

JUNE-JULY-AUGUST

The Pentecostal Fire



“And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak” (Acts 2:3, 4).

See the flames in the form of parted tongues resting over the heads of Mary and the Apostles and disciples.

O Holy Spirit, bestow upon me power to teach and a love of God and my neighbor that will give life and efficacy to my teaching.

By His Pentecostal gift of tongues, the Spirit of Love annulled the division which had begun at the building of the tower of Babel, and men were again made one in the language of the Word. It was fitting that the conquest of the nations by the Word should begin with a miracle whereby the word of truth would gather all peoples into the one family of the faith by being simultaneously intelligible to all. With this same end in view the Church during the ages of faith united the nations by a common language, the Latin tongue, which, until the great heresy of the sixteenth century, was the universal bond of communication between civilized countries.

On that first Christian Pentecost, Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims who had flocked thither from every Gentile land where Israel had founded a synagogue, in order to keep the feasts of the Pasch and the Jewish Pentecost. Attracted

by the sound of the *violent wind* and impelled also by the power of the Spirit, a large crowd gathered around the house which contained the infant Church of Jesus Christ. We may imagine how the curiosity of these *devout men from every nation under heaven* turned to astonishment when they heard the Apostles, unlettered Galileans, awkward hitherto even in the use of their native tongue, addressing them with extraordinary power in a language that each of them heard as his own.

Here was the symbol of unity in its perfection! Here were the heralds of the one true faith of Jesus Christ! Peter, the Vicar of Christ, his face glowing with enthusiasm; Andrew, already filled with the ardent love of the cross which would be his great characteristic; John, the future prophet of Patmos, his eyes shining with the fire of inspiration; James his brother, the son of thunder, who was to be the first of the Apostles to gain the crown of martyrdom; Thomas, the future Apostle of India; Matthew, the first of the Evangelists; Bartholomew, who would preach the Gospel in Armenia; Matthias, destined to be crucified like his divine Master; Philip, who would evangelize Phrygia; James, called the Lesser, who would be the first bishop of Jerusalem; Simon and Jude, who were to be martyred together in Persia.*

The crowd, struck with amazement, said to one another, "*Behold, are not all these that are speaking Galileans? And how have we heard each his own language in which he was born?*" But even this most striking miracle found its skeptics, for *others said in mockery, "They are full of new wine."* This rude derision, by contrast, only emphasized the grandeur of

* Our knowledge of the Apostles' respective missions and manner of death rests almost entirely upon tradition.

the scene. It was evident to all who were in good faith that these men had been transformed, that they were possessed of a new and supernatural power; consequently, *there were added that day about three thousand souls*. O blessed Pentecostal Fire of eloquence and zeal! Let us ask the Holy Spirit to impart it also to us.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up Thy rest,
Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid,
And fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

To Thee, the Comforter, we cry,
To Thee, the Gift of God most high,
The Fount of life, the Fire of love,
The soul's Anointing from above.

The sevenfold gifts of grace are Thine,
O Finger of the Hand divine;
True promise of the Father Thou,
Who dost the tongue with speech endow.

Thy light to every thought impart,
And shed Thy love in every heart;
Our body's poor infirmity
With strength perpetual fortify.

JUNE 2

The Discourse of St. Peter



“But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke out to them” (Acts 2:14).

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See Peter, the Rock upon which the Church was built, speaking to the crowd under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

O God, instill in me a true filial devotion to the Supreme Pontiff and the Holy See.

Indignant at the mocking charge that they spoke under the influence of wine, Peter, standing in the midst of the Eleven, addressed the crowd. Peter, who had not known how to answer a servant girl, now spoke with supreme authority. "*Men of Judea,*" he began, "*and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. These men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days,' says the Lord, 'that I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh. . . .'* Men of Israel," continued Peter, "*hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did through him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know. Him, when delivered up by the settled purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have crucified and slain by the hands of wicked men. . . . This Jesus God has raised up, and we are all witnesses of it. Therefore, exalted by the right hand of God, and receiving from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this Spirit which you see and hear.*"

Simon, the son of Jona, could not of himself have spoken with this knowledge, this authority, this air of command. He, the former fisherman of Genesareth, gives orders to the Synagogue; he charges it publicly with deicide and proclaims the sovereignty of Jesus over the house of Israel: "*Let all the house of Israel know most assuredly that God has*

made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." The Holy Spirit who inspired St. Peter also touched the hearts of his hearers, so that *they were pierced to the heart*, St. Luke tells us, *and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"* And Peter replied, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise and to your children and to all who are far off, even to all whom the Lord our God calls."* St. Luke continues, *And with very many other words he bore witness and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation."* Those who believed were then baptized and on the evening of that happy day of Pentecost the Church had been increased by three thousand souls. Our Savior had not deceived His followers; already they were His witnesses in Jerusalem, and soon they would bear testimony to Him *in the uttermost parts of the earth.*

My God, I thank You for making me a child of the Church, which is and ever will be inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. Strengthen, I beseech You, my filial allegiance to the Sovereign Pontiff and grant me a living faith and loyalty to the Church, the pillar and ground of faith, that I may steadfastly hold her doctrines, maintain her cause, and defend her rights.

JUNE 3

Christian Unity



“And all who believed were together and held all things in common” (Acts 2:44).

The first Christian community was united by that bond of union which is the gift of the Spirit of Love.

O Holy Spirit of God, inspire in me a strong realization of my union with the other members of the household of the faith.

The first Christian community possessed their goods in common; the proceeds from the sale of their lands and other property were shared with their brethren. *The multitude of believers*, writes St. Luke, *were of one heart and one soul, and not one of them said that anything he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.* The prayer of the Savior had been answered: they were *one*, and because they were one they were happy and strong. St. Luke tells us also that they daily assembled in the temple and then, *breaking bread in their houses, they took their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and being in favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their company such as were to be saved.* From the very beginning, the Church bore her distinctive marks: unity, even to the common possession of goods, freely and spontaneously agreed to by all; holiness, produced by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and maintained by prayer and the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread; growing universality and submission to the authority of the Apostles. Moreover, the primitive Church,

still untouched by heresy, was animated by a charity which it was not to know again in the same degree. This was the golden age, when the least counsels of the Savior were taken according to the letter.

The spirit of these early Christians should be our spirit. The Church is the house of God in which dwells the family of Christ, nourished by the same Bread, cared for and directed by a common Father. And it was because the members of the Church were to live one and the same life under one and the same head that the Twelve remained so long in Jerusalem after the descent of the Holy Spirit, gathered about Peter, their guide and the keystone, as it were, of the edifice of the Church. According to an ancient tradition, they did not leave the soil of Palestine for twelve years, teaching, as our Lord had commanded, first of all in Jerusalem, then in all of Judea and Samaria. Together they preached along the temple colonnades, together they ordained deacons and conferred the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands, together, but always in subordination to Peter, they governed the infant Church.

All we who are the younger brethren of these early Christians should be recognized by the same characteristic love for unity. Against a united Church enemies are impotent; their blows only tighten the bonds of union. We should possess the same catholic largeness of heart. There should be no exclusiveness, no barriers. We should imitate also their docility and filial submission to the successors of the Apostles; for we are *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief corner stone*. And our lives, like theirs, should be characterized by holiness; for the society founded by Christ has the sole aim of sanctifying its members and the Church will

continue her militant life on earth until the number of the elect whom she will have sanctified is complete.

“O good Jesus, Author of our faith, preserve it pure within us; keep us safe in the bark of Peter, faithful and obedient to his successor and Thy Vicar here on earth, that so the unity of holy Church may be maintained, holiness fostered, the Holy See protected in freedom, and the Church universal extended to the benefit of souls. O Jesus, Author of our faith, humble and convert the enemies of Thy Church; grant true peace and concord to all Christian kings and princes and to all believers; strengthen and preserve us in Thy holy service, to the end that we may live in Thee and die in Thee. O Jesus, Author of our faith, let me live for Thee and die for Thee” (from a prayer by St. Clement Hofbauer).

JUNE 4

Religious Union



“I pray . . . that all may be one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us” (Jn. 17:20, 21).

In this prayer to His Father for the Apostles, our Savior reveals the mystery of spiritual union. If the bond of brotherly love should unite all Christians, it should be especially evident in a religious community, whose members have vowed to imitate Christ even more perfectly than the other members of the Mystical Body are bound to do.

O divine Savior, grant me the grace of habitually promoting union in my community by my words and actions.

God is the founder and builder of every religious community. No matter how gifted its human founder may be or how fervent and apostolic its pioneers, God carries the work to its completion. If the work fail, it is always because the members fail in the constant effort to live the religious life perfectly. What are the qualities of a perfect religious life? It is a life led in common, submissive, regular, interior, edifying, laborious, motivated by a pure intention. It makes us aspire only to the happiness of possessing Jesus and of belonging only to Him and to His Blessed Mother. It makes us devote all our goods and gifts only to the honor of our divine Master and the salvation of souls. It makes us exactly obedient by a constant and universal fidelity to the Rules and Constitutions of our community; fidelity that is inspired by love, not fear; by faith, not human expediency. It unites us to one another by humility, meekness, and charity, so that the advice of the author of the *Imitation*, "mutually supporting, consoling, aiding, instructing, and admonishing one another," is carried out to the letter. It is a life in every sense hidden with Jesus in God.

Regardless of difference in employments, a common zeal for the glory of God in the leading of a perfect religious life will bring about a union of hearts. In a great work of charity, as in the erection of a large building; one person alone does not accomplish the work, nor does a single beam of wood or a single stone construct the edifice. On the contrary, the various workmen make their separate contributions, each stone is cut to fit into its proper place, and each piece of timber is so laid that it may add to the beauty and strength of the finished building. With us, likewise, united effort is the indispensable means for achieving our aim which is the salvation and sanctification of souls.

There should be but one mind and one heart among all the members of the community. Between the highest authority and the members should be union such as that which exists between Christ and His Mystical Body, between the Head of the Church and the faithful. A holy and intimate bond of peace and concord should unite the Superiors to the Superior General, the members of the community to their local Superiors and to one another, and all alike should be united to God through Jesus Christ and to Jesus Christ through Mary and Joseph. My dearly beloved, pray for your Superiors; pray especially for her who bears the burden of the general administration, and give to all your Superiors unquestioning loyalty and unfaltering support. Love one another, help one another, pray for one another. Remember that you are to be known as followers of Christ by this sign: "See how they love one another!"

O good Jesus, unite us all by that interior and exterior bond of fraternal union which characterized the early Christians. Let not the cold ashes of pride, envy, ambition, and intolerance smother among us the flames of fraternal charity. Help us to tighten the cord binding together the works of our community, so that Your grace and blessing may flow down upon us, and that the world, upon beholding the fruits of our union, may give glory to You, the Author of our vocation.

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit



“But the fruit of the Spirit is: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, modesty, continency. Against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-24).

The fruits of the Spirit are those works which the Holy Spirit generates and brings forth in us by His grace and through which we merit and obtain the kingdom of God. St. Paul uses the singular, *fruit*, to show that all the works of the Spirit, that is, the life of grace, are manifestations of charity.

