

The Life Of Our Lord

Symbolised in the Mass.

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A Very Devout Meditation on the Life of Our Lord As Symbolised in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

‘Contemplacio molt Devota’.

FOREWORD.

Saint Vincent Ferrer was born at Valencia, in Spain, on January 23, 1350, and was baptized the same day. His family was of English origin and a Bernard Ferrer, fourth son of the Earl of Derby, and Ansias Ferrer, a Scottish lord, took part in the conquest of Valencia in 1238. Both were ennobled by James I of Aragon. On February 2, 1367, Vincent entered the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans) at Valencia, and was ordained priest at Barcelona in 1379. His life was one of intense missionary activity. He travelled on foot over Europe many times, preaching Christ Crucified at a period when the Church was in sore straits. So vivid were his sermons that he was called — ‘The Angel of the Judgment’, and his miracles were so numerous — the number of authentic miracles wrought by him and accepted by the Church is 873 — and so striking, that he was known even in his lifetime as — ‘The Wonder-worker’. He died on April 5, 1419, and was canonised by Pope Calixtus III on June 29, 1455, though the Decree of Canonisation was not published until October 1 1458, by Pope Pius I. On his missionary journeys, he sang Mass each day. His devotion to the Holy Sacrifice was extraordinary. He wept abundantly, and the mere sight of him at the altar inspired love and reverence in all who were present. This little treatise was composed by the saint for the benefit of those who assisted at Mass, and although it is Mass according to the Dominican Rite of which he speaks, his words may well be applied to the Holy Sacrifice celebrated according to any Rite of the Church. [Obviously, in the Western, or Latin, Patriarchate this includes the Mass of Saint Pius V, (1566-1572) and of Paul VI (1963-1978).]

Some of the symbolism may appear to be rather forced, but the fact that a saint has written the little work should win a welcome for it. The *Contemplacio molt Devota* has been published many times, but never, as far as I know, in English.

STANISLAUS M. HOGAN, O.P.

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Every Christian should believe with his whole strength that Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, ordained and instituted the Most August Sacrifice of the Mass on Maundy (Holy) Thursday, in the presence of His holy Apostles, and that He bade them do likewise with great reverence as a continual memorial. For this is the testimony of Saint Luke (see Chapter 22:19), and of Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians: Do this in remembrance of Me (1 Corinth 11:24) — that is — : Keep before you and meditate upon the Sacred Life of Jesus Christ by hearing Mass. Wherefore the

priest says at the Elevation of the Chalice: As often as you do these things, you shall do them in remembrance of Me. He does not say, in remembrance of My Passion, but in remembrance of Me, thus showing that the Mass is not only a representation of the sacred death of Jesus Christ, but that it is also an epitome of His whole life, from His Incarnation even to His Ascension.

Some may say, however, that this command was given to, and imposed upon, priests only; that it was not given to lay people. I reply, that the command was given to the laity as well. Priests are bidden to keep the sacred life of Jesus Christ in mind by the devout celebration of Mass; the laity are to keep that life before them by assisting at Mass very devoutly.

Now, there are thirty chief things which were done by the Son of God, Who came down from heaven and took flesh in the virginal womb of the Most Holy Mary, each of which is included in, and shown forth by, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

These things are the following:

1. THE INCARNATION.

The first thing done for our sake by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was His most noble and most wonderful Incarnation, when He came down from heaven and enthroned Himself in the bosom of Mary Ever Virgin, and clothed Himself therein with our vesture — that is, with our human nature; for His Godhead was hidden beneath the veils of His human nature.

This wonderful work is symbolised in the Mass when the priest enters the sacristy, thereby representing the entrance of the Son of God within the virginal bosom of His Virgin Mother, wherein He was clothed with our nature.

