

## THE NEW PRIEST AND HIS MASS

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"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebr. 5, 1).

Questions are bound to occur to a newly ordained priest, his family and his friends. Just what does it mean to be a priest? How does the priest differ from the rest of men? What does a newly ordained priest mean to the Church? To his family? To himself? And what is the Mass? Is the new priest's Mass the same as every other Mass? Or is there something really distinctive about it?

Christ answered these questions most perfectly on the first Holy Thursday night when He instituted the Holy Eucharist as "My Body which shall be given for you" and "My Blood which is being shed for you" and when He commanded His Apostles to "Do this in remembrance of Me." His answers form the central core of the "Mystery of Faith." To understand completely this "Mystery of Faith" is not possible for us, but to see the inherent reasonableness and telling implications of the doctrine we need only consider some of the basic truths about the priesthood and the Mass.

### *I. Our Priests Share in the Eternal Priesthood of Christ.*

Almighty God willed that the Divine Word should be proclaimed to the world through a Human Voice, and so the Son of God became Man. Is it not only reasonable that the Word Made Flesh in turn would perpetuate His gospel through other human voices, and so would ordain priests to be His ministers? "Even as Thou hast sent Me into the world, so I also have sent them into the world" (John 17, 18). In this age of machines for accurately reproducing the human voice it should not be hard to understand that the priest of Jesus Christ is the human microphone through which the Divine Word is faithfully recorded and broadcast to the world. For a fuller penetration of the doctrine upon which this analogy is based it is necessary to study in detail the duties of the priesthood and the nature of this sharing in the Divine Mission of the Word of God.

The priest is a man like the rest of men and yet he is different

from them. The priest is the "go-between," the mediator between God and man. This is the fundamental teaching of the Epistles of St. Paul and the great writers of the Church, particularly of St. Thomas Aquinas. Our Holy Father Pope Pius XII echoes this tradition in his encyclicals on the Mystical Body (*Mystici Corporis*) and on the Sacred Liturgy (*Mediator Dei et hominum*). A mediator makes peace between parties that are at variance with one another. He must be equally the friend of both parties. He must satisfy the demands of justice on both sides. The need for a mediator between God and man arose after the sin of our first parents set men at variance with God. The priest acts in the role of God's mediator insofar as he forges a link between God and His people.

Priests are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4, 1). The mystery of the Incarnation is how God could become Man; the mystery of Calvary is how God sacrificed His Only Son for men. The mystery of the Priesthood is how man can take the place of the Son of God; the mystery of the Mass is how man can sacrifice the Son to the Father. The latin word for priest "*Sacerdos*," i. e. *sacra dans*, means "giving sacred things." These central mysteries of our faith are the sacred things given to us daily through the mediation of our priests. For every Mass is essentially the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary.

But just as God comes down to His people through His priests, so, too, the faithful must go up to Him by way of priestly mediation. The prophet Malachias says the people "shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of Hosts" (Malach. 2, 7). The priest is "appointed in the things pertaining to God that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebr. 5, 1). By his prayers and especially by his Mass the priest offers supplication to God and obtains forgiveness of his people's sins. "For in this sacrifice (the Mass) the sacred ministers act not only as the representatives of Our Savior, but as the representatives of the whole Mystical Body, and each one of the faithful."<sup>1</sup>

The office of mediator is best filled by one who has something in common with both sides. The priest, therefore, must be God Who is at the same time Man or a man who selected from men and elevated to the state of mediator. The great High priest of all time who also adequately fills the office is Jesus Christ. "There is one Mediator of God and man, the Man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2,5). Christ is Priest according to the Human Nature which He took from the

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<sup>1</sup> *Mystici Corporis*, A. A. S., 1954, p. 232.

Blessed Virgin Mary, for "every high priest is taken from among men." The Human Nature which the Son of God assumed was the gigantic Human Instrument by which God worked out our redemption. "Through Him God has bestowed on us very great and precious promises, you are to share the divine nature" (2 Peter 1, 4). Christ's teaching and preaching was not His own but was received "from the Father," as also the heavenly graces were from the Father. As St. Paul says, "It was God's good pleasure to let all completeness dwell in Him and through Him win back all things" (Coloss. 1, 19, 20).

