son to the Father, when he elevates us and enables us to of-

fer ourselves with the Father to the Son. We are never alone; the Spirit of the Father and of the Son is with us, in us.

In his presence which elevates us to the supernatural level, and which inspires our supernatural acts, it is formed and at the same time hidden, the mystical marital relationship between God and the elect. The elect becomes, for the Lord, soul spouse and thus generates life; for the soul of the elect becomes soul-mother, and all this occurs in the Holy Spirit.

This going from the Son to the Father, and from the Father to the Son, as well as from God to the souls, and from the souls to God, draws us to the Eucharist, supreme gift of the Father and of the Son in the Holy Spirit, sent to us by the Father and the Son.

The supreme object of this invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, in every soul in the state of grace, is always to form Jesus through Mary; to form Jesus in every person, in every saint, in every elect, in every christian hero within the bosom of mother Church.

All the elect together, the whole Catholic Church, are the mystical body of Jesus that human-divine body of which Jesus is the head, and the Holy Spirit is the heart.

Only those who receive grace and correspond to grace by letting the Holy Spirit lead and carry them will achieve a perfect, interior likeness with Jesus, the perfect man, in the fullness of Jesus' time. This life must be nurtured with the Eucharist in order to sustain and develop itself properly.

We conclude, remaining and confirming ourselves in the great, profound conviction that this is achieved only through fidelity, docility and generous obedience to the divine inspirations. We all should solemnly resolve always and everywhere to practice perfect fidelity, docility and obedience to the divine inspirations.

The divine inspirations will be different from one soul to another, from one state to another, from certain acts to others, but in all souls, for the sanctification of every state, for the divine imitation in every act, will stand out the inspiration that calls us to be perpetual worshippers in spirit and in truth, daily communicants in spirit and in truth. Amen.

Eucharistic-Trinitarian hymn

This Hymn was written by Fr. Justin, upon request of Fr. Carmine Sabatino for the Eucharistic Congress of Parete, Caserta. The original is kept in the archives of the Postulation in Rome. It is handwritten on three pages of commercial paper, and there are very few corrections made to the original by Fr. Justin. The Hymn consists of nine stanzas of six lines each.

It is signed under the pseudonym ROSALILIO [Rose-Lilly]

Oh! What a cloud of glory
Totally enwraps the sacred Altar!
The echo I hear
Of your voice, Lord
While of angels the choir,
Sings in act of adoration:

Refrain:

Glory to the Father and to the Son
In the Spirit of Love!

The new Sinai we ascend
New Tabor and Calvary
For the holy itinerary
Of the voice of Jesus.
I see the host and rejoice
Deeply in my heart.

The Father says: This is the only
Of my eternal love the object;
This is my beloved Son.
Welcome him with me.
Oh! To concentrate in God alone
The passion of every heart!

The great King urges us
To respond to his invitation.
Let us crowd the banquet
With the nuptial dress.
No joy, no distress
Will ever separate us from the Lord!

Father God, with a new song
We to you come;
An-ever new gift to you we offer
The cult to you adequate!
You alone can ever fill
The great emptiness of every heart!

Father, the ineffable groaning
Of your Holy Spirit
Is the perennial worthy song
To your divinity.
In its flight he elevates
All soulless creatures.

Behold the Host Sacrifice
Of bloodless passion
The worthy oblation
To you, august Trinity!
In it I offer and immolate
The whole world in my heart.

Of the Royal Priesthood
To me participated
With Christ incorporated
I accomplish the ministry,
Made a host in the fire
Of love and suffering.

O Jesus with your Spirit
And mother Mary,
Make all Eucharist
The universe in your heart.
From one extreme to the other
Spread your kingdom, Lord.

Holy Mass and Mystical Body

(A Catechesis)

Upon invitation of the Most Reverend Demetrio Moscati, Archbishop of Salerno, Fr. Justin presented this lecture at the Inter-diocesan Eucharistic Congress on May 27, 1949. Fr. Justin talks to the section of Religious Sisters. This eminently catechetical lecture stresses and clarifies the content of the lecture, "Eucharist and Clergy". In the role of catechist, Fr. Justin immediately underlines the meaning of the expression "Mystical Body" freeing the field from clichés.

For "Mystical Body" we must understand the Church as a community of baptized persons united to Jesus, their leader.

To the Church Jesus communicates his supernatural life that is nourished and exercised with Prayer. With which Prayer? The Church is nourished by integral prayer, which is not only "the elevation of the entire being, of all life to God, but a true prayer of life and a true life of prayer". The spirit of true prayer is expressed in the life of relationship through three functions and places:

- 1. The Liturgy (relationship of man with God);*
- 2. Asceticism (Relationship with oneself);*
- 3. The Apostolate (Relationship with others).*

Jesus, the Head of the Mystical Body, sets in motion the threefold life of relationship in his members. He makes the divine life flow through his sacrifice. In the eucharistic mystery are enclosed: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and intercession that satisfy the glory of the Father. The first purpose of the Mass is adoration. The human being, aware of the distance drawn by sin between him and God, begins the eucharistic celebration with the penitential act of reparation. The communion of saints with its wealth of grace, which circulates in the triumphant Church and in every soul sanctified by baptism, intervenes in the request for a collective forgiveness.

Fr. Justin in this Lecture guides with wise dosage the listener to immerse him-

self in the Holy Mass, to feel one with the Mystical Body of Jesus. The Holy Mass must always be lived in communion with Jesus-Head. The eucharistic celebration becomes "the public prayer of the Church par excellence and essence". The life of public and social prayer of the Church brings man to the heart of salvation by actualizing the paschal mystery in the three phases of the celebration: Offertory, consecration and communion.

The first victim to be offered and sacrificed is he himself, the Head, but together with him the sinful body also expiates the sin.

What is the most worthy and healthy way to participate in the sacrifice of Jesus? The Participants must unite themselves with the intentions and dispositions of the divine victim, who never says enough to his father's will and to the souls. Thus, united to Jesus, each of its members reaches "ever higher states of love, ever higher peaks, ever more sublime degrees of union".

Living with these provisions, the Christian no longer considers Holy Mass "as a good deed with which to sanctify the Lord's Day, or a debt to be paid to the divine justice, or a meritorious deed to support the souls of the dead". The Christian learns how to live the Holy Mass as "the most appropriate worship of adoration and praise, thanksgiving and gratitude, reparation and intercession".

Moreover, the sacrifice of Jesus "gives strength and fulfillment to the divine works "ad extra" (creation, redemption and sanctification) restoring man's final goal: Union with the Holy Trinity to be lived in the beautiful triple relationship of soul-daughter, soul-mother, soul-spouse.

The celebration of the eucharistic mystery tends to this Trinitarian attitude. Fr. Justin clearly states this: The supreme goal of an alive participation of the Mystical Body of the Head is the divine union ... Outside of Jesus, our ultimate goal, there are only intermediate goals, more or less remote, but more than goals, they are means to the ultimate goal, which is divine union.

At the end of the Lecture, the listener is inserted into the circle of Trinitarian love where the relationship with each of the divine persons is destined to overcome the confines of time and space. Here we touch the highest points of the Justinian spirituality, which focuses on the link between the Eucharist and the Trinity in an osmotic process of divine-human love that will never cease to amaze us.