The devout Christian may contemplate three things here: First, as relics, vestments, and other church ornaments are kept in the sacristy, so also in the glorious shrine of the virginal bosom there were relics — the power of God the Father, the wisdom and person of God the Son, and the operative grace of God the Holy Ghost. Vestments, too, were there — to wit, Grace and Virtue, since the fullness of Grace and of Virtue was found in Mary Ever Virgin; while the ornaments with which our great High Priest was to offer sacrifice on the Altar of the Cross on Good Friday were present in the most noble and most sacred Body of Jesus Christ, which was formed from the pure and immaculate blood of His Mother.

Secondly, the laity do not see the priest vesting in the sacristy, though they believe he is vesting, and hope he will come forth soon. When the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, was vested in the virginal womb of Mary, the Jewish people knew it not, nor did they behold the mystery, for His Incarnation was hidden and silent. But the faithful ones believed that He would come, that He would become Man, and would be born of a Virgin, as had been foretold by many of the prophets.

Thirdly, the priest puts on seven different vestments — the soutane, if he be but a simple priest; the rochet, if he be a Bishop; the cowl, if he be a monk; then the amice, alb, girdle, maniple, stole, and chasuble. So also in the bosom of Mary Our High Priest vested Himself with the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, wherewith the Most Holy Body of Our Lord was endowed and adorned. (See Isaiah 11:2-3.) This is the first work which is represented by the Holy Sacrifice.

2. THE NATIVITY.

The second work done by Our Lord was in His issuing forth from the Virgin's womb on Christmas Night, and in His showing Himself to all the world; then the darkness of night was changed into the

brightness of day. He willed to be born in the presence of Mary and Joseph, and to be cradled between two beasts — an ox and an ass. And a multitude of angels sang: Gloria in Excelsis. ‘Glory (to God) in the Highest.’ And the shepherds adored Him. He remained hidden in the bosom of the glorious Virgin, but after His birth, He openly and publicly made Himself known.

This is represented when the priest issues from the sacristy: The deacon is a figure of Our Lady; Saint Joseph is represented by the sub-deacon; the acolytes are symbolical of the two animals. The lights they carry are symbols of the brightness which accompanied the birth of Our Lord, while the choir which chants the Gloria Patri ‘Glory be to the Father’ as the ministers leave the sacristy typify the chorus of angels who sang the Gloria in Excelsis. The music is a symbol of the joy which filled the hearts of the shepherds when the glad tidings of Our Lord’s birth were announced to them. And the priest, clothed in rich vestments, is a figure of the ineffable purity of Jesus Christ, Who was the All Holy, the Stainless One.

3. THE CIRCUMCISION.

The third most wonderful work accomplished by Our Lord was His willing to be circumcised eight days after His birth. Circumcision was an atonement for original sin, and Our Lord was in no wise bound by the law, since He was absolutely sinless. But in submitting to it, He taught us by His example a noble lesson of humility, since He willed to appear as a sinner and in the likeness of sin.

When the priest, bowing low, confesses that he is a sinner by the words, Confiteor Deo Omnipotenti (I confess to Almighty God), he symbolises this act of Our Lord. Though he has received sacramental absolution, he is nevertheless bound to acknowledge that he is a sinner even if he were holier than Saint John the Baptist, in order that he may show how Jesus Christ, the source and plenitude of all perfection and sanctity, willed to be regarded as a sinner in submitting to the law of circumcision that He might be the fulfilling of the law. Or he symbolises the mystical Body of the Church, the faithful, and in the name of all he confesses the sinfulness of all.

4. THE THREE KINGS

Fourthly, Our Lord received the three Kings from the East, who, led by the star, were brought to the manger, and though they found the Child with the ox and the ass, they adored Him as their God and Lord of all things, and made their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The priest symbolises this when he goes to the altar after the Confiteor, ‘I confess’, and, bowing down, kisses it, saying: Remove from us, O Lord, our iniquities, that we may deserve to approach the Holy of Holies with pure hearts. And, first, as the three Kings offered their gifts, so also the priest offers the incense of devout prayer, the gold of great reverence and adoration, and the bitter myrrh in making the Sign of the Cross in memory of the woeful and most bitter Passion of Jesus Christ.

5. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

Fifthly, Our Divine Lord willed to be presented in the Temple. {Most likely, this occurred before the arrival of the Magi or ‘Kings from the East’ .} His ever glorious Mother bore Him thither and offered Him to the priest; and Simeon was there, and the holy widow, Anna, praising God.

This is symbolised in the Mass when the priest goes to the Epistle Side of the altar and reads the Introit or Entrance Chant (Antiphon). The deacon and sub-deacon are figures of holy Simeon and Anna, the prophetess. The acolytes and other assistants, who may not ascend the altar steps, are

symbolical of Mary and Joseph, and those others who were present, and who stood listening most devoutly to all they heard. Our Lady, indeed, was right worthy to draw near, but she would not, to set the example to those lay folk who, however just and holy they may be, should not approach the altar without grave necessity, lest they suffer loss.

When holy Simeon received the glorious Son of God, Our Lord, into his arms, he sang his *Nunc Dimittis* (Now You do Dismiss Your servant, O Lord) under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. These four verses (Luke 2:29-32) are symbolised by four things done by the priest — the reading of the Introit, the Kyrie, ('Lord have mercy') a petition for God's mercy for himself and all others, the singing of the Gloria in Excelsis, ('Glory to God in the Highest.') and the Collect or Opening Prayer.

6. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

Sixthly, Our Lord fled into Egypt from the Land of Promise, giving way before the fury of Herod, and remained in the country of Egypt with His Mother and Saint Joseph for seven years {if the exile lasted that length of time, which most scholars seriously doubt}.

When the sub-deacon, assisted by an acolyte, proceeds to sing the Epistle, the priest, deacon, and other acolyte remaining at the altar, we have a symbol of this sojourn in Egypt. The priest leaves the altar, and, on being seated, does seven things, which typify the seven years of exile — 1st, He reads the Epistle; 2nd, the Responsary (or Responsorial Psalm); 3rd, the Alleluia (a Hebrew word, which means Praise given to God); 4th, the Tract {a special poem or hymn, suitable to the occasion}; 5th, the Gospel; 6th, the incense is blessed, 7th, he gives the blessing to the deacon standing up, to signify that Our Lord returned into His own country in the seventh year.

7. THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE.

Seventhly, when Our Lord returned from Egypt on the death of Herod, {about the year 4 B.C.} He was brought by His Mother and Saint Joseph to the Temple in Jerusalem, when he was twelve years old. Our Lord stayed in the Temple. On the third day Mary and Joseph found Him in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions.

This is symbolised by the priest when he goes to the altar and listens with devout attention to the singing of the Gospel, to signify that as Our Lord listened to the questioning of the Jewish doctors and instructed them regarding the Messiah, so he listens to the teachings of his Divine Master. Wherefore, on the conclusion of the Gospel by the deacon, the priest intones: *Credo in Unum Deum.* ('I believe in One God'.)

8. THE HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH.

Eighthly, so great was the joy of Our Lady and Saint Joseph when they found Our Lord in the Temple that they wept; and Jesus Christ, on seeing this, filled with love and humility, left the company of the doctors and went down with His parents to Nazareth. There He assuaged their sorrow at His loss by His obedience to them, for the evangelist tells us; He was subject to them. (Saint Luke, 2:51.) This lowly service is symbolised by the priest when, on the conclusion of the Credo, he turns to the people and says, *Dominus vobiscum* (The Lord be with you), afterwards arranging the Host, chalice, and other things appertaining to the Holy Sacrifice, to signify the submission of Our Lord to His Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph, since He said: The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. (Saint Matthew, 20:28.)

