

# LET US JUDGE CATHOLICS BY THE BIBLE

## Part 2

### SEVEN SACRAMENTS NO MORE ... NO LESS

Three of the ten questions which we are considering deal with what are called "Sacraments". These questions and their answers can easily be combined.

Where in the Bible are seven Sacraments mentioned, and in particular the "Mass" or the confession of sins to a priest?

Before examining the passages in which the Bible mentions these things, it is well to point out that the answers to previous questions should make it clear that even though there were no indication of seven Sacraments in the Bible, this would be no reason to conclude that there are less than seven or none at all.

The Sacraments were possessed by the Church and in daily use long before a single line of the New Testament was written. The Christians for whom the New Testament was composed knew about them from the Apostles and their successors. The accounts of our Lord's last supper with His Apostles, given in the Gospels and in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, are rather an allusion to a thing well known than a description of it. At the time St. Paul wrote, the priesthood and the Eucharist had been in daily operation for twenty-five or thirty years, and every Christian knew by the evidences of his senses the full details of both. Nothing could be further from the truth than to suppose that the early Christians, or Christians at any date, were intended to obtain their knowledge of the priesthood and the Eucharist merely or mainly from the Scriptures. In the New Testament, when this was first written, they and the other Sacraments were institutions on which the Church was founded. People were being received into the Church by Baptism, were receiving the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands in Confirmation, were having their sins forgiven, were being married according to Christ's teaching, and were praying over and anointing the dangerously sick.

The number of the Sacraments is sufficiently established, when we find seven Sacraments in the Word of God as this has been consistently preached and practiced down through the years by the Church, drawing its teaching from what the Apostles taught by word and by letter.

How do we know the number of the various inspired books which make up the Bible, and what they are? Nowhere in the Bible is a list and the exact number given. Divine inspiration of the human author of a book is an act of God and He alone can know the authors whom He has inspired. The inspired character of one or many books could be made known only by God revealing. And we know the exact number of the inspired books and what they are because this was made known to us by the Church teaching this truth as contained in the Word of God. This is equally true of the number of Sacraments which Christ left in His Church.

Yes, the Scriptures mention the Sacraments, but in so doing, the word "sacrament" is not used. The thing is there but not the name. What we call "Sacraments" others sometimes prefer to call "ordinances". The word "Sacrament" which Catholics in the Western World have used to distinguish clearly between rites that are and those that are not Sacraments is derived from the Latin word "sacramentum", which, in its religious usage, meant the same as "mystery"— something sacred, hidden and secret. Among Greek Catholics, Sacraments have always been called mysteries.

The name "Sacrament" is given to a combination of words and actions performed by certain ministers whom Christ uses to produce certain effects in the world today — mainly sanctity. Thus, in the Sacrament of Baptism, the audible words (I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit) and the visible action (washing), employing a visible and tangible thing (water), are used by Christ through the person baptizing to produce a spiritual and invisible effect ( a gift of grace — the removal of sin — sanctity) in the baptized. It produces the desired effect because it was ordered by Christ and is used by Him. This is a rite — an established ceremony — which makes us holy and simultaneously signifies the special effects which each of the Sacraments was meant to produce. The institution of Sacraments was Christ's way of getting in touch personally with each individual in the "all nations"

to whom He sent His Apostles with the words: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

The Bible does not use our language and say "Christ instituted this Sacrament or that Sacrament", and it doesn't have to. All we need find in the Bible is the explicit or implicit statement that a rite used by Christ or by His Apostles gives the Holy Spirit and His gifts, that it effects and develops the Christian life which Christ came on earth to bring, and we have the divine institution of that rite. It belongs to God alone to produce grace through a rite and Christ alone, as the sole mediator between God and men, could have made known that fact.

### **Baptism**

Baptism, of course, is mentioned in the Bible over and over again. St. Paul speaks of the use Christ makes of it and the effect produced when he wrote to the Ephesians: "... Christ loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water (also Titus 3:5) by means of the word ..." (5:25-26). Here we find a visible thing composed of a double element — the water used to cleanse, and the word: in the name of the Father and of the Son, etc., used by Christ to sanctify the members of His Church.

That Christ intended to produce this effect through the medium of others whom He associated with Himself is evident from the words of the Apostle John: "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (the Baptist)—although Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples ..." (John 4:1).

It is through the Sacrament of Baptism that Christ makes people Christians by giving them a new Christian life: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

### **The Eucharist**

Almost as frequently as Baptism, the Eucharist appears in the New Testament as a rite to which Christ gave the standing and the significance of a Sacrament. Practically the whole sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel is devoted to our Lord's promise of the Eucharist. "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst ... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you ... For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, abides in me and I in him."

Here is how St. Paul records the fulfillment of that promise: "... the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said, 'This is my body which shall be given up for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In like manner, also, the cup, after he had supped, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes' " (I Cor. 11:23-26).

