

LESSON TWENTY-SECOND.

ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

238 Q. What is the Holy Eucharist?

A. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament which contains the body and blood, soul and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

WHEN we say "contains," we mean the sacrament which is the body and blood, etc. The Holy Eucharist is the same living body of Our Lord which He had upon earth; but it is in a new form, under the appearances of bread and wine. Therefore Our Lord in the tabernacle can see and hear us.

*** 239 Q.** When did Christ institute the Holy Eucharist?

A. Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, the night before He died.

"Last Supper," on Holy Thursday night. (See Explanation of the Passion, Lesson Eighth, Question 78.)

*** 240 Q.** Who were present when Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist?

A. When Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist the twelve apostles were present.

*** 241 Q.** How did Our Lord institute the Holy Eucharist?

A. Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist by taking bread, blessing, breaking, and giving to His apostles, saying: "Take ye and eat. This is My body;" and then by taking the cup of wine, blessing and giving it, saying to them: "Drink ye all of this. This is My blood which shall be shed for the remission of sins. Do this for a commemoration of Me."

"Eucharist" means thanks. Hence this sacrament is called Eucharist, because Our Lord gave thanks before changing the bread and wine into His body and blood, and because the offering of it to God is the most solemn act of thanksgiving. "Do this"—that is, the same thing I am doing, namely, changing bread and wine into My body and blood. "Commemoration"—that is, to remind you of Me, that you may continue to do the same till the end of time.

* 242 Q. What happened when Our Lord said, "This is My body, this is My blood"?

A. When Our Lord said, "This is My body," the substance of the bread was changed into the substance of His body. When He said, "This is My blood," the substance of the wine was changed into the substance of His blood.

"Substance" literally means that which stands underneath. Underneath what? Underneath the outward appearances or qualities—such as color, taste, figure, smell, etc.—that are perceptible to our senses. Therefore we never see the substance of anything. Of this seat, for instance, I see the color, size, and shape; I feel the hardness, etc.; but I do not see the substance, namely, the wood of which it is made. When the substance of anything is changed, the outward appearances change with it. But not so in the Holy Eucharist; for by a miracle the appearances of bread and wine remain the same after the substance has been changed as they were before. As the substance alone is changed in the Holy Eucharist, and as I cannot see the substance, I cannot see the change. I am absolutely certain, however, that the change takes place, because Our Lord said so; and I believe Him, because He could not deceive me. He is God, and God could not tell a lie, because He is infinite truth. This change is a great miracle, and that is the reason we cannot understand it, though we believe it. Once at a marriage in Cana of Galilee (John ii.) Our Lord changed water into wine. The people were poor, and Our Lord, His blessed Mother, and the apostles

were present at the wedding when the wine ran short; and our blessed Lady, always so kind to every one, wishing to spare these poor people from being shamed before their friends, asked Our Lord to perform the miracle, and at her request He did so, and changed many vessels of water into the best of wine. In that miracle Our Lord changed the substance of the water into the substance of the wine. Why, then, could He not change in the same way and by the same power the substance of bread and wine into the substance of His own body and blood? When He changed the water into wine, besides changing the substance, He changed everything else about it; so that it had no longer the appearance of water, but every one could see that it was wine. But in changing the bread and wine into His body and blood He changes only the substance, and leaves everything else unchanged, so that it still looks and tastes like bread and wine; even after the change has taken place and you could not tell by looking at it that it was changed. You know it only from your faith in the words of our divine Lord, when He tells you it is changed.

