

Thanksgiving

after

Holy Communion



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By

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INTRODUCTION

THE MOST precious moments of a lifetime are those immediately after Holy Communion. For a brief quarter of an hour or less our hearts are small sectors of heaven. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Savior, Master, King of Kings, is there. He is with us in His fascinating humanity that charmed the multitudes of earth and that today is the joy of the angels and saints. He is present in His divinity that is the essential object of heaven's Beatific Vision.

We play hosts during that brief quarter of an hour to God Himself. Abraham entertained angels; we entertain the Son of God. Concentrating His attention upon us is the miracle worker of Judea. Within reach of our outstretched hands passes slowly the source and author of all grace. The most delightful friendliness brings to dwell with us in intimate association the one who never refused even miracles to those who sought Him on earth.

Our weakness is through this Holy Communion displaced by the strength of the God-man. Through our body and soul courses the purity that counteracts the force of our most passionate temptations. We possess the master and teacher whose wisdom, the basis of modern civilization and of all we mean by the New Law, is placed at our personal disposal.

We, the branches, are united in such close intimacy with Christ, the vine, that the supernatural life of grace flows through us, making us still more perfectly part of His Mystical Body.

All this we know. Theoretically, we can explain with glib facility just what we believe of the glorious and delightful association of Christ and the soul in Holy Communion.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS

When a soul is in the state of sanctifying grace, the effect of Holy Communion necessarily follows. The mere presence of the Savior in the heart is the source of enormous grace. The sacrament works, in the familiar phrase, *ex opere operato*. Even when the thanksgiving is wretched, the soul has received a great deal by the important fact that Christ has dwelt with it, and the sacrament of His love has poured grace into it. However, the measure of this grace can be indefinitely increased by perfection of preparation and care and devotion in thanksgiving.

Yet our thanksgiving after Holy Communion, or our failure to give time to that thanksgiving, has a somewhat startling way of canceling out our professed faith. Our yawns, our distractions, our hurried departure, the listless reading of a prayer book or the fumbling of unattended beads, and the daydreaming through the most precious fifteen minutes of our lives often seem to indicate a complete lack of faith were we not able to plead that universal excuse for all our shortcomings and discrepancies between belief and practice — weak human nature.

Human nature being what it is, we waste most of the precious and important moments of life. Opportunity, that tireless visitor, knocks, but we are too busy or lazy to answer the door until opportunity has reluctantly departed. Love enters our lives, and we chill it to death with yawns and with careless and unintended but blighting neglect. From the slight elevation of our years, we look back sadly over a life of wasted chances, unused opportunities, dissipated gifts, squandered loves, and neglected friendships.

Usually, the only cause is sheer carelessness. Chances slip by because we are not awake and watching. We meet and let pass important people, failing to say the right thing, standing tongue-tied with surprise in their brief presence.

FREQUENT COMMUNION

One has to prepare carefully for the golden moments, or they glide away before one knows they have arrived. One has to cram into the short, important interviews of life as much as possible of preparation and forethought, or the person is gone, and with him the possibility of speaking and hearing and planning the things that might change a life's career.

Time was when Holy Communion was almost an event. Once-a-month communion was the privilege of the good, and men prepared for it prayerfully and followed it up with careful thanksgiving. Its relative rarity made it seem a solemn thing, something to be approached with awe and welcomed with grateful reverence.

Then frequent communion was given to the world by a loving providence at the hands of a Pope who knew the needs of humanity. Beautiful and world saving as frequent communion has been, its accustomedness is a peril. Becoming more frequent, it found at first less of solemnity and more of friendly companionship; then less of awe and more of gratitude. Finally, frequency brought its too usual effect.

SPOILED CHILDREN

We forget to tell our mothers that we love them. Good friends grow frighteningly silent in each other's company. Boredom usually follows in the train of repeated events, even the most significant. Soldiers grow blasé even amid exploding shells, as critics take for granted the paintings they have seen too often or the music they have heard a hundred times.

Because frequent communion was given, not to angels, but to forgetful men, who soon exhaust their resources of thought and emotion, men grew slack in their preparation and careless in their thanksgiving; and the precious moments following the coming of the Eucharistic Christ were increasingly lost.

Men received Holy Communion and rushed from the church thoughtlessly, carrying with them a God unadored, a Savior unthanked, a teacher unheeded, a friend unwelcomed, a source of strength unused. Once more, we proved ourselves children who could be easily spoiled. The very lavishness of our gifts, instead of making us increasingly grateful, made us more prodigal, wasteful, and cynically careless.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

The purpose of this booklet is then quite obvious. It is to help the frequent communicant to use more wisely and profitably the most precious moments of life. Often it happens that one needs only a little impulse or a quiet suggestion, and the obligation or privilege is seized with avidity. The booklet hopes only to give a stimulating impulse or suggestion.

The prayers offered are not in any sense complete. Rather they are meant to be guides for thought. The best prayer following Holy Communion rises from the heart of the one who has just taken close to him the heart of the Savior. The best thanksgiving is the spontaneous conversation of an eager friend with the most tender and powerful friend. Hence, the prayers are guides and suggestions merely. They can best be used as points of departure.

FIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion always supposes the following:

- A realization of who is present in our hearts: Jesus Christ, God-man, lover of souls, divinely powerful, humanly tender, with grace in His hands and the keenest possible interest in His heart for the one who has just received Him.
- A realization of why the Savior instituted Holy Communion: His desire to “be with the children of men”; His longing for intimate union with souls; His keen perception of their needs and His power to satisfy those needs; His knowledge that God

the Father looking upon the soul after Holy Communion will love it more because of its close union with His beloved Son; His eagerness to share our exile and solve our problems; the burning love of the Savior seeking the responsive love of men.

- An act of faith in the clearest words ever spoken: "This is my body; this is my blood. Do this in commemoration of me."
- An act of gratitude for this greatest of gifts: Jesus Christ giving to us Himself, who is the source of all good gifts and blessings.
- An act of love in return for the overwhelming love of God for souls, a love that never showed itself more clearly than in the intimate union of Holy Communion.

In these five considerations, there is an adequate thanksgiving. Thought over slowly and carefully, they cannot fail to arouse in the soul words that convey much of love and faith and gratitude.

CONVERSATION WITH CHRIST

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion is perhaps beyond all other prayer conversation with Jesus Christ.

When we speak with the saints, they are distant in heaven and recalled to us by the unsatisfactory presence of a statue. Even God the Father, though He surrounds us with His omnipresence, seems incomprehensible, vast, beyond the reach of broken words and halting sentences. Though we lift to Mary the eyes of trusting children, we feel that she must bend condescending in her motherly sweetness from a throne of glory.

However, prayer after Holy Communion is different. We speak to a God become man for love of us. We speak to a friend who had in His visible life the pre-eminent gift of friendship; to an intimate actually present in private conference; to a lover intimately concerned with our problems

and our joys, which in life He knew and understood from experience; to a God made sensible and humble and near and dear and incredibly approachable.

It should be easy to pray when prayer is conversation with one like this. And this conversation is the perfect thanksgiving.

One must retell with approval the story of the very little girl who returned from her first communion and, when asked if she had talked with Our Lord, said triumphantly:

“Of course I did. I said, ‘I’m so glad you’ve come, because I love you.’ I asked Him for something for every member of our family. Then I said my alphabet for Him and told Him a ghost story.”

A RUNNING ACCOMPANIMENT

With conversation must go quiet and recollected thought. Perhaps it is better to say that the conversation flows directly from the thought. The mere fact that we recall who is present makes us want to talk with Him. The consideration of His power inspires us with confidence in what He can do for us. The consideration of His love makes us spontaneously grateful.

Therefore, the prayers indicated here are merely the running accompaniment to our own thoughts, perhaps a sort of fuse to set off these thoughts with their consequent emotions and conversations. Use the prayers, not as ideals, but merely as suggestions. And after they have been used a bit, others, far better, will arise from the depths of the heart as one holds the Savior there and realizes through faith and love the infinite value of these moments of divine interview, heavenly consultation, friendly association with the Savior, eager welcome to the God of heaven and earth.

FIRST THANKSGIVING

The Thanksgiving Mass

NO OTHER THANKSGIVING following Holy Communion is more appropriate than the hearing of another Mass. Mass is, as we know, the offering by Jesus Christ, our high priest, together with His priest and His people, of Himself, the God-man, in unbloody sacrifice to God:

- To honor God and praise Him as He deserves.
- To thank Him for His great goodness to the world.
- To win forgiveness for sinful men.
- To draw down favors, blessings, and graces upon the needy world.

After Holy Communion, we are in a singularly important context. We are closely united with Jesus Christ, the high priest of Calvary and the Mass. Because of this fact, at that moment we can especially identify ourselves with Christ offering up this essential sacrifice of the New Law to His Father. If at all times we are members of a royal priesthood, during the time following Holy Communion we are intimately associated with the royal high priest.

So we can with special efficacy offer up this Mass of Thanksgiving, joining ourselves with the priest and victim, and at the same time using the Mass for its four important ends, with special reference to ourselves.

So in the Mass of Thanksgiving we begin by making a brief act of offering, uniting ourselves with Jesus Christ in our hearts, the same Jesus Christ who is about to offer sacrifice to God.

Lord God of heaven and earth, in union with your divine Son present within my heart, I offer you this Mass which He is about to offer to you, and for the great intentions which He has in His

divine mind and heart. Accept me as co-priest with your Son and let the sacrifice I am offering serve as an adequate thanksgiving for the great grace of Holy Communion, which I have just received.

During the part of the Mass from the prayers at the foot of the altar to the Credo:

We recall with sorrow our own sins, confessing ourselves sinners sadly in need of mercy.

We recall the sins of the world, especially that part of the world that will not repent of its evildoing, and we beg God's pardon for sinners.

If there is some member of our own family in need of penitence, we place his needs before the merciful Father. We offer the Mass in sorrow for sin and to beg mercy.

From the Credo to the Sanctus:

We recall God's great gifts to us personally. We think over those graces that have been especially recent and those that are special marks of His love for us.

