

EFFECTIVE LIVING

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HE bomber, plunging earthward, drops his explosives with a smashing roar upon a trembling patch of ground, then growls away into the sky to find another target. He has left an impressive and destructive effect behind him. The young rose blushing upon the bush, the tiny chicks cheeping in the barnyard, the choked cry of the newborn infant are all effects, but oh so gentle in comparison with the effect of a B-25. The paper you read is an effect of many causes; so, too, are the clothes you wear, the train you ride in, the house you own. You live in a world of effects. Even you, yourself, are an effect of your parents' love and God's goodness. All the effects mentioned are visible, palpable. However, there are other effects, which really and truly exist, even though you cannot see, touch, hear, taste or smell them. Among these hidden effects are thoughts and grace. A man can think his own thoughts in spite of a dictator, but a man cannot merit first grace. Only one Man could do this, and He was the God-man. Through His passion, the river of grace was released for the benefit of mankind. The channels of grace are the Sacraments. Among the Sacraments, the Eucharist is unique. It is the center of the sacramental world. All the other Sacraments revolve around It and lead man towards It.

You are not surprised to find that the Eucharist should confer grace. It contains the very source of grace, Christ. It represents His passion and is called the "unbloody sacrifice of Calvary." It may be used like food and drink. Just as food and drink nourish, sustain, increase and give pleasure to man's body, the Eucharist nourishes, sustains, increases, and gives pleasure to the soul of man. St. Augustine cries out: "O Sacrament of piety, O sign of unity, O bond of charity."

Grace has been well named the "seed of glory." Is there a "pledge of glory" in this Sacrament, as St. Thomas suggests in His Eucharistic prayer? St. John writes, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."¹ This promise is hardly meant to be taken for this life. If not, then it must refer to the life of glory. Why should this be? Christ and His passion are re-presented in this Sacrament. It is through the passion that the gates of the eternal were flung back.

¹ St. John's Gospel, ch. 6, v. 52.

Again, the spiritual nourishment and the unity signified through the species of bread and wine mirror imperfectly the state of glory.

As in the attainment of every goal, there are hindrances in the path to the attaining of grace and glory. Just as the bomber, before reaching his objective, must avoid the anti-aircraft guns and the fire of pursuit ships, and the rosebud must endure the vagaries of uncertain Spring weather before bursting into bloom, so, too, man must overcome the impediments in his path to grace and glory. These impediments are sins, particularly mortal sins. There is, in the Eucharist, the power of remitting mortal sin, because it contains Christ and represents his passion, which is the source and cause of the remission of sin. But anyone who receives the Body of Christ and is conscious of mortal sin does not have the sin remitted. He eats and drinks of the Eucharist to his own ruin, as St. Paul forcibly observes. Yet, one who has perfect contrition may receive and have the sin taken away. This sin must be mentioned in his next confession. A person, unconscious of being in mortal sin, receiving the Eucharist, has the sin removed from his soul.

Venial sins are taken away by this Sacrament. As food builds up the body by restoring to it what is lost in the course of the day's activities, so the Eucharist restores to the soul what is lost from the heat of desire through venial sins, which tend to lessen the fervor of charity. The grace of this Sacrament is charity, not only habitual, but also actual, which is stirred up by this Sacrament and through which venial sins are deleted.

Another boulder in the path to the immediate attainment of glory is the punishment due to sin. The satisfaction of this punishment takes place here or in Purgatory. Does the Eucharist take away the total punishment due to sin? The Eucharist was not instituted to satisfy for sin, but to nourish the soul spiritually through union with Christ. This union is brought about by charity, and the fervor of charity gains not only the remission of sin, but also of punishment, not the whole, but part, depending upon the degree of devotion and fervor. This is done through the Eucharist as a Sacrament. As a sacrifice, the Eucharist has the power of satisfying for the punishment due to sin. But satisfaction depends more upon the affection of the one offering than the quantity of the offering. Though the sacrifice would prove sufficient for the remission of the total punishment, again the human element appears, so that the sacrifice is satisfactory for those for whom it is offered, or even for those offering it according to the degree of their devotion.

The bomber, flying over enemy territory, is always in danger of

being shot down. And man, as long as he is a traveller to the grave, is always in danger of sinning. Small planes act as defenders of the bombers. Man is protected and preserved from sin by the Eucharist. As man's body uses food to ward off death, so the soul of man is strengthened by union with Christ through grace. As the soldier is protected by arms, so the soul is protected by Christ's passion by means of which the demons are conquered. St. John Chrysostom describes this effect in these words, "As lions breathing fire, so we depart from this table, terrifying to the devil."

If the effects of the Eucharist are so powerful, it might be asked: may this Sacrament be offered for others? The obvious answer is "Yes." It may be offered for others and is done so daily as a sacrifice. As a Sacrament It may be offered also, because It is the perfect act of religion, union with Christ, and because through Its reception charity is increased and our prayers become more fervent and efficacious.

Another practical question may be brought forward at this point: do venial sins hinder the effects mentioned in the preceding pages? Past venial sins do not. Venial sins actually present hinder the increase of charity not totally, but partially. This happens, because through venial sin man's mind is distracted, so that the actual pleasure of spiritual joy is impeded. However, venial sin does not take away the increase of habitual grace and charity completely, though it can diminish it.

Scarred earth, yawning craters, demolished buildings, docks and ships, flaming oil tanks, all bear witness to the effective, destructive powers of the bomber. These effects are awe-inspiring, because they are so totally brought home to the sufferer and to the eye of the beholder. Yet the invisible effects produced in the soul must inspire more awe. The effects of the bomber can scar and shatter the earth; the effects of the Eucharist could change the world. This terrified, warring world could become a veritable heaven. But, then, why complain? This world was meant to try us to see if we are worthy of the world of glory. War, destruction on a grand scale, disregard for human life and rights are all means of making this test an almost unbearable burden. Still, effective living can overcome the bellows of the dictators, the pounding of bombs, and the raking fire of the machine guns. Effective living is brought about by living with Christ. Effective living is brought about by Christ living within man by means of the Eucharist.