

ON THE EUCHARIST.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER IX.

THE EUCHARIST.

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I. - ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

554. *A Jewish Glass-Founder's Son.* -

My dear friends, there happened in the time of St. Mennas, patriarch of Constantinople, in the sixth century, a miracle too plain and too well attested to be passed over in silence. It was the custom at Constantinople, when the holy Eucharist was being renewed, to have the particles of the sacred host that remained from the last consecration eaten by children still in a state of innocence. The Greek historian Nicephorus assures us that he was called on, several times in his childhood, to communicate in this way.

One day when the children were brought from the schools for that purpose, there was amongst them a little Jew, who received Communion with the others. His father, a glass-founder by profession, wanted to know why he came home so late that day from school. The child simply told him what had passed. The Jew having learned that he had received the Eucharist, was so enraged that he flung the poor child into the fiery furnace in which he melted glass. The mother, in her grief and terror for the disappearance of her child, made the house re-echo with her cries; at

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length, at the end of three days, passing near the furnace, lamenting aloud, she heard a voice gently calling her. Not knowing, at first, where the voice came from, she opens the furnace; she perceives her dear child quietly sitting in the midst of the flames, without appearing to suffer the least in the world from the fire. She draws him out immediately and asks him how it was that he was not burned up amongst those red coals.

"Mamma, a lady all dressed in purple often appeared to me in those three days; she threw water about me, extinguishing the fire that might reach me, and she fed me all that time." The whole city soon heard of this amazing prodigy. The mother and her son immediately embraced the Catholic religion and had themselves baptized. As for the father, he obstinately refused to be converted; he was punished with death for this fearful attempt on the life of his child, and that by order of the Emperor Justinian himself. May he have been granted the grace of a final repentance and conversion. This happened at Constantinople, in the year 532 of our era.

- Abbe FAVRE, *Le Ciel Ouvert*, 142.

555. *The Mystery of the Eucharist.* -

You remember, children, that a mystery is a truth which we are bound to believe, although we can neither comprehend nor explain it. The Eucharist is of that number; we know well that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Our Lord, but we know not how that can be done. Here is something that may give us an idea of it. I have read that Samenes, Bishop of Gaza, in Palestine, travelling

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one day with a caravan, a Turk asked him how he could imagine that bread changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The holy bishop immediately answered: "That is not very difficult to God, for He can well effect by a miracle what He does every day in the natural order. At the moment of your birth you were not as large as you are now; who made you grow? Is it not that what you eat was changed into your substance?"

-- "But, is it possible," said this Mussulman Turk, "that the same body of Jesus Christ is in all your churches?" -- "Nothing is impossible to God," answered the bishop, "and that answer ought to suffice for you; but, to prove to you that that is not incredible, remember that if a glass is broken the same image is produced in all the pieces, and is complete in every piece. But here is a still better proof: now that I am speaking to you, are not my words heard entire by each person present? Explain to me how that is done, and you will be able to comprehend the mystery of the Eucharist." At these words the Turk remained confused, and knew not what to say; but the Christians present were edified and confirmed in their faith.

- GUILLOIS, *Nouv. Explic. du Cat.*, 364.

556. *How Hosts Were Made Formerly.* -

Nothing proves better, children, the profound respect which the Church bears to the Holy Eucharist than the precautions and the religious care wherewith the hosts for consecration were formerly made, and are even still made. I am very sure that you will read with interest the following curious details. They

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are related by St. Uldaric, a monk of the Abbey of Cluny, who lived in the eleventh century. "It is not allowed to work at this after eating. The wheat with which hosts should be made, however good and pure its quality may be, is, nevertheless, chosen grain by grain, and that by no others but the monks themselves. It is afterwards put in a bag, not the first that comes, but of some good material, and prepared for that express purpose. This bag is tied, then given in charge to a servant, who must be neither giddy nor frolicsome. That servant takes it immediately to the mill, washes the two millstones, and covers them with curtains above and below; he clothes himself with an alb, and puts an amice on his head, tying it so that only his eyes can be seen. He thus grinds the wheat and sifts the flour, after having first washed the sieve well. The high treasurer of the church, if he be not priest or deacon, seeks some one to finish this work in his place; he also seeks two other religious, priests or deacons, who know how to do it; they are to take with them a lay brother. These three religious, after having finished the nocturns or night prayers, put on their boots, wash their face and hands, then go to the altar, where they sing lauds and prime (Morning Praises and First morning prayers), adding thereto the Seven Penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints. Afterwards the three religious who are in orders clothe themselves in albs and amices destined for that single purpose. One of them spreads flour and kneads it very firm on a clean table; it is kneaded with cold water, so that the hosts

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may become white; the two other religious serve to form the hosts. Now, the water is carried in no other vessel than that which is used to carry the water for Mass. As for the lay brother, he holds the iron instrument in which the hosts are to be baked; for that he takes care to have his hands covered with gloves.