Again, it is much easier to change one thing into another than to make it entirely out of nothing. Any one who can create out of nothing can surely change one thing into another. Now Our Lord, being God, created the world out of nothing; and He could therefore easily change the substance of bread into the substance of flesh. I have said Our Lord's body in the Holy Eucharist is a living body, and every living body contains blood; and that is why we receive both the body and the blood of Our Lord under the appearance of the bread alone. The priest receives the body and blood of Our Lord under the appearance of both bread and wine, while the people receive it only under the appearance of bread. The early Christians used to receive it as the priest does—under the appearance of bread and under the appearance of wine; but the Church had to make a change on account of circumstances. First, all the people had to drink from the same chalice or cup, and some would not like that, and show disre-

spect for the Blessed Sacrament by refusing it. Then there was great danger of spilling the precious blood, passing it from one to another; and, finally, some said that Christ's blood was not in His body under the appearance of bread. This was false; and to show that it was false, and for the other reasons, the Church after that gave Holy Communion to the people under the appearance of bread alone. The Church always believes and teaches the same truths. It always believed that the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of bread contained also Our Lord's blood; but it taught it more clearly when it was denied.

*** 243 Q. Is Jesus Christ whole and entire both under the form of bread and under the form of wine?**

A. Jesus Christ is whole and entire both under the form of bread and under the form of wine.

*** 244 Q. Did anything remain of the bread and wine after their substance had been changed into the substance of the body and blood of Our Lord?**

A. After the substance of the bread and wine had been changed into the substance of the body and blood of Our Lord there remained only the appearances of bread and wine.

245 Q. What do you mean by the appearances of bread and wine?

A. By the appearances of bread and wine I mean the figure, the color, the taste, and whatever appears to the senses.

"Senses"—that is, eyes, ears, etc. Thus we have the sense of seeing, the sense of hearing, the sense of tasting, the sense of smelling, the sense of feeling.

The Holy Eucharist is the body of Our Lord just as long as the appearances of bread and wine remain, and when they go away Our Lord's body goes also. For example, if a church, tabernacle and all, was buried by a great earthquake, and

after many years the people succeeded in getting at the tabernacle and opening it, and then found in the ciborium—that is, the vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament is kept in the tabernacle—only black dust, Our Lord would not be there, although He was there when the church was buried. He would not be there, because there was no longer the appearance of bread there: it had all been changed into ashes by time, and Our Lord left it when the change took place. But if the appearance of bread had remained unchanged, He would be there even after so many years.

When we receive holy Communion, the appearance of bread remains for about fifteen or twenty minutes after we receive, and then it changes or disappears. Therefore during these fifteen or twenty minutes that the appearance remains Our Lord Himself is really with us; and for that reason we should remain about twenty minutes after Mass on the day we receive, making a thanksgiving, speaking to Our Lord, and listening to Him speaking to our conscience. What disrespect some people show Our Lord by rushing out of the church immediately after Mass on their Communion day, sometimes beginning to talk or look around before making any thanksgiving? When you receive holy Communion, after returning to your seat you need not immediately begin to read your prayer-book, but may bow your head and speak to Our Lord while He is present with you. After the appearances of bread vanish, Our Lord's bodily presence goes also, but He remains with us by His grace as long as we do not fall into mortal sin.

*** 246 Q.** What is this change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Our Lord called?

A. This change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Our Lord is called Transubstantiation.

“Transubstantiation”—that is, the changing of one substance into another substance; for example, the changing of the wood in a seat into stone.

* 247 Q. How was the substance of the bread and wine changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ?

A. The substance of the bread and wine was changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ by His almighty power.

* 248 Q. Does this change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ continue to be made in the Church?

A. This change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ continues to be made in the Church by Jesus Christ through the ministry of His priests.

249 Q. When did Christ give His priests the power to change bread and wine into His body and blood?

A. Christ gave His priests the power to change bread and wine into His body and blood when He said to His apostles, "Do this in commemoration of Me."

250 Q. How do the priests exercise this power of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ?

A. The priests exercise this power of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ through the words of consecration in the Mass, which are the words of Christ: "This is My body; this is My blood."

"Consecration." At what part of the Mass are the words of consecration pronounced? Just before the Elevation; that is, just before the priest holds up the host and the chalice, while the altar-boy rings the bell.