In the final part of the Lecture, following the method of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, Fr. Justin indicates present in Holy Mass the exercises that help us to advance in the life of holiness.

As an exercise of purification, Holy Mass reveals itself to be "the highest and most profound ascetic, more practical and simpler, more authentic and divine for

every soul of good will". The purpose of christian asceticism consists in this: to climb the steps of sanctity more and more up, like a true ladder of Jacob, to the point of joining "through ascensions to heaven, through Jesus Christ, to the grace of the head which is divine union".

Holy Mass becomes also an exercise of illuminative life because it opens the intelligence of the Scriptures: the altar becomes a new Sinai where God imprints in the heart of man rather than on the rock the word of the new law; it is a new Tabor on which every day comes to the soul a word of the Father that reveals Jesus. Every new degree of grace is like a new creation, and another week of creation that communicates and always inaugurates in the soul a new "fiat lux - Let there be light". Step-by-step, the member is more and more united to the Head, until becoming one flesh.

The Holy Mass lived in the three fundamental moments, offertory, consecration and communion, is the exercise that most transforms the soul and gradually lifts her towards the divine perfections.

With divine union the soul fully realizes the three constitutive functions of every life of relationship: asceticism, liturgy and apostolate. With these marching directives that accompany the development of the relationship, this marvelous and timely catechesis realizes the sacrifice and sacrament of Jesus for the salvation of every man.

Who or what is the Mystical Body?

1) You ask or could ask: Before anything else what is this Mystical Body?

The Mystical Body is the body of Jesus, but not the complete humanity, body and soul received in the incarnation by the Virgin Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot call the humanity of Jesus the Mystical Body, without jeopardizing the truth. Humanity is the physical body of the historical Jesus.

What is this mystical Body of Jesus?

2) Allow me first to ask another question: What do you under-

stand with this expression: "Jesus-Host"? With the word: "Jesus-Host" we must understand Jesus really present and coming to us in Holy Communion, he himself in person, alive and true, body, soul and humanity in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist.

Could the eucharistic species be the Mystical Body of Christ? Absolutely not! The eucharistic species are not even the dress of the Mystical Body, even though poetically have been called the veils of the Eucharist.

3) What do you intend with this other expression: Jesus-Gospel?

With this word "Jesus-Gospel" we must intend the divine, incarnate Word, who reveals himself to us through the entire Bible, through the New Testament, and especially through the four Gospels. This happens because in the Holy Book there is another presence of Jesus, not like his presence in the host, and yet there is a special presence that makes only the Bible the divine Book, the living Book.

Could then all the chapters of the Bible together be the Mystical Body? Not at all! The sacred pages are not even the dress of the Mystical Body, even though poetically speaking we say that the words are the dress of the thought.

4) What do you understand the expression "Jesus Church" to mean?

With the word "Jesus Church" we must understand Jesus head of mankind, and in a special way head of all the faithful that live within the truth of his doctrine, in the observance of his law, in the reception of his sacraments, in the obedience to his vicar and the shepherds appointed by him and that form the

Church, the society of eternal life, he founded for the salvation of the world. Finally we have arrived! We, all the children of Holy Mother Church, in every time and place, we ourselves are the mystical Body of Christ.

- 5) This and nothing else is the mystical body of Christ! This is the mystical building of which he is the living foundation and we are the stones. This is the mystical vine of which he is the trunk and we are the branches. This is the mystical body of Jesus: The Holy Church of which he is the head and we are the members!

The entire humanity, whose nature Jesus assumed, is intended to be incorporated in the holy Church (mystical body of Jesus), individual-by-individual, soul-by-soul. The entire universe is like the array of this mystical body of Jesus Christ!

- 6) I beg and admonish you not to over extend the simile of the physical body with its various parts and their disposition within the body! Doing so we would fall badly in the dangers of fantasy that would be a great impediment in correctly understanding this matter. The terms: head, brain, neck, arms, fingers etc. some time may be useful to indicate a permanent and prevailing function of someone in the Church. We, however, must never imagine the Mystical Body a being with a monstrous, colossal, immense body, in which under the Head that is Jesus, all men find their place according to the office they exercise in the Church.
- 7) Why, then, do we use the term and the idea of body and members to refer to the Holy Church of Jesus Christ? We use these terms for many good reasons: To understand that only from Jesus, as from our only head, life comes to us. Our whole life is a gift of our only head. Our life is Jesus' very life that circulates in us; so as it manifested itself in Jesus, it tends to manifest itself in us, with the same needs, for the same finality, with the

same works. We use the terms body and member to further understand the great union that must exist between Jesus and us, between our neighbor and us; union that is a vital necessity. These terms help us to understand how each one must develop his own self, progress and grow in this divine life, and in this divine union to the point of rendering the image of the divine unity of the three divine persons.

Since every member of this body is a human person, who understands and is free, he can and must strive to receive ever more abundant the inflow of Jesus' life, by cooperating more and more with the grace of the head to live in his spirit.

- 8) Let us go back to the Mystical Body of Jesus. We said that the accidents of bread and wine in the Eucharist cannot be called the mystical body, because they are only signs that indicate his presence, but Jesus does not communicate any life to them.

We cannot call mystical body the inspired words of the divine book, because they are only conventional, linguistic, graphic signs of the revealed ideas, but no life is communicated to them.

It is essential for the body to receive some inflow of life from the head, or better it must be animated by the life of the head. So, we can call mystical members of Jesus only the faithful, and mystical body of Jesus the Holy Church, the society of the faithful, because Jesus, their true and only head, communicates supernatural life to them.

- 9) The grace of which we live in the supernatural order comes to us from Jesus, our head.

He alone is our head for every title of order, of perfection, of vital influx! He alone is our head not only as the supreme flower

of our human nature and of the divinity, not only because he is the only mediator between the humanity and the divinity being the only Man-God. Jesus is our head in the life of grace, even in the most appropriate and rigorous sense of being font and principle of every vital influx in the supernatural order in the entire body of the Church, in each and all its members.

Life of the mystical body

- 10) The supernatural life of grace flows from our divine head Jesus unto us in proportion of our adhesion to him and our incorporation into him.

Supernatural life is essentially a life of religion, and religion is essentially a life of relation with the divinity.

In our present state of way and not of end, every relation with the divinity is essentially a life of elevation and ascension toward a life of union with the divinity, that is, with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Let us see how we must manifest and exercise this life, so that it may be nurtured and developed normally.

- 11) This life of religion and relation, this life of ascension and union is expressed and exercised, nurtured and developed by prayer. It must be an integral prayer. Integral prayer is not only the elevation of the mind to God, but also the elevation of the entire being, of all life to God, and consequently a true prayer of life and a true life of prayer. The more intimately we unite ourselves to the Lord the more we will be filled and animated by this spirit of prayer.

The more we exercise and elevate ourselves in the practice of this spirit of prayer, the more we are admitted to a stronger union with Jesus, and through Jesus, we can reach that

union that more rigorously is called divine union with the Most Holy Trinity.