9. OUR LORD'S OBEDIENCE AND HIS BAPTISM.

Ninthly, when Our Lord was thirty years old, He left His home at Nazareth, where He had ministered to and obeyed His Mother and Saint Joseph, (until Saint Joseph's death,) assisting them in many ways. He went with the other children to draw water from the well, as the Master of Ecclesiastical History tells us. He worked with Saint Joseph at the carpenter's bench as Saint Matthew (13:55), and Saint Mark (6:3), and the Gloss of Saint Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) teach us. Then, in His thirtieth year, He went to the river Jordan to be baptized. He did not require to be baptized, yet He submitted to the rite, that the water might acquire virtue through contact with His Sacred Body for the re-generation and salvation of all who believed in, and were obedient to Him.

This is symbolised by the priest when he washes his hands at the Lavabo. (Wash me, O Lord. I will wash my hands among the innocent, and will compass your altar, O Lord.) He does not do this of necessity, for his conscience has been cleansed already by Sacramental Confession, but as a remembrance of the lesson of humility taught us by Jesus Christ in willing to be baptized.

10. THE FAST IN THE DESERT.

Tenth, according to Saint Luke, Saint Mark, and Saint Matthew, Our Lord retired into the desert after His baptism, where He fasted forty days and forty nights, neither eating nor drinking, but passing the whole time in prayer, not for Himself indeed, but for us.

When the priest bows low at the altar and prays, In spiritu humilitatis (In a humble spirit), { 'With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord,' — this prayer is now being said just before the Lavabo, in both Pius V's Mass and in that of Paul VI } he symbolises this prayer of Our Lord. He prays that we may become a sacrifice acceptable to God through the Sacrifice of the Mass; and the prayer brings to mind the prostrations and humiliation of Our Lord when He prayed and pleaded in the desert. Then the priest turns to the people, saying: Orate fratres, Pray for me, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may both alike be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father, in the sight of the Lord. Let it be borne in mind that Our Lord's prayer in the desert was secret; so also now the priest prays so secretly and silently that he cannot be heard by either the deacon or sub-deacon.

11. OUR LORD'S PREACHING.

Eleventh, when Our Blessed Lord had, fasted He — 'began to preach and to say: — "Do penance, repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand".' (Saint Matthew 4:17.) This is symbolised by the priest when he sings, Sursum Corda (Lift up your hearts) in a loud voice, holding his hands uplifted, showing us that Our Lord taught by word and work.

12. HIS MIRACLES.

Twelfth, Our Lord taught not only by word and example, but He confirmed His teaching by His miracles, by those things, to wit, which God alone can do — raise the dead to life, give sight to the blind, and heal the palsied.

The priest recalls this when he says three times, Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, ('Holy, Holy, Holy,') to show that Jesus Christ did not work wonders through any human power, but in the might of the Three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One Almighty God. And when he says, Hosanna, it is to show us that Our Lord worked miracles for our salvation.

13. THE PASCHAL SUPPER.

Thirteenth, when Our Lord had preached and wrought many miracles He came to Jerusalem to eat the Pasch with His disciples. Many things necessary for the redemption of the human race were done by Him in secret, amongst which there were two principal acts, to wit, the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and His last discourse to His disciples, as recounted for us by Saint John (See John, Chapters 13 to 17.) This is symbolised when the priest reads the Canon in secret, so that the deacon alone hears him read, as the Apostles only heard Our Lord's last discourse.

14. THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN.

Fourteenth, when all was finished, Our Lord went forth to the Garden of Olives, and there He prayed three times to His Father on behalf of those who were in limbo (of the ancients), on earth, and those who were yet unborn. And His sweat became blood, a pre-monition to all who were to come after Him that their prayers must be fervent if they were to overcome the great trials and conflicts they would have to face, and which could only be borne by them through fervent prayer and patience.

When the priest makes the Sign of the Cross three times over the chalice, saying, *Benedictam, Adscriptam, Ratam*, ('Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge and approve [or bless, consecrate and approve] this offering') and then makes the Sign of the Cross twice, once over the Host, the other over the chalice, saying *Et Sanguis*, ('so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved Son'), he symbolises this prayer of Our Lord, to show that in His Passion Our Lord prayed for Himself as Man and for us sinners.