O Holy Spirit, help me to obey faithfully Your inspirations that I may bring forth Your fruits.

The fruits of the Spirit are distinct from the Gifts. They are the ripe and full product of the Vine which is Christ, of the three great theological virtues and the Gifts exercised together. The virtues and the Gifts are as the branches and sanctifying grace is the trunk and the sap of the tree of our spiritual life. Actual grace is the light and heat which cause the virtues to ripen into acts. St. Paul's enumeration of these fruits of the Spirit, that is, of the good works pleasing to God accomplished in us and by us through the help of the Holy Spirit, is not arbitrary; it admirably indicates the progress of the reign of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The first fruit of the Spirit is charity and according to our progress in charity is to be measured the extension of the reign of the Holy Spirit within us. As there can be no grace without charity, so there can be no Gifts and no Fruits which do not stem from the love of God and neighbor.

From charity joy is born, the result of possessing the God we love. This joy will always be relative here below, because on earth we shall never possess God according to our desires; yet it will become an ever greater and more living joy as we come to love God more exclusively. Joy brings peace, which itself supposes that the soul is untroubled by any enemy in the possession of God and that it does not seek rest in anything except Him. Adversities are not feared because the soul directed by the Holy Spirit knows how to suffer patiently. Then, St. Paul passes on to the moral virtues, naming first those which relate to our neighbor: patience and kindness. From these two virtues, there flow to our neighbor help and blessing. They change our hard, indifferent ways to courtesy and interest in speech and conduct. They cause us to render to our neighbor not evil for evil, but good for evil.

By faith the Apostle means, according to St. Ambrose, loyalty and reliability as opposed to deceit and falsehood. St. Paul may also be referring here to that simplicity of heart by which one is inclined to give credence to one's neighbor, unless prudence counsels otherwise; in other words, like charity, faith *believes all things*. Furthermore, the just man is not only patient, kind, faithful with regard to his neighbor, but he is also master of himself; that is, he is modest and continent. Modesty and continency impose temperance and restraint upon our words and actions. They are acquired by the mastery and restraint of the inner man and are shown exteriorly in well-ordered conduct. These virtues are particularly necessary to religious consecrated to God, so that they may become instruments of grace and divine blessing. St. Paul closes his list of the fruits of the Spirit with the words, *Against such things there is no law*; that is, they

who live no more according to the flesh live, by the power of the Spirit, a life in Christ, wholly and entirely for God.

“O Holy Spirit, divine Spirit of light and love, I consecrate to You my understanding, my heart, and my will, my whole being for time and for eternity. May my understanding be always submissive to Your heavenly inspirations and to the teachings of the holy Catholic Church, of which You are the infallible Guide; may my heart be ever inflamed with love of God and my neighbor; may my will be ever conformed to the divine will, and my whole life a faithful imitation of the life and virtues of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and You be honor and glory forever” (*Raccolta*).

JUNE 6

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Spirit



“He created her in the Holy Ghost, and saw her, and numbered her, and measured her” (Ecclus. 1:9).

Mary is the sealed fountain of God; only He can estimate the value and extent of the graces that are enclosed within her soul.

Our Lady of Light, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, obtain for me your dispositions of full response to the operations of divine grace.

When the angel greeted Mary as *full of grace*, she was inundated with the divine life—not in the sense that nothing more could now be added, but in the sense that there had never been an instant in her life up to that moment when she had not complied perfectly with the divine will. Never

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had there been a pause in the enlargement of her capacity to receive further outpourings of the divine life. Every grace that a creature can receive she received to the full. Mary's whole being was vibrant with the divine life of sanctifying grace. "Mary is rightly represented as clothed with the sun," says St. Bernard, "for she has penetrated into the profound abyss of divine Wisdom more deeply than we can think or comprehend; to such an extent, indeed, that she seems to have become immersed in that inaccessible light as far as it is possible for a creature who does not have personal union with God." The Holy Spirit communicated Himself to Mary for the first time in the home of her parents, St. Joachim and St. Ann, at the moment of her Immaculate Conception. The second great outpouring of grace came on the day of the Annunciation; and at Pentecost, when again Mary was in prayerful seclusion, the Holy Spirit infused into her soul for a third time the infinite riches of His grace.

We also have received the Holy Spirit. He dwells in us, body and soul. His work in us is the same as it was in Mary, namely, to form Jesus in us and through us to give Him to others; but He does this through Mary. Whenever Christ is born mystically in a soul, He is born as He was at the time of His incarnation — of the Holy Spirit through Mary. The common work of our Lady and her divine Spouse is the formation of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit shows her God's designs concerning each of Christ's members, the state and dispositions of their souls, the degree of glory each is to attain, their dangers and the graces they need. This is implicit in the doctrine that no grace is given to any soul without Mary's mediation. It is she who draws the Holy Spirit into our souls. "When the Holy Ghost finds Mary in a soul," says St. Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort,

“He flies thither, He enters fully, He communicates Himself abundantly to that soul, insofar as it makes room for His Spouse.”

If the accomplishment of the aim of our spiritual life, which is sanctity, has been entrusted by God to Mary, if He gives nothing to earth without causing the gift to pass through her hands, if she holds the threads of all the events bearing upon our salvation, should we not place ourselves completely under her guidance and so reach the perfection of abandonment to God through abandonment to Mary? To abandon means more than the surrender of self, it means forgetting self, putting self aside. Abandonment to Mary means not only placing all that is ours in her hands, but also turning our eyes away from ourselves and keeping them fixed on her. We should live “with her” by taking her as the model of all we do, live “in her” by making her views and feelings our own, and live “through her” by going to Jesus through her intercession.

“O thou who art both Virgin and Mother! O sacred Temple of the Divinity! O Marvel of heaven and earth! O Mother of God! I am thine by the general right and title of thy greatness, but I wish to be thine also by the special right of my choice and my free will. I give myself to thee and to thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and I wish to pass no day without giving Him and thee some special homage and mark of my dependence and servitude, in which I desire to die and to live forever” (from a prayer of Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle).

The Most Holy Trinity



"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).

In the doctrine of the Trinity our Lord Jesus Christ revealed to us a mystery concerning the nature of God which we could not even have suspected by the operation of our natural reason and which elevated our knowledge of God to an infinite degree. Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grant me dispositions of soul which will gain for me the special graces of this feast.

Essentially One by nature, God is three divine Persons, coeternal and identical, yet distinct: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Son is the Word of the Father existing from all eternity as the perfect expression of the Father's knowledge of Himself. The Spirit proceeds from the simultaneous and reciprocal love which unites the Father and the Son. The Three are One, yet Each is not simply a part of one Whole. The Three together are but one Substance, one Nature, simple, without parts. The Father was not made or created or begotten; the Son was not made or created, but He is eternally begotten by the Father; the Holy Spirit was not made or created or begotten, but He proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son.

Before the mystery of the Trinity the most learned must bow with the unlettered in a submissive act of faith and in humble adoration. Glory to the divine Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without

end! Glory to the Eternal Word, to the only-begotten Son, who without being separated from His Father eternally goes out from Him as the ray from the daystar, and who comes among us to exercise the office of Lawgiver, of Savior, of Pontiff, and of Mediator between heaven and earth! Glory to the fecund and universal Principle, to the incomparable Father, who has adopted us as His children, who has loved us even to delivering His Son to death for us, who calls us to partake of His happiness in the society of the elect!

Our Creator is not only our Sovereign Lord, but our Father—and doubly our Father, since He both gave us our natural life and regenerated us, supernaturally adopting us as His children. The Father adopted us in His Son become incarnate; the Word illumines the darkness of our minds by His light, and the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling in our souls. Not only has the Trinity impressed Its divine image upon our soul by making it according to Its own divine likeness, but, in the supernatural order, through the Sacrament of Baptism, the whole Trinity takes possession of Its creature. And as the names of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity were pronounced over us in Baptism, so they will be among the last the Church will address to us on earth. “Depart, O Christian soul, out of this miserable world,” her minister will say to us, “in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered and died for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee.” May the Most Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, cleanse and hallow the poor temples of our souls in which It deigns to dwell.

“O eternal Trinity, O Godhead, O divine Nature that gavest to the blood of Thy Son so great a price, Thou, O eternal Trinity,

art a bottomless sea into which the more I plunge the more I find, and the more I find the more I seek Thee still. Of Thee it is never possible to say: Enough. The soul that is sated with Thy depths desires Thee yet unceasingly, for it hungers ever after Thee. . . . Thou art the fire that burns ever and is never quenched, the fire that consumes in itself all the self-love of souls, that melts all ice and gives all light. This light is an ocean into which the soul plunges ever more deeply and there finds peace" (prayer of St. Catherine of Siena).

JUNE 8

The Calling of the First Disciples



"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (Jn. 1:37).

The two followers of St. John the Baptist who became our Savior's first disciples were Andrew and, probably, John.

O divine Savior, deign to make me an instrument of Your grace in my relations with others.

Among the contributing causes which brought to Jesus His first followers must surely be mentioned the testimony which St. John the Baptist rendered to Him in the presence of two of his own disciples, when he said, "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" Moreover, our Lord's first disciples were the cause of vocation to one another. Andrew brought Peter to the Lord and Philip, whom Jesus called the following day, brought Nathanael. The principal factor, of course, was divine grace, for it was God who chose these disciples and made the words of the Precursor touch their hearts. Still another and a decisive

element was the coming (certainly by design) of Jesus Himself to the place where John was preaching. His dignity and amiability, the prudence and wisdom with which He adapted His invitation to the character and temperament of those who were to be His disciples, strongly influenced their response to His call.

The two first followers of Jesus, Andrew and, probably, John, approached Him with some timidity. Benevolently and graciously, Jesus turned to them and asked, "*What seek you?*"; then He invited them to go with Him, and they remained in His company for the rest of the day. So winning was the charm of His conversation and the sweetness of His welcome that the Evangelist St. John recording the incident in his old age, still recalls the time when the meeting took place: *It was about the tenth hour*, he says; it is this detail in St. John's narrative that leads us to suppose he was Andrew's companion. As for Andrew, his words to his brother Simon, "*We have found the Messiah,*" sufficiently indicate the profound impression left upon him by his first interview with the Master. And so, by affability and sweetness of manner, Jesus attaches to Himself these two disciples who are both, but John especially, sensitive to evidences of friendship and affection.

Peter was brought to our Savior by his brother Andrew, and how was he received? Peter's interest and expectation had already been aroused by Andrew's announcement that he had found the Messiah. This was the most exciting news that could come to a believing Israelite. And Jesus, in turn, knew the way to Simon's heart. *Looking upon him*, Jesus called him by name and immediately declared that in future he would be called Cephas (i.e., Peter), hinting thereby at a great destiny. In Scripture a change of name indicates a call

to a particular vocation and Peter, whose courageous, decisive temperament was not at all insensitive to brilliant prospects, is instantly won. On the morrow, Philip, who appears to have been of a reflective, docile nature, is summoned merely by the words "*Follow me.*" But to Nathanael, upright, exact, cultivated, independent, Philip first gives a precise, documented account of Jesus; and Nathanael, despite his contemptuous reference to Jesus' native village of Nazareth, complies with Philip's suggestion that he meet the Master. Our Savior, on His part, praises Nathanael's integrity and then shows him that He knows of his conversation with Philip. He reveals in addition a circumstance of Nathanael's life known only to Him who reads the heart; thus Jesus allows a ray of His divinity to flash out for the first time, although in a very reserved manner.