When the priest is going to say Mass he prepares everything necessary in the sacristy—the place or room near the altar where the sacred vessels and vestments are kept, and where the priest vests. He takes the chalice—that is, the long silver or gold goblet—out of its case; then he covers it with a long, narrow, white linen cloth called a purificator. Over this he places a small silver or gold plate called the paten,

on which he places a host—that is, a thin piece of white bread prepared for Mass, perfectly round, and about the size of the bottom of a small drinking-glass. He then covers this host with a white card, called a pall, after which he covers the chalice and all with a square cloth or veil that matches the vestments. Then he puts on his own vestments as follows: Over his shoulders the amice, a square, white cloth. Next the alb, a long white garment reaching down to his feet. He draws it about his waist with the cincture, or white cord. He places on his left arm the maniple, a short, narrow vestment. Around his neck he places the stole, a long, narrow vestment with a cross on each end. Over all he places the chasuble, or large vestment with the cross on the back. Lastly, he puts on his cap or berretta. Before going further I must say something about the color and signification of the vestments. There are five colors used, namely, white, red, green, violet, and black. White signifies innocence, and is used on the feasts of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and of some saints. Red signifies love, and is used on the feasts of the Holy Ghost and of the martyrs. Green signifies hope, and is used on Sundays from the Epiphany to Pentecost, unless some feast requiring another color falls on Sunday. Violet signifies penance, and is used in Advent and Lent. Black signifies sorrow, and is used on Good Friday and in Masses for the dead. As regards the vestments themselves: the *amice* signifies preparation to resist the attacks of the devil; the *alb* is the symbol of innocence; the *cincture* of charity; the *maniple* of penance; the *stole* of immortality; and the *chasuble* of love, by which we are enabled to bear the light burden Our Lord is pleased to lay upon us.

Vested as described, when the candles have been lighted on the altar, the priest takes the covered chalice in his hand and goes to the altar, where, after arranging everything, he begins Mass. After saying many prayers, he uncovers the chalice, and the acolyte or altar-boy brings up wine and water, and the priest puts some into the chalice. Then he says a

prayer, and offers to God the bread and wine to be consecrated. This is called the offertory of the Mass, and takes place after the boy presents the wine and water. Immediately after the Sanctus the priest begins what is called the Canon of the Mass, and soon after comes to the time of consecration, and has before him on the paten the white bread, or host, and in the chalice wine. Remember, it is only bread and wine as yet. After saying some prayers the priest bends down over the altar and pronounces the words of consecration, namely, "This is My body," over the bread; and "This is My blood," over the wine. Then there is no longer the bread the priest brought out and the wine the boy gave, upon the altar, but instead of both the body and blood of Our Lord. After the words of consecration, the priest genuflects or kneels before the altar to adore Our Lord, Who just came there at the words of consecration; he next holds up the body of Our Lord—the host—for the people also to see and adore it; he then replaces it on the altar and again genuflects. He does just the same with the chalice. This is called the Elevation. The altar-boy then rings the bell to call the people's attention to it, for it is the most solemn part of the Mass. After more prayers the priest takes and consumes, that is, swallows, the sacred host and drinks the precious blood from the chalice. Then the people come up to the altar to receive holy Communion. But where does the priest get holy Communion for them if he himself took all he consecrated? He opens the tabernacle, and there, in a large, beautiful vessel he has small hosts. He consecrates a large number of these small hosts sometimes while he is consecrating the larger one for himself. When they are consecrated, he places them in the tabernacle, where they are kept with the sanctuary lamp burning before them, till at the different Masses they have all been given out to the people. Then he consecrates others at the next Mass, and does as before. The size of the host does not make the slightest difference, as Our Lord is present whole and entire in the smallest particle of the host. A little piece that you could

scarcely see would be the body of Our Lord. However, the particle that is given to the people is about the size of a twenty-five-cent piece, so that they can swallow it before it melts. In receiving holy Communion you must never let it entirely dissolve in your mouth, for if you do not swallow it you will not receive holy Communion at all.