Meanwhile the monks chant the remaining portion of the office, and when the hosts are baked they sing the Office of the Blessed Virgin. They observe silence at all the hours, and take care that not only their spittle, but even their breath, does not go in any way whatever that can soil the hosts they are making. If they happen to want anything, it is only the brother that can answer the domestics. Finally, the fire is only made with wood prepared expressly for that use." All these precautions give a high idea of the sanctity of the Eucharist.

- GENEVAUX, *Hist. Choisies*, 310.

557. *The Blessed Sacrament Carried on Horseback.* -

One of the most edifying instances I have read, dear friends, touching the respect and veneration wherewith the Blessed Sacrament should be honoured, is related in the history of the Emperors of Austria and Germany.

One of the heads of that illustrious house, Rodolph, Count of Hapsburg, being one day following the chase in the mountains of Switzerland, perceived a poor priest who was much embarrassed to cross a stream swollen by rain; he had to cross it to bring the holy Viaticum to a sick person. Immediately the noble count

alights from his horse, makes the priest

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mount him, and follows himself on foot with much recollection. The priest afterwards wanted to give back his horse to the prince, but the latter answered "I do not deem myself worthy of ever again mounting a horse which has had the honour of bearing the Lord of lords; it is from Him that I hold in fief all I possess." And so saying he left his beautiful courser at the service of the poor priest and his church. The report of this so edifying event was soon noised abroad through the valleys of Switzerland, and thence into the other provinces of the German Empire; it everywhere caused a pious joy to all the people, great and small.

Rodolph himself was rewarded for it in a very extraordinary manner even in this life; for, that prince having gone to visit a holy recluse, she foretold him that he should be greatly honoured in this world, specially because of his having humbly given his horse for the use of the King of Heaven.

And so it happened, dear friends, for Rodolph of Hapsburg became Emperor of Germany and Austria some years after, that is to say in 1273.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III, 68.

558. *A Host Crucified!* -

There exists, dear friends, a great number of hosts that are called miraculous, because they recall prodigious facts to which they gave rise. The history of that of St. Jean en Greve, at Paris, is one of the most celebrated and most authentic. A poor woman, who had need of money, had borrowed a small sum from a Jewish money-lender who was both an usurer and a very vicious and evil man. He was unlike the rest of that chosen tribe and was almost universally disliked, even by his own, for his ill-humour and petty-mindedness and for a certain nastiness in his general outlook. She had given him in pledge all she had best in clothes and linen.

The feast of Easter being near

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she entreated him to lend her, at least for that great day, what she had pawned with him. "I will willingly consent," said he, "and even forgive you the whole sum I lent you, if you promise to bring me the host you will receive in communion." The desire of having her clothes again, and not being obliged to repay the sum borrowed, was for that unhappy woman a temptation which she could not resist; she promised to bring him the host, and, what is still more, she kept her promise. On the morrow she went to her parish church, and, after receiving the Sacred Host into her mouth, she hastened to take it out again, wrapped it in a handkerchief, and brought it to the wretched Jew to whom she had promised it.

It was to gratify his hatred of Our Lord that this abominable man wanted to have a host; he treated it with the greatest indignity, and Jesus Christ constantly showed him how sensible He was to the outrages offered Him.

The wretch first put the host on a table, and struck it repeatedly with a penknife; blood immediately flowed from it in abundance, which caused the man's wife and children to shudder with horror. They were already grossly ashamed of the behaviour of their family's bread-winner but were terrified of his frequent violent outbursts. He then nailed it to a wall and brutally struck it; then he pierced it with a lance. All this was done by the now demented madman in the hope that it would renew the frightful torments of Our Lord's Passion.