O Jesus, *true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world*, how sweet and instructive it is to consider the way in which You accommodated the dispensations of Your grace to the character and dispositions of Your disciples, so that You might win them to Your service! Help me to learn from You how to prepare the way for the operations of Your grace in others and how to be, like Your great Apostle St. Paul, *all things to all men*, that I may gain all for You.

JUNE 9

The Miracle at Cana



"Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them to the brim. And Jesus said to them, 'Draw out now, and take to the chief steward'" (Jn. 2:7).

The miracle worked by our Savior at the wedding feast of Cana revealed both His divinity and His great goodness.

O Jesus, grant me a stronger realization of Your love for me.

The miracle of Cana was a prodigy of the first order. The transformation effected by it was complete and total. By this miracle Jesus showed that He was the Sovereign Lord of creation and possessed the power to do with nature as He pleased. This miracle, furthermore, was not only remarkable in itself, but also in the manner in which it was performed. Our Savior worked the marvel simply, silently, as if accidentally. Nothing in the accomplishment of it strikes the imagination or the senses. Nothing was brought in from outside; Jesus merely used what was at hand. But the circumstances were so managed as to leave no possible doubt of the miracle's authenticity. It was worked in public and in the presence of witnesses whose word would be above suspicion: the servants, the steward, the bridegroom. The stone jars stood in full view; they were used for the customary ablutions and, consequently, had never contained wine before. Moreover, the servants had just filled them to the brim with water. Since this was the *first sign* that Jesus worked to prove the divinity of His mission, it was fitting that it should be both striking and completely protected from all possible suspicion of error or deceit.

Like all the *signs* wrought by Jesus, the miracle of Cana revealed His goodness as well as His power. First of all, He accepted with the most gracious condescension the invitation extended to Him, as to an ordinary friend, by this family of Cana. His acceptance shows also that He did not ignore the customary usages of society; He blessed and sanctified all by His presence. For the consolation and joy

of many married couples He worked this miracle at the foundation of a new family. One might say, also, that it was His way of bidding farewell to family life and of expressing His gratitude for all the happiness He had known in His home at Nazareth. This miracle forms the glorious transition from the hidden life to our Savior's public ministry where a succession of the most striking miracles would be constantly revealing His divinity. The faith of His disciples was marvelously strengthened by this first manifestation of His glory. They had believed in Jesus since their first meeting with Him, when He had revealed His omniscience in the interview with Nathanael. But now, having witnessed one of the *greater things* that He had then promised them, their faith was wonderfully increased. And the confirming of His disciples in their faith was the principal motive of Jesus in working the miracle of Cana.

O Jesus, how could we ever doubt that Your paternal glance is ever upon us, attentive to even the details of our lives, for You know that details are often very important to us! It was Your gracious will that a small household matter should inaugurate the first public manifestation of Your omnipotence. Then, with incredible divine goodness and liberality You gave the *good wine* in vessels filled to the brim, not to satisfy thirst, for it was near the end of the feast, but merely to spare Your hosts embarrassment. How hard our hearts must be and how dull our understanding that we can ever fail to trust Your love for us and to give You all our love in return!

"They Have No Wine"



"They have no wine" (Jn. 2:4).

Picture our Lady interceding with Jesus when the wine fails at the marriage feast of Cana, and thus preparing for the third great manifestation of His glory.

O Mary, my Mother, obtain for me perfect and unfaltering confidence in your intercession.

And the wine having run short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." Among all his recollections St. John was well inspired to choose to relate to us this lovely incident which tells of the power and mercy of Mary. She not only hears our prayers, she anticipates them. She does not wait for us to lay our needs before her, she divines them; and she says to her Son, *"They have no wine"*; that is, "They have no strength, no virtue." Furthermore, Mary was the first to notice the awkward situation at the marriage feast. Perhaps she had helped with the preparations and so knew well the extent of the household resources. We can easily imagine our Lady coming to the aid of this family with the same active charity with which she had hastened to the assistance of her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation. And now, having observed the failure of the wine, she acted promptly, in order to spare her young hosts embarrassment. This may, indeed, have been her chief purpose in asking for the miracle, so that the faith of His disciples might be strengthened.

Our Savior's answer, "*What wouldst thou have me do, woman? My hour has not yet come,*" is in a sense a refusal, yet not an unqualified one. Jesus, it would seem, did not at this moment wish to perform the miracle His Mother was requesting, but since it was she who asked, He would not refuse. He could not have given stronger testimony of His love and respect for His Mother than by accomplishing a miracle at her request, even though His intention was not, for the moment, to prove His divinity by a public prodigy. "*My hour has not yet come,*" He said; that is, in the counsels of God, apart from the prayer of Mary, this was not the time. But, because Mary had prayed, the hour had come. It is significant and consoling that Jesus should reveal His divine power publicly for the first time by a miracle whose accomplishment depended upon the intercession of Mary. She herself showed her firm confidence that her request had been granted by saying to the servants, "*Do whatever he tells you.*" Mary knew then as she knows now that in her hands is the invisible master key that opens the treasures of the divine bounty. And her words to the servants, the only recorded words that she spoke to men, she addresses also to us in all our needs. "Obey my Son's commandments," she tells us, "and conform your conduct to His, if you wish to receive His favors."

O Mary, you presented the Fruit of your womb to the shepherds. The Magi worshiped Jesus in your arms; and long before the baptism in the Jordan, your gracious salutation had manifested Jesus to His holy Precursor. Then, by the miracle of Cana you gave Him to His people. Turn now toward me, O gracious Advocate, your eyes of mercy, and obtain for me from your Son the grace to do all that He tells me and to follow His example in all things.

Corpus Christi



"This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19).

In the Eucharist our Savior continues His essential action: the immolation of Himself for the glory of the Father and for our salvation; and He also achieves the end for which the Eucharist was instituted, namely, that we might keep an imperishable remembrance of Him.

Lord Jesus, grant me the grace of honoring in a fitting manner Your presence in the Holy Eucharist.

On Holy Thursday the Church celebrated in sorrow the institution of the Holy Eucharist; Calvary was too near to allow her to lay aside her grief. Today, however, she celebrates this great mystery with splendor and exultation, rejoicing particularly in the glory that is given to God by this sacrament. If at the first appearance of Jesus in this world the angels proclaimed with heavenly joy the glory given to the divine Majesty by the Incarnation of the Word, how immeasurably greater must be the glory He receives from the Eucharist! This is owing, first, to the very nature of the sacrament, in that it is a composite of stupendous marvels. A second excellence of the Eucharist is the character of sacrifice which belongs to it. God is glorified by nothing so much as by sacrifice, and especially by the sacrifice offered in the state of mystical death to which Jesus is reduced in His act of immolation.

Third, great glory is rendered to the Father by the miracu-

lous multiplication in time and space of the Savior and His sacrifice. The Crib was found only in Bethlehem; Calvary alone witnessed the raising of the cross. But now, everywhere, at every moment, God beholds His only-begotten Son adoring Him and immolating Himself upon innumerable altars and in countless tabernacles. The glory and excellence of the Incarnation now covers the whole earth. And this abiding presence of Jesus draws from earth heavenward powerful waves of homage to delight the city of God. These are the days which the prophets foresaw. *In that day, said Isaias, the bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory, and the fruit of the earth shall be high.*

The Incarnate Word is also glorified by the Eucharist in that all Its graces are received through the sacred humanity of our Redeemer Himself. He instituted this sacrament that we might not forget Him; how could we forget One who makes Himself our food, who becomes our very life? By the manifold action of the Eucharist, Jesus forces Himself upon our faith, as it were; He pervades our whole spiritual life; He enters into our very hearts. It is to Jesus in the Eucharist that we go with our faith and our love, our needs and our gratitude. To the Eucharist we bring our humble offerings of reparation for the humiliations and sufferings of our Savior's life and death. Jesus has gained His end: the adoration of the Eucharist is practiced all over the world; the richest treasures, the most exquisite art, the highest and most ingenious expressions of our love are all centered about our altars and our tabernacles. In a manner, the honor given by the Church to Jesus in His Eucharistic life, serves as compensation for the obscurity of His mortal life on earth.

O Jesus, our Emmanuel, I adore You profoundly in the Holy Eucharist and I thank You for this unspeakable divine Gift,

the greatest that even You could give us. At any moment, at every moment, I can go to You. I can never be left entirely alone nor abandoned, because You are always near me. In the Eucharist I possess a treasure so great that I can satisfy for all that God demands of me, atone for my sins, and offer due praise, honor, and thanksgiving to the divine Majesty. In the Eucharist I find divine aid against temptation and strength for my soul. Little by little, through the love, courage, and joy that flow from It into my soul, It will transform me into You. What would the Church be without You in the Eucharist, O Jesus? As a sky without sun, as earth without water, as a body without a soul!

JUNE 12

Devotion to the Eucharist



“Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world” (Mt. 28:20).

Jesus is for us not only our Head and our Model; He is also our “present God,” our Emmanuel.

O Jesus, grant me a stronger and more generous devotion to You in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The Lord God manifested Himself to His people on Mount Sinai in fire and flashes of lightning. The sound of thunder and a voice filled the people with fear and awe. But Jesus in the Eucharist does not speak to our senses; faith alone draws aside the veil and reveals Him as really present in the little white Host, as really present as when He walked on earth in the villages of Judea and Galilee. We believe in this

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adorable mystery; but our faith is not truly strong and living or it would be more apparent in both our interior sentiments and our external conduct when we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. If Jesus gave the least visible sign of His Eucharistic presence, we should be filled with amazement and fear; and if He would show Himself in His glory and majesty as He will one day appear, when He comes in the clouds of heaven, who would dare remain in His presence with a soul defiled by sin or by affection for sin! Who would be tempted to even an instant's distraction? We would all bow low before Him, filled with holy fear and penitence and love. Let us beg Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to strengthen and enliven our faith.

After faith, the homage of ardent love is eminently due this great mystery of love. When was the love of Jesus more generous, more tender, stronger, more disinterested than in the institution of the Eucharist? *Generous love*: He is God and He shares with us His divinity; He is Man and His Body and Blood are given to us as our food and drink. *Tender love*: tenderness grieves upon being separated from the object of its love; and Jesus, *knowing that his hour had come, to pass out of this world to the Father*, instituted the Holy Eucharist so that He might remain with us. *Strong love*: omnipotence was needed to perform the miracle of the Consecration. *Disinterested love*: What need has He of us and our homage? O impenetrable depths of divine mercy and charity! Truly love could do no more. If we really loved in return, how fervent would be our prayer, how rare and transient our distractions! How much we would have to say to Him!