15. OUR LORD IS SEIZED AND BOUND.

When He had prayed in the manner aforesaid, the rabble came with great noise, with swords and staves, to seize Jesus. He allowed Himself to be seized and bound, and to be brought in shame before Pilate, who condemned Him to be crucified. Our Lord submitted to the sentence and bore His Cross, which He accepted willingly.

This is symbolised in the Mass, when the priest takes the Host in his hands to consecrate it, saying, *Et elevatis oculis in coelum* (And lifting up His eyes to heaven). And the bells ring to symbolise the tumult and shouting of the Jews when they seized Jesus. Then the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the Host, saying, *Benedixit ac fregit, et cetera*, (He blessed and broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, *et cetera*), to symbolise the sentence of death which Pilate pronounced on Our Lord.

16. HE IS CRUCIFIED.

When Our Lord was condemned to death He was brought to Mount Calvary and crucified between two thieves, the thief on His right being called Dismas; the other, Gestas.

This is symbolised by the priest when he uplifts the Sacred Host with both hands. The right hand is a figure of the good thief; the left hand represents the bad thief. Then he uplifts the chalice to signify that Our Lord offered up His Precious Blood on the Cross to His Eternal Father for the redemption of the human race. Hence, the priest should say in his heart at the elevation of the chalice: We offer You, O Lord, the inestimable price of our redemption.

17. HE SPEAKS AND DIES.

Our Lord did not cease from praying when He was nailed to the Cross. And He cried out in a loud voice, *Heli! Heli! Lamma sabacthani?* (My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?). Saint

Jerome says that Our Lord in fact began the psalm, *Deus, Deus meus, respice in me; Quare me, dereliquisti?* (O God, My God, look upon Me: Why have You forsaken Me?) (Psalm 21 in the Vulgate.) [It is numbered Psalm 22 in the Hebrew] and continued the prayer and to pray this Psalm. He then continued the Psalms and prayed until He came to the words, *In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.* (Into Your hands, I commend My spirit.) (Psalm 30:6 in the Vulgate.) [It is numbered Psalm 31:5 in the Hebrew.] (See Saint Luke, 23:46)

When Our Lord hung upon the Cross the Jews made mock of Him continually, with scornful words, some exclaiming, *Vah!* You that would destroy the temple of God, and in three days build it up again (Saint Mark, 15:29); other crying out, *If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross.* (Saint Matthew, 27:42), while others said, *He saved others; Himself He cannot save.* (Saint Matthew, 27:42.) But Our Lord answered no word; He prayed and pleaded without ceasing until the end.

The priest recalls this to mind when, with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross, he says; *Unde et memores Domine, servi tui, et cetera.* (Wherefore, mindful of Your servants, O Lord). (Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into heaven of Christ, your Son, our Lord, we, your servants and your holy people, offer et cetera.)

Note. — This ceremony is peculiar to the Carmelite and Dominican Rite.

18. HIS SIDE IS PIERCED BY A LANCE.

Though Our Lord was wounded in His hands and feet by the nails, He willed for love of us that a lance should pierce His sacred side, whence blood and water gushed forth. This was miraculous and contrary to nature, for His Precious Blood had flowed—first, in the scourging; secondly, in the crowning with thorns; and, again, when He was nailed to the Cross. But after His death, when His side was pierced by a lance, the blood and water flowed so copiously as to cause wonderment.

These Five Wounds are symbolised in the Mass when the priest makes the Sign of the Cross five times with the Host over the chalice, saying, *Per Ipsum, et Cum Ipso, et in Ipso* (By [or through] Him, and with Him, and in Him). These Signs of the Cross are symbolical of the Five Wounds of Jesus Christ.

19. THE SEVEN WORDS.

When Our Lord was crucified, He spoke seven times from the Cross in a loud voice. (Two of these sentences have been mentioned in Meditation Number 17.)

These are symbolised when the priest sings in a clear voice the Pater Noster, which contains seven petitions. The priest does not say this prayer secretly, but aloud, for Our Lord spoke aloud on the Cross.