There are two important features of what Christ did and said that need to be underlined. First, He stated the significance of the bread and wine, which He changed into His Body and Blood and which He gave them to eat and drink. He spoke of them as food and, when consumed, they were nourishment. By His Body and Blood, under the appearance of bread and wine, He gave them spiritual nourishment for the Christian life which had been implanted in them at Baptism. Moreover, in this way, He and each of the Apostles present were intimately united in a spiritual manner. The visible appearance of bread and of wine signified the invisible effects which Christ produced — the strengthening of the Christian life that He had likened to the life drawn by the branches from the vine (John 15).

What He had done, He charged and empowered them to do likewise. This is a Sacrament.

Secondly, in doing what He had done, He assured them "You will proclaim the death of the Lord". The body they received under the appearance of bread, apparently separated from His blood, was to be offered up for them. The blood which they received under the appearance of wine, apparently separated from His body, was His blood of the new covenant. The blood of animals shed in sacrifice sealed the old covenant — the blood of Christ in His sacrifice on the Cross sealed the new covenant of God with His people. Thus at the Last Supper, He represented the bloody sacrifice which showed forth His death which He offered to His Heavenly Father in satisfaction for the sins of mankind.

What He had done — He charged and empowered them to do. This is a Sacrifice.

The partaking of the Eucharistic Bread and Wine is called "Communion" in the Catholic Church today. And the sacrificial offering of the Eucharistic Bread and Wine from the preparatory to the concluding prayers, we call "The Mass".

### **Confirmation**

The Acts of the Apostles give abundant evidence that the rite of imposing hands was considered by the Apostles not only to signify but also to effect the descent of the Holy Spirit on those who had been baptized (Acts 8:14-18; also 19:5-6), but this imposition of hands must be performed by those who have received the plenitude of the Spirit — the Apostles (Acts 8:12-16).

We have here all the elements of what Catholics call a "Sacrament"—Confirmation. The significant ceremony of the imposition of hands by which it is intended to communicate to another some favor, quality or excellence, usually of a spiritual kind, is extremely ancient and was practiced in Old Testament times (Gen. 48:14 Num. 27:8-23). Christ likewise used this ceremony on several occasions. When they imposed hands on the newly baptized, however, the Apostles used it with a new and distinct significance—the communication of the Holy Spirit, His grace and gifts. This meant the development of the Christian life in the baptized and a strengthening which, as confirmed Christians, they needed in living and publicly confessing their Faith.

### **Ordination**

But the imposition of hands was also used by the Apostles for another and different purpose. They deputed their office to their successors by imposing hands upon them. We find that the significance of the imposition of hands in this rite, which we call the Sacrament of Order, is the Holy Spirit conferring an office and the grace to exercise it well. This can be easily verified in St. Paul's words to Timothy: "... stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the laying on of my hands" (II Tim. 1:6; also Acts 6:6). Since Timothy was Paul's successor as Bishop of the Church in Ephesus, these words make it clear that it is the Christian rite for the ordination of the successors of the Apostles. Likewise, it was to be the rite whereby they should ordain their successors, (I Tim. 5:22). The altogether distinct and special purpose of this imposition of hands makes it a distinct Sacrament.

### **Matrimony**

The ceremony of Christian marriage is not mentioned in the Bible — probably because it consists simply and essentially in the exchange of marriage vows between a Christian man and woman. But the New Testament mentions Christian marriage and the Catholic Church teaches that it is a Sacrament.

When we examine the teaching of Jesus Christ on marriage, it is clear that it was His intention to elevate it from the sad state into which it had fallen in the world at large and among the Jews. He insisted that it is a union between one man and one woman and that this union is indissoluble. He plainly considered marriage to be sacred, since it is God Who joins the married couple. St. Paul adds that it is sacred for a most sublime reason.

The principle point which St. Paul stressed in writing to the Ephesians (5:21-33) is that, since the coming and death of Christ, Christian marriage is something different than marriage was before. The union of husband and wife is now similar to and should be modeled after the union between Christ and His Church. The union of husband and wife is that of one man and one woman until death and is holy with the holiness of the union between Christ and His Church.

To a quotation from Genesis: "The man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh," St. Paul adds the following reflection: "This is a great mystery; I mean in reference to Christ and the Church". He does not state that the rite of Christian marriage is a Sacrament, but he indicates that the union of husband and wife is not only similar to the union between Christ and His Church but that the marriage union is a title to the assistance of the grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit to make it holy.

According to St. Paul, Christian marriage has a significant character. It signifies the union between Christ and His Church. The fact that this union of Christ and His Church is the model of Christian marriages means that they should be patterned after it and marriage, thus understood and practiced by Christians, will therefore exemplify the union of Christ and His Church. This is the Scriptural basis for the teaching of the Catholic Church that Christian marriage is a Sacrament.

## **Last Anointing**

Much more explicit is the New Testament when we consider the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, or the Last Anointing. In the Epistle of the Apostle James (5:14-15), we find a brief description of this Sacrament. "Is anyone among you sick?", he wrote. "Let him bring in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."