The wretch had developed an insane, if not demonic, hatred of his brother and fellow Jew, our own beloved Saviour. It then shed blood anew, as though to prove to the execrable wretch that it was not merely material bread. He threw it in the fire, and it was seen flying here and there without receiving any injury. The infernal rage that animated this deluded and irrational Jew led him to throw it into a pot of boiling

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water; the water took the colour of blood, and the host then appeared visibly under the very form of Christ crucified! After so many marvels connected with what on the surface seemed by a small piece of white, unleavened bread, this last sight so terrified this hate-filled Jew that he went to hide himself in a dark corner of his house; a moment of rational insight had at last penetrated this crazed man. But it was not long before his crime was discovered, and in this way. One of his children, the youngest, not understanding his father's crazed, hate-filled outburst, but deeply impressed by the abundant evidence of blood-shed during his father's manic performance, seeing people going to church the next morning, cried out simply: "Do not go to church

any more to seek your God; don't you know my father killed Him?" A woman, hearing what he said, entered the house under pretence of asking for some fire for her stove, and she saw the host which was still under the form of Jesus on the cross; but it soon resumed its former shape, and came to repose in the little vessel the woman had in her hand.

All amazed, the latter carried her treasure religiously to the Church of St. Jean en Greve. Information was given to the magistrate. An inquiry was held and all the above details were given by the eyewitnesses, namely the man's wife and the older and more responsible children, though the younger and more simple children were also able to add their testimony of what had happened that night. The Jew, no-wise sorry for his fault, was condemned by the harshness of the law of those days to be burned alive; in fact he really needed some sort of mental asylum for his outrageous conduct. One of the jurymen in the case used the term 'deicide Jew' in reference to this man, in referring to his insane desire to somehow eliminate the God worshipped by Christians. It is thought that he had a powerful influence on the outcome of the trial and its harsh penalty.

But it is of some interest to note that as a result of the miraculous manifestations shown during this sacrilege that his wife, his children, and many other Jews were converted to a deep and profound Catholicism thereby fulfilling the expectations of their ancestors in having faith in the true Messiah promised to the Jews. The house wherein Our Lord showed that he is really in the Blessed Sacrament was changed into a church; and, in course of time, it was served by Carmelite monks. The family was provided with new accommodations by the parish. The religious who inhabited the new church were charged with repairing, by a perpetual adoration, the outrages offered to Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of His love. This sad event took place in 1250.

- LASSAUSSE, *Explic. du Cat. de l'Empire*, 498.

559. *The Holy Eucharist and a Robber.* -

If ever you have occasion to go to Turin, the capital of Piedmont, in modern Italy, be sure to go and see the church of *Corpus*

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Domini, that is to say, the Body of Our Lord. This is the miraculous fact which caused its erection; it has reference to the holy Eucharist. A sacrilegious robber having slipped into a church in Turin, stripped the tabernacle, and loaded his horse with all the sacred vessels, having first thrown out the sacred hosts. At the dawn of day he was preparing to go away, when his horse fell down on his forefeet; the repeated blows of the robber could not make him rise. People assemble, they gather round him; by degrees they begin to suspect something extraordinary, and lay their hands on his burden. A glance reveals to their terror-stricken eyes the sacred vessels. And instantly, an adorable host, which had lain hidden in the bottom of a ciborium, escapes and rises all radiant in the air to a considerable height. The report of the miracle soon spread throughout the city; the archbishop immediately ordered a general procession, at the head of which he came himself. In presence of the whole city assembled, he presented a chalice to the sacred host, which descended into it perpendicularly, and was carried to St. John's, the metropolitan church of Turin. In memory of this great event, a magnificent church was built in the same place; a balustrade may still be seen, on the base of which these words are read in Latin: *It was here the horse stopped*. Every year the diocese celebrates this prodigy by a festival, and the city of Turin, in particular, by a solemn procession.

This prodigious event, preserved in the municipal records, took

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place in 1453, on the 6th of June under the pontificate of Pope Nicholas V., and the reign of Count Louis of Savoy. It was the son of the latter, the Blessed Amadeus Romagno, who received the sacred host, for it was he who was then archbishop of Turin. Besides what I have said, the diocese of that name celebrates it in a still more pompous manner every fifty years; and since that time, there exists a body of canons intended to celebrate that memorable event, in the church of *Corpus Domini*.

The last fifty years' jubilee was solemnized in 1853. I read Father Favre's account of it some years after that solemn jubilee, and it is now my privilege to share it with you, my very dear friends.

- Abbe FAVRE, *Le Ciel Ouvert*, 148.

560. *The Miraculous Host of Faverney.* -

France, too, my very dear children, has had her miraculous hosts; one of the most celebrated is that of Faverney, in the department of the Upper-Saone.

This event took place, in the Church of Notre Dame, on the 25th of May, 1608.

There was usually, at the Feast of Pentecost, a great concourse of the faithful, who came to gain a plenary indulgence granted by the Holy See. It was the custom, for that solemnity, to erect a wooden altar, richly decorated, whereon the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. A taper, placed too near a curtain, having taken fire, the altar and *repositor* or repository, with all their ornaments, were burned in an instant.