We recall God's gifts to the world, the world that accepts them without gratitude or even a short act of thanksgiving.

We offer our gratitude for some important grace or favor recently received by some member of our family. We offer the Mass in thanksgiving to the good and merciful Father of us all.

Only the Son of God, Jesus Christ, God-man, ever served His heavenly Father perfectly in birth, life, and death. His death upon the cross was the perfect act of sacrifice, the offering to the infinite God of an infinite victim. Now upon the altar that offering is repeated, but we together with Christ may now offer this act of homage to God.

From the Sanctus to the Communion:

We offer to God the only gift worthy of Him, Jesus Christ His Son, present in our hearts, but also offering Himself in the Mass. Our offering coincides with the offering in the Mass.

We offer to God the perfect life and death of the Savior.

We unite our life with His and offer it to Him as a gift no longer completely unworthy, because it is united to Christ's life.

We do all this to praise God for his infinite goodness and greatness and beauty and power.

From the Communion to the end of Mass:

We beg of God the graces we need for our own soul and body, our success in life and in death.

We ask favors for those who are near or dear to us in love or association, in friendship or in dislike.

We beg graces for the Church, its Pope, bishops, priests, religious, missionaries, sick and well, faithful and unfaithful.

We ask speedy delivery for the souls in purgatory and remember especially our own dear dead and those who have been forgotten.

We beg grace and forgiveness and blessings for the sinful world, unbelievers, pagans, those who do not know or love Christ and His truth.

We offer up Mass for all these favors.

At the end we briefly offer to God our own lives, especially the day that lies ahead, uniting it with the Mass we have just heard and begging Christ to remain with us all through our future.

My God, unworthy though I am, I have at least offered to you the sacrifice of your Son in sorrow, petition, praise, and thanksgiving. To this sacrifice, I unite my own life. Accept it, with whatever I do or accomplish, suffer or enjoy, as a continuance of the Mass. I have united myself in Holy Communion with your

divine Son. Give me the grace never to separate myself from Him. Let my life from this moment be so close an imitation of His that you may accept it for His sake and because it resembles, however imperfectly, His life on earth.

Lord Jesus, be with me through the day, through my life, making all joys sweeter and all sorrows easier to bear.

Never let me separate myself from you by sin. Let my life be an unending sacrifice offered to your Father as a continuance of the Mass.

SECOND THANKSGIVING

The Priest's Official Thanks

THE CHURCH has assigned to her priests beautiful prayers following Holy Communion. No finer thanksgiving can be offered to Christ than these official prayers.

They can be found at the end of every missal, and it is safe today to take it for granted that all intelligent Catholics carry to Mass and use a missal.

Before beginning the Canticle of the Three Hebrew Children in the fiery furnace however, we can pause for a moment to remember the circumstances that make this so important a prayer:

- The Hebrew youths placed in peril of death find themselves delivered by a miracle of mercy. We may pause to reflect how through temptation we are placed in daily peril of spiritual death.
- They are saved by the special intervention of God. The special intervention of the Eucharistic Christ saves us again and again from the hot fires of temptation.
- In gratitude for God's goodness they call upon all nature to praise God together with them. They summon all the powers

of heaven and earth to join them in a great canticle of thanksgiving to God, who has been gracious and generous beyond measure to them. Their prayer aptly describes God's goodness to us.

- The Church then adds its own special prayers of thanksgiving, praise, petition, adoration. As we say these prayers, we are using the official language of the Church addressing Christ, its head and master.

The prayers can be recited slowly and thoughtfully, either as vocal prayer or as a kind of grateful meditation.

THIRD THANKSGIVING

The Five Simple Prayers

THE FOLLOWING prayers are suggested as simple forms of prayer that are modeled on direct conversations with the Eucharistic Christ. Basically, they are acts by which the one who has received Holy Communion:

- Thanks the Savior for three things.
- Expresses sorrow for three things.
- Asks Him for three things.
- Talks three things over with Him.
- Promises Him three things.

The form of the prayers is unimportant. The important thing is the calling of the Savior's attention to matters of deep concern to us and hence to Him. The number three is purely arbitrary and can be reduced or increased according to the wishes of the one making the prayer.

No words are necessary. A simple consideration of these points will lead easily and naturally into the conversational prayers suited to the thoughts aroused.

“I THANK YOU”

Lord Jesus Christ, present in my heart, I thank you for all you have done for me. Surely, I am almost beyond all others your favorite child. My life has been a succession of gifts from your loving hands: my birth in a Catholic home and a Christian country; my adoption in baptism as the child of your heavenly Father and as your brother (sister); the care and protection and love that surrounded my infancy; the health and training and soundness of mind and body that marked my growing years.

You gave me yourself in the joy of my first communion, as you gave me the Holy Spirit to be my strength and light in confirmation...And when I sinned against you, you forgave me in confession and took me back into your love and grace. I have been fortunate in my friends and happy in my associations. Catholic education and training have been mine. To my natural life, you have added the far more important supernatural life of my soul. This moment I am part of your Mystical Body.