We should also enter into the sentiments of reparation with which the Church celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi.

Gratitude would urge us to atone insofar as we can for the outrages that were inflicted upon the sacred body of Jesus during His passion, and zeal should prompt us to make amends for the profanations that have been committed against the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Above all, we should endeavor by our fervor and recollection to make reparation for all the irreverences of which we ourselves have been guilty: our distracted reception of Holy Communion, our thoughtlessness and preoccupation during the Holy Sacrifice, our lukewarm visits to the Blessed Sacrament, our negligence in overcoming those faults that keep us from becoming worthy to appear in the presence of Jesus and to receive Him into our hearts.

O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, grant me to cry out with the faith of St. Peter, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*" Divine Savior in the Eucharist, You are truly and really the Son of God and the Son of Mary. Your body is here which she bore in her womb and carried in her arms, the body which was crucified for me and the blood that was shed for me. Your soul is here, whose virtues and merits are mine through my union with You. Your divinity is here, which imparts to me a divine life and a divine destiny. O Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, I believe! I adore! I love!

JUNE 13

Our Lady and the Eucharist



"And from that hour the disciple took her into his home" (Jn. 19:27).

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One reason why our Lady was committed to the care of St. John rather than to the other holy women who stood also at the foot of the cross was that St. John was a priest and could give Mary the Eucharist.

O Mary, give me a share in your dispositions when I assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and receive your Son in Holy Communion.

After our Savior's ascension into heaven, Mary possessed Him only as all other Christians possess Him — in the Eucharist. Let us picture our Lady assisting at the Holy Mass celebrated by St. John. For her the Mass was a renewal and continuation of the Sacrifice of the Cross in a manner and to a degree which we are quite unable to comprehend. Mary was not a priest, but she had received, says Father Olier, "the plenitude of the priestly spirit." Her dignity was higher than that of an ordained priest, for it was Mary's most pure blood which provided the substance of the sacred body of Priest and Victim for the Sacrifice of the Cross. Certain saints have been privileged on occasion to see Jesus in the celebrant's place at the moment of Consecration, but no saint ever grasped the full meaning of this Act as Mary did. She realized more clearly than anyone that the soul of every Mass is the voluntary oblation that her Son made of Himself to the Father for our redemption. As at the foot of the cross she had united herself to His oblation as universal Co-Redemptrix, so she continued this total offering of herself at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in a spirit of adoration, thanksgiving, atonement, and petition. She prayed for sinners, for the Apostles, for the advancement of her Son's kingdom on earth.

As for our Lady's Communions, we can only attempt rever-

ently to form an idea of the hunger, the strong, living desire that drew Mary to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. An early Christian tradition mentions a special feast to commemorate the First Communion Day of the Blessed Virgin. Her reception of the Eucharist was unique, its fruitfulness incomparably surpassing that possible to any other creature. We should try in vain to estimate the benefit our Lady received from each Eucharistic contact with her Son. Our innate desire for God is weakened by the consequences of sin, original and personal, and by our innumerable imperfections; but Mary's soul knew nothing of these impediments. Nothing ever halted for a single moment the grand soaring of her wonderful charity. Her love for the Eucharist was like her love for God — an intense thirst accompanied by a sweet pain which ended only when she died of love.

Each of Mary's Communion's surpassed the preceding one in fervor and, by the increase in charity it produced, each Communion disposed her to receive the next with still greater fruit; and the nearer she approached to God the more swiftly she moved toward Him. At every mystical renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, at every Holy Mass, Mary is present, says Gerson, "in spirit, heart, and affection." The sacred body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ, becoming present in the hands of the priest at the words of Consecration, came to us originally through Mary. Would it not be fitting, then, for us to offer Jesus to the Father through Mary at Mass and in Holy Communion to ask for graces through Mary's intercession?

O Mary, Mother of divine grace, deign to associate me in the sacrifice you made to the divine Majesty on the altar of your heart where ceaselessly you offered your beloved Son as a living Host. When I say with the priest at the beginning of the Holy

Mass, *Introibo ad altare Dei*, let me think of your Immaculate Heart so united with the Heart of your Son as to form one Heart, one altar of sacrifice. When I look at the chalice, let me remember that your most pure body was as the first chalice of the blood of Jesus. When I receive Jesus in Holy Communion, give me some share in your dispositions during the nine months preceding His birth, and during those moments after receiving the Eucharist when again you became His pure Tabernacle, O living Tower of Ivory! O House of Gold!

JUNE 14

Jesus in the Eucharist



"I am the bread that has come down from heaven" (Jn. 6:41). Through the Eucharist our Savior is not only really present in the Church, but He also continues the mysteries of His sacred humanity.

Divine Savior, enable me to enter deeply into the mysteries of Your sacred humanity, especially the mysteries of Your passion and death.

In the Eucharist as in the Incarnation, Jesus is present at the bidding of a word from virginal lips, He reposes in virginal hands, and, as in the crib, He appears enveloped by the swaddling clothes, as it were, of the sacramental species. The obscurity which conceals from our eyes even the sacred humanity perpetuates the years of the hidden life, as also do the lowly poverty in which He gives Himself to us and His silent, secret action in our souls. Not without good reason, then, does the Church in her Eucharistic Offices and hymns

link repeatedly the mysteries of the Incarnation and Transubstantiation. The Preface of the Mass of Corpus Christi and of the votive Mass of the Blessed Sacrament is that of Christmas; and more than once Jesus has deigned to show Himself in the Eucharist in the lovable guise of a child.

The mysteries of the public life are also mystically renewed in the Eucharist. Our Savior's sacramental presence in so many places, His endless docility in allowing Himself to be carried through our towns and country districts reveal again the tireless Teacher, the Shepherds of souls, who during His public life never wearied of traversing the streets and roads of Palestine, spreading everywhere truth, blessing, comfort, and healing. Again, how many of His parables find their explanation and their most sublime fulfillment in the Eucharist: the parables of the great supper, of the wedding feast, of the banquet ordered by the father of the prodigal after the return of his wayward son! And are not the miracles of the water changed into wine and the multiplication of the loaves continually worked in the Eucharist? Does not Jesus in the Eucharist daily heal throngs of blind, deaf, and mute souls, of paralytics, and of persons possessed and tormented by their undisciplined passions?

As for the relation of the mysteries of our Savior's passion to the Eucharist, this sacrament is essentially a memorial whereby He mysteriously renews His holy passion and death. And, unhappily, the Eucharist also renews the suffering that our Savior did not will or seek for and which brings neither honor to Him nor profit to us. In the hall of the Eucharistic banquet Judases are not wanting, who approach the Body of the Lord with impure hands and who receive Him into a defiled heart. The Eucharistic life of Jesus is, on the side of God, an abyss of miracles and love; but there is at the

same time on man's part an abyss of ingratitude. The glorified life of the risen Jesus is also mystically continued through the Eucharist. The Body of our Savior in the Blessed Sacrament represents a marvelous conquest of grace and glory over matter. We need not envy those who lived in Palestine in the days when *all flesh saw the salvation of the Lord*. In the Eucharist we have by faith Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Calvary, and the holy sepulcher; and without faith what would it have availed us to be contemporaries and witnesses of our Lord living among men?

"O my God, I firmly believe that You are really and corporally present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I adore You here present from the very depths of my heart, and I worship Your sacred presence with all possible humility. O my soul, what joy to have Jesus always with us, and to be able to speak to Him, heart to heart, with all confidence. Grant, O Lord, that I, having adored Your divine Majesty here on earth in this wonderful Sacrament, may be able to adore It eternally in heaven" (*Raccolta*).

JUNE 15

The Eucharistic Life



"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him" (Jn. 6:57).

These words of our Savior express the effect of the Eucharistic banquet, which is a mutual dwelling of Christ in the soul and the soul in Christ.

O Jesus, grant that I may add growth and strength to Your

Mystical Body by reproducing in my own life the virtues of
Your life in the Eucharist.

In Holy Communion we receive the very Victim slain on the Cross; during the Holy Sacrifice we offer ourselves in imitation of and in union with this same divine Victim. In Communion, therefore, we receive back again, as it were, our own lives united with His and transformed into His divine life, which should then be reproduced in our own. It was an act of unspeakable condescension for the Word of God to become incarnate and to accept the suffering of His passion and death. It was an even greater "emptying of Himself" for Him to assume the Eucharistic life, for there nothing even of the sacred humanity appears; rather, Jesus lives hidden beneath the appearance of bread—an object which lacks all semblance of life and which does not of itself tend to arouse the respect and sympathy which we feel toward a living thing. Jesus, washing the feet of Judas, was less abased than Jesus coming to the lips of any and every human being. His Eucharistic state is in a certain sense the lowliest of all, and yet it was the glorified Son of God who chose it—for the sole purpose of making Himself accessible to us. Could we ever humiliate ourselves for His sake to the extent that He humiliates Himself for us?

The Eucharistic life is also a life of obedience. During His life on earth Jesus obeyed His parents and He obeyed His executioners. In the Eucharist He obeys everyone. He is moved from place to place or left motionless. He is raised and lowered, He is profaned by sacrilegious hands; yet He is ever the Lamb of God who *opened not his mouth*. He obeys the sacrificing priest and the faithful; He comes alike to the humble and devout communicant and to the guilty or

the indifferent. The observance of your vow of obedience requires that you place yourself in the hands of your Superiors as if you were a lifeless body. You can do even better: let yourself be treated like the Host.

The Eucharist is the hearth of Christian charity, absolute and universal. Our full exercise of charity is confined, perhaps, to a circle of friends; the charity of Jesus in the Eucharist knows no limitation. He is for all, without the least reserve. He is ignored, treated with indifference, or even desecrated; and He pardons, He forgives, He gives Himself anew. All the virtues He prescribes for us He practices Himself, and when we find it difficult to follow His precepts, we should fix our eyes upon Him in the Eucharist and imitate His example. Moreover, the Eucharistic life, although hidden and silent, is supremely active. Jesus prays and makes atonement still by offering to the Father His past expiation. From the tabernacle He is ever offering to us supernatural life and vigor for our souls. Let us imitate this life of Jesus and offer Him in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar our active and fervent reparation. He humiliates Himself, let us honor Him; He practices obedience, let us do in everything His holy will. He loves us, let us give Him all our love in return. He lives in the Eucharist for us, let us live only for Him.

“Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, I consecrate to You all the faculties of my soul, all the powers of my body; I would strive to know You and love You ever more and more, in order to make You better known and loved; I would act only for Your glory, I would do only the will of Your Father. I consecrate to You every moment of my life in a spirit of adoration before Your real presence, in a spirit of thanksgiving for this incomparable gift, in a spirit of reparation for all our

cruel indifference, in a spirit of unceasing supplication that our prayers, being offered through You, with You, and in You, may rise purified and enriched to the throne of God's mercy unto His eternal glory" (*Raccolta*).

JUNE 16

The Holy Mass



"And having taken bread, he gave thanks and broke, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In like manner he took also the cup after the supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood which shall be shed for you'" (Lk. 22:19, 20).

