

THE BOND OF ALL

Mere memories are all that the heroes of the past have left behind them. They could leave of themselves nothing more. Little matter how much they would have liked to join hands with the generations that were to come, the inevitable curtain of mortality dropped on their little act in the great drama of the Universe, never to rise again, and they and their deeds fell back into memory's mists, or oblivion.

The future is less than a memory; it is uncertainty whose burden must be borne by either Hope or Despair.

Both past and future are wholly in the hands of God. Only the things of the present can we in any sense call our own—with one exception, the Man-God and His Sacrifice.

He lived, suffered, and died nineteen centuries ago, yet He Himself, His Sacrifice, His life of silent prayer and suffering, are all our own. The Father has made them our own in the True Bread from Heaven which he has given us.¹ In the Eucharist, the past of the Saviour of the world is present to us; and the Eucharist also has given us a foretaste of the future, for of it if any man eat, he shall taste of the sweetness² of the Bread of Heaven³ and shall live forever.⁴

Jesus Christ, Man and God, has been present in truth and reality to every generation since His birth; and His union with each generation has been ineffably more intimate than the clasp of friendly hands. The Mystery of His Sacrifice in its full significance has been transferred through all ages to the present in the Mystery of the Mass, which is a book of the life of the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world.⁵

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the Passion and Crucifixion truly though mystically perpetuated, in order that man may make use of its infinite merit, may partake of its life-saving fruit, the grace of salvation. It is, therefore, although a representation of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, more than a representation. It *is* His sacrifice continued in an unbloody manner. And he who is crucified to the world, and witnesses It with the sublime humility,

¹ John, 6, 32.

² Wis., 16, 20.

³ John, 6, 33.

⁴ John, 6, 52.

⁵ Apoc., 13, 8.

all-trusting faith, and love of the penitent thief shall receive a promise like to the one made him: "Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."⁵

All the other mysteries of the Saviour's life are and always will be, in a certain sense, a present reality on our altars; at least, they are there far more than a memory.

Once the Son of God was summoned to earth by a humble Virgin's word; and now at every bidding of His priests He comes from Heaven down upon our altars—to all intent as helpless as the Babe of Bethlehem—with the white linen for His swaddling cloths.

And beneath the commonplace appearance of a little piece of bread dwells the glorious Christ of the Resurrection and Ascension, with His perfect Humanity and every attribute of the Divine Nature.

We know He preached simple incomparable sermons from the hills of Galilee. Yet how could He, even with the breath of His Sacred Lips, have taught a more touching, lasting lesson of humility, love, and obedience, than is His sermon from the mount of the Tabernacle? It is the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God.⁷

This is the union, in the Eucharist, of the present with the past and the future.

There is something like to the Divine Vision of all eternity before our very eyes as the Second Adam perpetuates His atonement for the fault of the Adam that sinned. For the Second Adam is none other than the Eternal Word of God, through whom all things were made, through whom all things are renewed and purified, through whom all things will reach the state for which they are finally destined.⁸

He is the Lamb who in the Mass is mystically slain for the sins of the world, so that divine grace may descend upon the souls of men and lead them along the true and blessed way: the past is redeemed, the happiness of the future is assured.

Heaven is there, its King, its Angels, its Blessed in the communion of Saints.

⁵ Luke, 23, 43.

⁷ Rom., 11, 33.

⁸ John, 1, 3, and I Tim., 2, 5.

The Poor Souls in Purgatory are there, waiting for the prayers of friends on earth to let fall a drop of the Blood of the Lamb on their suffering souls to purify and liberate them.

All God's faithful children of this world are there in person or in spirit, with their faces all turned toward the Sacrifice, all participating in its prayers, all reaping the illimitable exhaustless benefit of its graces so far as the narrowness of their hearts will admit.

Even Hell is there, scoffing, as it did on the Calvary of Palestine, cursing the tremendous consequences, trembling under the fear and remorse that shall know no end or abatement.