For all this, I am grateful from my heart. This morning I thank you especially for these favors:

- [Mention some favor recently received.]
- [Mention a favor that came to your family, to some close friend or relative.]
- [Mention some favor lately given to the world, the Church, or some group of people.]

“I AM SORRY”

Yet in spite of your great generosity to me, I am deeply conscious of the fact that I have been ungrateful, cruel, ungracious, and

mortally sinful. By my sins, I have used your gifts of mind and heart and tongue and hands to offend you. Through my fault, your kingdom upon earth has been retarded and kept back in its advance. I know very well that I have deserved the endless pains of hell. Surely, I never deserved the eternal joys of heaven. Because of my sins I should spend long years in purgatory and merit punishment on earth.

Not for any of these reasons do I now tell you my sorrow for sin. I am sorry because your gifts have failed to win my heart. I am sorry because you have been so good and I so ungrateful and criminal. I am sorry because my sins have crucified you, my best friend and most generous benefactor. My sins of the flesh have scourged your back; my sins of the mind have crowned you with thorns; my sins of tongue have cried aloud for your crucifixion; my sins of pride have put a red rag upon your shoulders and a reed in your hand; my sinful loves have driven the lance into your side; and my dishonesty has nailed your hands to the cross. Forgive me for what I have done to you, who are so good and merciful.

This morning I am especially sorry for the following:

[Beg pardon for some recent sin of your own commission.]

[Beg pardon for someone sin of your past life.]

[Beg pardon for some sin common throughout the world today, or for some sin committed by a member of your own family who does not repent.]

“I ASK YOU”

Never during your life on earth, blessed Savior, did you refuse any request. Your goodness to me personally is just another

guarantee that that generosity is as true today as it was then. Largely through my own fault and because I have neglected the graces you gave me and because I have sinned, I am weak and poor and needy in soul and body. You are infinitely rich and powerful, and you love me. May I ask again? Your generosity is bounded only by our willingness to accept and use your favors.

Dear and generous Savior, you know better than I the things that I most need and that are for my good. In your wisdom grant me these. You know too the things I desire for myself, for others, for the Church, for the sinful world. If they are for our good, grant them, O Lord. Especially I beg virtue for my soul, strength against temptation, a closer union with you through grace, more faith and hope, firmer strength. Watch over my life that it may be lived in accord with your wishes and your law.

This morning I am asking especially for these things:

[Ask for some favor for yourself.]

[Ask for some favor for those dear to you or connected with you through friendship or dependency.]

Ask some important favor for the Church, or for the world.]

“MAY I TALK IT OVER WITH YOU?”

Blessed Savior, life is full of problems and difficulties. There are temptations to be met, decisions to be made, work to be done. There are the difficulties that arise from association with people, from misunderstanding, neglect, unpleasant dispositions. There is the need of walking through the attractive world without falling in love with it.

In all these things, I need your wise counsel and direction, your

strength, your constant help and support. Unaided, I make recurring mistakes. I decide unwisely and with unfortunate results. My work is spoiled or half done because of my limitations of mind and heart and body. So, I come to you as to my wisest friend and best counselor, and ask you what I am to do and how I am to do it. I know you are interested in my life, its problems, and successes. You are concerned with my doing well the things you have entrusted to me. You want my conduct to be a help and not a hindrance to others.

In your life upon earth, you met and solved all the problems that ever could be mine. You see just how I can overcome temptation and what decisions I should make. Give me your guidance and light.

Give it also to the world's leaders, to those who hold the destiny of the Church in their keeping, to my friends and associates.

Especially this morning I wish to consult you about the following things:

[Discuss some temptation or trouble and how to overcome it.]

[Discuss some problem or decision connected with family, friends, associates.]

[Discuss some problem connected with your work.]

“I PROMISE”

Lord Jesus Christ, my life in the past has been continuously disappointing and unsatisfactory. I have failed again and again, seen my best resolutions dissipated, my best plans collapse. The strength and light gained from this Holy Communion give me

hope for the future. I have drawn my strength from you, the source of all strength; I shall not fail again. You have given me new light and courage! I cannot but do better.

It is my hope to live my life worthy of your gifts and your love. I want to go back to my daily life carrying you with me in my heart. Let me take you with me to my work and play, my home and occupation, among my friends and associates, everywhere and with whomever I go. My work shall be done for you; my friends shall be loved for you; my amusements shall be worthy of you.

I promise you I shall avoid the occasions of sin. I promise to make my morning offering faithfully, so that the day with all its actions may belong to you. I promise to make my life more like yours. In this, I cannot fail, since I have held you in my heart. In my association with people, I shall try to live so perfectly that through me they will be drawn to you, to the faith, to goodness.

Especially this morning I promise you these things:

[Promise something regarding sin and its occasions.]

[Promise something regarding your attitude toward home or friends.]

[Promise something regarding your work or casual associates.]

FOURTH THANKSGIVING

“My Soul Remembers and is Glad”

In this simple thanksgiving, we slowly and thoughtfully go through the individual considerations, pausing from time to time to make such acts of faith, love, and gratitude as may be inspired by the consideration of the

truths. No prayers are given, only the thoughts that form the basis of the prayers. The prayers will be recited out of the heart of the one who has just received Jesus Christ.