The three dominant features of Christ's Priesthood are: (1) Christ as Man is both Priest and Mediator; (2) Christ's Priesthood is everlasting; (3) Christ's Priesthood is the source of all worship. Christ as man is inferior to God. But it should be remembered that, even as man, Christ is superior in grace and glory to all the angels. His power to mediate and intercede for us is, therefore, greater than all creatures. Secondly, the source of His everlasting Priesthood, St. Thomas says, is the everlasting nature of His sacrifice. St. Paul tells us that "Christ appeared as the high priest of the good things to come" (Hebr. 9, 11). Finally, the Priesthood of Christ is the source of all divine worship. "The whole rite of the Christian religion is derived from Christ's priesthood."<sup>2</sup> Since Christ is the "one Mediator of God and Man," it is evident that all others are priests inasmuch as they share in the Eternal Priesthood of Christ. St. Thomas says that Christ's priestly power is the "origin of the whole priesthood."<sup>3</sup> Pope Pius XI clearly insisted on the same point: "Those whom our High Priest uses as His ministers to offer to God a clean oblation in every place from the rising of the sun even to the going down are indeed partakers of that sacred priesthood in that office of offering satisfaction and sacrifice."<sup>4</sup>

No man, however saintly, can dare claim the priestly office of Christ for himself. "No man takes this honor to himself; he takes it who is called by God as Aaron was" (Hebr. 5, 4). The Sacramental character is especially the character of Christ, to Whose likeness the faithful are configured. But a Sacramental character, a kind of sign or seal, is imprinted on the soul by certain Sacraments, namely Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, conferring "certain participations of Christ's Priesthood, owing from Christ Himself."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, 63, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 50, 4, ad 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, A.A.S., XX (1928) p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> *Summa*, III, 63, 3.

Christ Himself, Who by the excellence of His Priestly power instituted the Sacraments, perpetuates His priesthood through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. By the words "Do this in remembrance of Me" He ordained His Apostles and commanded them and their successors to offer the Sacrifice of His own Body and Blood. The character of sacred orders is an active power for the exercise and ministry of Divine worship. "It is the sacrament of Orders that pertains to the sacramental agents, for it is by this sacrament that men are deputed to confer sacraments on others."<sup>6</sup> Lastly, this character is in a certain way the cause and the source of the sacramental grace proper to each sacrament. Father Garrigou-Lagrange sums up the action of the character in this fashion. "The character is an intimate and permanent possession of the soul which enables a man to perform the actions of a priest validly; so it is commonly understood as the active power of Holy Orders to consecrate the Eucharist validly and to absolve the faithful validly from sins committed since Baptism."<sup>7</sup>

A deeper appreciation of the priestly office may also be realized by comparing it to the other parts of the Mystical Body of Christ. Everyone in the Mystical Body shares in the merits of Christ, as everyone who participates in a corporation shares in its earnings. Everyone shares, however, not equally, but according to the degree of his participation. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon and another of the stars; for star differs from star in glory" (Cor. 15, 41).

If we consider the Mystical Body as a corporation, the laity would be the common shareholders, and priests would be members of the Board of Directors under Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body. But the priest is more than an associate or even a representative of Christ. He is in a way the reality of Christ, just as the sacrifice that he offers is not only a representation, but the real, true and substantial Body and Blood of Christ. The priest has a real share in the glorious mediatorship of Christ both by way of carrying men's prayers through Christ to God and by way of receiving God's favors through Christ for his fellowmen. Christ in His role as Head of the Mystical Body came once to earth and offered the great propitiation for sins. Now, aided by His priestly ministers here on earth, He continues to act as our Mediator in heaven. "He is able

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 63, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *The Priest in Union with Christ*, Rev. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., The Mercier Press Limited, Cork, 1951, p. 16.

at all times to save those who come to God through Him, since he lives always to make intercession for them" (Hebr. 7, 25).

The sacerdotal character, therefore, is a participation of the priesthood of Christ and the closest configuration to Him in His office of mediator. This is clear from the superiority of the priestly participation in offering and consecrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass over the lay participation. The lay people truly share in the sacrifice of the Head of the Mystical Body, as stockholders in a corporation, but in a lesser degree than the priest. The laity must offer the Holy Sacrifice with the priest, through the priest and in the priest, their mediator at the throne of heaven. The priest alone, by reason of His ordination and priestly character can consecrate and perform the most sacred act of sacrifice. "The people, on the other hand, since they in no way represent the person of Christ, and are not mediators between themselves and God, can in no sense rightly possess priestly power."<sup>8</sup>