- 12) Now, we can practically consider our life in a triple function, or under a triple aspect, in relation with God, in relation with our own self, and in relation with our neighbor.

In the Christian-religious language (that is the language more shining with the splendor of truth), this function in its aspect of relationship with God, can be indicated with the word "Liturgy"; in the relationship with our own self can be called "Asceticism"; and in our relationship with our neighbor we can call it "Apostolate".

So, we have the life of liturgical prayer, the life of ascetical prayer and the life of apostolic prayer.

- 13) If we consider this triple life and this triple prayer, in their integrity and fullness, we see that one proceeds from the other, and one contains the other. One is equal to the other! Having imprinted the seal of the divine Unity and Trinity, they are also an image of the divine processions and missions! As a matter of fact from the integral liturgy derives asceticism and from both of them derives the apostolate!

They become also an image of the circuminsession in as much as we cannot have an integral liturgy without asceticism and apostolate. Likewise, there can be no integral asceticism that does not embrace liturgy and apostolate. The apostolate cannot be integral without leading the souls to liturgy and asceticism.

In each of these supernatural functions, the life of prayer must always logically take place through adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and intercession.

In a similar way, in each of these supernatural functions, the prayer of life must correspond to the state of the soul in her ascension to the union. This ascensional journey starts with the level of purification proper of the beginners, passes afterward through the illumination of the proficient, and reaches at the end the state of deification of the perfect, with the fruition of mutual possession, in the final unitive life.

- 14) Do not think of supernatural life as something too complicated. To the contrary, supernatural life is simple like the gospel. Spiritual life is simple like God. In the supernatural life there cannot be anything exaggerated or burdensome because it is a gift of love with all its spontaneous generosity.

Spiritual life is simple and easy to handle because it consists wholly in receiving the vital flux that from our divine head Jesus flows into the Mystical Body, and it circulates throughout all the mystical members, in proportion of their incorporation. What can be more simple and easy to handle for the body than receiving life from the head?

The life that our divine head Jesus reverses on the mystical body and makes circulate through all the mystical members is his very life. Jesus is the Word, the Son of God, incarnate for us to be for us the supreme revealer and glorifier of God the Father, and at the same time the only mediator between the world and God, the only savior of the world.

Jesus communicates to us his very life and work, and through his very self, he wants to make us glorifiers of the Father. The liturgy, more than anything else, enables us to be glorifiers of the Father. He, likewise, wants to make us saviors of the souls, and for this we have the apostolate. Above all the Father wants to make us sons of God with his Son Jesus, coheirs of heaven, and for this we have asceticism.

- 15) Where, when and how does Jesus communicate more directly and more fully his life? Jesus communicates to us his life in the triple and unique finality and function in his sacrifice and sacrament, that is, in our Holy Mass.

In the Holy Mass Jesus renders to the Father, with the perennial immolation and the oblation of himself, the adequate adoration for all the divine perfections, the adequate thanksgiving for all his benefits, the adequate reparation for all God's graces to humanity with the offering of his perfect and perpetual sacrifice of his blood, poured out in the fire of love of his Spirit. He does all this as our head and mediator, as our priest and our victim.

In the Holy Mass Jesus applies to us the merits of his sacrifice and communicates to us his very life with his body and blood. Thus he gradually leads the beginners from the purgative to the illuminative life of the proficient, and then he leads the proficient to the unitive life of the perfect. *By virtue of that one single sacrifice, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified* (Heb 10, 14). With the sole oblation of himself on the cross, Jesus accomplished all that was needed for the achievement of the highest level of sanctification of all those who throughout all the centuries will be saved by his sacrifice.

Sequence of the four goals of the sacrifice

- 16) In the celebration of the Holy Mass, the exercise of these various religious duties, with which we glorify the Father, through Jesus in the Holy Spirit, we do not follow the order that we could call theoretical (or even better, ontological). We follow the order that we can call "practical".

Let us see together.

When we enumerate the goals of the sacrifice, we place first the adoration that centers on God's perfections in himself. In second place, we place thanksgiving that centers on God's benefits poured out upon us. In third order we place reparation of the offenses that we have committed against God. In fourth place we center on intercession for the graces we ask to be helped in his divine service. But, in the celebration of the Holy Mass, we start with the reparation that we listed as the third finality.

- 17) We start the Mass with the penitential act (reparation), because we understand and feel in our conscience and in our reason that our prayer cannot be heard, and our offering cannot be acceptable, if we do not first recognize our faults and confess our sinfulness before the heavenly court. We understand that we must first convert heartedly to the Lord and enter into his graces through his forgiveness and his indulgence. This does not appear only from all the prayers for the immediate preparation that consist in the confession at the foot of the altar, but in the Offertory, in which directly and explicitly we declare of offering the sacrifice *pro innumerabilibus peccatis, offensionibus et negligentis* - for the innumerable sins, offenses and negligence of the priest who is offering the Mass, of all the participants and of the entire militant and suffering Church.

- 18) The very thought of the Mystical Body nurtures the hope of the divine forgiveness, and our trust in the divine mercy in the celebration of the Mass. When I say Mystical Body in this moment, I refer to our brothers in the faith, that is, to the entire Church, as Communion of the Saints: While in one way we feel our serious insufficiency to render to the Lord the cult due to him on the altar, on the other side we are comforted by the Communion of the Saints, both of the saints that are already in the triumphant Church of heaven, and of the faithful

of the militant Church that live in faith and charity, and tend to the common glorification of the Most Holy Trinity.

Ne respicias peccata mea sed fidem ecclesiae tuae - Do not look at my sins, but to the faith of your Church, we say to the Lord in the Holy Mass, when having given a look upon ourselves, we feel crashed by our unworthiness.

St. Ambrose pleads the Lord to grant him the constant consciousness of the Communion of the Saints as his support and comfort in the celebration of the Mass: *sentiat anima mea excubias Santorum et Angelorum in circuito meo* - Grant that my soul may experience the help of the Saints and of the Angels in her life.

More than once the celebrant invokes the help of the prayers of the participants, as in the *Confiteor* (I confess) ad in *Orate Fratres* (Pray, brothers and sisters).

- 19) Once the impediment of the sins has been wiped away, the soul is admitted into the presence of the Divine Majesty, and then she explodes in the song of praise with which she expresses her adoration.

So after the penitential act, the soul elevates herself to the praise of adoration in the *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* Likewise after the Offertory, with greater fervor, in the Preface and in the Holy, Holy, Holy, the soul elevates herself to the supreme expression of the adoring spirit.

Then, the priest offers and immolates the victim that is object of all predilections and complacence of the Blessed Trinity. Thus the soul communicating with the immolated victim enters in the mystery of these divine predilections and complacence, and gives to the Blessed Trinity the perfect adoration of the full glory of love through her union with Jesus, and

through Jesus with the Father in the Holy Spirit. This glorification through love leads us to the union, which is one of the finalities of the sacrifice, the one that is absolute priority because it is the supreme adoration *in spirit and in truth*.