Surprising thing, the Blessed Sacrament was not only undamaged by the flames, but it remained suspended in the air without any support, and that for thirty-three hours, to the great astonishment of the multitude, who flocked from all parts to

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contemplate this prodigy. A priest of the neighbourhood came in procession with all his people, and prepared to celebrate Mass at the high altar. Whilst he was saying it the Blessed Sacrament went of itself to place itself on that altar, after the elevation. All this took place in sight of an immense multitude of spectators, from amongst whom were chosen fifty witnesses, the best instructed and most trustworthy.

The Archbishop of Besancon, Mgr. Ferdinand de Longwy, after the most critical investigation, caused the account of this miraculous host to be printed and published, and from that period, that is to say, for more than two hundred and fifty years since 1608, the memory of it is preserved in the little town of Faverney, and throughout the diocese of Besancon.

- Abbe FAVRE, *Le Ciel Ouvert*, 179.

561. *Our Lord Appears in the Blessed Sacrament.* -

Our Lord is truly in the Eucharist, none of you doubts it, dear friends, but He is there in a manner invisible to the eyes of the body. Nevertheless, He has sometimes been pleased to show Himself in a sensible manner; here is one instance of it, which took place in France not quite two hundred years ago, (in 1666, in fact). It was in the village of the Ulmes de Saint Florant, in the department of Maine et Loire. It was on the Saturday within the Octave of Corpus Christi, the 2nd of June in the year 1666.

The whole population being assembled in the church for the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, at the very moment when the priest intoned the *Verbum caro, panem verum*, ('the precious Word, Love made Flesh, bread indeed to eyes, Food for the soul,') there

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appeared in place of the host a real human figure. His hair was almost black, and falling on his shoulders; his face appeared brilliant, and in his mien shone a superhuman majesty; he was clothed in white, and his hands were crossed. The priest, who was the first to perceive it, invited his parishioners aloud to come and assure themselves of the fact, saying: "If any one here is incredulous, let him approach." People did approach, and enjoyed the spectacle for full a quarter of an hour, when a little cloud, covering the figure, concealed it from human eyes; the cloud itself soon disappeared, and the host was seen in its former state. This astounding fact soon reached the ears of Mgr. Henri Arnaud, who was then Bishop of Angers; he went immediately to the place, heard the witnesses, and found, by the strictest inquiry, that the fact was unquestionably true, which induced him to attest to the whole Church the truth of this miracle by a mandamus, which was circulated all through France. This story, dear friends, will, doubtless, edify your piety, but I would fain believe that it will add nothing to your faith, which ought to be entire and absolute in regard to the mysteries and truths of religion.

- Abbe FAVRE, *Le Ciel Ouvert*, 164.

562. *Story of an Irreligious Barber.* -

I know not, dear friends, if you remember the story of a robber in Turin, who had the frightful misfortune to profane the Blessed Sacrament in 1453. (See anecdote number 559.) I will only tell you now that a solemn commemoration is every year made of it, and a more solemn one still every fifty years.

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In 1803, during the invasion of Piedmont by the French, the procession of the jubilee made on that occasion was going on in Turin. An impious barber after having scoffed and ridiculed a person whom he was shaving, because he was going to join the procession, went himself from his shop to see it pass. He affected to keep his hat on his head, and would not take it off after being repeatedly told to do so. He thus braved the pious ceremony and the Blessed Sacrament in the most insolent and obstinate manner. But, at the moment when the priest who carried the divine Eucharist passed before him, the justice of God overtook him. He fell dead on the ground, in presence of the innumerable crowd of spectators, who regarded this awful death as the just punishment of his impiety. This event produced such a sensation, that the police magistrate caused the wretched man's body to be exposed for thirty-six hours at the door of the City Hall. A number of persons, eye-witnesses of this tragical death, related this fact just as I have told it; several of these are living still, or were a few years ago when Fr Favre wrote his celebrated account of it.

- Abbe FAVRE, *Le Ciel Ouvert*, 197.

563. *Sacrilegious Parody on the Eucharist.* -

I have either read or heard told a great number of tragical stories touching the Holy Eucharist; but, my good friends, here is one which, short as it is, singularly struck me.

I read it in a very interesting book entitled the *Historical Catechism*, published in Germany some years ago. In the village of Edinghausen,

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situated not far from the town of Bielfeld, in Rhenish Prussia, an impious blasphemer of religion took it into his head one day to turn the Holy Eucharist into derision. He sits down to table with some companions, who were not at all as impious as he, but who were still no great things. He takes some bread and wine, and pronounces over it, with mock solemnity the words of consecration: *This is my body! This is my blood!*

After this sacrilegious parody he distributes them amongst his companions, telling them with an ironical smile: *Take you, all!* When he had given some to all, and his own turn came to take bread and wine, he felt unwell, let his head fall on his chest, and in a few seconds ceased to live!