On the eve of His passion our Lord instituted the great memorial which was to perpetuate for all time and in every place the one Sacrifice where *he has perfected forever those who are sanctified*. In the Eucharist as on the cross the body of Jesus is *given* for us; from the Eucharist as from the cross life flows out upon the world.

O Jesus, grant me the dispositions I need in order to gain the fruits of the Mass more abundantly.

The consecration of the Mass re-presents Jesus Crucified in three ways. First, it commemorates His death on the cross; second, the twofold formula of Consecration separates, as by a sword, the body and blood of Christ; last and especially, Jesus, at the word of the priest, is present on the altar as the Victim who is later to be offered to us in Holy Communion. At the instant of the Consecration an act is per-

formed before our eyes which would be utterly overpowering if we grasped it in its reality. He who is *as if slain* is the Lamb of whom St. John speaks in the Apocalypse. He is God! The sacred Host is the incarnate Son of God, still immolating Himself for our salvation. Who can express the value of this immolation, the value of a Mass? No work glorifies God more, none offers Him greater reparation, none touches Him more nearly. The Mass is the prayer of prayers.

When we assist at Mass we also offer it. We make our own the homage which Jesus, Priest and Victim, offers to the Father; and when we thus glorify God, He is moved with love toward us and bestows upon us the grace truly to repent of our sins. Thus we win remission of our guilt, however great it may be. But when we associate ourselves with Christ Jesus in the role of Priest and Victim, we should bear in mind that it is for God to dispose of the victim offered to Him. We must keep ourselves interiorly throughout the day in the essential attitude of our participation in the Holy Sacrifice; that is, in the attitude of self-oblation, of giving *all* to God, making our acts of self-denial and mortification for Him, and accepting the happenings of each day, above all if they are disagreeable or painful, for love of Him. Also in union with Jesus we offer our petitions and He who prays and supplicates for us on the altar is One whose prayers are always heard. We pray, too, in union with the whole Church as well as with her invisible Head, for *we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread*. And as bread is one through the union of many grains of wheat, so unity is also signified by the Eucharistic wine; "for," says St. Augustine, "the wine was once in so many clusters of grapes; but now it is all one in the sweetness of the chalice; for it has gone through the crushing of the

wine press." United, then, with Jesus and with one another through the Mass, let us offer the divine Son to the Eternal Father and ourselves also with the Host in the dispositions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the cross; namely, intense love for God and our brethren, full abandonment to the divine will, and ardent desire for the salvation of souls.

"O God, who in this wonderful sacrament hast left us a memorial of Thy passion, grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy body and blood, that we may ever perceive within us the fruit of Thy redemption" (Roman Missal).

JUNE 17

The First Cleansing of the Temple



"And making a kind of whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, also the sheep and oxen, and he poured out the money of the changers and overturned the tables" (Jn. 2:15).

Adore Jesus manifesting Himself in this incident for the first time publicly as the Messiah.

Divine Master, inspire me with holy zeal and teach me how to exercise it.

On this occasion, Jesus showed Himself for the first time in Jerusalem to the priests and the people. He spoke and acted as one claiming the prerogatives of the Messiah and a right of ownership over the Temple. We see Him also in this incident accomplishing His mission of repairing the

honor of His Father by expelling sacrilegious abuses from the Temple. It is noteworthy, too, that Jesus began His public life with an action similar to the one which will conclude it—the banishing of the sellers and money changers from the Temple. On both occasions He is shown to us engaged in the exercise of His principal virtue, zeal for His Father's glory. To Jesus may be applied in their fullest and most ardent meaning the words of the Psalmist: *The zeal for thy house has eaten me up*; and these words, St. John tells us, came to the minds of the disciples as they watched Him.

In this incident, moreover, the outline of the whole public life of our Savior is already discernible. We find Him here, as we shall find Him throughout the rest of His life, accompanied by a small band of followers, without means or resources, exercising His apostolate among the ignorant, the fickle, the inconstant. To the end He will have to cope with the incredulity of a decadent priesthood and their obstinate unbelief will even appear momentarily to gain the victory, only to be ultimately defeated by our Savior's glorious resurrection from the dead. This triumphant conclusion of His apostolate Jesus prophesied at its very commencement. "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up*" was His response to the Jews who asked, "*What sign dost thou show us, seeing that thou dost these things?*"

The reply of our Savior had a double significance for His hearers. For them His words could have referred to the material Temple of Jerusalem or to the temple of His Body, the true Sanctuary and the visible Temple of God. In just retribution for the malicious incredulity of His people, Jesus revealed the truth to them on this occasion in a veiled manner. Yet His reply was clear enough for the Jews to understand that the Savior had at His disposal the highest

divine authority whereby He would perform still greater works. In prophesying His death and resurrection, He gave them a double sign: that of the Resurrection, which was the strongest and most decisive proof of His divinity and the prophecy itself which foretold the Resurrection. It is a striking fact that this utterance, "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,*" was the chief accusation made against Jesus when He was brought before His judges. This incident, then, implies the whole destiny of our Savior. It constitutes the program, boldly and clearly outlined, of the contradictions He will face throughout His public career. Let us ask our Lord to grant us a zeal which, like His, will be fearless, unmixed with selfish interests, and directed by obedience.

Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? Or who may stand in his holy place? He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain, nor swears deceitfully to his neighbor. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks for him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob. Lift up, O gates, your lintels; reach up, you ancient portals, that the king of glory may come in! (Ps. 23:3-7)

JUNE 18

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Model



"Look and make it according to the pattern" (Exod. 25:40).

Imagine that the Lord God is showing you the Sacred Heart of Jesus and saying these words to you as He did to Moses

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when He presented to him the pattern for the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus leads us to virtue, for He offers us His Heart that we may honor It not only by adoration, love, and reparation, but also by conforming our hearts to His. Let us study the adorable dispositions of the Sacred Heart as opposed to our sinful ones. When we are tempted to pride, let us think of how our Lord bore humiliations, calumnies, and insults. His divine example of humility will help us to repress our self-love and vanity. If the memory of an injury or some other trial awakens thoughts of revenge, let us look at the Heart of Jesus and remember how He pardoned His enemies and prayed for His executioners. His example of patience will help to stifle in us every movement of hatred or anger. In temptations against modesty or purity, we have only to think of the pure and stainless Heart of Jesus, formed from the blood of the Immaculate Virgin, and we shall pass through the trial without sin.

The sacrifices demanded by our vow of poverty will not be difficult for us—we shall even desire greater ones—if we have meditated deeply enough upon the privations voluntarily endured by our Lord because of the love of His Heart for us. When our sensitive pride is wounded by an affront, when we are tempted to nourish bitterness against others, let us think of how the Heart of Jesus suffered from the malice of His enemies during His whole life on earth and especially during the Passion, and we shall be more patient and resigned in our little sufferings. Whatever the provocation, in whatever situation we may find ourselves, we can

always look to our Model and apply ourselves to imitating Him.

In devotion to the Sacred Heart we shall also find both the model and source of love for God and our neighbor. It was from the Sacred Heart of Jesus that St. Bernard drew the generous love and tender piety that breathe through his writings. In this Heart St. Bonaventure learned to relish those interior joys and spiritual delights that united him directly with God. The penitent St. Augustine found therein the strength and courage to conquer himself, and from this same adorable Heart the Apostles drew their zeal, the martyrs their triumph, the virgins their purity. Whatever be the needs of our souls, the Heart of Jesus is our refuge, the abyss of all virtues, the source of all consolation. If we are in sin, here is the Heart that pardoned the repentant Magdalene and converted the thief on the cross. If we are lukewarm, here is the hearth of charity where we can rekindle our love and draw forth new strength. If the infinite bounty and the infinite perfections of the Sacred Heart were known to us now as they will one day be revealed in eternity, we should be all but consumed by our sentiments of adoration and love. But it is not for souls as cold and feeble as ours to measure *the breadth and length and height and depth* of the love and perfection of the Sacred Heart. Even if it were given us to comprehend matters so sublime, we, like St. Paul, would be unable to find expression for truths so infinitely surpassing all our powers of language and even of conception.

O loving Savior, You are so good and so powerful that surely You will remove from my heart all that is unworthy of You. Change my heart and make it conformable to Yours. Deign Yourself to inspire me with the sentiments of love, contrition, and gratitude, that will help to atone for the indifference of

those who do not love You. Heart of Jesus, speak to the hearts of all men and draw them to Yourself. I ask this by the wound You suffered on Calvary and by that counterthrust which at the same time pierced the living heart of Mary, Your Mother, who stood beside the cross.

JUNE 19

The Love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



“Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart?” (4 Kings 10:15)

The devotion to the Heart of Jesus has for its object His Sacred Heart united to His body, soul, and divinity, and considered as the seat and center of His love for man.

○ Jesus, grant me the desire and the grace of making reparation to Your Sacred Heart.

In human language the heart is the synonym and the symbol of love. To give one's heart is to give love. Jesus speaks our language when He holds out to us His heart, which of itself tells the story of His love. It is aflame, a “burning furnace of charity”; It is pierced, He loved us unto death; It is surrounded by a crown of thorns, His love has been repelled. “Behold this Heart which has so loved men that It has spared nothing, but has been poured out totally and consumed as proof of Its love; and in return I receive from the greater number only ingratitude, through irreverence and sacrilege and through the coldness and scorn men have for Me in the Sacrament of love. But what touches Me closest is that the very hearts which are consecrated to Me act thus.”

Such were the words of our Savior to St. Margaret Mary, the humble handmaid of the Sacred Heart.

Meditation upon the life and passion of Jesus should have convinced us of His love, but because we did not reflect thereon deeply enough, we needed this moving reminder from the lips of the Savior Himself. We needed to see materially expressed the extent to which He loved us. Surely, the sight of the Sacred Heart will keep before our minds the mystery of divine love. And it was not to St. Margaret Mary alone nor to mankind in general that Jesus spoke in the visions which led to the establishment of world devotion to the Sacred Heart, but to each individual one of us whom He loves as if each of us were the only living human soul. It was for each of us personally that He endured all that He suffered on earth.

Our first duty, clearly, is to return love for love; and this is the primary purpose of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Since this devotion is essentially reparatory, we should manifest our love in this spirit. Jesus Himself recommended to St. Margaret Mary two exercises of expiation: the holy hour and the Communion of reparation. The holy hour He wishes us to spend in union with Him, saddened by the desertion of the Apostles in the Garden of Olives on the night of the passion, appealing with Him divine justice and begging mercy for sinners. But to practice devotion to the Sacred Heart is not only to watch and pray in Its honor, it is above all to imitate Its virtues. To advance in the devotion is, above all, to advance in the characteristic virtues of the Sacred Heart, namely, humility and zeal; the humility united with meekness which Jesus asks us to learn from Him; and the zeal which is shown in the apostolate of words and actions, prayer and suffering, according to the example of Jesus Himself.