Public prayer par excellence and essence

- 20) It is note-worthy to see how in all liturgical acts, especially in the Holy Mass, prevails the concern for common good, for the good of all faithful and of the entire world! The Holy Mass is the official, public and solemn prayer, with which mother Church, as a public society, renders to God the due public worship. Through the Mass the Church, as God's kingdom on earth, offers to God the public homage of the court of glory to her divine Sovereign. As the Mystical Body of Jesus, the Church proclaims and exercises, strengthens and perfects the union of her members amongst them, and of the all ensemble with her head Jesus, and through Jesus with the Blessed Trinity.

Since the Mass is the public prayer of the Church, for all titles and under all aspects, it must be considered as public prayer par excellence and essence. So it must be explicitly public, directly public, and exclusively public, provided it is well understood that in the public is necessarily included the private, and in the social is included the individual.

This aspect and this spirit of public prayer in the holy Mass is never meditated enough!

- 21) The holy Mass is the prayer of the Church, precisely because it is all one with Jesus, precisely as Mystical Body that, in the divine sacrifice and sacrament, unites herself, or even better we can say, it unifies herself with her Head. In the Holy Mass, above all, we always implore the supreme good of the union,

union of all people within the Church, an ever-greater union and communion among the faithful in the Church. We also always implore a greater union and communion between the faithful, still pilgrims on earth, and the faithful triumphing in the heavenly homeland.

In the Holy Mass we implore union with the Blessed Trinity through our incorporation in Jesus and the communion with his body and blood! This union can become a reality only in the common longing for the supreme interests of the eternal goods, in the fulfillment of the supreme duties of glorifying the Most High with our sanctification and the sanctification of the whole world through the life of Jesus that flows from the Head to the members.

The life of the head cannot flow in the body, if the body is not well united to the head. Likewise, within the body this life cannot flow normally and efficiently, if the members are not well conglutinated, articulated and well united among them and with the Head. In this we see the evident character and tone of prayer of union, prayer for union in the holy Mass. The life of grace is obtained and given to the individuals, only by this union, in the mystical Body, of the individual members amongst them and with the Head Jesus. The life of grace is necessary for every favor in the temporal and eternal, in natural and supernatural order, and for the increase of the life of grace. All must be done for glory of Divine Love. The triumphal union of Divine Love ultimately takes place and is celebrated in sacramental communion.

- 22) In sacramental communion with the spotless victim, it seems to prevail the individual over the social spirit. It is like the joining of vertices, which end, it is true, in one point, but they do not cancel out. It is the point where all the lines and the surfaces that rise to the sky converge, and from their junction,

at that point, new light will shine forth for all neighbors. New lifeblood will gush over all members of the mystical body. Then, the soul is made a partaker of the dignity and function of the Head, to whom in that moment she unites herself, in the highest degree and in the most divine way. By virtue of this union the soul becomes, in turn, as a spring of goodness for many brothers, and she shares with them the exuberance of the supernatural life, communicated to her in the sacrament.

Thus the circulation of the good is completed. The good spreads from the community into the individual and from the individual into the community, in a degree that normally should always be higher, and within a more extended radius. All the good of Holy Mass as a sacrifice of the community spreads in each individual soul with Holy Communion. From every soul that unites herself to Jesus with the sacramental communion, the divine good spreads throughout the entire humanity, and in the whole universe, even by irradiation, without saying of all the forms of the apostolate to which Jesus indwelling in us urges us.

Operational and transforming prayer

- 23) This life of public and social prayer finds in Holy Mass not a common and ordinary exercise, even though it may be the most elevated, the most intense and the most meritorious. In the Holy Mass the life of prayer of the Mystical Body reaches such a high level that could very well be considered as an order of prayer in its own right.

By virtue of the incorporation with Jesus and of the vital union with Jesus, every act and aspect of this prayer is supremely practical and sovereignly operative of elevations that

can and must be called transformations, because on account of their virtues, it is realized, in the living members of Jesus in the mystical body of Jesus, the mystery of their divine head Jesus Christ.

What mystery of Jesus is communicated in the Holy Mass and communion?

In the Holy Mass every mystery of Jesus is communicated because it is the entire Jesus that we offer in sacrifice and receive in sacrament. However, we can say that we receive in greater abundance and more specifically his passion and death and his resurrection and ascension, because above all in these mysteries he wants to communicate his life to us, and then nourishes it in us, with his body and his blood.

- 24) So, concerning our head Jesus, in these divine mysteries, we have not a simple commemoration of the incarnation and life, passion and death, resurrection and ascension of the incarnate Word, as if it were a memory of the past, but we have their renewal as true reality in the present. So, also with regard to the holy Church in general and to souls in particular as the Mystical Body of Jesus, we have not a simple, ordinary effect of grace, coming from the meditation and commemoration of the incarnation, passion and death, of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, as a memory of the past, but a special grace of participation in these mysteries; they are a reality in the present, differing according to the degree of union and life of grace, implemented in the life of grace and prayer of each faithful soul.
- 25) In the Holy Mass in general and in each one of the three main parts of the sacrifice - offertory, immolation and communion - Jesus is always the main celebrant and the victim being offered. This is always done by the mystical Body, with its head Jesus Christ.

As Mediator, Jesus identifies himself with us; as a victim he takes our place; as a host he incorporates us to himself. If we want more light of distinction, we can say more properly that in the offertory Jesus identifies himself with his Mystical Body, the Church of the faithful; in the consecration or immolation, Jesus more properly replaces the Mystical Body, the Church of the faithful; in the sacramental Communion, Jesus more appropriately incorporates himself with his Mystical Body, the Church of the faithful.

- 26) At the offertory also the Mystical Body of Jesus is presented and offered to the Blessed Trinity in the Father. We refer to the oblations as *immaculatam hostiam - spotless host* not in the sense that they have already become Jesus, who is not yet really present in them, because the transubstantiation has not taken place yet. When we refer to the oblations calling them spotless host, we intend the Mystical Body, the Church that has been made immaculate by the life of grace, which is participation of divine nature, and therefore of the holiness of God! The Church has been made immaculate by the life of charity, which is union with the holiness of God, with the divine persons and with all men, in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

The oblations, then, represent and substitute the Church, the Mystical Body. Even though Jesus is not yet really sacramentally present, he is mystically present in them only as head of the Mystical Body. This happens before the divine words effecting the transubstantiation change the oblates in Jesus really present.

At the offertory the Mystical Body is also placed on the altar. The sign of the cross is traced and impressed upon the oblates, calling to mind Jesus' passion, death and burial, as sacrifice of reparation, eradication and preservation from sin.

This is done not only as a remembrance and sign, but as grace infused in them that causes death to sin.

- 27) The sacrifice of the creature to the creator is not meant for the destruction, ruin and annihilation of the creature. Could Life ever enjoy death? Could ever the destruction of the creature please the creator? Could ever the loss of the beloved please the personal, infinite Love?

It is true that a complete sacrifice requires a mutation in the oblations; it is true that the perfect sacrifice consists in the mutation of the oblation. Our sacrifice to God, however, is not a mutation of annihilation, but a mutation of transition to a higher form of life, in which the living creature participates more in the divine life, and the creature becomes more like the creator, and the beloved joins the lover in a great way, and all this in Jesus Christ, who descends to live in it.