St. James is writing to Christians and telling them what to do. When one of them is dangerously ill, he should call in those who could perform the desired rite — the presbyters of the Church. The New Testament uses this name for certain leaders of the first Christian communities who were superior to laymen and deacons but inferior to the Apostles and their principal successors who established these communities. These are the same "presbyters of the Church" whom the Holy Spirit has placed in the whole flock "as bishops to the Church of God" (Acts 20:17-28).

What the presbyters of the Church are to do is then indicated and it is something established and official. They will pray over him — supplicate God in his behalf — and at the same time anoint him with oil — a strengthening and comforting action. All this is done in the name of the Lord. Their acting in the name of Christ means that they act in a religious manner and are not applying merely a natural remedy of some kind; and it means, also, that they are acting as ministers delegated to act in the name of Christ Himself.

The effects of the rite are both physical and spiritual, and they both concern the sick man's salvation. The prayer of faith in behalf of the anointed person will bring salvation whether this involves the restoration of his health or not. If it pleases God to do so, He will raise him up. Certainly a restoration of health should be prayed for. But what is more important, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven. We find in this passage an established Christian rite and a spiritual effect produced when it is used by the Church.

## **Confession**

It is not out of place to point out that in connection with the Sacrament of Penance in which sins committed after Baptism are forgiven and the confession of sins to a priest, mentioned in one of our questions, St. James concluded his description of the rite of anointing the sick with this exhortation: "Confess, therefore, your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be saved." Does the Bible, therefore, say we should confess our sins only to God? These are interesting words, which should be carefully considered by anyone who is concerned about where the confession of sins to a priest is mentioned in the Bible. There are Scripture scholars who find in these words the confession of sins to a presbyter of the Church or what Catholics call a priest".

This much is certain, St. James speaks expressly of the confession of sins. No matter to whom the sins are to be confessed, — the confession of sins itself is necessary. But to whom? "One another" are his words. What do these words mean?

Further on in the same Epistle (5:9), exhorting Christians to be patient, St. James uses these words: "Do not complain against one another". Does this not mean: those who have reason to complain should not complain against those who give cause for complaint?

St. Paul used similar language in writing to the Ephesians (5:21): "Be subject to one another". Did he not mean subjects obey those in authority over you — wives obey your husbands — children your parents — slaves your masters? He certainly did not mean to be subject to anybody or everybody.

When St. Paul says to the Colossians (3:13) that they should "teach one another", does he not mean that those who are in a position to teach should teach those who need to be taught?

No, "to one another" does not always mean anyone or everyone. The sense depends upon what is done to one another.

Consider, therefore, what St. James said: "Confess your sins to one another." Could he not have meant: "Confess your sins to those who are delegated to forgive sins — the presbyters of the Church?" At any rate, that brings up the question: Did Christ delegate His Apostles and their successors to forgive sins, and was this a Sacrament?

## **Penance**

If Christ did not depute His Apostles to forgive sins, then His words to them (John 20:19-23) after His Resurrection are unintelligible. Standing in the midst of them, He said: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." When He had said this, He breathed upon them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Not merely did He promise the Holy Spirit, He then and there communicated the Holy Spirit to them and His purpose is clear. They were to forgive and to retain sins.

The forgiving of sins is often mentioned in the Bible and there is no mistaking its meaning: a sinner is delivered, freed from his sin, his guilt no longer exists and he is just before God (Romans 5:5; 8:14, sq.; James 2:23).

Now God alone possesses in His own right the power of forgiving sin which is always in some way an offense against Him. After Jesus had forgiven the sins of a paralytic, it was objected that God alone can forgive sins and He did not deny this but went on to prove by the miracle of the paralytic's instantaneous and complete cure that "the Son of man on earth has the power to forgive sins" (Luke 5:21 sq.).

It was precisely this divine power which Jesus delegated to His Apostles. It was to render them capable of exercising this power, that He communicated to them the Holy Spirit. It was for this reason that He delegated His mission and His authority to them (John 22:21); and His mission was to deliver men from their sins (Matt. 1:21) — to justify sinners (Matt. 9:13; Luke 5:32).

He told them, also, to retain sins, and this was just as much a part of His command as was the forgiving of sins. Moreover, by these words He determined the nature of the act whereby, as His ministers, they were to exercise the power given to them.

Whether they would forgive or retain sins was left to their judgment and this judgment evidently could not be based on chance or caprice. According to their judgment, men would either remain sinners or be freed from sin — they would be guilty or not guilty in the eyes of God. He plainly intended to oblige His Apostles to act prudently and justly, to take into account the degree of the sinner's guilt and the sincerity of his repentance. In order to fulfill this obligation, if they were to judge justly or prudently whether they should forgive or retain, they needed to know two things — what were the sinner's sins and was he truly sorry. How could they ascertain these facts except by confession on the part of the sinner?

