

## Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

26. The feast of Easter, or of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the greatest solemnity of the year. In the Old Law also the *Pasch* was the greatest feast amongst the Jews. It was called the *Pasch*, or *Passover*, (1) because of the passage of the exterminating angel, who smote with death all the first-born of the Egyptians, but spared the houses of the Hebrews, which were marked with the blood of the lamb which they had immolated; (2) because by the Passover God released His people from a long and cruel captivity, and established them in a happy and prosperous freedom.

In the New Law the feast of the Resurrection of our Saviour is likewise called *Pasch*, or *Passover*, (1) because of the passage which Jesus Christ made on this day from death to life; (2) because by His resurrection He has made us pass from the death of sin to the life of grace; (3) because this feast should be the period of the Christian's passage to a new and more perfect life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is, (1) foundation of our faith, because it proves the divinity of Jesus Christ, and consequently the truth of our religion; (2) the motive of our hope, because it is the pledge and model of the future resurrection of our bodies, when the members are to be reunited to their head, and our bodies to become conformable to the glorious Body of Jesus Christ.

27. The Rogations are public prayers, accompanied by processions, which take place on the three days before the feast of the Ascension. The Church prescribes abstinence from flesh-meat on these days. The rogation days are instituted, (1) to appease the anger of God by our prayers and our penances, and to avert His chastisements; (2) to draw down the blessing of God on the fruits of the earth, which at this time are exposed to various accidents; (3) to implore the divine help in the various wants of the Church and State.

28. The feast of the Ascension celebrates the glorious mystery of our Saviour's ascending up into heaven, after having, from the time of His resurrection, spent forty days on the earth, conversing with the Apostles and speaking to them of the kingdom of God. Our Lord ascended into heaven, (1) to give to His sacred humanity the throne of glory which it had merited by its humiliation and death; (2) to prepare a place for His elect, and to inflame them with the desire of being reunited to Him in heaven; (3) that He might be their advocate and mediator before God the Father; (4) in order to send down the Holy Ghost from heaven upon His Apostles.

29. In the Old Testament Pentecost was celebrated in memory of the law given to Moses, and promulgated on Mount Sinai fifty days after the exodus from Egypt.

In the New Testament the feast of Pentecost is meant to honor the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles and on the Church, fifty days after our Lord's resurrection.

30. All days of the year, but especially Sundays, are consecrated to the Blessed Trinity. The Church deemed it meet to establish, in addition, a special feast for the celebration of this mystery on the first Sunday after Pentecost. This feast is meant to remind us vividly of the greatest of our mysteries, which is at the same time the foundation and epitome of our religion and the source of our justification. (1) The faithful should call to mind on Trinity Sunday that they have been baptised, confirmed, and sanctified in every way, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that is to say, by virtue of the Blessed Trinity, that they have become living temples of the Blessed Trinity, and have been wholly consecrated to it. (2) They should renew this consecration of themselves to the honor and service of the Blessed Trinity. (3) They should, in union with the Church, adore and glorify the Divine Trinity, by devoutly making the sign of the Cross, and often repeating the doxology, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

31. As on Maundy Thursday the Church is chiefly occupied in mourning over her Divine Spouse, she can but imperfectly celebrate the feast of the Blessed Sacrament; therefore she has set apart another Thursday, that following Trinity Sunday, to honor the mystery of the Eucharist with all fitting solemnity. The day is rendered more marked by

a solemn procession, in which the God of the Eucharist is carried in triumph, to receive our homage and praise, with all the splendor with which we can enhance them. The feast of Corpus Christi was instituted in 1264.

32. As the feast of the Sacred Heart is a completion of Corpus Christi, it is celebrated on the Friday which immediately follows the octave of the latter feast. The object of this feast is to kindle the love of our Lord Jesus Christ in the breasts of men, and to make reparation for the outrages which are committed against Him.

33. The feast of the Visitation is established in memory of the visit paid by the Blessed Virgin to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, a visit which sanctified the house of Elizabeth, and called forth the wonderful words of Mary, in what is called the hymn of humility: "My soul doth magnify the Lord!"

34. We celebrate on the Assumption the glorious entrance of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, whither, according to common tradition and the pious belief of the Church, she was transported, both in body and soul. In order to enter into the spirit of this feast we must rejoice in the happiness of the Blessed Mother of God, excite in our souls great confidence in her powerful aid, and beg of her to obtain for us the grace to glorify her for all eternity.

35. The Church celebrates also the Nativity, or birth, of the Blessed Virgin by a special feast, (1) because this privileged creature came into the world not only exempt from sin, but already full of grace; (2) because as the dawn heralds the rising of the sun, so did the birth of Mary herald the near approach of the Redeemer.

The Blessed Virgin's parents were St. Joachim and St. Anne, who were descendants of the family of David and the kings of Israel.

36. Feasts of St. Michael and the Holy Angel Guardians.—The Archangel Michael, the chief of the hierarchy of blessed spirits, remarkable for his zeal for the glory of God against Lucifer and his wicked angels, is the special protector of the Church; it is he who conducts pure souls, who have left this life, into eternal light. Faith teaches that each one of us has an angel guardian, who prays for us, offers our prayers and actions to God, turns us away from evil, and excites us to good; who protects us in danger of body and soul, and who helps us particularly at the hour of death.

37. On the first Sunday of October we celebrate the feast of the Holy Rosary. The Rosary is a prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin. It is composed of the Creed, followed by one Our Father, three Hail Marys, and one Glory be to the Father; and then of fifteen decades of Hail Marys, each decade preceded by an Our Father, and terminated by a Glory be to the Father, etc.

We honor the Blessed Virgin by reciting the Rosary and meditating, during the recitation of the fifteen decades, on the fifteen mysteries relating to her own life, or those of her Divine Son, connected with it. These mysteries are divided into three groups: the five joyful mysteries, the five sorrowful mysteries, and the five glorious mysteries. The chaplet, which is composed of five decades, represents five of these mysteries.

38. The Church has instituted the feast of All Saints, (1) to honor together in one solemnity all the saints and elect who are in heaven, the greater number of whom are unknown to us; (2) to excite us powerfully to virtue by so many examples; (3) to obtain for us more graces, by giving us a greater number of intercessors; (4) to help us to supply by this general feast for all our shortcomings in the honor we have rendered to the saints.

39. The Church has chosen the day following the feast of All Saints for the commemoration of the dead. On this day she offers solemn prayers to God for all the souls in purgatory, thus showing that the Church triumphant, the Church suffering, and the Church militant are united by the closest bonds of charity, and go to form but the one Church of Jesus Christ. In order to enter into the spirit of this day we must, (1) pray and obtain prayers, practice good works, and, above all, cause the Holy Sacrifice to be celebrated for the faithful departed; (2) we must conceive a great horror of venial sin, which is punished so rigorously in the next life; (3) we must try to make satisfaction in this world to the justice of an offended God.