## *II. The Mass Is the Renewal of the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.*

"The priest has two acts: a principal act, namely to consecrate the Body of Christ, and a secondary act, namely to prepare the people for reception of this Sacrament."<sup>9</sup> All the other duties of the priest, to forgive sins, to preach, to teach, all these are ordered to the preparation of the faithful for the sublime act of adoration, the Sacrifice of the Mass. To appreciate the office of the priesthood we must understand the nature of sacrifice. To appreciate the surpassing dignity of the priesthood of Christ we must understand the self-sacrifice of Christ. We shall consider, therefore, the nature of sacrifice and particularly the sacrifice of the Cross in relation to the Sacrifice and particularly the sacrifice of the Mass.

The Council of Trent declared that "Sacrifice and priesthood are so conjoined by the ordination of God that both should exist in every law."<sup>10</sup> In other words, priests are ordained to offer sacrifice and sacrifice, properly so-called, must be offered by God's ordained ministers. But the popular notion of the term sacrifice is quite different from its religious use. To sacrifice in the popular sense means (1) to suffer a loss, e. g. a business man "sacrifices" when he sells his merchandise at a loss to himself; or (2) to surrender something in behalf of a higher object of devotion, e. g. parents who "sacrifice" to educate their children. The second meaning

<sup>8</sup> *Mediator Dei*, A. A. S., XXXIX, (1947), p. 560, par. 84.

<sup>9</sup> *Summa*, Suppl. 40, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. XXIII, c. 1., *Denz.* 957.



is closer to the religious signification of the word. St. Thomas considers sacrifice as an act of the virtue of religion, which is a part of justice. Thus sacrifice must always have something to do with paying our debt of reverence and devotion due to God alone.

Broadly speaking any act of external public worship may be called a sacrifice because it testifies to the supreme dominion of God. In this sense, prayer and the works of mercy are also called sacrifices. "Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise always to God, that is the fruit of lips praising His name. And do not forget kindness and charity, for by such sacrifices God's favor is obtained" (Hebr. 13, 15, 16).

St. Thomas considers sacrifice in the strict sense, however, as the offering of a sensible object or victim to God by a priest with some change or destruction of the victim taking place. The common element of every type of sacrifice strictly so-called is the offering of some sensible thing. It has always been natural for man to use sensible things to express his inner feelings. "Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock with their fat portions" (Gen. 4,3,4). Yet this external offering, it must be noted, is only the sign of the religious will of the one who offers sacrifice. "My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit" (Ps. 50, 19). The good will of the offerer counts more than the sensible victim that is destroyed. The mere offering of ritual sacrifice apart from good dispositions is not acceptable to God. The sacrifice of Cain and Abel is a tragic example. "The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offerings. But for Cain and his offerings He had no regard" (Gen. 4,4,5) "By faith, i. e. the internal offering, Abel offered to God as sacrifice more excellent than did Cain, through which he obtained a testimony that he was just" (Hebr. 11, 4).

A sacrifice differs from other offerings made to God by the fact that there is some change or destruction of the thing offered. As St. Thomas says, "A sacrifice, properly speaking, requires that something be done to the thing which is offered to God."<sup>11</sup>

The generic expression "that *something* be done to the thing which is offered" is deliberately employed by St. Thomas to include all different types of sacrifice. We shall see that a change or destruction need not be understood in the sense of a bloody sacrifice, but that in a very real sense the change can be applied to an unbloody or "sacramental" sacrifice.

<sup>11</sup> *Summa*, II-II, 85, 3, ad 3.

The prototype of all sacrifice is the Sacrifice of the Cross. It was: (1) a true sacrifice; (2) a unique sacrifice; (3) the consummation of all sacrifices; (4) an eternal sacrifice.

First the death of Christ on the Cross fulfills all the requirements of a true and perfect sacrifice. The most sacred Body of Christ was a most acceptable Victim to the Father; the shedding of His most Precious Blood effected the destruction of the Victim; and the external suffering was manifestly an expression of the internal will of Christ united to the will of His Eternal Father. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26, 39). The truly sacrificial nature of Christ's passion was foretold by Isaias, for "Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Is. 53, 4).