“I BELIEVE IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT”

Lord Jesus Christ, I believe you are present in the Blessed Sacrament:

You promised to give men your body and blood for their salvation. “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day.”

You proved your power over bread by multiplying the loaves to feed the hungry multitudes; you proved your power over wine when you changed water into wine at the wedding feast.

You said in the clearest words: “This is my body; this is my blood.”

You commanded your disciples to do as you had done: “Do this in commemoration of me.”

Saint Paul, writing to the Corinthians, describes the faith and practice of the early Christians as being just what you had commanded them to be.

From the beginning, the Blessed Sacrament was the center of all Christian life and worship, and so it remained until the sad days of the Protestant rebellion in the sixteenth century.

Today your infallible Church teaches, as it has always taught, this beautiful mystery of your love.

My Savior, I believe in the Blessed Sacrament. Strengthen me to see with my mind what I cannot perceive with my senses.

“I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE BLESSED SACRAMENT”

Lord Jesus, I am grateful for the Blessed Sacrament:

You loved me so much that you could not bear to be separated from me.

You performed the wonder of turning bread and wine into your body and blood though you knew the sacrileges and outrages you would suffer in the Blessed Sacrament; and you did so in the desire to remain with me.

Because of your presence in the host, life can never be lonely to me, for you share my exile on earth.

In Holy Communion, your strength supplements my weakness, your purity calms my passion, and your sinlessness counteracts my temptations.

Through Holy Communion, I am more intimately and fully united in the life of grace with your Mystical Body; and this fact will greatly increase my glory, joy, and happiness in heaven.

In Holy Communion, you give me the opportunity to ask the gifts I need, to talk over my problems with you, to draw light, counsel, and guidance from you, my God and Savior.

No matter what friends may fail me, I know I can always come and find you ready and eager to welcome me, to bring me your love and your sympathy and companionship.

Lord Jesus Christ, I am deeply grateful to you for the great gift of Holy Communion.

“I HOPE THROUGH THE BLESSED SACRAMENT”

Lord Jesus Christ, the fact of the Blessed Sacrament makes me hope with new certainty for all else that I need or desire.

If you have loved me to the point of giving me yourself in Holy Communion, there is nothing that I may not hope for from you.

In the joy of Holy Communion, you have given me a foretaste of heaven; and because of this, I hope more firmly that you will one day give me heaven itself. To those who have received Holy Communion you have promised that you will raise them up on the last day.

I hope now for the strength to overcome my weaknesses, the grace to live beautifully and supernaturally, the grace to bring to others only goodness and truth.

I hope to obtain those things that I need for soul and body, for myself and for others, for those I love and for those unfriendly to me, for the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.

And because of all these hopes, my hope of heaven, my hope for strength and increased grace, life will seem easier and safer and happier and a surer way to the eternity in which I shall possess you, not in the faith of Holy Communion, but in the Beatific Vision.

“NOW I AM STRONG THROUGH HOLY COMMUNION”

Lord Jesus Christ, because of Holy Communion I feel within me a new strength. I am no longer weak and faltering but strong with a strength that is not mine but yours, not human but divine.

What food is to my body, this spiritual bread is to the life and strength of my soul.

Martyrs of the early centuries and martyrs in later time received before martyrdom Holy Communion. In the strength of the Eucharist they dared to suffer tortures and face all manner of death without failing. That strength now is mine, and I can face the daily martyrdom of temptation, difficulty, and duty, not trusting to my own strength but to yours.

Through my veins now flows your purity; your chaste body in the white host has been united with my body, surrounded as I am with temptations; your divinity has come to the aid of my humanity. I can say with Saint Paul, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

FIFTH THANKSGIVING

"Welcome to God"

I

LORD JESUS CHRIST, few were ever willing to welcome you when you walked the earth in visible form.

The doors of Bethlehem were shut in your face. There was room for all the world but not for you, who had created the world. Only a bleak and dirty stable opened its doors to welcome you, who had come into the world begging the hospitality of the men you had made.

From Bethlehem, you were driven out by Herod and found refuge in pagan Egypt among strangers and aliens.

Few were the doors that opened to you during your public life, though you said of yourself: "I stand at the gate and knock." You,

who had planted the love of home in human hearts, could say of yourself that the foxes had their holes and the birds of the air their nests but you had no place whereon to lay your head.

Yet when men did open to your knock, how generously you rewarded them!

Peter welcomed you into his home. You restored his mother-in-law through a miracle and later made him chief of your Apostles.

Zaccheus welcomed you and you gave him faith and an immortal place in your Gospel.

The holy little home in Bethany opened its doors to welcome you, and you brought back its master, Lazarus, from the grave and gave to Mary and Martha your personal friendship and the deep and tender love that made of them great saints.

Mary tended your little home in Nazareth; and because she had given you a little heaven upon earth, you made her Queen of Heaven for all eternity.

II

Blessed Savior, may I play host to you now in the Blessed Sacrament? Gladly I open my heart to receive and welcome you. Willingly I accept you as my best and dearest guest.