The virtue of the words of transubstantiation does not stop to tell us, to make for us the real presence of the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus, under the species of bread and wine. The transubstantiation extends and spreads waves and waves of new life of grace in all the members of the Mystical Body. The great word: "*This is my body, this is my blood*", although very indirectly, refers to the whole Mystical Body. Throughout the Mystical Body it brings a new influence of new life of grace, if we do not want to say a vain word, a vain action - *quod absit - may God deliver us!*

- 28) That word not only works a new life awakening all the energies of grace already existing in the soul, too often, dormant and mortified, mutilated and buried by innumerable faults. That word also adds and infuses in them new levels of grace, of virtue and of gifts. It is truly a new life that every day grants

the glory of the resurrection to the mystical body as a whole, and to its individual member.

In this life of resurrection with Jesus Christ, the whole Church and the individual souls, in proportion always of their incorporation in Jesus and of their implementation in Jesus, live the life of the risen, descending with him in purgatory to free souls at every Mass. They implore and obtain from the Father every day the glory of his name, the advent of his kingdom, the triumph of his love, with all the other favors necessary for the well being of the human family, and then they ascend to heaven. In sacramental communion the Mystical Body and the individual souls touch the apex, every day higher and more intimate, of the divine communion, and in it they begin to live the divine life, that is, the heavenly Trinitarian life, our conversation in heaven.

Admirable Conversion

(Presence - Sacrifice - Nutrition)

At the inter-diocesan Eucharistic Congress celebrated in S. Angelo dei Lombardi (Avellino) on September 30, 1951, Fr. Justin presents his Lecture: Admirable Conversion. In it he deepens the mystery of the transubstantiation. This Lecture can be considered as the spiritual testament of a man near to hand over his earthly life to God Trinity. Blessed Justin died four years later, on August 2, 1955.

At the Congress of S. Angelo dei Lombardi participated about twenty bishops; but the ideal public that the lecturer intends to address, according to his style of expert catechist, are the children. The same privileged recipients of his first Lecture: The Eucharist and the Child. The theme is the same: the Eucharist, a marvelous gift from the love of God, actualized in the consecration. The stages of the journey of the Justinian soul culminate in the "Admirable Conversion" of a piece of bread and a cup of wine.

The lecture shows a solid biblical-theological structure that sheds light in three moments of the eucharistic mystery: Presence, sacrifice and nutrition.

Fr. Justin quickly points out that the public life of Jesus starts with an ordinary banquet, the wedding at Cana, and ends with an extraordinary banquet, the Last Supper.

The miracles that Jesus performs during the three years of his public apostolate are but: "The announcement and prelude of the great miracle of the eucharistic transubstantiation". Theologians see in the Eucharist "an harmonious and delightful complex of twelve miracles", among which we have the conversion of the species, the mystery of redemption, the sanctification of man and the glorification of God-Trinity.

With Fr. Faber, Fr. Justin "knows how to enjoy in the theology of the Eucharist an angelic music made perceptible to mortal ears". The Eucharist is the place where the practicality of God's love can be touched with our hands. "With Jesus, God is always present to us, totally with us, in innumerable ways and levels".

It is enough to think of grace and of the supernatural gifts that it operates in the souls, to the indwelling of the adorable Trinity, to the invisible missions of the Word and of the Spirit, to the brothers that pray, suffer and love, to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities and to the priest. Above all these ways of presence "there is the palpating reality of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament" that sustains man in his pilgrimage to the celestial homeland. To this divine presence something is lacking: our presence. The place that God the Father has assigned to us from the moment of creation is to be near the tabernacle. There, we must form a court of perpetual worshippers. In the eucharistic apostolate it is convenient to start with the children: They should be worshippers before being communicants.

Naturally the invitation to seat around the eucharistic table is extended to all the seasons of human life (youth, mature life and third age). How do we reconcile the joy of the presence with the idea of sacrifice? The sacrifice must be considered not in the human prospective, but in the divine optic, where it assumes its redemptive value. "It is an ever larger dilatation of the being... it is a tearing of the boundaries of our life, it is an opening of new heavens for the soul, a flood of new oceans of light, a blooming of ever new and more marvelous flowers in every corner of creation, elevated to the supernatural".

The sacrifice according to the eucharistic exemplar is the triumph of life over death, of heaven over earth, a new earthly paradise that serves as novitiate for the celestial paradise.

Jesus instituted the Eucharist before his passion and death to make us understand that he still remains with us in the transubstantiation. His sacrifice is the effect of his love for us and requires the offering of our sacrifice for him, offered with love that wins every pain. The finality of the sacrifice is to make our life a relation of love with the Lord and transform it in a state and act of sacrifice for him.

The presence of Jesus among us with his body and blood is a sign that the sacrifice is: "The supreme state of love must be the ideal practical program of our life". In his role of victim and host, Jesus invites us to participate in his human-divine life, not in a bloody manner, to inundate us with the effusions of his heart. How can man's love correspond to God's infinite love?

If we live in a context of living faith and sincere love, the Holy Spirit will come to our aid. In God-Holy Spirit, we divinely correspond to the incarnate Word in the Holy Spirit-Sanctifier; we correspond through our deification by grace, because we apply ourselves to make it grow in us according to the Spirit of love that never says "enough". Every increase of grace is like another elevation of us to heaven, and assumption to God".

The Holy Spirit of love and union performs in us the miracle of our assimilation

to the eucharistic state of Jesus, enabling us to progress to ever more perfect states of life and to ever higher levels of holiness. Through a process of abnegation of our egotism he disposes us to the state of union with the will of God. Once we have reached the heaven of divine union, we constantly produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as trees planted on the banks of a river of "living water springing from the altar of the Eucharist, living presence and constant nourishment of our life".

The Lecture ends with a note of firm hope: If we aliment ourselves with Jesus-Host, we will become builders of our admirable conversion and total assimilation with him, living and present in our humanity.

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From Banquet to Banquet

As we know, when our Lord started to form the college of the apostles he took them to the wedding banquet, and there he started his miracles and manifested his glory with the conversion (that is, the change from one substance into another) of the water into wine, and all this for the joy of man, so that nothing would ruin the feast of that humble people.

Likewise, Jesus concluded his mortal life gathering the same disciples to another banquet in which he operated another conversion, even more admirable than the first: He changed the substance of bread and wine into his own body and blood, to which is inseparably united by concomitance his soul and divinity. The evident resemblance between the first banquet and the last enables us to see in the Last Supper the aspect of nuptial banquet. In the first miracle we see the motivation: the complete joy of his disciples, so that nothing will be lacking to the feast of love that is the incarnation of the Word, true marriage of the divinity with the humanity.

Only one element of the first miracle seems to be missing in the second: the presence of Mary Most Holy. If we reflect well,

we will see and find her presence in the second more than in the first! That flesh and blood is hers! *Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine - Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary!*

In the banquet of Cana, we see in a splendid light the obedience of the servants, and at the Last Supper we see the obedience of the apostles.

Do whatever he tells you, says the mother, and the servants having been ordered to do so, filled the jars to the brim. The two disciples, having received the order to go to Jerusalem, because there they would encounter a man carrying a water jar, and they should follow him to the house, and there ask the master of the house where they can prepare the Passover Meal. They followed the order faithfully. In their obedience they found exactly what Jesus had told them. They prepared the large furnished room in which was to take place the greatest and sweetest divine work!