Here I might tell you what benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is. The priest sometimes consecrates at the Mass two large hosts; one he consumes himself, as I have told you, and the other he places in the tabernacle in a little gold case. When it is time for benediction, he places this little case—made of glass and gold, about the size of a watch—in the gold or silver monstrance which you see on the altar at benediction. It is made to represent rays of light coming from the Blessed Sacrament. After the choir sings, the priest says the prayer and goes up and blesses the people with the Blessed Sacrament; that is, when he holds up the monstrance over the people Our Lord Himself blesses them. Should we not be very anxious, therefore, to go to benediction? If the bishop came to the church, we would all be anxious to receive his blessing; and if our Holy Father the Pope came, everybody would rush to the church. But what are they compared to Our Lord Himself? And yet when He comes to give His blessing, many seem to care little about it. Because Our Lord in His goodness is pleased to give us His blessing often, we are indifferent about it. The holy teachers and fathers of the Church tell us that if we could see the sanctuary at Mass and Benediction as it really is, we would see it filled with angels all bowed down, adoring Our Lord. These good angels must be very much displeased at those who are so indifferent at Mass or Benediction as not to pay any attention; and above all, at those who stay away. The large silk cloak the priest wears at Benediction is called the *cope*, and the long scarf that is placed over his shoulders the *humeral*, or benediction veil. At the words of consecration, you must know, the priest does not say “This is Christ’s body,” but “This is *My* body;” for

at the altar the priest is there in the place of Our Lord Himself. It is Our Lord Who offers up the sacrifice, and the priest is His instrument. That is why the priest wears vestments while saying Mass or performing his sacred duties, to remind him that he is, as it were, another person; that he is not acting in his own name or right, but in the name and place of our blessed Lord.

I have given you in a general way a description of the Mass: let me now mention its particular parts by their proper names, and tell you what they are. At the foot of the altar the priest says the *Confiteor*, a psalm, and other prayers as a preparation. Then he ascends the altar-steps—praying as he goes—and says the *Introit*, which is some portion of the Holy Scripture suitable to the feast of the day. He next says the *Kyrie Eleison*, which means: Lord, have mercy on us. He then says the *Gloria*, or hymn of praise, though not in all Masses. After the *Gloria* he says the *Collect*, which is a collection of prayers in which the priest prays for the needs of the Church and of its children. This is followed by the *Epistle*, which is a part of the Holy Scripture. Then the Mass-book is removed to the other side of the altar, and the priest reads the *Gospel*—that is, some portion of the gospel written by the evangelists. After the Gospel the priest, except in some Masses, says the *Creed*, which is a profesison of his faith in the mysteries of our religion. After this the priest uncovers the chalice, and offers up the bread and wine which is to be consecrated. This is called the *Offertory* of the Mass. The offertory is followed by the *Lavabo*, or washing of the priest's hands: first, that the priest's hands may be purified to touch the Sacred Host; and, second, to signify the purity of soul he must have to offer the Holy Sacrifice. After saying some prayers in secret he says the *Preface*, which is a solemn hymn of praise and thanksgiving. The Preface ends with the *Sanctus*. The *Sanctus* is followed by the *Canon* of the Mass. Canon means a rule; so this part of the Mass is called the Canon, because it never changes. The *Epistle*, *Gospel*,

prayers, etc., are different on the different feasts, but the Canon of the Mass is always the same. The Canon is the part of the Mass from the Sanctus down to the time the priest again covers the chalice. After the Canon the priest says the *Post-communion*, or prayer after Communion; then he gives the blessing and goes to the other side of the altar, and ends Mass by saying the last Gospel.

During the Mass the priest frequently makes the sign of the cross, genuflects or bends the knee before the altar, strikes his breast, etc. What do all these ceremonies mean? By the cross the priest is reminded of the death of Our Lord; he genuflects as an act of humility, and he strikes his breast to show his own unworthiness. You will understand all the ceremonies of the altar if you remember that Our Lord—the King of kings—is present on it, and the priest acts in His presence as the servants in a king's palace would act when approaching their king or in his presence, showing their respect by bowing, kneeling, etc. You will see this more clearly if you watch the movements of the priest at the altar while the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.