It cannot be denied, therefore, that in authorizing and obliging the Apostles to forgive and retain sins, our Lord laid a corresponding obligation of confessing their sins on the part of sinners seeking forgiveness. In so doing, He established the rite known in the Catholic Church as the Sacrament of Penance, or as it is commonly called "Confession". The sinner confesses his sins and professes his sorrow for them, the sincerity of which sorrow is indicated by his determination, with the help of God, to commit these sins no more. The priest — a presbyter of the Church — judges him worthy of forgiveness and in the name of God, forgives him.

Isn't it possible that when St. James referred to the confession of sins in connection with the anointing of the sick, he may have been referring to the conjunction of two Sacraments?

What we have said about the Sacraments in the Bible is not and was not meant to be an answer to all the questions which can be raised concerning the Seven Sacraments. It has been our sole purpose to show any sincere inquirer that the teaching of the Church that there are seven Sacraments can be supported by the Word of God as it is found in the Bible.

### **WHERE IS PURGATORY MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE?**

The answer to this question does not require a treatise on Purgatory. For a discussion of this subject, we refer the reader to our free pamphlet "WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?" Perhaps no one point of Catholic belief is so widely misunderstood and misrepresented as this one, and it will pay anyone interested in the facts to procure this pamphlet.

However, before we go looking for Purgatory in the Bible, it is wise to have the right notion of what we are looking for.

The Catholic Church believes, on the authority of God revealing, that there is a state after death which is commonly called Purgatory. This was not always the name used. For many centuries in the early history of the

Church, it was called "the darksome way", "a place of sighs and tears", "a place of cleansing flames", "a place of transitory fire and purgatorial punishment". Finally, in the Thirteenth Century, the name "Purgatory", which is most appropriate, obtained common and established usage.

Catholics are required to believe only two things about Purgatory. First, we believe that they go to Purgatory who have died free from serious sins and are the friends of God and who have, therefore, saved their souls, but who have not, during life, completely met all the requirements of an all-merciful, an all-just God, Who holds us responsible for all our sins.

We also believe that the prayers of the living, especially those which we offer through Christ in the Sacrifice of the Mass, can move God to be merciful to people in Purgatory.

Now, the question is: do we find this in the Bible? The answer will be found in the 13th Chapter of the Second Book of Machabees in the Old Testament. On the day after his victory over Gorgias, the governor of Idumea, Judas Machabeus, the leader of the Jews, together with his company discovered under the tunics of the Jewish soldiers who were slain in battle, valuables which had been taken as plunder from the temple of idols in Jamnia. This was contrary to the law of the Jews (Deut. 7:26) and Judas and his men considered their death to be a punishment from God.

The inspired author goes on to say: "Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord who had discovered the things that were hidden.

"And so betaking themselves to prayers, they besought him, that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten.

"But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin for as much as they saw before their eyes what had happened, because of the sins of those that were slain. And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.

"(For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead). And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them.

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."

Several important points should not go unnoticed in this passage.

After the unlawful plunder was found on the soldiers, their Jewish kinsmen gathered in private prayer for the fallen soldiers that their sin "might be effaced from the mind of God".

Thereafter a public sacrifice of expiation (Lev. 4:2-35) was offered in the temple in order to satisfy for their sins and to assure the dead soldiers divine absolution from their sins.

These sins had not robbed them of godliness, else it would have been vain to pray with hope in their future resurrection. Yet prayer was offered to the just and merciful God. And it was expedient to offer public sacrifice in satisfaction for their sins even though they had saved their souls.

From all of which the inspired author concluded, no longer speaking of Judas and the dead soldiers in particular, but of the dead in general — no longer speaking of particular sins of transgressing the Law which these soldiers committed, but of any sins—no longer approving of the prayer of Judas and his men only, but recommending it to everyone: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins".

It is impossible to understand how the Bible could mention the Catholic belief in Purgatory more clearly than this.

Judas Machabeus did not doubt the future resurrection of the fallen soldiers. But their future resurrection was nonetheless affected by the sins committed in the pillage of Jamnia. They would one day rise again and would enjoy the recompense of those who slept in the Lord or prayer for them would have been in vain. But beforehand they needed to be freed from their sins by public sacrifice in the temple.

It must be admitted that in the thought of the inspired writer, these soldiers were not lost forever. At the same time, due to their sins, they did not enjoy the great grace that was laid up for them. They were dearly in a state in which they needed to be loosed from their sins and in which they could be helped by the prayers of the living. And the Bible recommends the whole idea to everyone.

By this time, the reader may have thumbed through his Bible, only to discover that the Second Book of Machabees

and this whole passage is nowhere to be found. He may ask: Why isn't it there?

That is a good question. It happens to be a question that anyone whose Bible does not contain this Book should not only ask himself, but should also take steps to settle to his own satisfaction. Too many accept without question the well-bound, well-printed volume with the title "Holy Bible" on the cover in gold letters as the real thing. But is it? How do they know? Why don't they find out?

There have always been those who did not hesitate to tamper with the Scriptures. Passages have been rephrased to fit their preconceived ideas and opinions, words have been inserted and others conveniently omitted—in fact, whole books have been eliminated—for the same purpose.