The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross was unique, because Christ was at once priest and victim. St. Thomas offers three reasons from the New Testament to show how perfectly Christ was Priest and Victim. (a) The Human Body of Our Lord that was crucified and the Precious Blood that was shed took away our sins. "He was delivered up for our sins" (Rom. 4, 25). (b) His Body and Blood were the offering through which we receive grace. "He became to all who obey Him the cause of eternal salvation" (Hebr. 5, 9). (c) We acquire glory through the same Blood. "We have confidence to enter the Holies in virtue of the Blood of Christ" (Hebr. 10, 1). Therefore, St. Thomas concludes "Christ Himself, as Man, was not only priest but also a perfect victim, being at the same time a victim for a peace offering, and a holocaust."<sup>12</sup>

The Passion of Christ was the consummation of all sacrifices. It was the great sacrifice that was the fulfillment of all the rest. In the awful words of Christ: "It is finished" (John 19, 30). St. Thomas sees the fulfillment of the whole law. The moral law was fulfilled by the law of charity; the ceremonies of the Old Law, mere shadows, were replaced by the substance of the New; and all justice between God and Man was satisfied. The offering of the true Lamb of God was the consummation of all the rest" (John 1, 24). "I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim" (Jer. 11, 19).

The sacrifice of Christ, like His priesthood, is eternal in its efficacy. "Jesus having offered one sacrifice for sins has taken his seat forever at the right hand of God, waiting henceforth until His enemies be made the footstool under His feet. For by the one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (Hebr. 1, 12-14). "And just as it is appointed unto men to die once, but after this

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 22, 2.

comes judgment, so also was Christ offered once to take away the sins of many; the second time He will appear with no part in sin to those who wait for Him unto salvation" (Hebr. 9, 27).

St. Augustine rightly says "Christ was sacrificed once in Himself, and yet He is sacrificed daily in the Sacrament."<sup>13</sup> For the Mass is the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. But what precisely is the relation of the Sacrifice of the Cross to the Sacrifice of the Mass? First of all, the Mass is the one rite of the Church essentially related to the Sacrifice of Calvary. It is essentially related to Calvary because the Victim of the Mass is the same as the Victim of Calvary. It is the same Christ who acts now through His priestly ministers. The same internal will of Christ to offer Himself for sinners is renewed everytime the Mass is offered. "For the Victim is one and the same, and He Who now offers through the ministry of the priest is the same as He Who once offered Himself on the Cross, the manner of offering alone being different."<sup>14</sup> The Mass is also a memorial of Christ's death. It is repeated daily not because the sacrifice of Christ was insufficient, but rather in order that the sacred mysteries of Christ and His Passion be continually recalled: "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes" (I Cor. 11, 26).

We know with the certitude of Faith that the Mass, like the Passion of Christ which it represents, is a true sacrifice.<sup>15</sup> The Council of Trent in 1562 condemned the error that "a real and proper sacrifice is not offered to God in the Mass." From Holy Scripture, too, it is clear that Christ's priests will offer His sacrifice forever. "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation" (Malach. 1, 11). The words of Christ at the institution of the Eucharist indicate that it is to be a Sacrament of His Passion and Death. "This is My Body which is being given for you." "This cup is the New Covenant in My Blood which shall be shed for you" (Lk. 22, 19-20).

But there remain even today disputed points among theologians of the Church as to the essential act of the sacrifice and the way in which this takes place. Most theologians, following the thought of St. Thomas, conclude that the sacrificial act takes place at the time of the consecration. The reasons they advance are understandable in the

<sup>13</sup> *Liber Senten. Prosper*, cf. Epistles of St. Aug., no 98.

<sup>14</sup> Council of Trent, Sess XXII, *Denz.* 945.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* canon 1 on the Sacrifice of the Mass, *Denz.* 948.



light of what has been said of the relation of Calvary to the Mass. (1) The consecration is a perfect representation of Calvary. (2) At this part of the Mass the priest most perfectly takes the place of Christ. (3) This part of the Mass was particularly instituted by Christ Himself. (4) The sacrificial act should involve the Eucharistic Victim, i. e. the Sacramental Body and Blood of Christ. These same theologians agree with St. Thomas that the Communion of the priest is an integral part of the Sacrifice of the Mass, because of the general principle that the one who offers ought to partake of the sacrifice.