This took place on the 5th of January, 1807. The wretch was buried outside the cemetery, precisely on the feast of the Epiphany. (6th January.) May this tragical and lamentable story be a salutary warning for wretches who scoff and sneer at holy mysteries, and turn into ridicule the truths of religion!

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 146.

564. *A General Carrying the Canopy.* -

How happy are those amongst you, my good little friends, who have the honour of being altar boys! They approach the good God, one may say, more nearly. This is especially true as regards the Blessed Sacrament.

Listen: Some months before a celebrated Austrian General, Baron Geramb, entered the noviciate of the reverend Trappist Fathers, whilst he still wore his brilliant general's uniform, he met, in one of the principal streets of Lyons, France, a priest carrying the holy viaticum

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to a sick person. No sooner had he perceived it than he threw himself on his knees and adored Our Lord with the liveliest emotion. But when the priest came up to where he was, he observed with pain that the two altar boys who held the canopy over the priest were quarrelling between themselves making threatening gestures, and elbowing each other. At this sight the pious baron snatched the pole of the canopy from the one who appeared the most insolent, and sent him off. The priest, turning round, to his great surprise, perceived the general who had taken the place of the altar boy. No less great was the admiration of the crowd which had gathered to the place or was following the Blessed Sacrament. The Baron de Geramb, who had exhibited such great devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament, was obliged to make a long circuit, as the priest had to administer to two persons whose dwellings were at a considerable distance one from the other. Hence it was that, after having accompanied the Blessed Sacrament all the way, having returned to the church, the priest thanked him most kindly; but the brave and pious general was quite surprised, for he thought he had only done his duty as a good Christian.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 73.

565. *God's Sentry.* -

I am sure I have never told you, dear friends, a prettier story than the following, especially as regards the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

You know that nothing is more amiable than the French soldier, especially the Christian soldier. There

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is in his faith so much loyalty and sincerity! At times it may, indeed, manifest itself in a strange, original manner, but it is always full of meaning. Some years ago, I believe it was in 1847 or perhaps 49, a soldier who had attended regularly at the St. Francis Xavier meetings, in Paris, went to Orleans with his regiment. Now, from the arrival of this new regiment, the pastor of the cathedral had remarked with surprise a soldier who, from one in the afternoon till three, remained standing motionless, straight as a pillar, in the middle of the church before the grating of the sanctuary. The good priest was very anxious to know what this might mean. One day a captain came to visit the cathedral with his lady, who was very pious. The priest brings him into the sacristy, tells him what was going on and adds: "Wait a moment, it is almost the time, and I am sure you shall see this singular soldier." True enough, when the hour strikes, the soldier arrives, says a short prayer and takes his post. The captain looks and exclaims "Why, it is my confidential soldier! my batman! an excellent soldier and a fine fellow!" He is sent for to the sacristy. "And what are you doing here?" said his officer to him. "Captain, I am keeping two hours' sentry for the good God; you see, captain, He is stronger than I and warms my blood. There are sentries everywhere. In Paris, there are four for the President; here, my general has two, my colonel one. For the prefect a sentry, for the bishop a sentry, and so on. When I came here, I said to myself: 'The good God is something

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more than all these people. Well! there is no sentry for Him'. So I keep sentry for Him when I am at liberty, and I assure you the time is not long, for I love Him as you do yourself, captain!" The captain had the happiness of being a Christian all his life. You may imagine the sweet satisfaction experienced by the happy witnesses of this scene. They congratulated the religious soldier, and encouraged him to continue on duty for the good God.

- *Recomp. Hebdom.*, No. LXXVIII., p. 5.

II. - ON THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

566. *A Saint Unwilling to Say Mass.* -

It is something so great, so sublime, dear friends, the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that no one is ever too well prepared to offer it. There were bishops, saints even, who did not dare to celebrate Mass when they had some slight faults wherewith to reproach themselves. Here is a fine example of it, taken from the life of St. John Chrysostom. Being one day at an assembly of bishops in Constantinople, of which he was patriarch, one amongst them, named Eusebius, who was Bishop of Cibiana, in Lydia, declared himself the accuser of Antoninus, Bishop of Ephesus, his metropolitan, and presented a memorial against him, containing seven points of accusation.