Catholics have no trouble in answering the question "What is the genuine and complete Bible?" Well aware of the danger after centuries of experience with spurious Bibles, the Church insists that all — clergy and laymen alike — use only those versions of the Bible which have been carefully checked with the oldest and most authentic versions available to Scripture scholars over a period of nineteen centuries.

The question of why various books or portions were removed from the Bible has been discussed in our free pamphlet "BUT DO YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?" and will not be considered here. However, in settling the question of why the Second Book of Machabees was removed from the list of inspired books which make up the Bible, two other questions must be faced by every sincere Christian.

Why do you find the Christians of earliest Christian times using this Book as part of God's inspired word? It is something more 'than coincidence that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, there seems to be remarkable allusion (11:35-36) to the suffering of Eleazar and the seven brothers (II Mach. 6: 19-28).

In the second century after Christ, the Pastor of Hermas (140-154 A.D.) refers to II Mach. (7:23) in speaking of "God who created the world" (Vision I, 3,4). Later, about 235 A.D., Clement of Alexandria and Cyprian (258 A.D.) speak of the book. Hippolytus of Rome (255 A.D.) used the book in his commentary on the Scripture as also did Origen (352 A.D.).

Thus in all parts of the Church — in the East and in the West — this book was received by the early Christians. And it seems obvious that if this book was part of the Scriptures then, it still is and should be today.

Why was this book removed from the list of inspired books and who excluded it from some Bibles?

The pioneer was Martin Luther. In the disputation of Leipsig, he was pressed by John Eck to declare if he still believed in Purgatory. He responded that "in truth, in all of Scripture, there is not one word on the subject". When the passage of the Second Book of Machabees was proposed as evidence, he simply rejected the whole thing by rejecting the two Books of Machabees as having been erroneously placed on the list of inspired Scriptures. He did not believe in Purgatory or the value of prayers for the dead, so the Books of Machabees had to go!

## ONE MEDIATOR AND INTERCESSOR CHRIST, THE REDEEMER

Where does the Bible mention praying to Mary or to saints or that Mary is a mediator between God and man?

In some people's minds, the act of prayer is associated exclusively with an act of adoration of God, but it should not be. We may adore God when we pray to Him, but this does not mean that we adore some other human being when we direct an act of prayer to him.

The act of prayer which is referred to in the question we are considering is the simple act of asking a favor of another. We pray when we ask a favor of a friend. Prayer can be addressed to anyone who is in a position to grant the request which the prayer contains.

Not only do we find the early Christians addressing prayers to God, but to other Christians, as well. Consider carefully the following words of St. Paul: "I beseech you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Spirit, that you help me in your prayers to God" (Romans 15:30). In thus addressing a prayer to his fellow Christians, was he offending God or robbing Him of any of the honor which is His due? On the contrary, he was but following out Christian teaching: "... pray for one another, that you may be saved, for the unceasing prayer of a just man is of great avail" (James 5:16).

"We beseech you, Mary, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Spirit, that you help us in

your prayers to God". By substituting the name "Mary" or any Saint in the place of "my brethren", in St. Paul's prayer, you have identically the same prayer which the Catholic Church offers to Mary and the Saints.

This is the practice of prayer identical with that which the Bible shows to have been the practice of the Apostles and early Christians. Can anyone doubt that St. Paul who asked for the prayers of his brethren, would hesitate to include among these brethren Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ? So the same kind of prayer which we offer to Mary and the Saints is mentioned in the Bible.

"But Mary and the Saints to whom you pray are dead", it will be objected. "The Bible speaks only of prayers to the living".

Such a question coming from those who have no idea or hope in a future life makes sense, but not coming from Christians who profess to believe in survival after death and in the reality of the future life. In Mary's case, she most certainly is not to be classed among the dead. Her Assumption into Heaven means that her body, re-enlivened by her soul, was raised from the grave and she is alive in Heaven together with the blessed saints who will have their bodies restored at the end of the world. They, too, all live.

It is the privilege of the Christian to have the full assurance of a future life and to look upon the life after death as more truly real than the life we at present know. This assurance is founded upon faith, not conjecture or opinion—faith which is no less certain than actual personal experience. We do not lose our friends when they die; we gain them if they die as friends of God. "As I live," said our Lord, "so shall you live also." Mary and the saints are in Heaven and Heaven is the abode of the living.

Have Mary and the saints who are with Christ ceased to love us and to be concerned about our affairs? No, we believe in the communion of saints — an oft-forgotten article of our Creed.

"Far be from us," wrote St. Bernard (On the Death of Mal-achy), "the thought that that love which we have seen so active upon earth should be lessened or destroyed in Heaven ... the love of those who have gone before us, and passed through the valley of the shadow of death, cannot fail, for love is stronger than death, yet, the breadth of Heaven enlarges men's hearts, not contracts them; fills them with more love, not empties them of what they had before. In the light of God, the memory is brightened and strengthened, not obscured; what was not known is now learned; not what was known, unlearned; in a word, it is Heaven and not earth," and Heaven is not a land of separation or of forgetfulness.