In the tradition of the Angelic Doctor, John of St. Thomas concisely explains the substantial unity of the Sacrifices of Calvary and the Mass in the following terms. "Each is one oblation, Calvary as consummating the redemption, and the Mass as applying the power of Calvary to the faithful. And thus we are not receding from one oblation, nor do we multiply it from the part of the victim offered and its value, when we say the Eucharist is a sacrifice, because the same victim which is offered on the cross and the same value and fruit is continued in this mystical representation of it."<sup>16</sup>

We get some appreciation of the great mystery of Love that links the Mass with Calvary in the same sacrificial action from the example of a soldier who exercises the virtue of patriotism in defense of his country. When a man enters the army he pledges his allegiance to serve his country in whatever way the army may see fit to use him. The army accepts this oath of allegiance as the external manifestation of the soldier's will to defend his country. It is an act of the virtue of patriotism. When the same soldier goes on the battlefield he is exercising the same virtue of patriotism but in a different manner. Finally, when the soldier returns from the battle and reaffirms his love of country by another oath of allegiance he renews his act of patriotism. Here we have the same virtue of patriotism taking three different external expressions. The first was rather anticipatory of his country, the second was consummative, and the third commemorative.

Somewhat similarly, Christ offers Himself as a sacrifice to the Eternal Father by one internal act of the will which takes different external expressions. At the Last Supper, Christ freely willed the sacrifice of His life that was to be consummated upon the altar of the Cross on Good Friday. This anticipated expression was a true

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<sup>16</sup> John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theologicus, De Sacrificio Missae*, Disp. XXXII, a. 2, n.XII, c.551, p12.

immolation but in an unbloody, sacramental manner. He immolated Himself by placing His own Body and Blood, under the form of bread and wine, as a sign of their physical separation that would take place on Calvary the next day. On Good Friday Christ's physical Body was immolated. The Bloody Sacrifice of Calvary was the consummation and the full accomplishment of the Last Supper. This was the one great sacrifice for sin. Now Christ has taken His place at the right hand of God in glory. His physical Body is glorious and impassable. It can no more be sacrificed. But His Sacramental Body and Blood continue to be shed upon our altars in daily commemoration. At the moment of consecration the same will of Christ is renewed and by the words of the priest the real Body and Blood of Our Savior is truly placed upon our altars in a sacramental form. The Body is placed under a separate species from the Blood as a sign of the real immolation that takes place. The Sacrifice of the Mass offered by every priest is a commemorative renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary, just as the Last Supper on Holy Thursday night was a sacrifice offered by Christ in anticipation of the Passion on Good Friday.

### *III. The Conclusion.*

#### *A. In General.*

From our examination of the nature of the priesthood and the sublime act of sacrifice we must conclude that priestly ordination means sacrifice and self-sacrifice. First because the priesthood of its nature exists for the accomplishment of sacrifice. And secondly, because the priesthood of Christ is specifically for the accomplishment of self-sacrifice. Therefore, the newly ordained priest inherits a two-fold obligation: to immolate Christ and to immolate himself. But with this dual obligation go the necessary powers and graces for its fulfillment.

By his ordination the priest receives power and grace to immolate Christ, to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to God. Because he shares in Christ's priesthood he is obliged also to immolate himself. "Christ also loved us and delivered Himself up for us a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor" (Eph. 5, 2). "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." (Matt. 16, 24). This obligation of self-sacrifice binds every priest for two reasons.

The first reason is that conformation to the self-sacrificing Priest, Who is Christ, demands special self-sacrifice. Since the priest

ministers in the august sacrifice of Christ, he should have the same dispositions of soul that Christ had when He offered Himself on the Altar of the Cross. As Cardinal Manning wrote, "Every priest, morning by morning, offers to the Father the eternal oblation of Jesus Christ, but in that action he ought to offer also himself. When he says "*Hoc est corpus Meum*," he ought to offer his own body; when he says "*Hic est calix Sanguinis Mei*," he ought to offer his own blood, that is he ought to offer himself as an oblation to his Divine Master, in body, soul and spirit, with all his faculties, powers and affections, in life and unto death."<sup>17</sup>

Another reason for self-sacrifice is the priest's Communion, which is an integral part of the sacrificial action. By the character of Orders the priest shares in the Eternal Priesthood of Christ, but by the reception of Holy Communion he becomes one with Christ as He is Victim for sin. Holy Communion symbolizes and achieves oneness with Christ in the self-sacrifice. By his Communion, therefore the priest should be conformed to Christ the Victim offered and received by both the celebrant and the faithful. The words of St. Paul to the Romans apply especially to the priest who must partake of the Body of Christ as often as he offers Holy Mass. "I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God—your spiritual service" (Rom. 12, 1).