“O God, who in the Heart of Thy Son, wounded by our transgressions, mercifully condescendest to bestow upon us the infinite wealth of Thy love; grant, we beseech Thee, that revering It with due devotion, we may make a worthy reparation for our sins” (Roman Missal).

JUNE 20

The Interview With Nicodemus



“Now there was a certain man among the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus at night” (Jn. 3:1, 2).

While our Savior was still in Jerusalem, one of the Pharisees, whose name was Nicodemus, came to speak with Him. He came at night, perhaps that he might converse with our Savior uninterrupted, perhaps because he feared the hostility of the other members of his caste; for they appear to have been irritated and antagonistic from the very commencement of our Lord's public life. Or it may be that Nicodemus came at night in order not to compromise Jesus Himself.

Lord Jesus, teach me through this meditation to exercise prudence in guiding others.

Nicodemus was a man of prominence, a doctor of the Law and a member of the Sanhedrin; everything seems to indicate that he shared Jewish and Pharisaical prejudices regarding the kingdom of the Messiah. But Nicodemus was a just man, sincerely desirous of finding salvation. Because of the works already performed by Jesus in Jerusalem and because of His teaching, Nicodemus had been slowly arriving

at the conviction that our Savior was a divine envoy extraordinary, a prophet, perhaps even the Messiah. He came, therefore, to see if this last suspicion was valid, and if so, to inquire about the kingdom of the Messiah to which every Pharisee claimed a right of preference. The decision of Nicodemus to seek out Jesus may have represented on his part considerable inconvenience and self-sacrifice; at all events, the sequel proved how important it was for him to follow the first invitation of grace.

Jesus knew the thoughts of His visitor and He instructed him in all he wished to discover concerning His Person and His kingdom, revealing to him at the same time the two means necessary for entrance into this kingdom, namely, Baptism, which is to say, a new and spiritual life, whose basic principle is sacramental Baptism; and faith, the only means of comprehending supernatural truths and the ways of divine Providence. Our Savior also spoke to Nicodemus of the most profound supernatural mysteries: the ineffable love of God as shown by the Incarnation and the Redemption. He enlightened this sincere Pharisee as to the real nature of the kingdom of the Messiah, showing him that it was an interior kingdom, spiritual and supernatural; that its Founder was at once human and divine; and that its distinctive characteristic was not earthly triumph, but redemption through humiliation, suffering, and death.

After this interview Nicodemus left, full of faith, gratitude, and loyalty to Jesus. Even though he did not declare himself immediately as a disciple, the good seed had been sown in his heart and it was to bear fruit. We meet Nicodemus for the first time at the beginning of our Savior's apostolate; we shall see him again at its close, after the consummation of His sacrifice. And what progress in the spirit is implied

in the role Nicodemus plays then, as one of those who lovingly prepare our Savior's body for the tomb. It is consoling to think that with grace, good will, and sincerity, truth could be victorious even among the Pharisees. In Jesus we again admire the perfection of His prudence and His divine condescension. He does not wound the reserve and timidity of Nicodemus, nor reproach him for his Jewish prejudices; on the contrary, He favors him with an extraordinarily full revelation of Himself. By this frankness and plain dealing Jesus shows that He recognized in Nicodemus a man of good will, disposed for receiving even the highest truths of faith. To uprightness and good will Jesus gives all without reserve.

O good Jesus, help me to imitate You in teaching others. Grant me wisdom and prudence, so that I may choose the best way of gaining the confidence and good will of those whom You entrust to me. Make me patient and mild when I am accosted at inopportune times or by persons who I may think are hostile to me. Lord Jesus, do You Yourself act in me and through me.

JUNE 21

The Samaritan Woman



"There came a Samaritan woman to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me to drink'" (Jn. 4:7, 8).

Our Savior was alone, sitting at the well, when the Samaritan woman came from the town of Sichar to draw water. He took the initiative in the conversation by requesting of her a small kindness.

Divine Savior, make me alert and docile to the least motions of
Your grace.

Our Savior's request in this incident was somewhat unusual, since it was not customary for Jews to speak to an unescorted woman, particularly a Samaritan. And the woman, recognizing Jesus as a Jew by His garb and accent, expressed her surprise: "*How is it that thou, although thou art a Jew, dost ask drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?*" But Jesus had asked a favor that He might bestow one. "*If thou didst know the gift of God,*" He said, "*and who it is who says to thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou perhaps would have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*" The living water was grace, but this woman did not understand our Savior's words, or did not wish to understand them, and almost in jest, she replied, "*Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Whence then hast thou living water?*" Jesus said in answer, "*Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again. He, however, who drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.*"

The Samaritan woman must have shrugged her shoulders at these words, for with a certain irony, yet politely, she replied, "*Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, or come here to draw.*" This request, lightly made though it was, Jesus willed to grant; but in order to receive His grace the soul must first repent of its sins. And so, briefly, delicately, Jesus opened the eyes of this woman to the state of her soul: "*Go,*" He said, "*call thy husband and come here.*" The woman answered, "*I have no husband.*" "*Thou hast said well, 'I have no husband,'*" replied our Savior, "*for thou hast*

had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. In this thou hast spoken truly." Here we might have expected the Samaritan to show annoyance, but she admitted her guilt humbly: "Sir, I see that thou art a prophet." She has prayed, she is humble, and now the level of her thought rises. She asks Jesus if it is on Mount Garizim that one should worship or at Jerusalem—the great controversy that divided the Jews and the Samaritans. "Woman, believe me . . .," said our Savior, "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Not comprehending this high doctrine very well, the woman replied, "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ) and when he comes he will tell us all things." Then Jesus, more indulgent toward this poor woman than He had been even toward Nicodemus, said, "I who speak with thee am he."

What progress was made by this soul in the few moments of her interview with our Savior! At first she recognized Him as a Jew; next she addressed Him with greater respect, using the title, *Sir*; then she acknowledged Him as a prophet; and finally, in her joyful summoning of her fellow townsmen, as perhaps *the Christ*. It is true that Jesus had been awaiting this woman—as He awaits us all. But she was receptive to His first request, as we, perhaps, are not. She gave Him to drink and she was recompensed for this first act of good will by another gift of grace. Then her progressive fidelity led her to the great privilege of hearing the direct revelation of our Savior's identity. Let us adore the goodness of Jesus who came so far to find this poor soul, and let us imitate the docility of this soul who listens to Jesus, prays, and humbles herself.

Grant me, O Jesus, the living water of Your grace and Your

love that my heart may no longer desire to drink from the fountains which do not spring up unto life everlasting. Let me hear Your voice today and not harden my heart, when You ask of me an act of obedience, of self-denial, of humility; lest the grace, received in vain, may not return again; as the Samaritan woman would not have encountered You a second time.

JUNE 22

A Second Miracle at Cana



“Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe” (Jn. 4:48). We find Jesus again in the little village of Cana where He had performed the first of His miracles. A royal official, probably in the service of Herod Antipas, came to Jesus there from Capharnaum to beg a cure for his son who was gravely ill with a fever.

O Body and Blood of Christ, which I shall receive this day, sanctify me and cleanse me from sin.

In the case of the Gentile centurion of Capharnaum who asked our Savior to cure his servant, Jesus, without waiting to be asked, said, “*I will come and cure him.*” Now, however, when He was implored by this royal official, who was a Jew, to come and heal his son, Jesus delayed. St. Gregory tells us that He did this to confound our pride, the vice that causes us to be prompt and eager in serving those who bear external signs of honor and power, but reluctant and careless in assisting the poor and lowly. Such distinctions are opposed to true charity. For those who serve God alone,

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for His own sake, there is no respecting of persons, but the image of God and the works of His power are seen in all men alike.

Another reason for our Savior's not heeding immediately the prayer of this anxious father was the imperfection of his faith, although it is evident that he sincerely believed Jesus had the power to heal his child; otherwise, he would not have come so far to ask our Savior's help. The words of Jesus, "*Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not,*" were, therefore, addressed not to the suppliant alone, but to the Jews in general. They were also meant, however, as a test of this man's faith. For him Jesus seems to have been neither Son of God nor Messiah, but merely a prophet and wonder-worker. The weakness of his faith was shown in that he supposed the presence of our Savior to be a necessary condition for the cure. And so Jesus addressed these words of reproach to him as well as to his coreligionists; for to see first and then believe was the order preferred by most of them.

But the father, supported by his love and concern for his child, stood the test and more urgently repeated his petition: "*Sir, come down before my child dies*"; as if death itself could render Jesus powerless. This agonized prayer was answered more promptly than the father would have dared to hope. "*Go thy way,*" said our Savior, "*thy son lives.*" Again, there was the trial of faith. Jesus still declined to go to the boy and merely announced the cure which had already taken place in Capharnaum more than twenty miles distant from Cana. Despite this new test and his first insistence, the father of the boy now believed; and as he journeyed down the long descent leading from Cana to Capharnaum, he was met by his servants, who verified the cure and that it had

taken place precisely at the time at which Jesus had said to him, "*Thy son lives.*" Thus was the faith of this man advanced another degree toward perfection and through him his whole household received faith. We see again how adversity can help us grow in faith, humility, and fortitude, and be made to contribute in the end to the service and glory of God.

Divine Master, with the sincerity of this Jewish official I cry humbly to You: Lord, come down in Holy Communion this day to strengthen and purify my faith, to heal my inordinate affections and sinful habits, that are weakening my soul and that, left unchecked, could cause its death. And when I have the happiness of possessing You, body and blood, soul and divinity, remain with me and never let me be separated from You.

JUNE 23

Return of Jesus to Nazareth



"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and according to his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read" (Lk. 4:16).

See Jesus speaking to the people in the synagogue of the village of Nazareth where He had spent His youth.

Divine Master, grant me courage and zeal for the truth even in the face of antagonism and probable failure.

Nazareth possessed an unenviable reputation among the Jews; and, while this poor village was to receive enduring glory from Jesus, He Himself was often to be discredited

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because He had come from there. Now He returns to Nazareth, having waited until His reputation was well established, for He knew His fellow townsmen.* This visit was prompted by a just and charitable recognition of the natural claims of relatives and fellow-citizens. Jesus wished to show His gratitude to the little town where He had grown to manhood. Perhaps, also, for our instruction and consolation, He desired to give us an example of an unfruitful apostolate, and under circumstances where failure would not be expected. He Himself foresaw this lack of success, but His foreknowledge did not deter Him.

He comes, then, to the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath day. He is invited, or He offers Himself, for the customary reading and explanation of the Law and the Prophets. They hand Him the book of Isaias; He unrolls it and finds a passage whose Messianic sense was familiar to all: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he has anointed me; to bring good news to the poor he has sent me, to proclaim to the captives release, and sight to the blind; to set at liberty the oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of recompense.* Then, rolling the book, Jesus is seated. The curiosity of the crowd is intense, for it is well known that Jesus has been teaching and working miracles. All eyes are fixed upon Him as He proceeds to apply this text, so clearly Messianic, to Himself. "Today," Jesus begins, "*this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" He develops this theme, and *all . . .* says St. Luke, *marvelled at*

* The violent expulsion of Jesus from the synagogue at Nazareth happened after He had been preaching publicly for some time in Galilee. Either St. Luke is anticipating by placing this event at the beginning of our Lord's ministry in Galilee, or he is fusing two separate visits to Nazareth.

the words of grace that came from his mouth.