There is but one Body of the faithful, whether in Heaven or upon earth, and Jesus Christ is their Head and through Him there is a communion between all the members of His Body. Those who have entered into their rest have not thereby ceased to be our brethren and to love us. Nor have they ceased to love God and to have an interest in all that concerns His honor and glory, and the salvation of men's souls.

If Mary and the saints are living, can anyone deny that they are in a position to know that we seek their prayers? The enjoyment of the blessed life of Heaven does not deprive them of the power of knowledge, rather it is increased. That there is knowledge in Heaven of what goes on in this world is clear from Christ's own words: ... there will be joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 25:10). God surely can cause Mary and the saints to know what goes on in this world.

That He actually does so is certain from the assurance Christ gave that they are "equal to the angels" (Luke 20:36) and although He was speaking of the blessed in Heaven after the resurrection of the body, Mary does have her body restored and the saints do not need their bodies to be capable of knowledge, any more than do the angels who have no bodies.

Mary and the saints are no longer affected by time and space in the way that we are while on earth. They are not subject to the difficulties and imperfections of communication that we are. Nothing prevents Mary and the saints from knowing our petitions to them as soon as they are formed in our minds and hearts and to present them to God. They know these things in God Whom they see face to face.

Those who find fault with prayer to Mary and the Saints usually do so on the ground that they are thereby exalted to a position on a par with Christ. But St. Paul, they tell us, says: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all ..." (I Tim. 2:5). Christ it is "... who is ever living to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25).



But what did he mean when he spoke of Jesus Christ as our Mediator? Did he not refer to the fact that Christ alone was the Redeemer of mankind — that as man He died and offered His death as a redemptive sacrifice? Catholics make no such claim for Mary today — and they never did. It is true that she was associated with the Mediator in His redemptive mission.

In fact, she was associated more closely than were His chosen Apostles. This does not, however, make her a "mediator" in the sense that this term has when it is applied to Jesus Christ, nor do Catholics say that it does.

Likewise, Christ our Redeemer is ever living to make intercession for us. He Who is our Intercessor is also our Redeemer, Who intercedes on the strength of the Sacrifice He alone has made for us. Neither Mary nor any Saint could be our Intercessor in the sense in which Christ is.

But, we ask, because Jesus Christ as our Redeemer is the sole Mediator between God and men, ever living to make intercession for us, does this mean that the terms "mediator" and "intercessor" cannot be used in other senses and applied to others for different reasons? The dictionary justifies the use of the term "mediator" in the sense of one who acts as the intermediary in effecting something, bringing something about, communicating something, and the like.

Many do not seem to realize that St. Paul spoke of Jesus Christ as the one Mediator between God and men and this does not exclude the possibility or even hint at the incongruity of there being intermediaries between Jesus Christ and other men. Indeed, the whole Bible takes such mediation for granted.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was the medium through which Jesus Christ came into this world as man: "... God sent his Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). She, out of her own heart's blood and from the substance of her body, supplied the wherewithal from which was fashioned the body of Him Whose death on the Cross won our Redemption and reconciliation with God the Father. She willingly consented to become the mother of our Redeemer when this was announced to her (Luke 1:38). Jesus Christ could have come into the world in other ways, but the Divine Plan called for the Savior to have a body which would come into existence through the regular channel of a human mother's womb. In that sense, we are indebted to Mary. She was the medium, or, if you will, the Mediatrix, through which Christ became one of us. Mary is not the mediator between God and men; Jesus Christ alone is that, but it is a historical fact, which no one can deny, that she was the medium through which He came into this world and became a member of the human race.

We find more than one kind of mediation in the Bible. When John the Baptist pointed out the world's Savior with the words: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), he served as the medium which brought the attention of John the Evangelist and Peter to our Lord. The Baptist was the medium through which Jesus Christ became known to those Apostles. The Baptist who spoke the words was the mediator between them and Jesus Christ.

Similarly, when Andrew went in search of Simon Peter to lead him to Jesus, he, Andrew, became the medium which led Peter to the feet of his Redeemer (John 1: 40-42). Jesus could have made Himself known directly to these men, but He chose to work through others as He has chosen to do ever since, down through the centuries. The story of Christ in the Gospels which is read by a man who has never known Christ makes the author of that Gospel a mediator. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are mediators. Any preacher who proclaims Christ and His message is a mediator, but — let it be repeated over and over again — not between God and men, but between Jesus Christ and men.

Anyone who administers the Sacrament of Baptism and thus becomes the instrument of the baptized party's regeneration, is a mediator. The one who baptizes is of little consequence in himself, but the rite which Christ prescribed as essential to salvation is of the utmost consequence. It makes little or no difference who administers the rite, whether he be saint or sinner, male or female, believer or infidel; it is obedience to Christ's direction which counts and He, the one Mediator between God and men, must have imparted some powerful and mysterious efficacy to that simple rite for so much to depend on it. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). The one who does the baptizing becomes a mediator according to the dictionary's definition of the term. Let it be repeated once more, not a mediator between God and men, but between Jesus Christ and men.