#### B. In Particular.

God looks upon the newly ordained priest as a continuation of Christ among men. Because of what the priest is and what he does, he becomes another instrument in the achievement of God's purpose in the universe. By offering Mass the priest renders to God a divine and perfect homage in which the whole universe realizes its goal; by conforming himself to Christ the priest attains the highest mirroring of God and the greatest likeness to Christ possible to man.

To Christ, the priest is His ambassador. "On behalf of Christ, therefore we are ambassadors, God, as it were, appealing through us" (2 Cor. 2, 20). The priest, having true power over the Sacramental Body and Blood of Christ, is the key to the efficacy of that Blood in the Mystical Body. In the priest's hands Christ places not only the power to administer the Sacraments but also the determination as to how Calvary shall have its effects upon the souls of men. On the priest's zeal in carrying out his work—preparing men for

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<sup>17</sup> *The Eternal Priesthood*, Card. Manning, London, Burns and Oates, p. 5.

the Eucharist by preaching, teaching, and administering the Sacraments—depends the fulfillment of Christ's will "that they may have life." To His priestly ambassadors Christ has surrendered all the power and love of His Sacred Heart, and for His chosen ministers He prays to the Heavenly Father. "Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth. Even as Thou hast sent Me into the world, so I also have sent them into the world" (John 17; 17-19).

The heart of Holy Mother Church rejoices in her newly ordained minister. She sees in him one more guarantee, one more fulfillment of Christ's promise, "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28, 20). In her new priest the Church sees the same power and love of her founder blossoming again. "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Hebr. 13, 8).

To certain souls this newly ordained priest is their special way to heaven. For normally God predestines certain souls as dependent upon this priest for their sanctification and salvation. The very fact that his holiness and his zeal is the hope of salvation to the souls entrusted to him should be a motive for the priest to aspire to the highest conformity with Christ in self-sacrifice. "I will most gladly spend and be spent myself for your souls, even though, loving you more, I be loved less" (Cor. 12, 15).

The new priest represents the very real sacrifices of his parents, teachers, and benefactors. To them his priestly ordination is a kind of divine testimony that God is pleased with their offerings. He was "their sacrifice" to God and he will be "their priest" interceding for them daily at the altar. Religion, whereby we give due worship to God, and piety, whereby we pay due reverence to our parents, go hand in hand and are not mutually exclusive. Thus, if the priest be faithful to God, he will also be faithful to those who have helped him to achieve his divine vocation.

To the new priest himself ordination day is the greatest day of his life, the day he "puts on Christ." Ordination completes in him that configuration to Christ the Priest which was begun in him by the sacramental characters of Baptism and Confirmation. It is a sign of divine predilection and predestination to the even more glorious things of heaven.

To the newly ordained priest the priesthood is an awesome, humbling responsibility. The holiness and self-sacrifice demanded for this august ministry is greater than that requisite for the religious state. "Between a priest and any other man, however good, there

should be as much difference as between heaven and earth.”<sup>18</sup> The priestly dignity, therefore, to him that receives it is not an occasion for self-exaltation; it is inherently a divine mandate to spend himself in the service of Christ and His members “usque ad mortem.”

Finally, to the Blessed Virgin Mary the newly ordained priest is a beloved son. She is the Mother of God who gave humanity to the Eternal Priest and Victim. She will show her motherly care for His priest, cut off from many human ties, by tenderly strengthening him as she did the first disciples in the Cenacle. The priest who by character and grace is “another Christ” should be turned by filial affection to His Mother. Yet she was also the Co-Redemptrix who shared the agony of His blood-stained sacrifice on Calvary. She knows better than we that the priesthood demands self-sacrifice. Her counsel to the newly ordained priest, therefore, is the same that she gave to the servants at Cana. “Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye” (John 2, 5).

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<sup>18</sup> “*Haerent Animo*,” The Exhortation of Pope Pius X to the Clergy, August, 1908.

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“Come to me all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you.” That so few are obviously saints may well be, from the human side, because we shrink from the unrelenting labour of uncompromising good habits and the sweeping demands of thoroughly virtuous living. We can escape some of the deadening of the heart that lies behind aversion to labour by avoiding the alluring contours which the fog of materialism gives to evil; but to fire our hearts to an eager demand for opportunities for this labour, we must be enraptured of what awaits the willing and chosen labourers even in this life. It is only in this way that bitterness is turned to sweetness, and labour into rest.

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