

## Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

### THE BLESSED EUCHARIST CONSIDERED AS A SACRAMENT.

1. Of all the Sacraments instituted by Our Lord the Blessed Eucharist is the holiest, the most august, and the most admirable. What the sun is in the world, what the heart is in man, the Blessed Eucharist is in the Church of Jesus Christ.

It is the resplendent and divine centre of Catholic worship to which all the other Sacraments refer. It is like the altar of a temple, to which all the other parts of the edifice are subordinate, and which is the point of attraction for all worshippers. So the Blessed Eucharist appears as the central mystery towards which all the religious ceremonies of the Church converge.

The Blessed Eucharist also contains the vital principle of Christianity. It is the soul which animates everything, which nourishes the life of faith and charity in our hearts. It is the soul of all our feasts, of all our offices, of all religious ceremonies.

It is called with reason the greatest, most wonderful, and most divine of all our mysteries: an abridgment of all the other mysteries of the Christian faith, according to these words: "The Lord hath established a memorial of His wonderful works; He hath given food to them that fear Him." (Ps. cx.)

2. The mystery of the Eucharist has a twofold character. It is at once a Sacrament and a Sacrifice. It is a Sacrament when received by the faithful in the Holy Communion or exposed for their adoration, and a Sacrifice when offered to God in the Holy Mass. The Eucharist as a Sacrifice will be the subject of the following chapter; in the present one we shall consider it as a Sacrament. In order to give a clear exposition of the whole doctrine we will consider—(1) the preliminary ideas concerning the Blessed Sacrament, (2) its constituent elements, (3) its reception and its effects.

First Article: Preliminary Notes on the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

3. The name Eucharist signifies thanksgiving. This Sacrament is so called because, in instituting it, Our Saviour returned thanks to His Father; and because we ourselves are enabled by it to render thanks to God, which are worthy of His acceptance, for the inestimable benefit of our redemption. It is called also by various other names, which all indicate its nature and its different properties: The Host or the Holy Victim, the Holy Communion, the Holy Viaticum or Bread of the Traveller, the Holy Table, the Sacred Banquet, the Bread of Angels descended from heaven, the Most Holy Sacrament, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Sacrament of Love—of Charity.

4. The Holy Eucharist is defined as the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ: or, in other words, it is the Sacrament which contains really and substantially, under the appearance of bread and wine, the living Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; that is, Jesus Christ Himself in His entirety, in His humanity, and in His divinity, as He sits in heaven at the right hand of His Father.

5. This Sacrament differs from the others in several ways: (1) The other Sacraments have the power to confer grace, but this contains the Author and Source of grace. (2) The others consist in a transitory action, but this is a permanent and substantial thing. (3) The others have only the one character of Sacraments, but the Eucharist has the twofold character of Sacrament and Sacrifice.

It may be added that the Holy Eucharist is also distinguished among the other Sacraments by the magnificence of the figures by which it was foretold, and by the solemnity of its institution.

6. The principal figures of the Holy Eucharist are the following: The Tree of Life, planted in the garden of Paradise, whose fruits bestowed immortality. (2) The bread and wine offered in sacrifice by Melchisedech, the priest-king. (3) The Paschal Lamb, whose blood protected the Israelites in Egypt from death, and whose flesh had to be eaten with unleavened bread. (4) The Manna, or the bread which God rained down from heaven to feed the Israelites in the desert. (5) The Loaves of Proposition which the

priests placed before the Lord in the tabernacle, and which could only be eaten by men who had been purified and sanctified according to the law. (6) The bread baked in the ashes which Elias received from the hand of an angel, which so strengthened him that he walked for forty days and forty nights till he reached the holy mountain of Horeb. (7) The water changed into wine at the marriage feast of Cana, and the bread multiplied by Our Saviour to feed the people who had followed Him into the desert.

7. The Son of God, after having given a telling image of the Blessed Eucharist in the multiplication of the loaves, that miraculous bread which He twice distributed to the people by the hands of the Apostles, the future pastors of the Church, announced to His hearers that He would give them a more excellent bread than that which they had eaten, a living bread, the true bread from heaven, of which the manna was but a figure. He told them that this bread would be His own Flesh and Blood, and that by eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood they should possess eternal life. This promise, which was then scarcely comprehended, was to be fulfilled and understood at the Last Supper. On the eve of His Passion Our Lord went with His disciples to a large and handsome room in Jerusalem, where the Paschal Supper was already prepared. On the table was the lamb, which was immolated according to the law; also bread and wine for the repast. After the eating of the mysterious lamb, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples; and then, being seated with them at table, He took the bread in His sacred hands, and lifting His eyes to heaven He gave thanks to His Father, blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take ye, and eat; for this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." Then taking the chalice, He blessed it also and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, and drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins. Do this in remembrance of Me." This institution plainly contains the proof of the dogma of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, a dogma which is moreover clearly taught by the traditions of all ages.

8. The design which Our Lord had in instituting this Sacrament is multifarious. He wished to leave us—(1) a living monument of His Passion, whereby to perpetuate its salutary remembrance; (2) a testimony of His ineffable love; (3) food for our souls and a preservative against sin; (4) a pledge of future glory; (5) a living image of His Church, that mystical body of which He is the Head; (6) a pure and perfect sacrifice infinitely agreeable to His Father; (7) a great consolation in the exile of this life, that we might have Him always really present in the midst of us.

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Jesus is the light of the world, illuminating every man who cometh unto it, opening our eyes with the gift of faith, making souls luminous by His Almighty grace—Mary is the star, shining with the light of Jesus.—Newman.

## St. Patrick's Church, Raetihi

### Ireland's Crisis

Ireland's delegates in London to decide Ireland's future. Who with Irish blood and faith is not in breathless anxiety? Who does not hope that Ireland's rights will be fully recognised, and who does not fondly hope and pray that Ireland's women (the bravest of the brave) who stood on Ireland's Calvary, will witness the glory of Ireland's resurrection?

Send an offering to-day to Ireland's Patron, St. Patrick. Ask him to intercede in this crisis and secure freedom for Ireland. Send an offering for St. Patrick's Church, Raetihi.

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