Perhaps you will find my heart much like the stable of Bethlehem. Your presence there will make even my sinful heart beautiful and clean.

Perhaps my soul needs a miracle of healing; but once you are under my roof, I know that you will grant me even miracles.

Like Lazarus and his sisters, may I welcome you to my heart? May I then sit at your feet while you speak to me the truths you spoke to them? Your infrequent visits to Bethany were enough to make Lazarus, Mary, and Martha saints. Your frequent visits to me surely can make me a saint too.

I have none of that love that filled the heart of your mother when she welcomed you to her home. I have none of that warmth of tenderness with which she surrounded you. But at least I can ask her to assist me in making you feel at home in my heart; I can beg her to obtain for me the graces I need to make my soul an acceptable dwelling upon earth.

III

Blessed Savior, someday death will come for me; and I shall stand at the gates of heaven, begging for admission.

I shall ask then to be your guest for all eternity; and if I am worthy, you will be my divine host.

May I in anticipation of that day offer you in Holy Communion the hospitality which I shall hope to receive from you? You are now the sacred host who has become my guest; then I shall be your guest, begging hospitality of my divine host.

May the warmth of my welcome now assure me of a warm welcome from you when I beg the eternal hospitality of heaven. May you in that day remember that I willingly and eagerly opened my heart to receive you, so that in the day of my death, when, afraid and unworthy, I seek admission to the courts of heaven, you may open the everlasting gates for me.

Lord Jesus Christ, give me the grace to be a not unworthy host to you here on earth, that I may claim with some slight justice your

eternal hospitality in heaven.

SIXTH THANKSGIVING

My Transformation

THROUGH Holy Communion, strange and marvelous things happen to us. In this thanksgiving, we simply consider some of the marvelous privileges that are ours and say to the Blessed Savior whatever this consideration prompts.

Now that Jesus Christ is in my heart, I am a living tabernacle. Within me dwells the God of heaven and earth. My body is a living temple in which dwells Jesus Christ, God incarnate.

If this be true, let me consider what care and skill have been lavished upon the dwelling places of God:

The Jews surrounded their Temple with the perfection of art, decorated it with gold and precious stones, and guarded it with their lives. Yet only the shadow of God dwelt there. With what reverence should I regard my body, now the temple of the Eucharistic God! What virtues should fill my soul with their beauty, since it houses the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity!

Men build the most beautiful structure they can erect to house God dwelling among them. Consider the beautiful Gothic cathedrals, the magnificent churches in every country. Christ dwells in these buildings only in the hope that He can come into my soul.

A desecrated tabernacle or church is thought to have suffered the worst of sacrileges. My soul and body have been despoiled by sin. Have I cleared and cleaned them and ornamented them to the best of my ability for the coming of the Eucharistic God?

I become for a time a small portion of heaven. Christ, the centre and heart of heaven, is in my heart.

Angels gather about me as they reverence the God within me.

It is within my power to speak directly to God Himself as I shall someday speak to Him in heaven.

Lord Jesus Christ, make me slightly worthy of the wonderful things that have been done in and for me. Make me pure enough to be your temple and your tabernacle. Make me as faithful in your service and as strong in your love as the angels are. Let me carry with me back to the workaday world the portion of heaven that has been mine this morning.

SEVENTH THANKSGIVING

In Union With Mary

No one else ever prepared for the coming of Christ as Mary did. No one else ever talked with Him in such beautiful intimacy and love. A thanksgiving after Holy Communion spent in imitation of Mary is an effective way of bringing home to ourselves the beautiful reality of Christ's presence and of teaching ourselves more effectively to talk with Him and to love and honor Him.

Mary prepared for the coming of Christ through years of prayer in the Temple and through the perfect humility and purity and sinlessness of her life.

When He came, she surrounded Him with the warmth of her love and protection, sheltered Him against her stainless body, and gave Him the perfect service of her life.

After the Ascension, Saint John said Mass for Mary in her rooms in the Cenacle, and Mary made perfect preparation for the coming of the Eucharistic Christ and a thanksgiving that was unique in its love, its intimacy, and its complete absorption in Christ present within her heart.

A consideration of these points before receiving Holy Communion is my immediate preparation for Christ's coming. I compare my own preparation, my soul and body, my love, humility, purity, eagerness, with that of Mary. And,

I PRAY

Mary, mother of my Savior, give me a little of the eagerness with which you waited for the coming of the Savior and a gleam of the joy that was yours when you held Him in your arms. My soul is utterly unworthy to receive Him because of its sinfulness; obtain for me the grace to cleanse it from its sins, that it may be a little more like yours. When He has come in the past, I have been thoughtless, distracted, busy about other things; obtain for me a little of your love, your devotion to Him, your complete absorption in His presence. May He find in me a reflection of those virtues that made him so eager to come to you. I am making my thanksgiving in imitation of you, welcoming your Son in Bethlehem, welcoming your Eucharistic God in Holy Communion.