St. Chrysostom said to him kindly and gently: "Brother Eusebius, accusations which are made through passion are often not easy to prove; take my advice

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do not accuse brother Antoninus in writing, and we will try to arrange this affair." But Eusebius grew warm, and, carried away by anger, absolutely persisted in his accusation.

St. Chrysostom requested Paul of Heraclea, who was a friend of Antoninus, to reconcile them; then he rose with the bishops, who were twenty-two in number, and entered the church, for it was the time for the Holy Sacrifice. Having saluted the people as usual, wishing them peace, he seated himself in the chair with the other bishops. During this time Eusebius came towards him, and, in presence of all the people and the assembled bishops, he presented to St. John Chrysostom another memorial, containing the same charges, and adjuring him by the most terrible oaths to do him justice in that affair.

The holy patriarch, seeing his anger, and anxious that the people might not be disturbed thereby, received this memorial; but, after the public reading of the Holy Scripture, according to custom, he begged Pansophius, Bishop of Pisidia, to offer the Holy Sacrifice in his place. For himself, he left the church with the other bishops, for he would not celebrate Mass with his mind agitated, following that saying of the Gospel: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and remember that your brother has anything against you, leave there your gift, and go first to be reconciled with your brother."

St. Chrysostom applied these words literally to himself; although he had nothing to reproach himself with on this sad occasion, he would not celebrate Mass himself,

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merely because he had been a little disturbed, and knew that Bishop Eusebius had something against him. A great lesson for us, dear friends, when we are preparing to assist at the Holy Sacrifice or to receive Holy Communion.

- PALLADIUS, *Life of St. John Chrysostom*.

567. *Singular Vision of Witikind.* -

Although we know very well, my good little friends, that Our Lord Jesus Christ is really present on the altar after the consecration, we would, perhaps, be very glad to see Him in a sensible manner. This favour God has sometimes granted for reasons worthy of His wisdom and His goodness. Our Lord Jesus Christ is really present in and on the altar.

The most curious story I know on this subject is what happened to the famous Witikind, duke of the Saxons, one of the most barbarous nations of Germany in the eighth century. When he was still a pagan, and maintaining an obstinate war against Charlemagne, Emperor of the Franks, this valiant duke was curious to know what was passing in the camp of the Christians; for that purpose, he disguised himself as a pilgrim. It was precisely at the time of the festival of Easter, when the whole Frankish army was engaged in fulfilling the duty of Paschal Communion. He enters the camp without being recognized, he admires the ceremonies of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and assists thereat with an attention and a pious curiosity, little to be expected from a barbarian and a pagan. But what surprised him the most was to see in each host which the priest distributed to the soldiers for holy communion,

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a child of admirable beauty all radiant with light.

(Now, it is the risen and redeeming Christ who is truly and substantially present under the appearance of bread, but the Good God permitted the Saxon duke to visualize Our Saviour as the Divine Child.) This divine child seemed to enter with extreme joy the mouths of some, whilst he struggled not to enter that of some others. This miraculous vision, on which he afterwards took care to obtain instruction, was one of the causes which determined him to embrace the Christian religion and make all his subjects embrace it; which happened in the year 804, as you may have already read in the history of France.

- RODRIGUEZ, *Practice of Christian Perfection*, IV., 319.

568. *The Communion of a Bad Priest.* -

Oh! my friends, if it were given us to see what passes in regard to persons who receive Holy Communion! How delighted we should be to see some, and how deeply afflicted to see others!

We read in *Christian Perfection* a singular fact which relates to that. A holy man, whose name I have forgotten, was one day at Mass, which was said by a priest who was rather worldly. What was his surprise, at the moment of Communion, to see a charming child, surrounded by luminous rays, reposing on the patten, in place of the species of bread!

(Again, the Good God had permitted the Risen Lord, truly present in the Sacred Host, to be visualized, in His great self-emptying, as a mere child.) He was more astonished afterwards, for he saw that when the priest went to take Communion, the child turned away his head, struggling with his hands and feet, as if to prevent the priest from receiving him into his mouth. The same saint had several other times the same vision, which gave him much thought. One day this secular priest, who was not bad at bottom, was conversing with him, and confessed that as often as he received the

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body of Our Lord at Mass he had great trouble in taking it, and knew not how that could come. The servant of God was very glad of this confidence; he took occasion to tell the priest what he had himself seen, and advised him to examine his conscience well and change his life. Touched by this kind admonition, and the warning he had received, the priest applied himself to become more edifying.

Some time after, the holy man who had warned him, assisting again at his Mass, perceived the same child between his hands, at the time of Holy Communion, and saw him enter into his mouth and his heart joyfully and eagerly, which proved the sincerity of his conversion.

- RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*, IV., 320.

569. *Cure of a Lady at Mass.* -

It would take whole volumes, my dear children, to relate all the miracles that have been accomplished by means of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. St. Bernard wrought a great number of the sort; his life contains several which took place, as one may say, before the whole city of Milan. One day, at the moment when he was going to celebrate Mass, there was brought to the Church of St. Ambrose a lady of distinction. This lady had been dreadfully afflicted for several years; she had lost, at once, sight, hearing, and speech; her tongue even had lengthened so that it protruded from her mouth in a monstrous way. St. Bernard exhorted all the people present to unite their prayers with his, and began to celebrate the divine mysteries, making the sign of the cross over the

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poor infirm woman every time he made it over the host or the chalice. Having finished the Lord's Prayer, he took the body of Jesus Christ, placed it on the patten, which he laid on the woman's head, and prayed Our Lord to cure her.

After that, he turned to the altar, to finish the Holy Sacrifice. When he had made the division of the host, and distributed the Communion to the people, the infirm lady, who was placed near the altar, felt herself suddenly cured - her tongue resumed its natural state, and she recovered at the same time sight, hearing, and speech.

Quite transported with joy, she came to throw herself at the feet of St. Bernard, and returned a thousand, thousand thanks to the Lord. A cry of admiration rose from every part of the church; the bells rang joyously out, the people ran in crowds to see the person so miraculously cured, and the whole city magnified the power of God, so wonderfully manifested in that miraculous cure.

- Abbe FAVRE, *Le Ciel Ouvert*, 210.

570. *Two Pages of the Court of Lisbon.* -

It is an excellent thing to hear Mass every day, dear friends, or, at least, as often as one can without failing in the duties of their state.

It is related in the life of St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, and niece of St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, that she was extremely charitable to the poor. She had ordered her almoner never to refuse charity to any one whatsoever; but, over and above that, she also gave continual alms by her own hands or those of her domestics. She usually

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employed, for that purpose, a young page named Don Pedro, in whom she had discovered great piety.

Another page, whether through envy of him or to ingratiate himself with King Denis, husband of St. Elizabeth, accused Don Pedro of having a secret understanding with the queen. Although the king did not absolutely give credence to this story, still, as he was already somewhat displeased with his wife, and some suspicion arose in his mind, he resolved in his own mind to get rid secretly of the accused page. The means he adopted for that purpose were rather extraordinary; passing that same day by a kiln where they were baking lime, he sent for the people whose business it was to keep up the fire, and told them that, on the following morning, he would send a page to ask them *if they had executed his orders*, and that they must not fail, as soon as he uttered those words, to throw him immediately into the fire. Thereupon he returned to his palace, sent for the suspected page, and ordered him to go next morning early to give the message in question. But, my friends, God, who always takes care of His own, ordained it so that, as he passed by a

church on his way to the lime-kiln, he heard the bell which announced the Elevation of the Host at Mass.

Piety having induced him to enter the church, he heard the rest of that Mass, and two others that were said one after the other. Meanwhile King Denis, impatient to know if he had been obeyed, meets by chance in his ante-chamber the wicked page who had accused the

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queen, and commands him to go in haste to ask the men at the lime-kiln if they had done as he ordered. The page runs thither without a moment's delay, and delivers his message; but, no sooner did they hear what he was directed to say, than, taking him for the one of whom the king had spoken, they seized him and threw him into the fire. The other, who had, during this time, finished his devotions, went to do his errand; and being informed that the king's orders had been obeyed, he returned to Denis with the answer. Imagine the king's anger and amazement when he saw that things had turned out so differently from what he expected. He asked Don Pedro where he had stopped so long. The page answered unsuspectingly: "Prince, as I passed by a church, on my way to the place where your Majesty had sent me, I heard the bell for the Elevation, and was induced to go in. I remained till the end of the Mass. But just as it was finishing another was commenced, and then a third, before the other was finished, and I heard them all, because my father, when giving me his last blessing before he died, told me, above all things, to hear to the end every Mass I saw commenced."

Then the king, entering into himself, easily understood that all that did not happen without the express permission of God; he adored the Divine Providence, repented of his rash and murderous judgements, and banished from his mind all the injurious suspicions he had conceived against his wife, whom he venerated ever after as a saint.