Similarly, when Jesus Christ commissioned the Apostles to go teach all nations all that He had commanded, to baptize them and to forgive sins, He was interposing their ministry of preaching, baptizing, and forgiving between Himself and others. The Apostles, then, by the very appointment of Jesus Christ, became intermediaries between

Himself and men, that men might come to have faith in Jesus Christ and share in the benefits of His unique mediation before the throne of Him, Who "alone has immortality and dwells in light inaccessible, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting dominion" (I Tim. 6:16).

So important, in fact, is this mediation of the Apostles and their successors in the Christian ministry, that St. Paul does not hesitate to declare to Timothy: "Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching, be earnest in them. For in so doing, thou wilt save both thyself and those who hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). The words which are to be especially noted here are those which say that Timothy saves others who hearken to his preaching of the Word. If he saves others by bringing to them the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, by that same token he is a mediator of salvation between men and Jesus Christ, and so is any other minister who by delivering the Gospel message or by baptizing brings Jesus Christ to men and men to Jesus Christ.

Another Biblical example of mediation is particularly to the point raised by our questions. In the marriage feast of Cana, (John 2:1-11), the wine ran out in the midst of the festivities. This was painfully embarrassing to the bride and groom. Mary, with consideration for their feelings, called the situation to the attention of her Son. And, although His hour for performing His first miracle had not yet come, He nevertheless, because He could not find it in His heart to refuse her anything, miraculously supplied wine at her request. In this instance, Mary was a mediatrix. Our Lord surely sensed the situation, but He waited until it was called to His attention by Mary.

Because Mary's prayer was so effective in this case, and induced her Son to anticipate the time when He planned to perform His first miracle, many believe in the power of her prayers. They believe that she is our Mediatrix, not between God and men, but between men and her Son Who is the sole Mediator between God and men. They pray to her, not that she by her own authority or by any personal resources of her own, may give us graces and blessings, but that she may appeal on our behalf to her Divine Son, Who in turn will make intercession for us before Him Who is the source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).

#### MONKS, NUNS, AND FRIDAY ABSTINENCE .

Where in the Bible is the authorization for nunneries or monasteries mentioned?

Where in the Bible is the eating of meat on Friday called a sin?

These may appear to be unrelated questions, but they aren't. Both are concerned with laws and discipline of Christian life as authorized by the Catholic Church. The laws of the Church as such won't be found expressly stated in the Bible. But the matters with which these laws deal, and which they apply to Christian life in a practical manner, will be found there.

Consider first the Catholic practice of abstaining from meat on Friday. The Church has applied this law almost everywhere in the world, for a very simple and Scriptural reason. Our Lord was very explicit when He said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). In the light of these words, it looks very much like everyone who is worthy to be called a Christian is going to be found practicing self-denial.

Now self-denial does not mean refraining only from that which is wrong, but refraining from that which is in itself good. It is denying oneself things which could be lawfully done and enjoyed. Left to their own devices, how many Christians consistently live up to this evident command of Christ? Very few! The experience of the Catholic Church over the centuries has borne this out. So, in order to insure the practice of at least a minimum of self-denial, the Church has ruled that Catholics the world over deny themselves meat on one day of each week — Friday.

But why Friday? It could be any other day of the week, but Friday happens to be the day on which our Lord performed the supreme act of self-denial. He not only carried His cross, but on it, He gave up His life for us. That fact we must never forget and ever honor. What better day for Christians to practice self-denial ... to obey His command? So the Church, not the Bible, has specified Friday and who will dare to say this is contrary to the Bible?

There is nothing wrong with good meat anywhere or at any time. So why deny oneself meat? For the obvious reason that meat is a universal food. Can a food be named that is more common to mankind all over the world, than the flesh of animals living on dry land? No doubt, in choosing as the object of universal self-denial, the Church had an eye on what St. Paul said about abstaining from meat being good (Romans 14:21), but bread or fish or eggs might

have been chosen. When you come right down to it, what more universal food can be found for the catholic, the universal Church, in which there is to be common and collective self-denial?

### **Importance of Friday**

There are those who do not like the idea of members of the Church the world over adhering to the same practice of self-denial, but they forget the unity Christ expected to prevail among His disciples (John 17:21). Others say that Friday, as a designated day, is not mentioned in the Bible. Of course it isn't, but as we have said, the Friday on which Christ died is — and we do not wish to forget it.

When anyone cries "regimentation", referring to the Church's determination of the day and manner in which we practice the self-denial ordained by Christ Himself, we point to Christ deputed His Apostles and their successors: ... teach them (their followers among the nations) all things I have commanded" (Matt. 28:19) ... and when He said: "... whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven" (Matt 18.18), He could have meant nothing less than the moral binding of conduct through the making of laws.

