

thanksgiving for the glory with which He has crowned His saints. But not only is Jesus Christ the Victim Who is offered, He is also the Priest Who offers. The priest who stands at the altar is but the visible representative of Christ, Whose priesthood is shared by those who have received the priestly ordination, a priesthood which was instituted by Our Lord Himself at the same time when He instituted the Holy Eucharist. Whenever, therefore, we assist at the Holy Mysteries, we should remember that we are witnessing the self-same sacrifice that was accomplished on Calvary. The Body that is consecrated and offered on the altar is the same Body that was delivered for us and nailed to the cross. The Blood that is consecrated on the altar is the same blood that was shed for us and for many, unto the remission of sins (Matt. 24:28).

Since this is so, we ought to assist at Mass with the same devotion and veneration as we should have felt had we stood beneath the Cross of Christ on the day He died on Mount Calvary. However, the conduct of many who come to Mass and the indifference of many more who stay away show that if they had stood beneath the Cross of Christ, they would have been amongst the number of scoffers and persecutors, and not of the faithful few who grieved and mourned for Our Lord. The identity of the Sacrifice of the Mass with the Sacrifice of Calvary is clearly shown by the very form of the solemn words of consecration. The priest does not say: "This is the Body of Christ; this is the Blood of Christ." Rather he says: "This is *My* Body; this *My* Blood!" We are not to regard the person of the priest, but to look upon him as clothed with the priestly robe of Christ, in Whose Name he pronounces these words and by Whose power the matter is consecrated.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass being what it is, it follows that the most precious and inestimable graces flow from it, and that it is our duty to profit to the utmost of our endeavor by these graces. In the Mass Jesus Christ is offered up as an atonement for *our* sins, so that if we assist at it with proper sentiments of devotion, we shall obtain for our souls the same graces that we should have received had we been present at the Sacrifice of the cross on Calvary. Who could doubt that if we had been present there and had uttered but a single sigh of repentance to our

dying Savior as He hung on the cross, that He would not instantly have looked down upon us and given us the same pardon and grace as He gave to the penitent thief? Yet, it is most certain that anyone could do just as much himself during the celebration of Holy Mass because it is one and the same sacrifice. So great is the power of this sacrifice that its merits ascend to the very throne of heaven above and give glory to God and His saints. The merits of Christ extend over the whole world, bringing down blessings on every creature. The fruits of this sacrifice apply to the whole Church of God, the triumphant in heaven, the militant on earth, and even to the suffering in purgatory. This is always the case, whenever and wheresoever Mass is celebrated, whether there be anyone to assist at it or not, whether it be said for a public or private intention.

But, since familiarity with the most sacred things is apt to produce indifference, Holy Mother the Church has wisely invested these holy mysteries with many solemn rites and ceremonies. She has prescribed that the richest and most precious things should be devoted to their celebration in order to keep constantly in our mind the augustness of the mysteries at which we are assisting. During Passiontide, the last two weeks of Lent, she make us all the more aware of the sublimeness of this mystery. The Church veils her statues and images with violet cloth to symbolize her sorrow at the approaching death of her divine Spouse and to remind us of the purple robe of His torn flesh, which He wore as a sign of His kingly dignity.

May we profit during this Passiontide by a profound consideration of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, so as to grow daily in love and veneration for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and the Mass. May we show our love and veneration for these Holy Mysteries by assisting at Mass more frequently, with greater devotion, with a more lively faith, and with a more fervent love of Him Who offers Himself each time as a Victim of propitiation for us. The fruits of our greater fervor will soon make themselves apparent by purifying our hearts more and more from worldly attachments so that we may serve God with generosity. By serving Him thus, and worthily partaking of this Sacrifice of the Cross, we shall gain for ourselves eternal happiness.