How beautiful the divine design! In the various phases of the divine-human life of the Incarnate Word (hidden life, public life, sorrowful life), the one that is more ours, totally ours is the public life. In it we must mirror and shape our life guided and animated by the same spirit of love.

This public life of Jesus, from an initial human banquet to a divine nuptial banquet, is all about a great feast of the Lord's love for man, to which the love of man for the Lord must correspond. This love manifests itself more and more openly and gives itself more and more effusively and it is always more intimately united to its extreme limits. *In finem dilexit - He loved them to the end!*

It could also be said in all truth that Jesus' public life is inaugurated by his baptism of penitence in the water of the Jordan, and is crowned by the baptism of blood so long sighed by the Heart of Jesus on Calvary!

The disciples represent us near Jesus. At the baptism in the waters of the Jordan the disciples were not present, because they were not yet congregated around Jesus. From the baptism of blood on Calvary the disciples were turned away, I would not know whether by the love of Jesus or by their fear. For at the time of his capture, Jesus said: *If you look for me, let these go* (in peace, safely). Anyway, let us also say: The disciples were absent, (and we are almost always absent) from Calvary for both these reasons; even more because of their fear. St. John forgives me if I pretend not to remember him!

In the most realistic sense for us, Jesus public life goes from one banquet to another and it unfolds as a perennial invitation addressed by Jesus personally to mankind, to prepare and move us to the supreme banquet of divine love.

The Divine Design

The teachings of Jesus are the revelation of the super eminent science of divine love; they are as many chapters or articles of the code of love. Likewise, all miracles (works of the omnipotence of God's love) announce and prelude for us the great eucharistic transubstantiation.

The great miracle of eucharistic transubstantiation! It is not correct for us to talk of one miracle, in the singular, because the theologians count twelve distinct miracles, in this sacred mystery of faith and love. There is no shadow of exaggeration; there is no inking of stretching this enumeration of miracles.

Miracle on the part of the substance of bread and wine that utterly ceases to be present, by annihilation, to give place to the Body and Blood of the Lord; yet, they turn to be present when the species get corrupted or change.

Miracle on the part of the species of bread and wine that exist without substance, and yet present the same qualities and undergo the same alterations as if they were retaining their respective substance.

Miracle on the part of the priest, who was given this supreme power of consecrating and making present the Body of the Lord.

Miracle in the easiness of multiplying the Holy Sacrament.

Miracle above all on the part of the Body and Blood of the Lord truly, really, substantially present in the most holy Sacrament in every consecrated host, and to be totally entire in each even minimum part of the host, and yet, always unique and the very same Jesus that seats at the right of the Father.

Miracle on the part of the state and way of being of the Lord's Body and Blood in the matter of the sacrifice, similar to a spiritual substance, totally entire with its corporeal qualities, as the human soul all present in the entire body and all entire in each part of the body.

Discussing in detail each one of these miracles may give the impression of making anatomy; it may be a theological anatomy, but always anatomy that recalls the idea of death and infuses like a sense of death. In the Eucharist we are in the presence of the great life, of the greatest mystery of life and of the greatest effusion of life!

Only the contemplatives know how to enjoy the theology of the Eucharist and the angelic music made perceptible by mortal ears (Faber).

In the Eucharist we apply ourselves to adore and contemplate the triumph of faith over the senses, the triumph of spirit over mat-

ter, the triumph of grace over nature, the triumph of the Church over the world. Only the Liturgy for the Solemnity of Corpus Domini, of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, is totally attuned to the triumphing Jesus. The great triumph that Jesus wants to score with this supreme work of his, is the triumph of his love in the heart of man, soul by soul! This triumph of love is possible only after the victory of the highest sanctification of each soul. There is nothing more practical than the Eucharist; nothing more ascetical and mystical than the Eucharist, as our adoration, imitation and union with him, and as his presence among us, sacrifice for us, life and most vital nourishment in us.

Divine Practicality

Every thing is practical in the work of the Lord. Everything is practical in the highest sense of the word, as it is proper of the divine Agent that is essentially "act". Everything is practical because everything is operative. This is true of creation that gives the being to every existing thing; it is true of redemption that redeems all men; it is true of sanctification that deifies all those who want it. It is true of glorification that crowns the elect eternally: It is much more true of the transubstantiation that presents the marvels of all divine works, contains them and excels them infinitely. Only considering the practical aspect of things, as help for our sanctification, can we avoid the biblical threat: *Qui scrutator est maiestatis opprimetur a Gloria - Whoever scrutinizes the majesty of God will be oppressed by his glory.*

Not for the satisfaction of our curiosity, but for the correspondence to the divine, we entrust ourselves to the Eucharist. The Eucharist reveals and reminds us that truly, essentially and the only "practical" reality is God's love, and by analogy, every love.

Practical in every sense, as in the simplest of manual work, for

this, St. Ambrose wrote: *Primum noverimus nihil tam et inutilis quam non amari!* Above all we should keep in mind that nothing is more useful than being loved, and nothing is more useless than not to be loved in the supreme sense of generation and creation!

The unique infinite love that is God generates and spires from all eternity (*ab aeterno*) with his own necessary operation *ad intra*, the divine persons in the unity of nature, and with his operations *ad extra*, he creates and redeems, sanctifies and glorifies!

Among the divine persons, the Holy Spirit represents, so to speak, the limitless limit of the unlimited Trinity. Likewise among the divine works of creation and redemption, sanctification and glorification, the transubstantiation is the limitless limit of the unlimited divine love.

We live, move and exist in God's ongoing work of creation, conservation, redemption and sanctification. On the background of this ongoing divine action, Jesus himself authorizes us to consider and call divine works par excellence the miracles, on account of the special intervention of the divine will that shows in them the divine authority and freedom in the use of his omnipotence and wisdom, at the service of his love.

As we have said, the transubstantiation is all a harmonious and delightful ensemble of miracles of conservation, redemption, sanctification and glorification. In it the practicality of the Lord reaches the limitless limit of the unlimited love.

Through the transubstantiation we have more than a benefit, a treasure or paradise, we have what is infinitely more than any benefit, more than any treasure or paradise! We have Jesus himself! We have him always present to us! All with us, all for us!

It is a specific need of love to make itself present to the be-

loved. To be present and to remain present, for help and defense, if necessary, but above all, to please the beloved and satisfy him, to activate and satisfy his hunger and thirst for the lover, to begin the union, which is then the whole will and glory of love.

Divine Presence

If we knew, or if we would really meditate upon the Gospel and the theology with the spirit of love, in order to the ascetical practice, we would be delighted by the many discoveries of new heavens and new earths in which resides holiness, and there the soul encounters and stays with the Lord.

The Lord multiplies his presence in virtue of his immensity, of his intervention in the being and acting of his creatures; in virtue of his grace and supernatural gifts; in virtue of the invisible missions of the Word and of the Spirit in every infusion and increase of grace; in virtue of the coming and indwelling of the adorable Trinity in the souls. All these forms of the Lord's presence are possible because he is pure, immense, infinite eternal spirit.