20. THE SACRED HUMANITY.

His Bloodless Body Hangs Upon the Cross.

Our Lord willed that His Sacred Humanity should be divided in three parts — His Body hung upon the Cross; His Precious Blood was poured out; and His soul descended into the Limbo of the faithful.

This is symbolised at Mass when the priest divides the Host into three portions. Yet, it should be noted that he holds these three portions united one to the other; for, although the Sacred Humanity was divided, the Godhead was not separated from the Humanity. It was united to each part, as Saint John of Damascus says, *Quod semel assumpsit, numquam dimisit* — (What [the Word of God] assumed, he never dismissed.) That is, when the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ were united, they were never separated. Thus, by way of similitude: If a piece of glass be exposed to the sun, and then is broken into ten or twelve pieces, the sun is not therefore broken up into as many pieces, but each piece of glass reflects the sunlight in the same manner that the whole piece reflected it. So also, each part of Our Lord's Humanity was personally and substantially filled with the plenitude of the Divinity, as each piece of glass receives the sunlight fully.

21. THE CONVERSIONS WROUGHT AT HIS PASSION.

Wishing to, show the efficacy of His Passion, Our Lord wrought the conversion of several persons of various conditions. Wherefore He converted the thief, a man of wicked and sinful life; the centurion, a leader of soldiers, who exclaimed: Indeed, this Man was the Son of God; and many of the people, according to the testimony of Saint Luke. And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts. (Luke, 23:43 and 47-48.)

These persons are prayed for by the priest at Mass when he says three times, *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God, You Who take away the sins of the world). First, he prays for each sinner, to show that Our Divine Lord yearns to save him even as He saved the good thief. Secondly, he prays that, as Our Lord enlightened the centurion, the head of his men, so may He deign to enlighten those who rule others, whether in spiritual or temporal affairs. Thirdly, he prays that Our Lord will preserve in peace and holiness the whole Christian people, that He will pardon their offences, and make them recipients of His grace.

22. THE DESCENT INTO THE LIMBO OF THE ANCIENTS.

After His death, Our Lord did not will to ascend into heaven immediately; on account of His true humanity He willed to descend into Limbo first, that He might give joy to all those saintly souls who longed for Him with eager yearning. As soon as they beheld Him, those souls were filled with rejoicing, and were possessed of essential glory; then, and for all eternity, being exempt from every sorrow.

The priest symbolises this at Mass when he puts one fragment of the Sacred Host into the chalice, a figure of the descent of the soul of Christ into Limbo, and of how He filled those waiting there with such joy and glory that they knew not how so great gladness had come to them. And through the delight and love, they praised and blessed Our Lord, saying: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because He has visited and wrought the redemption of His people. (See Luke 1:68.)

23. THE BURIAL.

Our Blessed Lord willed that after His most bitter death His body should be taken down from the Cross by His friends, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and Gamaliel, who had obtained Pilate's permission. {Gamaliel's participation is not recorded in the Gospels but, based on Acts 5, an ancient tradition associated him with this work of mercy.} They then placed it in the tomb, which still exists in the Church of the Hoy Sepulchre. And His Virgin Mother, the Magdalene, and other holy women were sorely stricken.

This is symbolised in the Mass when the priest, having given the Pax, the Peace, calls in mind during the short time in which he holds the Body of Christ in his hands the grief of the Virgin Mother and those other holy women who made great lamentation, wherefore he should be filled with sorrow for the sins he has committed.

24. THE ANOINTING.

Our Lord willed that He should be anointed with balm and myrrh; that He should be wrapped in a winding-sheet and laid in a tomb cut out of the rock, and that His Body should not suffer corruption.

