

DAILY MASS

By EUSTACE BOYLAN, S.J.

I.

— EASY AND CONSOLING.

To assist at Daily Mass is a practice that is both easy and consoling.

Yes, easy. Don't run away with the idea that the task is only for saints and is quite beyond you. It is nothing of the kind. It is easy. Perhaps not at first; but soon, very soon, it becomes a high and holy pleasure.

What?—you will say—easy? Easy to get up earlier in the morning to go off to church? Yes. Undoubtedly the difficulty that people raise about early rising is all Imaginary. No matter what hour you may get up at, there is some difficulty in getting out of bed; yet you do get up, say, round about 7 o'clock, because if you remain longer in bed you will not be able to get your breakfast before you go to your business, or you will be late for your business, and soon get to know about it from your employer. Therefore, through a kind of compulsion you get up at an hour that allows you time to reach your place of business at the appointed hour.

Now, the whole question of getting up an hour earlier is not one of added difficulty, but is merely a question of practical arrangement. How much sleep do you require? Let us say eight hours, which is a good night's rest. Therefore, the obvious arrangement is to go to bed in time overnight. If you are in bed at 10 o'clock you can have your eight hours' rest completed when the alarm clock goes off round about 6 o'clock. The moment, therefore, you begin to examine into the arguments against early rising, you see that they are based on purely imaginary difficulties. It is no whit more difficult to get up at six than it is at seven if you have gone to bed overnight at an hour which allows you to have the required amount of sleep. Most people dawdle aimlessly at night before retiring to rest. If they have a beautiful task to perform in the morning, such as going out to Mass, they will get off to bed with a pleasing sense of the happy experience ahead of them, abounding in consolation.

It is frequently said that people are rather cross and snappy in the morning before their breakfast. This, perhaps, applies especially to men during the operation of shaving, but it has its application to all the members of the family—at least according to a rather common belief. Many people are not in the right frame of mind until they have had their morning meal, with a bracing cup of tea or coffee. Before that they may be quite unbearable.

Not so with the person who goes out to early Mass. He is already braced up; he has taken the best of all tonics; he has had a little exercise in the fresh morning air, and has brushed off all the cobwebs from his brain and his temper, and goes back to breakfast not only with a raging appetite denied to the more sluggish members of the family, but with a light and springy step, a contented heart, and a bright light in his happy eyes. To regain his good temper and pleasant disposition he is not depending on the stimulus of a warm breakfast—he will enjoy his breakfast, of course, more than the others)—but he has already had his stimulating experience from the grace of God and the feeling that he has begun the day well. He has an advantage over all the other members of the family who have been staying in bed till the last possible moment and who, when he returns from the Holy Sacrifice, are still perhaps in a bad humour.

Perhaps one of the reasons why people are a little snappy before breakfast is because they have before them the tasks of the day, which are often uncongenial; and, the machinery of life moving slow at that early hour, they look forward in a gloomy way to the undertakings that lie before them. Not so with the boy or girl who has commenced the day with this superb experience of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. For them, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." The sun will shine brighter for those who have assisted at the Holy Sacrifice, the sky will be of a deeper blue, the little trivialities of daily life will be gilded with the love and beauty of God Himself. And so I say again that assistance at daily Mass is not a difficult undertaking. It is easy, and if you think it is difficult, it is because you have not sufficient experience of it.

It must be conceded, of course, that the beginnings of nearly all new tasks present some difficulties, which disappear only with practice. Anyone playing a game in which he has had no previous experience will have sore muscles; a person taking exercise in riding a horse will be terribly saddle-sore for the first day or so; and early exercises of piano playing or typewriting are difficult, for the simple reason that there is an initial reluctance from the

unexercised faculties. But once habit has been established through a certain amount of familiarity with the new task, all the initial difficulty vanishes and a pleasurable sensation accompanies the task.

Even so it is with attendance at daily Mass. We may concede that, through the force of custom, helped by a vivid imagination, there is some difficulty in getting up before the rest of the family are thinking of stirring. But once those difficulties are overcome with a little practice, they are found to have been of a purely imaginary order. Those who go out every morning to assist at daily Mass will tell you that the day is incomplete without it, and that they would not miss it for anything. And so to assist at daily Mass is a practice that is really easy, and at the same time consoling—consoling for the reasons already given, and from the fact that it makes you feel that you have done something worth while, that you have begun the day well, that you have put some meaning into life, and that the commonplace facts of existence will have for you a higher significance and deeper consolation than they have for those who are blind to the treasures within their reach and are neglecting priceless opportunities.

II.

A TREASURE BEYOND PRICE.

All the treasures of gold and precious stones that the earth contains are outweighed by one Mass.

“If thou didst know the Gift of God! Those words, deep in meaning, were addressed by Our Lord to the Samaritan Woman beside the Well of Jacob. And they are addressed to us all; and they might fittingly be inserted over every altar where the Holy Sacrifice is offered daily.

“If you only knew!” No doubt you do know in a kind of way. You can form the judgment, truly but superficially, that there is no gift within our reach comparable to the Holy Sacrifice. Yes, but are you -sure? Is your conviction more than skin deep? Does it penetrate into those inner depths of the mind from which action originates? Or are you like the talking parrot who, under instruction, might repeat again and again the words, “This is the Gift of gifts,” without attaching any meaning to the utterance? Please, consider the matter a little.