Our human being and our heart of flesh need above all Jesus, the Man-God!

Even of Jesus, man and God, there are many revealed presences. It would greatly help our spirituality if we would visit him very often at the right hand of the Father in the heavens of the triumphant Church, with as many visits to the glorified Jesus. There, he is present in his own dwelling after the Ascension!

How good it would be for us to go with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who having left the ninety-nine sheep in a safe place, reveals to us his special presence near the sinners, in order to conquer

them to his heart. He wants to do it also externally through our work; we follow him as he reveals his presence wherever there are several people united in his name, so that we may attract other souls to honor and serve God with us, precisely to have him present amongst us in a special way.

How good it would be for us to go with Jesus near those who are dying, at whose transit he is always present with his most special graces to be their savior, above all in the moment immediately preceding their appearance at his tribunal. He wants that even through us, the doors of hell may be closed to them and the doors of paradise may be open.

How good it would be for us to go to Jesus, even now processed and scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and pierced, throughout the nations rebel to the Church, among deprived Christians, in the house and heart of every sinner!

We want to go to Jesus not only by way of compassion, but also much more by the effective ways of apostolic reparation that snatches the souls from the grasp of the enemy, and gives like a new life of resurrection to the Lord, making him live in them.

How blessed would we be, if we could always remember the special presence of Jesus in the little, the humble and the afflicted! It would give us the opportunity to surround in them the very person of Jesus, the Man-God with all the attention of the corporal and spiritual, social and individual works of mercy.

How blessed will we be, if we always remember the special presence of Jesus in every legitimate ecclesiastical and civil authority, as his representatives!

How blessed will we be, if we always remember the special presence of Jesus in every priest, as his minister, at least to be

helped to exercise the perfection of obedience and the homage of veneration.

Above all these various forms and levels of the Lord's presence, here, in the most Holy Sacrament we have the unique real presence of his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of the entire Jesus, fully alive and true, all with us and all for us.

Who was the saint, who said: I wouldn't want to be loved by a person who would remain indifferent if Jesus is near him or far from him? No, it is not indifferent whether Jesus is near us or far from us! One evening Jesus said very sadly: It is better for you that I go. He said it only for our greater good, subtracting from us only what could be satisfaction of the senses, with disadvantage of the elevation of the spirit.

In the Eucharist, Jesus gave us the palpating reality of his perpetual presence, always and everywhere, in every day and in every place of our exile as pilgrims toward heaven.

Jesus gave us this special presence of himself in the most humble and simple, in the most encouraging and consoling, in the most intimate and familiar way, which, at the same time, is the most useful for us as exercise of faith, as example of humility, as treasure of merits, as an invitation to every freedom of effusion of our love.

Our Presence

What is missing in this divine presence? the presence of all our being and of all our life is missing! Our real place in creation is near the tabernacle, because Jesus is there. Our life should integrally and exclusively be observance of the great law of love because such is the life of the God-with-us in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Faithful and affectionate servants of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus are needed to make all souls know the marvels of the glory of the Eucharist, the exigencies of love of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the joys of the visits, of the entertainment and of our habitation near the tabernacle of the God-with-us!

Oh! How we wish to surround the Lord, in his real presence with a perpetual court of worshippers.

To be practical, let us begin to recruit these guards of honor, these body's guards of the Lord, between the extreme limits of human life, as if we ourselves were the sky of the dawn and the sky of sunset of the Eucharistic Sun that is always in its full noon!

After all, the eucharistic apostolate of the children does not seem too difficult.

To the Lord are due the first fruits of human life. Man's first age is unable to work for profit, and is excused from carrying the burdens and struggles of a family for its existence. It can very easily be presented to the Lord and bring the joy of the human spring's feast to the sanctuary. Every child should be a worshipper before (and much more after) receiving first Holy Communion.

As pedagogy must form good habits for the human consortium, so christian pedagogy must form in each child virtuous eucharistic habits of daily Mass and Communion, of the eucharistic visit and adoration for the divine consortium with the adored Trinity.

The same must be said of man's last age, and consequently of the retired and veterans of life's battles. This last age, not less than the first, cannot be employed in work for pay, cannot sustain the burden of the day's struggles in the fight for life. Consequently it is not hard to convince older people to form, around the throne

of the Lamb, the court of the twenty-four seniors willing to start to occupy near Jesus the place that he has prepared for them in heaven, as long as they deserve it on earth.

Should the entire middle age, the age of life's full development and vigor, be excused from making the act of presence to the Lord? To this age is addressed more directly the invitation: *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos* - *Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest* (Mt 11 289). It is not only the burden of penal, material, intellectual or mixt work that they must undertake, but much more the load of spiritual work that is the yoke of the Lord, that is not only light in itself, but also renders light any other yoke in the will of God.

The Lord calls it his yoke, and inviting us to carry it with him, with transparent allusion he hints, for those who love him, to the mystical marriage of the souls with God, thus making the Eucharist the true nuptial banquet.

The noblest purpose of all physical wellbeing and temporal comfort, to which we want to raise the level of life of each of our brothers, cannot be to immerse them deeper in matter and in torpor, nor to nurture more temptations and passions of the world. We want to raise the level of life for our brothers, putting them in a position to be able to attend more directly and for a longer time the culture of their relationship with Jesus, and to introduce them into the enjoyment of God's possession.

At the real presence of Jesus it will be easier for everyone to experience a prayer of simply looking at him, of relaxation and joy, as a sense of the real presence of Jesus, as a consequence of a state of faith and of trust, of love and complacence, of union and peace.

The prayer at the eucharistic presence of Jesus is very much like some very elevated forms of prayer; it is a great help to intro-

duce us to contemplation, if it is not already in itself the beginning of contemplation, which is offered and facilitated to everyone. St. Thomas says: In the Eucharist, all those who want it, experience contemplation, and from it we draw spiritual sweetness as from its own spring.

The Sacrifice according to the Divine Idea

How is it possible to reconcile joy and sorrow? How can the Eucharist be the spring of spiritual sweetness if it is the sacrifice of the New Law, the sacrifice in which Jesus drank to the last drop all the bitterness of the chalice of his passion and death? Certainly, the Eucharist is our sacrifice! Transubstantiation realizes not only Jesus' presence, but also Jesus' sacrifice. Precisely because the Eucharist is Jesus' sacrifice, it is for us also the spring of sweetness and the tree of life on our land.

Incarnation itself is a perpetual sacrifice. If we think that the lamb of the sacrifice was in the thought and in the plan of God from the creation of the world, we can correctly call it: The eternal sacrifice.

The hypostatic union is the true, the first and the perennial consecration of Jesus. We understand as hypostatic union not only the fact that through it Jesus is the Christ of the Lord, the anointed and consecrated, but also specifically in the sense of oblation and immolation of the victim, not through the violence of passion and death, but through the assumption of the human nature on the part of one of the divine persons.