Now what about monasteries or nunneries? As the dwellings in which monks and nuns live, they are nowhere authorized in the Bible. Neither are Lutheran, Baptist, or Methodist seminaries, parsonages, or rectories. There is no good reason why they should be.

But this question, most probably, inquires if the lives led by Catholic monks and nuns are authorized in the Bible. Nuns and monks, of course, are religious women and men (who may be ordained priests or not) all of whom live a common life approved and regulated by the Church in which they practice Christ's counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Do we find such a life authorized in the Bible? The answer is easily found.

### **"Come Follow Me"**

There is little need to tarry over Christ's recommendation of obedience and poverty. There can be no doubt but that both are clearly indicated in His answer to the wealthy man who had kept the Commandments of God from his youth, but who wanted to do more. "If thou wilt be perfect," He said, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor ... and come follow me" (Matt. 19:21). It was not a command, but it most certainly was a counsel that authorized special obedience and detachment from worldly possessions.

It is the celibate life, the chaste unmarried life of monks and nuns, which is the chief concern of those who ask the "monastery and nunnery" question. Why don't priests and nuns get married?

Unfortunately, there are always those who are anxious to mind the other fellow's business for him. What is worse, their motives in so doing are often based on rash judgments. Such people need to be told that Catholic priests and nuns choose not to get married. No one is obliged to be a priest or a nun. But since the Church has made the celibate life a required condition for the life of a priest or a nun, they freely choose this kind of a life because they want to be priests or nuns.

### **Celibacy**

But there are those who sincerely want to know what is behind the required celibacy of priests and nuns. "Is it authorized by the Bible?", they ask. If by "authorized" is meant commanded by the Bible, the answer is: No. It is merely a law of the Church. But if by "authorized" is meant encouraged and commended by Christ and His Apostles as their teaching is recorded in the Bible, the answer is: Yes.

We find our Lord expressly recommending celibacy chosen for religious motives (Matt. 19:11-12). But He immediately added that such a life of self-denial is not meant for all. Only the few who have a special calling are to undertake such an obligation: "Let him accept it, who can."

Anyone who asks "Is celibacy authorized by the Bible?" should read thoughtfully the Seventh Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, especially where he says: "For I would that you all were as I am, myself; but each one has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows, it is good for them if they so remain, even as I" (I Cor. 7:7-8). St. Paul was a celibate and the reason why he recommended celibacy for those who can live such a life is stated subsequently in the same chapter: "I would have you free from care. He

who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please God. Whereas he who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided. And the unmarried woman, and the virgin thinks about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and in spirit. Whereas she who is married thinks about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. Now this I say for your benefit, not to put a halter upon you, but to promote what is proper and to make it possible for you to pray to the Lord without distraction" (7:32-35).

### **A Good Reason**

Not only the recommendation of celibacy but its purpose is plainly evident in St. Paul's words. The unmarried man is free from the worries, anxieties, responsibilities and claims on his time and attention, which arise from marriage and family life. A married man cannot devote himself wholly to the work of the ministry; he must needs devote himself wholeheartedly to his family as well. Whereas the unmarried man is free to give his whole attention, time, love, and devotion to the service of those intrusted to his care, and he can thus accomplish more for the spread of the Kingdom of God on earth.

So there is plenty of authorization for the celibate life in the New Testament, but it is not made a matter of obligation. It is presented as a closer and more perfect way of serving the Lord and His interests, but it is not commanded. Consequently, for several centuries in the Church, a married clergy and priesthood and episcopate existed, although at the same time, many members of the clergy were celibates. It was not until several centuries had elapsed before the Church began to make celibacy a matter of obligation for those who wished to enter the ministry of the priesthood. One of the earliest laws was made by the Council of Elvira in Spain in the Fourth Century, and thereafter, one Church Council after another ruled in the same way until within a hundred years or so, the law was universal in the Western World. But it has been the practice of the Church in Eastern and far Eastern countries to ordain married men, but after their ordination, unmarried priests were not permitted to marry. Thus the Catholic Church knows what it is to have a married and unmarried clergy.

With the intention of imitating Christ, women began living a religious life together in the Third Century. We find that Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, established convents for women and celibacy was their mode of life approved by the Church.

This insistence upon celibacy for priests and nuns, of course, implies no disregard, no failure to appreciate the holiness and nobility of Christian marriage. The Catholic priests and nuns who deny themselves the happiness of marriage and family life are the last ones in the world who can reasonably be accused of looking down upon marriage. In season and out, they have constantly taught that Matrimony is a most sacred union, noble in purpose and instituted by God Himself. As we have pointed out elsewhere in this pamphlet, the Church teaches that marriage is a Sacrament - that the very permanency of the union resulting from the vows of husband and wife to remain faithful to each other unto death, becomes a channel through which the help of God's grace flows to strengthen husband and wife, father and mother, to be faithful to their vows and to discharge perseveringly and conscientiously the sacred responsibilities of parenthood.

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