

'STAND FAST IN THE FAITH'

(A Weekly Instruction specially written for the N.Z. TABLET by GHIMEL.)

THE OBLIGATION OF HEARING MASS ON SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS.

(Continued.)

The law of the Church binding the faithful to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy days of Obligation is based both on divine and natural law. Christ when ordaining the first priests, laid on them the command to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass in remembrance of His holy Passion and Death. Even the natural law tells us that we must in some fashion or other acknowledge the supreme Majesty of the Creator. The Church merely determines what the natural and divine laws leave thus undefined—saying what are the times and the ways of fulfilling these duties. Needless to say, the Church has power to lay down such duties, and to enforce them under grave penalties, for she speaks with the power of her Divine Founder. Two considerations will show why the Church has selected the Mass as the most suitable act of worship by which we creatures can pay God the homage we owe Him.

(1) Bossuet, the most famous of French preachers, writes: 'There is nothing greater in the universe than Christ; there is nothing greater in Christ than His Sacrifice; there is nothing greater in that Sacrifice than His death, than the moment in which His soul was separated from His body.' This is equally true of the Sacrifice at which the Church asks us to assist, for the Mass is the ever-living renewal of Calvary's sacrificial act. 'It is an enduring and universal Sacrifice. It belongs to all ages, to all nations. It has at all times and in all places the same virtue, the same Victim, the same High Priest. The same Blood flows from the same Wounds not only for all of us in general, but for each of us in particular. Holy Mass is the basis of our salvation, the foundation of all our devotions towards the Holy Eucharist. It is "Emmanuel"—God with us—God poured out on us, for what is the Church but Christ poured out on us and communicated to her and her members? Once more Christ is all and in all. He is all and in all through Holy Mass.'

(2) According to St. Thomas Aquinas, 'man is bound to render homage to God for these four reasons: Because of God's supreme Majesty, of blessings received, of sins committed, of benefits hoped for.' But how can man, imperfect, nay, sinful as he is, give God what is His due? His only hope of offering an acceptable homage is by uniting it with that homage of the Cross, which was at once human and divine, because offered by God-made-man. Christ and His Church always act together. Whatever is done by the Church, it is Christ Who does it; whatever Christ does in the faithful, He does through the instrumentality of His Church. Christ is one with the Church by bearing her sins; the Church is one with Christ by bearing His Cross. Everything in the Church points to the Altar, to the Sacrifice of the Mass. Holy Mass is the great action of the Church, and through Holy Mass, man is able to pay his fourfold duty to God, to pay full homage to God. These duties, defined by St. Thomas, are summed up in these four words: Adoration, Thanksgiving, Propitiation, Supplication. These are also the four ends as well as 'the four fruits of Mass.'

There is an additional reason why attendance at Holy Mass should be considered the great act of the week. Jesus Christ is 'King of kings, Lord of lords Who only has immortality, to Whom be honor and empire everlasting' (Ep. to Timothy vi. 16). In the vast kingdom over which He holds sway the Mass is not only the expression of the subjects' humble devotion, but also the instrument of regeneration for a society that is sick unto death. 'Let the modern legislator and economist,' writes Abbot Gendens, 'study the his-

tory of Christianity, the annals of sociology. What will he see? He will see that Holy Mass has been the truest, strongest element of civilisation, the real means of its triumphs. He will see that it civilised our ancestors, disciplined their fierce passions, brought despots to a sense of justice, made the people obedient to the laws, broke the barriers between the rich and the poor. Holy Mass was the symbol and bond of charity and union. God's temple was open to all. Holy Mass brought together the lord and the peasant, the master and the servant. All conditions of men met before God's altar. The same Bread of Life was given to all. Admission to Holy Mass was considered the greatest honor: excommunication from Mass the most dreaded moral punishment. The most glorious epochs of European history are those when people publicly acknowledged the sovereignty of Christ and . . . went to Mass. Let sick society return to Christ and to Christ on His throne on the altar.'

TRIBUTE TO CATHOLIC CHAPLAIN

Rev. R. Hall, Methodist chaplain with the British Expeditionary Force in France, states that he was allotted a tent at the base camp at Havre with Father Bradley, the Catholic chaplain, and that 'this was the commencement of a friendship that I am sure will be lifelong.' 'I never,' says Mr. Hall, 'met a more gentle and refined Christian character. His one thought was to serve others, and he cared nothing for his own discomfort as long as he was helping someone else. It was a grief to both of us when a little over a month ago I stood, in the middle of the night, at a railway station, to wish him good-bye. He was ordered to join a field ambulance in the fighting line. His last words were: "Hall, don't forget to pray for me; underneath and round about both of us are the Everlasting Arms."'

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