The hypostatic union, the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus, places the human being, body and soul in a state of unique, ineffable, incommunicable and mysterious elevation. This hypostatic union also places the human being

in a state of glorious annihilation before the majesty of God, and this explains why it is said of the servant of God that he will be totally permeated and inundated by the spirit of the fear of the Lord: *Adimplebit eum spiritus timoris Domini - The spirit of the fear of the Lord will fill him.*

For Jesus, not being a human person, is already an immolation and consecration; but for the human nature, assumed by the Incarnate Word, it is a most blessed and glorious immolation and consecration.

With the transubstantiation the same body of Jesus is placed and maintained in a condition that while elevating it in in the way of being of the spirit (totally entire in the whole body that he animates, and totally entire in each part), Jesus still immolates and - so to speak - annihilates all natural exigencies of the body and constitutes it in a state of sacrificed victim not only separating it from the blood - *vi verborum - in virtue of the words*, with a realistic representation of the passion and death on the cross. The transubstantiation also renders Jesus present in the eucharistic species in such a mysterious way that with infallible certainty we believe that the eucharistic sacrifice is the true and proper sacrifice of the New Testament, because the transubstantiation does not only remember and represent a past event, but renews and perpetuates it as a new, living and palpitating reality, just as it renews and perpetuates his real presence.

Don't we run the risk of scaring our poor souls with our excessive insistence on the idea of sacrifice? Let us reassure ourselves.

We usually have the idea of the sacrifice as seen by man and not by God. According to man's way of seeing, sacrifice is humiliation and suffering, it is all tears and blood, anxiety and agony, death and burial! Humanity prepared all this cup of sourness,

and the divinity offered it to Jesus in his saving will and in fulfillment of his redemptive work.

So, we have Jesus, who agonizes in the garden to the point of sweating blood! So, we have Jesus dragged and trampled in the tribunals of man! So, we have Jesus scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed and spirant on the cross!

The idea of the sacrifice according to God is that of an expansion of the ever-broader being, of an elevation of being ever more exalted; for this reason the sacrifice would come to be like breaking the boundaries of our life, but without blossoming in death, but instead welcoming an infusion of higher life that requires ever greater capacities. It is an opening of new skies of the soul, a spreading of new oceans of light, a blossoming of new flowers more marvelous than any power of nature, elevated to above nature.

The sacrifice according to the eucharistic exemplar

Don't be afraid, my soul! The Lord did not tell you: *You must suffer with all your heart, with all your mind, with all strength. He told you: You shall love me with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength* (Dt 6 4-7).

Look up high in the Lord for the ideal of the sacrifice of the Incarnate Word! Look at hypostatic union, think and proclaim: Behold the Sacrifice according to God, all work of God.

Look at the passion and death of Jesus! Then, think and proclaim: Behold the sacrifice according to man's mind. Look at the transubstantiation and think and proclaim: Behold the human and divine sacrifice! Behold the harmony of the state of mystical death and of glorious life. Behold, what Jesus offers me! Be-

hold, what he has chosen for me! Wherever there is juxtaposition of death and life, as long as Jesus is present, life triumphs over death, glory triumphs over humiliation, heaven triumphs over earth, and a new earthly paradise is reopened as a novitiate of the heavenly paradise. The Lord instituted the Eucharist before the passion and death that he was to receive from men, in order to make us understand his thought about the nature and the existence of the sacrifice according to his heart.

The Lord remains amongst us through the transubstantiation in the Eucharist to make us understand that it is all work of his love for us. Likewise our sacrifice must be all work of our love for him. If it is work of love, it must also be work of happiness that overcomes every pain.

So, the Lord reveals the nature of the true sacrifice in its finalities. Our Life is all a relationship of love with the Lord, and as such must be all an exercise of religion. Since the supreme act of religion (and consequently of our relationship with God) is the sacrifice, it follows that our all life must be in a state of sacrifice, and therefore always in act of sacrifice.

Consequently the sacrifice cannot essentially consist in violence. Violence cannot last a long time, and the Lord does not do violence to anyone of his creatures. The Lord cannot assent to the violence offered by his creatures.

In order to make of the Eucharist the practical ideal of our life it is very important to meditate and promulgate the true idea of the sacrifice. So, Jesus comes to our aid by incarnating in himself and revealing with his very eucharistic presence in our midst, through the transubstantiation that the sacrifice is the supreme state of love, and that in it there is the harmonization between death and life. With the triumph of life over death, with the triumph of the resurrection, he harmonizes being on earth while keeping his

dwelling place in heaven. Likewise he harmonizes being with the children of men with being at the right hand of the Father.

So, not only does he constitute himself as the victim, our unique sacrifice in the new law, but he also invites us to unite ourselves to him in the state and in the acts of his sacrifice, not as sharers in his bloody passion. If you look for me – he said in the garden, let my dear ones go (Jn 18, 8). He wants us to share in his human-divine life and to unite ourselves to his heart, to delight ourselves in his love, above any limit and measure, tearing the natural boundaries of our capacity in order to receive his effusions of paradise!

Love always wants to be corresponded!

How does it want to be corresponded? Love does not want to be corresponded equally because in this case it would be justice rather than love; it would be a convenience, but not love; it would be spirit of duty, not spirit of love! Love wants to be corresponded with exuberance! It is impossible for us to reciprocate his love with exuberance! That is correct, but it is not impossible to desire it! With the desire we reach the infinite! Before God the desire has the value of an accomplished act, not only in evil things, but also in good.

But, is it really possible? It does not seem impossible, if we live by faith, if we live of love!

Since the Holy Spirit has been given to us, let us become one with the Holy Spirit. It has been said that the Christian is not made up only of body and soul, but of body, soul and Holy Spirit.

In the Holy Spirit we correspond divinely to the Incarnate Word in the Blessed Sacrament. In the Sanctifying Spirit we correspond to the gift of the Word's incarnation, through our deifica-

tion by grace, as long as we apply ourselves not only to conserve grace, but also to increase it continuously and to increase it in the spirit of love that never says: enough!

Every increase of grace is for us like another elevation to heaven and assumption in God.

Jesus is not the man elevated in God. The person of Jesus is only the person of the Word!

Each one of us is the man-person wanted in the relationship of love with the Lord, ever-more deified, that is, always more sharer in the divine person by grace, always more united to the divine person in love, even while remaining the distinct and individual human person, which is desired as term of the relationship of love between God and man, without this term of love the relationship ceases to exist.

This spirit of love continuously offers us the opportunity to choose among the various states of life always more perfect, among ever-higher levels of holiness. The spirit of love moves us to an elevation of state, and to a production of acts ever more corresponding to the exigencies of Jesus' love.

What is this supreme state of love that is proposed to our election?

It is a state of such total abnegation of our own "I" and of such a high union of our will with the Lord, as to be able to present an ever more perfect image and likeness of the uncreated grace of the hypostatic union of Jesus our head!

It is the eucharistic state of Jesus that is offered and remains exposed in perpetuity not only to our adoration, but also to our admiration, enjoyment and imitation, within the limits of our

ever limited and successive capacity, even in the supernatural order! In this heaven of divine union, in this state of transfiguration and of grace in Jesus, in this life animated by the Holy Spirit blooms the perennial production of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, of those supreme, most excellent acts of virtues that enrich every tree planted on the banks of the river of living waters that spring up for us from the throne of the Lamb, from the altar of the Eucharist!

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