This is the union, through the Eucharist, of the Church Militant with the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant, from which the damned are excluded forever.

There is an even closer union which the Eucharist brings about. It is the union of the soul with Christ in Holy Communion.

The closest union between mortals, however strong and perfect their love, leaves the soul of each "in its narrow sphere of bliss or woe a hermit spirit."

But the Man-God in the Sacrament of Love enters our very bodies and souls under the semblance of food; and, since in His glorious incorruptible state He cannot be assumed as part of ourselves in the way that ordinary bread is, He instead takes us to Himself, makes us part of His Body,⁹ so that rejoicing in our sufferings they may be united to His sufferings for the sake of His Body which is the Church.¹⁰ "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood," He has said, "abideth in Me, and I in him."¹¹

This is the union, through the Eucharist, of man with Jesus Christ.

So we of the Church Militant, being many, but all united to the same Christ, because we each and all partake of the Bread which is the Body of the Lord, are all One Body.¹² This is the

⁹ S. Augustine says in the voice of Christ: "Nec tu Me mutabis in te, sicut cibum carnis tuæ, sed tu mutaberis in Me."—Confessions, Book 7, chap. 10.

¹⁰ Col., 1, 24.

¹¹ John, 6, 57.

¹² I Cor., 10, 16-17.

Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head,¹³ and His faithful followers the members.¹⁴

The Holy Eucharist is the life-preserving, strength-giving Food by which the Church, the Body of Christ, is nourished, and by which it shall live on united until the end of time, and thence in eternity.

Saint Paul, when he calls the Church the Body of Christ and ourselves the members of that Body, is using not merely a figure of speech: he is telling us of a real mysterious union by which we are all made one in Christ,¹⁵ a union far excelling the union of men in any other society, much more sublime than the union of mere human friendship and love.

This is the union, through the Eucharist, of man to man in Jesus Christ.

There is a union of the soul with God that is called charity, and it sums up in one word the meaning of a Christian life. It is the abiding of God in us, and of ourselves in God. It was to purify, strengthen, intensify this union on earth,¹⁶ and to pledge its completion and perfection in Heaven,¹⁷ that the Eucharist was instituted.

For the union with God, which is charity, is impossible without the help of God, which is divine grace; and Holy Communion increases the soul's wealth of grace: it contains Christ Himself, the all-bountiful Author of grace.¹⁸

Besides, the worthy reception of the Eucharist remits venial sins,¹⁹ which place the barrier of created things before the near approach to the soul of its Divine Lover.

Still another of the primary effects of Holy Communion is to excite acts of love and devotion,²⁰ which wipe away, wholly or partly, in proportion to their intensity, the weakness and stains which past sins have left in the soul,²¹ and the temporal punishment due for offenses that have been forgiven;²² all

¹³ Ephes., 1, 22-23.

¹⁴ I Cor., 12, 27.

¹⁵ Rom., 12, 4-5.

¹⁶ S. Thomas, Summa, 3a, Q. 79, a. 5.

¹⁷ *ibid.* a. 2.

¹⁸ *ibid.* a. 1.

¹⁹ *ibid.* a. 4.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.* a. 6, ad 3.

²² *ibid.* a. 5.

of which, together with venial sins, would, if not wiped out in this life, need to be cleansed from the soul by the fires of Purgatory, thus delaying the final and perfect union with God in Eternal Blessedness.

But He hath touched our mouths and hath said: "Your iniquities shall be wiped away."²³ Take this gift from God, where-with you shall overthrow your enemies."²⁴

This is the union of man with God through the Eucharist.

Thus may the Eucharist be said to be the bond of all things. But especially, because of the divine love it excites and perfects in the human heart, is it the bond of charity which unites the Christian man and the Christian woman to Jesus Christ and to the members of His Body the Church.

—Basil Saylor, O. P.

²³ Isaias, 6, 7.

²⁴ 2 Mac. 15, 16.