AFTER HOLY COMMUNION:

I recall the purity of Mary's soul, a soul that was lovely enough to shelter the Son of God. I remember the depths of her humility, that made her call herself God's little handmaid while she was really God's mother. This purity and this humility I contrast with my own sinfulness and pride. And,

I PRAY

Blessed Savior, how little I am like your beloved mother! Yet, at this moment, I hold you in my heart somewhat as she held you in her womb. She brought to you the shelter of a sinless soul. She won your love with

her intense, profound humility. My soul is blackened with sin; my heart is filled with unjustifiable pride. I am ashamed of the shelter that I offer you, and I turn and beg grace of your mother. And,

I PRAY

Beloved mother, obtain for me some of those graces that adorned your heart, so that I may not be altogether unworthy of offering hospitality to your Son. May I have a little of your purity and sinlessness? May I have something of your beautiful humility? If I can become a little like you, perhaps the Christ, whom now I hold in my heart, may love me a little more because He sees in me some resemblance to His mother.

I recall the undivided attention with which Mary devoted herself to Christ in life and to the Eucharistic Christ, whom she received in Holy Communion. She had no other interest but Him. She had no other thought, no possible distraction. With all her powers she adored, loved, and served Him. I, on the other hand, find myself easily distracted by many trifling considerations and interests. I give to Him such divided attention. So,

I PRAY

Lord *Jesus*, alone among all mortals Mary, your mother, gave you an undivided and completely devoted heart. When you were with her, she had no other thought. When you were present, all other people seemed almost unimportant. Her mind never strayed from your interests, as her eyes never left your face. I, on the other hand, receive you and then leave you for other thoughts and people. My mind is running riot with distractions. Trivial interests and considerations take the place that should be given over entirely to you. I am ashamed and embarrassed, but again I turn for help to your mother. And

I PRAY

Beloved mother, obtain for me some of that absorption in the Savior that marked your dealings with your divine Son. You were thoroughly devoted to Him, completely centered in Him. You thought only of Him and His interests. Compared to Him all others seemed unimportant and unworthy. Besides His interest, all other interests seemed trifling and insignificant. On the contrary I am filled with thoughts of everyone and everything but Him. May I have a little of your attention, your recollection, your realization of the great privilege and opportunity that came to you with the coming of Christ? If I have only a trifle of this, I know what important things your Son will say to my heart. He will find me more like you and love me more because something of your complete absorption in Him is mine too.

Mary talked with Christ in the utmost intimacy and friendliness. She discussed the problems of their life—their needs, poverty, joys, happiness, and dealings with relatives and friends. She expressed her love for Him simply and naturally. She knew He was interested in all her concerns, in her aspirations and thoughts; and she was eager to hear what He would say to her in reply.

Silently and wordlessly, I listen to an imaginary conversation between Christ and His mother after Holy Communion or during the beautiful association in their holy house of Nazareth:

She talks of His interests: the success of His Church and His mission among men; the salvation of souls; the winning of the world for His Father.

She tells Him simply and beautifully that she loves Him.

In her humility she tells Him how unworthy she is to speak with Him yet how grateful she is that He permits their sweet association.

As she begged the miracle at the wedding feast, so she asks favors of Him for their neighbors and friends.

She pleads with Him for the success of His Apostles working in the

mission fields.

She thanks Him humbly for having come and asks Him to stay with her always. Following her example, I talk over with Christ:

- His interests, His church, souls, the winning of the world.
- My love or lack of love for Him, begging Him to forgive its weakness and to strengthen it.
- My utter unworthiness of His great goodness to me and my gratitude to Him for overlooking this and coming to me in spite of my poverty of soul.
- The success of His priests and religious and missionaries.
- The needs and necessities of my friends and neighbors and associates.
- My own needs, spiritual and physical.
- My gratitude for the great grace of Holy Communion.

I end by asking Mary to thank the blessed Savior for me, as she can do it much more beautifully and effectively than I.

EIGHTH THANKSGIVING

In Union With the Mystical Body of Christ

THROUGH baptism, we become united with that Mystical Body of which Jesus Christ is the head and all Christians are the members. The grace that runs through our spiritual life comes directly from Christ the head. The more grace we possess, the more spiritual life we possess and the happier we shall be for all eternity; for our life in eternity depends upon this spiritual life which is the life of grace. Our intimate association with Christ our head becomes closer and more perfect through Holy Communion. Through Holy Communion, we receive great stores of this grace, which increases our spiritual or supernatural life.

In this thanksgiving, I recall these important truths and make them the basis of thoughtful gratitude:

- In baptism I became part of the Mystical Body of Christ.
Because of this:
- I was intimately united with God's only-begotten Son and was beloved by God because of this association.
- I was adopted as God's child and made one of the heirs of His kingdom.
- My dead soul was awakened to life through the infusion of grace.
- This grace, the basis of my supernatural life, makes it possible for me someday to see God face to face and possess Him for all eternity.
- Now in Holy Communion I am again more intimately united with Christ our head, and I become more perfectly a part of His Mystical Body. Because of this:
- God the Father regards me with new approval. I can ask favors of Him with fresh courage because of His attitude toward me. [I pause to ask favors.]
- I can adore God more worthily because of my close connection with Christ, His Son. [I pause to adore Him in union with the Savior.]