But an arresting thought occurs to the listening crowd: "Is not this Joseph's son?" Then, how, they say among themselves, can He be the Messiah? And not only prejudice, but also jealousy feeds their antagonism; they wish Jesus to perform for them miracles such as He had worked at Capharnaum. They refuse to believe in Him, but they demand miracles. Jesus knew their bad dispositions and, precisely because of their unbelief, He refused to work the miracles which, indeed, by reason of their rejection of Him would have served only to increase their guilt. He severely reproached them for their incredulity, observing that no prophet is honored in his own country. Elias and Eliseus, He reminded them, were not believed by their own people, and could work miracles only among strangers; and so it was there and then at Nazareth. The idea that God could have preferred the pagans so infuriated the people of Nazareth that *they rose up and put him forth out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill, on which their town was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But he, passing through their midst, went his way.* Jesus had come to His own and His own had rejected Him. Capharnaum would henceforth be known as *his own town*; for Jesus of Nazareth had been banished from Nazareth.

O good Jesus, help me to imitate the beautiful virtues You practiced in this incident: Your loyal charity to Your own, Your courage and humility, which did not draw back from prospective failure, the firmness with which You revealed the truth to the people of Nazareth, although You knew it would provoke their anger, Your merciful benevolence which demands faith first, because the faith that precedes miracles is more meritorious for us.

The First Miraculous Draft of Fishes



“Put out into the deep, and lower your nets for a catch” (Lk. 5:4).

Because of the press of the crowd, Jesus had delivered His instruction on this occasion from Peter’s boat, which he had withdrawn a little from the land at the Master’s request. Now, having finished His discourse, Jesus told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down his nets.

Lord Jesus, help me to renounce all that hinders me from following You according to Your will.

Our Savior addressed the command to launch out into the deep to St. Peter alone. St. Ambrose sees in this action the symbol of a personal privilege granted to St. Peter of insight into the most profound mysteries; for, St. Ambrose explains, it was Peter who later recognized the divine nature in Christ Jesus and proclaimed His divine generation. Simon now replied to the Master’s order in the name of the others: “*Master, the whole night through we have toiled and have taken nothing, but at thy word I will lower the net.*” What faith and confidence against his own experienced judgment and against all likelihood of success! What could be hoped for from one cast of the net in full daylight, always less favorable to this kind of fishing than darkness? But that which is done by divine order is sure to succeed.

Peter obeyed, and the net enclosed so great a number of fish that it broke. *And they beckoned to their companions in*

the other boat to come and help them. This miracle was a most gracious and benevolent favor which Jesus accorded Peter as a compensation for the futile labors of the night and as a recompense for his faith and docility. But it was more than a manifestation of the divine goodness and bounty. The miraculous draught of fishes was a prophecy of the miraculous apostolate which would begin with the conversion of the three thousand after Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost.

Peter, filled with astonishment at the prodigy, could only fall on his knees before His Master and cry out, "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*" This prayer pleased Jesus. He ever withdraws from the complacent and the self-satisfied and approaches those who deem themselves unworthy of His presence. The prayer of Peter should be ours also when we kneel before the majesty of God made Man in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. The reply of our Savior, "*Do not be afraid; henceforth thou shalt catch men,*" appears to have been addressed not to Peter alone, but to the others who were with him as well; for St. Luke continues, "*And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him.*" Simon Peter, however, is particularly addressed throughout this incident as being the future head of the apostolic college. It is in the bark of Peter, that is, in the Church, that Jesus Christ is to be found, teaching and working miracles. How glorious is God in His saints! The fisherman of Galilee is to become the Vicar of Christ, the first Pope. How greatly to his interest it was to obey the divine command and respond to the call of Christ! Our dreams for ourselves can never equal the plans God has for us; and who knows to what degree of virtue and glory we might attain, if only we would let ourselves be guided

solely by grace, surrendering ourselves in full confidence and abandonment to the divine will!

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?
When evildoers come at me to devour my flesh, my foes and
enemies themselves stumble and fall. Though an army encamp
against me, my heart will not fear; though war be waged upon
me, even then will I trust (Ps. 26:1-3).*

JUNE 25

"We . . . Have Taken Nothing"



"Master, the whole night through we have toiled and have taken nothing" (Lk. 5:5).

The Apostles who had toiled in vain all night are symbolic of those persons who lose the merit and fruit of their works by acting from selfish motives or out of vanity.

O Jesus, preserve me from self-deception with regard to the motives of my actions.

The saddest consequence of vainglory is that it deprives us of our recompense with God. Our Lord Himself assured us of this when He said, "*Take heed not to practise your good before men, in order to be seen by them; otherwise you shall have no reward with your Father in heaven*"; this terrifying threat is repeated three times within the same chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Yet how many there are among Christians, even among religious, who gladly suffer inconvenience, hardship, and fatigue, provided they can in this way gain

admiration or even pity! What great merit there would be in their works of zeal if only their intention were upright and pure, directed to God alone! But, alas, it costs us dear to be content with the divine approval only; it is so sweet to lower our gaze to see what creatures think of us. We may even succeed in deluding ourselves into the belief that our motives are pure, but let us remember that God sees the depths, that He is *the searcher of heart and soul*. When St. Hilarion saw himself the object of esteem and even veneration among his people, he exclaimed, "How greatly am I to be pitied! I am receiving my reward in this life, for Palestine and Syria account me to be something." Let us see whether these are our sentiments, whether we dread to be recompensed by the esteem of men after we have performed a good work.

The desire for esteem also tends to blind the eyes of the soul, so that we do not see ourselves as we really are. Human praise distorts our view of ourselves; it makes the evil that is in us seem to vanish; or at least it becomes less apparent to us, while the little good that we are able to do is exaggerated and embellished with the most alluring and deceptive hues. Our limitations seem not to awaken sentiments of humility in us, but the least advantage we believe ourselves to possess inflates our vanity. And from the good opinion we have of ourselves the distance is short to the conviction that we are really worthy of esteem. Often we begin an action well, fixing our gaze upon God alone and willing only His good pleasure; but then, we become conscious that we are being noticed or admired or praised, and at that instant, unless the thought is immediately repressed, we are turned aside, distracted from our initial aim, and arrested in our upward flight. Our passion for the esteem of others also

causes us unhappiness. A rebuke irritates us, a disagreement makes us unquiet, preference shown another troubles us; in short, there is no need of any valid external reason for anxiety, since we readily create our own unhappiness. If only we would have the courage to mortify habitually our natural desire for praise until we learned to take account only of what God sees in us, what He knows of us, and His judgment of our actions, how peaceful and happy we should become! Then we should experience the truth of the words: "Be humble and you will have in your soul peace, tranquillity, and happiness."

O God, help me to see You only in all things. Assist me during this day to direct my intention consciously toward You in all that I shall say and do. Let not vainglory rob me of the merit of my good works, but enable me to repress instantly the first movements of vanity. With the help of Your grace, I shall learn to account as true glory only that which awaits the humble of heart in heaven. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, have mercy on me!

JUNE 26

The Expelling of the Unclean Spirit



"Now in the synagogue there was a man possessed by an unclean devil" (Lk. 4:33).

For the first time our Savior finds Himself face to face with the visible empire of Satan over humanity, and He confronts the enemy as a conqueror, as the Strong One who has appeared that He might *destroy the works of the devil*.

Good Jesus, keep me mindful of my baptismal renunciation of the devil's works and pomps.

It is very instructive to observe the behavior of the possessed man in the presence of Jesus. The evil spirit, who is an *unclean* spirit, had not been accosted by our Savior; but His very presence and, perhaps also, His teaching, which the possessed person had heard, both provoked and intimidated the demon. Trembling and whining with fear, he cried out to Jesus, either recognizing Him as the Messiah, or, at least, hazarding a guess at His identity. His words, "*Hast thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God,*" may be viewed either as an avowal wrested from him by force or a flattering supplication inspired by fear and by the hope that Jesus would not drive him out. In either case his exclamation gives evidence of panic and weakness. Yet, when he is forced to leave his victim, he makes a last futile effort to destroy him, throwing him upon the ground in violent convulsions.

In our Savior, on the contrary, we observe, in the first place, a majestic calm. He does not concern Himself with the pleading of the demon nor with his acknowledgment of His divinity. Scorning the homage of those unclean lips, He sternly bids the evil spirit be silent; for the glory of revealing Jesus Christ to the world is reserved for the Apostles. Our Savior would teach us here not to temporize with the devil, who is ever a deceiver and who continues to seek for a way to do harm even when he has been forced to proclaim the truth. Jesus, who is goodness and mercy itself has only a stern and contemptuous word for these spirits who are the declared and irreconcilable foes of God and man. But what compassion He shows to the unfortunate victim of the

malice and hatred of the devil in rescuing him from the power of hell!

If the teaching of Jesus had amazed and enraptured the people of Capharnaum, this evidence of His mastery over the evil spirits inspired them with fear and reverence. They said to one another, "*What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.*" The voice of Jesus is the voice of the Lord which, as David says, *strikes fiery flames and shakes the desert*; it is the voice of the Lord that *twists the oaks and strips the forest*. This miracle has a special character in that here the power of the Savior is not exercised without impediment, as was the case with the miracles He works in the realm of nature. His power encounters here a resistant hostile force—the might of hell; and yet this power is broken by one word from His divine lips. A new light is also cast upon the nature of the evil spirits, whom we see in this incident to be at once so powerful and so impotent, so shrewd, and yet heedless enough to serve the cause of the God they hate.

O Jesus, make me quick to recognize the wiles of the devil when I am tempted to yield in small ways to my weaknesses, especially to my predominant fault. Enable me to be firm and decisive in rejecting his evil suggestions, even when sin is not directly involved; and help me to choose habitually the better course of action that will lead me to perfection.

JUNE 27

The Cure of a Leper



“Now when he had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came up and worshipped him, saying, ‘Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean’” (Mt. 8:1, 2).

The time and place of this miracle are uncertain. St. Matthew, alone, places it immediately after the Sermon on the Mount. The locality appears to be some town in Galilee.

Divine Master, grant me the grace of feeling the maladies of my soul more keenly than I feel bodily ills.

Having come down from the mountain where He had been preaching, our Savior encountered a leper who worshiped Him and asked to be cured of his disease. In thus accosting Jesus, the leper did a thing which was absolutely forbidden, as St. Luke seems to note by calling attention to his particularly loathsome condition: *behold, there was a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus he fell on his face and besought him.* In the leper’s whole attitude as well as in his words, there was not only deep respect, but also extraordinary faith in the power and goodness of Jesus. He said to Him, “*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*” And Jesus, out of pity, as St. Mark tells us, *stretched forth his hand and touched him.* By touching this man afflicted with so repulsive a disease, Jesus particularly manifested His pity and benevolence. Moreover, in His compassionate touch of the leper, our Savior bore witness to His humanity, just as the command “*Be thou made clean*” proved His divinity;

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for the leper was healed by no borrowed aid, but by a single contact and a simple word! O ineffable goodness of Jesus, ever attentive to the desires of the poor and the unfortunate and ever prompt to do the will of those who fear Him!