This is symbolised when the priest consumes the Body of Christ at Mass, for his heart should be a new sepulchre. As the tomb was hewn from the solid rock, so the priest should be strong of faith and of holy life; as the Body of Christ was wrapped in a clean winding-sheet, the priest's conscience should be cleansed from sin and his life should be chaste; and as Our Lord's Body was anointed with balm and spices, so too should the heart of the priest be adorned with all virtues. These are the thoughts which should fill, not only the priest, but every Christian who assists at Mass, with love and devotion.

25. THE RESURRECTION.

Our Divine Lord rose from the dead on the third day, and His tomb was found empty.

This is symbolised in Holy Mass when the priest goes from the middle to the Epistle Side of the altar to show that Our Lord passed from this mortal life to life eternal. The empty chalice is a figure of the empty tomb and of Our Lord's Resurrection from the dead by His own divine power. When the deacon folds the corporal it brings to mind the sacred winding-sheet in which Our Lord's Body was wrapped and which was found in the tomb.

26. HE APPEARS TO HIS MOTHER.

After His Resurrection Our Divine Lord appeared to His ever-glorious Virgin Mother. The evangelists do not mention this; but the doctors of the Church tell us this expressly, particularly Saint Ambrose in his treatise, *De Virginibus*. And it was fitting that Our Lord should visit and console His Mother before any others, since she had sorrowed more than all others at His death.

This is symbolised when the priest turns to the people and says, *Dominus vobiscum*, ('The Lord be with you') and then sings the prayer of the Post Communion, (the Prayer after Communion) a prayer full of sweet comfort and a symbol of the consoling words which Our Lord spoke to His Mother, and of the great praise which the souls of the redeemed gave to Our Blessed Lady, exclaiming, *Regina Coeli, laetare* (Rejoice! O Queen of Heaven).

27. HE APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES.

Our Lord appeared to His Apostles when they were together in the Supper-room, and said to them Peace be unto you.

The priest symbolises this when he turns again to the people and says, *Dominus vobiscum* — that is, Peace be with you all. ('The Lord be with you.')

28. HIS COMMISSION TO THE APOSTLES.

Our Lord summoned His Apostles and said to them, Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. (Saint Matthew, 28:19.)

This is symbolised when the priest says, *Ite, Missa est*, and sends each one present at Mass back to his duties, since the Holy Sacrifice is over. ('Go forth, the Mass is ended.')[Formally, this is the Dismissal.]

29. HE APPOINTS SAINT PETER HIS VICAR.

Our Lord kept His promise made to Peter and the other Apostles by appointing Saint Peter as His Vice Regent, saying to him: *Feed My sheep*. For, according to the doctors of the Church, Our Lord then constituted Saint Peter Supreme Head of the Church. To the other Apostles He said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye shall forgive, et cetera*, and He gave them power to forgive sins — that is, divine power.

This is symbolised at the conclusion of Mass when the priest bows his head and inclines his body, saying, *Placeat tibi, Sancta Trinitas*, ('May the lowly homage of my service be pleasing to You, O most Holy Trinity') praying that the Holy Sacrifice which he has offered in the name of the Church may be acceptable to God and profitable to all Christian people. The inclination which the priest makes in kissing the altar is a sign of God's infinite mercy, who condescended so much as to bestow on sinful man that power which belongs to God alone—the power to forgive sin. Then the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the people to show that our sins are forgiven through the Sacred Passion of Our Divine Lord. [The Blessing is now given before the dismissal.]

30. THE ASCENSION.

Our Lord willed to ascend to heaven in the presence of the Most Holy Mary, His Apostles, and about fifty persons (some say, though others believe the figure to be closer to one hundred and twenty, Acts 1:15) who were assembled on the Mount of Olives, as Saint Luke tells us. He lifted up His hands and blessed all who were grieving over His departure, and then He returned whence He came. (See also Saint Paul's list of those who had seen the risen Lord in 1 Corinthians 15.)

This great Ascension into glory is symbolised at Mass when, having given the last blessing, the priest returns to the sacristy.

Thus, the whole life of Our Lord and Saviour is shown forth in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And may He lead us to heaven, He Who lives and reigns, in a world without end. Amen.