Great floods of grace pour into my soul; and if I use them, my heaven will be happier and my possession of God more complete and satisfactory. [I pause to ask Christ to give me grace, to make me appreciate the importance and value of this grace which gives my soul its supernatural life and its ability someday to see and possess Jesus Christ in heaven.]

The consequences of this union with Christ in the Mystical Body are most important:

- When I sin mortally, I cut myself away from Christ and cease to be part of Him. God hates me because I have left this union with His Son. I am supernaturally and spiritually dead and can never see or possess God unless by repentance I am reunited with Christ.
- Sins of impurity are especially terrible. “Can I take the body of Jesus Christ and give it over to impurity?” Yet I do this when I take this body of mine, which was united with the body of the Savior, and use it for unclean purposes.

Through this union, I am also united with all Christians throughout the world. Hence, sins against my neighbor are in a way sins against myself and certainly are sins against Christ Himself.

On the other hand charity and love for all men is inevitable, because what I do to them I do to Christ, with whom they are united, and in a way to myself, since I am united with Him and with them. [I pause to consider and make resolutions.]

Because of my union with Christ in the Mystical Body, my work becomes much more precious and important in God’s sight. It is work that is united with Christ’s—work in which Christ shares.

[I pause to offer to God my life in union with His Son and I determine that my life shall be lived worthy of the cooperation of the Son of God, the Savior.]

NINTH THANKSGIVING

Holy Communion Is Like Bethlehem

Jesus Christ is born again in my soul.

My soul is unfortunately much like the stable: cold, ugly, dirty.

I myself am like the dwellers in Bethlehem: distracted, careless, cold in love, and interested in everyone but Christ.

Yet I can bring to Him:

- The lambs of the shepherds, in my purity.
- The gifts of the Magi, in my faith, adoration, and sorrow for sin.
- The love of Mary, who will help me adore her Son.

Had I been at Bethlehem, what should I have wanted to do? I do this now, while Jesus is in the Bethlehem of my heart.

TENTH THANKSGIVING

Consultation With God

I recall what an honor it is to have an interview with the Pope, the President, and other great persons.

I consider all that could be gained by a sick person consulting a great doctor, a man in trouble consulting a distinguished lawyer, or a student talking things over with a great teacher.

For such interviews as this people dress correctly, prepare just what they are going to say and how they are going to say it, determine to treasure up everything they are told by the person consulted, talk as quickly and eagerly as they can when the interview begins.

I am being granted an interview with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity—the Son of God; the King of Kings; the future judge of the living and the dead.

I am permitted to bring my sick soul to the great physician, my troubles of life to the great lawyer, my ignorance to the divine teacher.

How have I dressed my soul for this important occasion?

What is there I want to say? How shall I say it?

I talk fast and eagerly during the few moments of my own interview. Jesus Christ is giving me His undivided attention.

ELEVENTH THANKSGIVING

Holy Communion as Preparation for Death

Death, we know, is inevitable. Yet it is terrible only:

- If I am in mortal sin.
- If Jesus Christ is not my friend.
- If I can look back over a wasted life.

Therefore, at the hour of death my great desire will be:

- To be in the friendship of Jesus Christ.
- To have Him come in viaticum, to take me safely through death to eternal life.
- To have with me in death my future judge as my friend.

Yet when I do come to die, I may be weak, unconscious, perhaps struck down by an accident and unable to use viaticum as I should. I shall use today's Holy Communion as if it were my last.

I make an act of resignation to my death in whatever form it may come.

I beg that when death arrives there may be no mortal sin on my soul and that Christ may be my friend.

I express sorrow for sin as I should like to do on my bed of death, with judgment just ahead.

I plead with the judge, Christ present in my heart, to lead me safely through death into life and to be merciful to me when my judgment comes.

I place my hand in His hand, knowing He will lead me safely into eternity.

SUMMARY

PERHAPS in conclusion the one thing to emphasize is that in Holy Communion we receive our best and dearest friend.

That friend is interested in us, in all that we do, all that we need, all that we meet by way of obstacle, joy, problem, happiness, all our friends, all those who do us harm, our work and play.

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion is then the simple conversation by which:

- We welcome that friend.
- We make Him feel that we are grateful and that we love Him.
- We talk over with Him, knowing His keen interest and His great power, whatever concerns us most at that particular time.
- We put our lives in His hands, knowing that there they are safest.
- We ask Him not to leave us but to go with us into the day and thence into our whole life, trusting that with Him we can do all that is necessary for success in time and eternity.

Holy Communion is our precious moment alone with our friend.

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion is best made in the simple language of friendship.

A FINAL WARNING

Emotion has nothing to do with the value and worth of our Holy Communion—nor has our feeling of joy or delight or intimate association. The value of our thanksgiving is in our desire to welcome Christ and our effort to employ the time of His presence as perfectly as possible.

There are times when the sight of a friend or his presence is a real delight. There are other times when we must make an effort to talk with him and

make things pleasant for him. Friendship is proved, not during the moment of delight, but during the moment when we are pleasant in spite of our lack of delight.

To the one who makes an honest effort, emotional joy will often come. Grace and Christ's approval and blessing will always and infallibly come.

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