- *Life of St. Elizabeth of Portugal.*

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571. *Why, then, do I not see the Sacred Host?* -

The venerable Thomas a Kempis, who is thought to have been the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, relates that a holy priest, who lived in the same monastery, going one day on some business to another convent some distance off, met on the way a man of the world, with whom he entered into conversation. After some familiar discourse, they came to speak of the things of God, and the stranger said to him; "Father, I am going to tell you a thing that formerly happened to myself. One day, while hearing Mass, I was much surprised on not seeing the Host in the hands of the priest. I at first imagined that it was because of the weakness of my sight, or that I was at too great a distance from the altar; I moved very close to it, but still without seeing any better that way than the other. That continued for the space of a year. At length, not knowing to what cause I was to attribute it, and finding myself in a strange perplexity of mind, I resolved to speak of it to a wise director. After having maturely examined the thing, he found that I had long nourished a secret hatred against one of my neighbours, for an injury I had received, and would never forgive. The fact was unhappily true; my confessor, seeing such a great hardness of heart, represented to me the unhappy state in which I was, admonished and exhorted me several times, and at length told me that nothing else was the cause of my not seeing the Sacred Host. He added that it would be vain for me to hope to obtain that

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favour or the remission of my sins, if I did not forgive the injuries that had been done me. I acknowledge, father, that I was so touched by the words of my confessor, that thenceforward I entirely forgave my enemy. "When I finished my confession, and had received penance and absolution, I entered the church, heard Mass, and saw the holy Host without any trouble. So, ever since, I never cease to return thanks to God for such a favour, and to bless Him continually for so many other wonders which He every day works on behalf of His servants.

- RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*, I., 357.

572. *The Sacrifice of the Cross and the Altar.* -

You have not forgotten, my very dear children, the relation there is between the sacrifice of the cross and that of the altar. I have just now a very curious fact to relate to you on that subject.

After the miserable Henry VIII., King of England, had consummated the schism and heresy of the Anglican

Church, there long existed severe penal enactments against those who had the courage to practise the Catholic religion; a heavy fine was even imposed on those who assisted at Mass. It happened one day that a fervent Catholic, who enjoyed a large fortune, was condemned to pay five hundred gold pieces, because he had dared to fulfil publicly that duty of religion. The gentleman was very happy in that he was judged worthy to endure this persecution. He sought out the finest pieces of Portuguese gold that were to be had, because they bore the imprint of a cross, and

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went himself to present the entire sum in the court of law. As he counted out the beautiful new coin before the Protestant official, the latter asked him, in a jeering tone, what was the reason of his selecting such beautiful pieces to pay the fine. To this ironical question the Catholic gentleman merely replied:

"I would think it wrong to pay with common and ordinary money the favour I received in being enabled to adore my Lord and Saviour in the holy sacrament of the altar. Know, sir, that between the cross you see stamped on this coin and the holy sacrifice of the altar, there exist numerous points of analogy, both are, in fact, monuments of Our Saviour's infinite love, and no Catholic may ignore them." And so saying he went on quietly counting out the five hundred gold pieces which had permitted him to assist at the holy sacrifice. Which of you is there, dear friends, that would be willing to pay so dear for such a happiness?

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 170.

573. *What One Gains by Going to Mass.* -

There are some persons who say, "Oh! I have not time to go to Mass every day." My friends, beware of thinking that lost time; on the contrary, you cannot employ it better.

Listen: It is related of two mechanics, who worked at the same trade, and lived in the same village, in the former province of Franche-Comte, in modern France, that one of them being burdened with a large number of children, and never missing hearing Mass every day, lived very comfortably; whilst the

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other, on the contrary, who had only himself and his wife to support, went rarely to Mass, and worked night and day, even on holy-days, had the greatest trouble in the world to live. He had already remarked many times that his neighbour's affairs seemed to go on well. He one day took it into his head to ask him where he got the means of supporting so large a family so well as he did, since he, who had but his wife, and worked incessantly, often wanted the necessaries of life. The other answered him: "Come to me tomorrow morning early, and I will show you whence I draw all my profit." On the morrow they met early and the fortunate workman took the other to church to hear Mass, after which he left him, telling him to go to his work, for it was getting late. He did the same on the following day, but having gone a third time, to make him do the same thing, the other said: "My friend, I am much obliged to you, but if I want to go to Mass, I have no need of your taking me, I know the way very well. I only want to know where it is that you find so much to earn, so that I may go with you and see if I cannot make something, too."

-- "That is just what I wanted to tell you, but I know no place where there is so much to gain, both for this life and the other, as at church. A proof of this is that I have remarked that my business never goes on so well as when I have commenced my day by hearing Mass. Try it yourself, and you will see." The other did so, dear friends, and it was not long before he was convinced of the truth of what his neighbour said.

- RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*, IV., 353.