Our Savior then imposed two conditions on the leper: he must present himself to the priests at Jerusalem and speak of the miracle to no one. The first recommendation was made in compliance with the prescription of Moses, whereby a leper who was cured or was thought to be, had to present himself before the priest to be examined by him and given a certificate of his cure, if it was found to be authentic. Probably Jesus explicitly reminded the leper of this obligation, since his sudden cure might easily have caused him to forget the condition prescribed by the Law; and in this case the priests would not miss the opportunity of accusing our Savior of desiring to transgress the law of Moses. As for the admonition not to publicize the miracle, we find this recommendation more than once in the Gospel. Our Savior wished to teach His disciples and us that good should not be done with a view to attracting notice or for useless display. But His principal motive here as in other cases seems to have been the avoidance of needless provocation of His enemies. The leper, however, reported the cure everywhere, with a good intention, no doubt, and out of gratitude. The result was so great a gathering of the sick and infirm that Jesus *could no longer openly enter a town, but remained outside in desert places*. From this we may infer the vehemence of the secret hostility against Him.

“Almighty and eternal God, mercifully look upon our infirmity, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to help and defend us” (Roman Missal).

The Leper's Prayer



"Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Mt. 8:2).
Picture the leper worshiping Jesus and asking for a cure.
Divine Savior, grant me the dispositions necessary for the cure
of all my ills.

The dispositions and the prayer of the leper in this incident from the Gospel deserve our close attention. We see in him strong faith, exemplary reverence, and humble confidence. Bravely he accosted Jesus, of whose power and goodness he doubtless had heard, and prostrated himself before Him in worship, saying, "*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" The brevity and tact of this petition recall to our minds those other similar prayers, whose efficacy we know from the Gospel: "*They have no wine,*" "*Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" But if the words were few, the fervor and confidence implied in them were very great. And by employing almost the same words in His answer, "*I will; be thou made clean,*" Jesus seemed to express His approval of the manner in which the leper had made his request. He was cured at once, for by his moving prayer he had confessed the divinity of Jesus, His power, and his own firm hope of being heard.

If our faith were as strong as that of the leper, we should not remain so imperfect and languid of spirit. Jesus extended His hand and touched the leper, in order to make known the power of His sacred flesh, which can impart health, purity, and holiness to body and soul. Not only once, as

in the case of the leper, but daily we come into contact with the body of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. If our dispositions in receiving Him were less imperfect, what streams of life-giving virtue would flow into our souls from this source of strength and sanctity of body and soul! Like the leper we must lift up our voices and cry to the Savior until we are healed. If our will is feeble, uncertain, and inconstant, we shall never break with sin. Lukewarm prayers do not touch the heart of God, nor will feeble sighs accomplish the work of our total conversion to Him. He hears not the cry of the lips but the cry of the heart that is penetrated with sorrow for sin.

Let us not cease to cry out to Him until we hear the consoling words, "*I will; be thou made clean.*" These words we truly hear whenever we receive worthily the Sacrament of Penance. For, although our divine Master can cure the leprosy of sin without the intervention of His ministers, He has willed that the sinner show himself to the priest of the New Dispensation, just as He instructed the leper in the Gospel to present himself to the ministers of the Old Law.

O divine Savior, bring healing to my soul today. Touch it in Holy Communion with the full efficacy of Your holy and sanctifying flesh. Command me to be interiorly and exteriorly healed and purified, that I may be "washed yet more from my iniquity and cleansed from all my sins."

The Paralytic of Capharnaum



“And getting into a boat, he crossed over and came to his own town. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic lying on a pallet” (Mt. 9:1, 2).

The house in Capharnaum where Jesus was teaching on this occasion was so crowded, St. Mark tells us, that there was no longer room not even around the door. While our Savior was instructing those who were fortunate enough to get near Him, a pallet bearing a paralytic was lowered through an opening made in the roof.

O Jesus, grant me the grace of obtaining in this life the remission of all my sins.

As Jesus sat teaching this large audience, which included Pharisees and Scribes from the villages of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem, a litter bearing a paralytic was lowered through an opening in the roof into the midst of the astonished throng and placed before Jesus. The large audience, the presence of the Scribes and Pharisees, the faith and generous charity of the sick man's friends—all these circumstances imparted to this occasion a special solemnity. That the general atmosphere was favorable to the working of the miracle is indicated by the words of St. Luke: *And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* Our Savior's procedure in performing this cure was itself remarkable. He intended to profit by this opportunity for revealing to the people and to the Pharisees that the Son of Man was also the Son of God, by exercising His power of forgiving

sins. His words, "*Take courage, son; thy sins are forgiven thee,*" signified a formal remission of sins, and it was so that the Pharisees and Scribes understood them.

Jesus began with the remission of sins not only to carry out His primary intention of manifesting His possession of this power, but also to show that sin is a greater evil than physical infirmity; and perhaps also for the reason that sin in this case appears to have been the cause of the malady. Then, He proved His right to exercise the power of remitting sins by reading the secret thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees; for God alone can read thoughts, just as God alone can forgive sins. Finally, Jesus confirmed the reality of His power to forgive sins by healing the paralysis. The specific aim of the cure was to bear witness to this power, which the prophets had attributed to the Messiah, and to prove thereby His divinity. "*But that you may know,*" He said, "*that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins . . . I say to thee, arise,*" He said to the paralytic, "*take up thy pallet and go to thy house.*" To forgive sins, to read men's secret thoughts, to cure miraculously are equally impossible to man, but to God they are all equally easy; in this instance the outward cure was accomplished merely by a word of command.

As for the effect of this miracle, the cured paralytic was naturally filled with joy and gratitude, and he went to his house glorifying God. The bystanders, too, were filled with admiration and gratitude to God, but they were also struck with a reverential fear and they said, "*Never did we see the like.*" And what of the Scribes and Pharisees? They seem to have felt nothing of all this, yet *the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* They had personally witnessed the prodigy, they understood the significance of what

had taken place well enough to say to themselves, "*Who can forgive sins, but God only?*" But still they did not believe.

O Jesus, I adore You as my Savior and my God. The Pharisees protested against those words of Yours, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee*"; but as for me I believe and confess that You alone have expiated my sins by Your blood, that You alone can with sovereign authority remit my sins by Your merits. In Your mercy, O divine Jesus, make me hear within my heart those consoling words You spoke to the paralytic: "*Take courage . . . thy sins are forgiven thee.*"

JUNE 30

The Call of Matthew



"And after this he went forth; and he saw a publican, named Levi, sitting in the tax-collector's place, and he said to him, 'Follow me'" (Lk. 5:27).

As Jesus was walking along the lakeside at Capharnaum, He stopped before a tollhouse where Levi, the son of Alphaeus, was busy at his work.

Good Jesus, grant me the strength of will to break once and for all with everything that keeps me from being a true follower of Yours.

The three Evangelists who record the calling of Matthew all allude to the glance of Jesus as He stopped before the desk of the publican, Levi. What blended majesty and sweetness there must have been in this gaze, penetrating even to the most secret depths of the soul, this divine glance

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which from all eternity had rested upon Matthew! The gaze of Jesus was the omnipotent regard of Him who draws living souls out of the void and who in one and the same instant casts the seed and gathers the fruit. Immediately our Savior said to Matthew, "*Follow me.*" *And leaving all things,* continues St. Luke, *he arose and followed him.* The summons of Jesus was to this publican as a light so bright and living that he left straightway his home and family, his business and property. He exchanged his customhouse for the throne of the judges of Israel and the registry of taxes for the recording of the Gospel.

The manner in which St. Matthew responded to the call of Jesus implies a magnanimous nature. He obeyed immediately—this detail also is noted by all three Evangelists. He left all things and followed our Savior with joy and gratitude. Perhaps it was to signalize this moment of grace that he changed his name from Levi to Matthew (i.e., "grace of God" or "gift of God"); at all events, even if he already bore "Matthew" as a second name, he used it exclusively after the call of Jesus, for no other name appears in the recorded lists of the Apostles. He also celebrated the occasion by giving a feast to which our Savior, as guest of honor, the disciples, and Matthew's fellow publicans were invited. His intention in this would seem to have been not only to show his gratitude to Jesus and mark the commencement of his new way of life, but also to bring his former companions into contact with the Savior and to make Him know them—already Matthew was an Apostle!

But we are not to conclude from the eager docility of St. Matthew that Jesus never met with resistance. We know of one instance, at least, in which a soul called by Him hesitated and finally refused. The Gospel does not record

the names of the others who may have rejected our Savior's invitation or who, perhaps, became disciples only temporarily; but it is probable that then as now a great many appeals were necessary to make one disciple. We should learn from this incident of the calling of Matthew that when divine grace encounters a responsive, docile soul, it can work a very rapid and profound transformation. No one while he lives is to be despaired of, for there is no condition of life nor state of soul that God cannot turn to account for His kingdom. Let us resolve, then, to pray with greater earnestness that sinners may have the grace of repentance, and that we ourselves may respond with eagerness and sincerity when Jesus invites us to a closer imitation and a more perfect union with Him.

Great St. Matthew, obtain for me a sincere and magnanimous heart. I also wish to accept the invitation of Jesus to a new life of greater humility, self-denial, and prayerfulness; help me to conquer my selfishness, so that, like you, I may follow Jesus with joy and as you did attract others also to His service.

JULY 1

The Precious Blood of Our Savior



(See *Festivals and Saints*, p. 818)

JULY 2

The Visitation of Our Lady to St. Elizabeth



(See *Festivals and Saints*, p. 820)

The Question of Fasting



"Now they said to him, 'Why do the disciples of John fast so often and make supplications and likewise those of the Pharisees, whereas thy disciples eat and drink?'" (Lk. 5:33)

The calling of St. Matthew marks the beginning of new difficulties for our Savior. The Pharisees, angered that Jesus should associate with publicans and even call one of them to the apostolate, now for the first time make an open attack on Him. The feast given by St. Matthew in Jesus' honor was, perhaps, the occasion of the complaint recorded by St. Luke. Good Jesus, help me to imitate Your gentleness and reasonableness in the face of ill will and opposition.

Our Savior is here reproached for not obliging His disciples to fast and pray as John the Baptist had done and as the Pharisees were demanding of their disciples. It is true that the recitation of prayers and the observance of fasts are important practices of the spiritual life. It is equally true, however, that along with a full exercise of prayer and fasting one can still be far removed from interior perfection, as the disciples of John and the Pharisees show in their complaint on this occasion. Jesus, far from condemning fasting in itself, will later give precepts on this subject, and His disciples will fast according to His example; but this was not the time, He said in effect on this occasion, to prescribe rules for fasting. "*Can you make the wedding guests fast,*" asked our Savior, "*as long as the bridegroom is with them?*"