All the good gifts of Time and Eternity come from the hand of God. Gold and precious stones come out of His treasury, and to a limited extent they may be sometimes within our reach. But vast numbers of gifts are always within our reach; they are poured out upon us all in a stream that never stops flowing. The rose and the violet, the birds and the butterflies, the sunlight and moonlight and the mystery of the stars, the pageant of the seasons, the music of dawn, the panorama of mountain, valley and sea—these and all the beautiful and varied furniture of the visible universe are common property and should be received from the hand of God with humble thanks. These and the deeper gifts of human companionship, sympathy, friendship, and love all come from God, and in such an unending stream that we too often take them as our due and forget to offer to the Giver a humble and hearty “thank You.” We are like the spoiled child who takes for granted the gifts that are lavished on him and receives them without real gratitude.

“Men,” said Oscar Wilde, “do not value the sunsets because they have not to pay for them.” A thought in which there is an amount of truth. But there is a deeper philosophy in the saying of Chesterton: We ought to pay for them, and we can pay for them “by not living like Oscar Wilde.” We can pay for them by a life in harmony with the will of our Father. And Chesterton goes on to say that a man might well make a pilgrimage to see the cowslips, or qualify himself by a forty days’ fast to hear the blackbird sing. A rich and beautiful thought. In no way have we deserved any of these exquisite gifts, and so we ought surely to receive them with humble and thankful hearts.

Well, all these varied gifts come out of God’s treasury without making any appreciable inroad on the good things at the disposal of Omnipotence. All these gifts of nature and the whole mighty universe itself, when measured with Omnipotence may be regarded as “unconsidered trifles.” They are produced and distributed by the great Giver of gifts with effortless ease. “They are but a whisper of His ways.”

But there is one Gift that is not an “unconsidered trifle.” There is one Gift that—to speak in a human way—was not bestowed with effortless ease: it taxed—to speak again in a quite human and inadequate way—the resources of Infinite Power and Wisdom: God went the limit: *usque ad finem*, as John the Evangelist says—unto the end. In the Incarnation He gave us Himself. That is His supreme Gift.

All the various natural gifts which He showers on His children—(so often, alas, thoughtless and thankless)—could be bettered or multiplied by Him, and they make no drain on the limitless resources of His treasury; but it is otherwise

with the Gift of gifts—the Sacred Humanity, Of that He can truly say: “What more could I give you? What more could I do that I have not done?”

Attend, O reader. Let us lay aside our superficial thinking and our parrot-like affirmations and try to grasp this profound truth. Or, rather, let us turn earnestly to the Holy Ghost, the Giver of Wisdom, and say from our hearts: “Holy Spirit of God, make me feel this.”

Now, the Blessed Sacrament is the continuation in our midst of the Incarnation. When the Mass bell tinkles at the Consecration we are once more at the stable of Bethlehem. Like the Shepherds we are present at the bestowal of God’s supreme Gift. We are truly among the privileged few who accepted the invitation.

To end, therefore, where I began this section, do you not see, or rather, do you not feel, that all the treasures of gold and precious stones that the earth contains, yes, and all the other natural gifts which we have considered, are outweighed by one Mass?

III

LIGHT AND STRENGTH

By Daily Mass your understanding will be enlightened and your will strengthened.

The two great faculties given to us to work out our eternal destiny are the Understanding and the Will. On the right employment of both depends the successful achievement of the great task for which we are in the world. We are here for one and only end—to fulfil the purposes of God; to honour and reverence, and serve Him for a brief time of probation here on earth, so that afterwards in eternal life we may receive our destined crown. But eternal life, with the unimaginable joys of Paradise, is too great a possession to be gained without a struggle. We must pay a price. We must work for it. It would be unreasonable to suppose that to gain such a priceless treasure we have only to sit back idly after a fruitless and wasted kind of earthly existence and then to expect to be called before the angels and archangels to receive the shining crown of eternal life. It is unreasonable to expect something for nothing. Above all, it is unreasonable to expect a priceless inheritance for nothing. Surely we must do something to earn it. We must pay a price.

In Dickens’s famous story of David Copperfield he portrays for us a very interesting character named Mr. Wilkins Micawber. This gentleman was continually “waiting for something to turn up,” and as a result of this policy he was always unemployed; if he managed to secure a breakfast through the compassion of his friends he could not be sure that it would be followed later on by a dinner. This attitude towards life gets us nowhere in the world of natural effort, and is equally futile in the more important world of spiritual effort. There is no use waiting for something to turn up. We cannot fulfil the end of our existence, the mighty purposes of life, by a policy of inactivity and senseless waiting. We must earn our crown. We must make the effort by the two noble faculties given to us for the purpose—namely, our Understanding and our Will.

Now, even a limited experience of human conditions reveals to us two great facts: first, that man’s life is a warfare— as the Holy Scripture reminds us; and secondly, that both understanding and will are feeble enough in all conscience. They need support; they can only achieve good results with the help of God. “Without Me you can do nothing,” said Jesus Christ; We may be willing enough, and yet have to admit that we are often as weak as water. “The spirit indeed is willing,” said Our Lord, “but the flesh is weak. Be vigilant, therefore, and pray that you succumb not to temptation.”

As we pass through life’s experiences, our voyage is not always over level and sunshiny seas favoured with gentle breezes. We run into plenty of dirty weather; clouds are often black and threatening; gales blow, and the cataracts of the seas pour over the reeling bow of our frail vessel. Our cry may well be, like that of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee: “Save us, Lord, we perish.”

Again, even a limited experience of life shows us that we do not live in an ideal world; we do not meet angels and archangels at every street corner. On the contrary, we come into frequent contact with men and women who are anything but angels. Temptations abound and it may well be that at times both the Understanding and the Will are giving way before the pressure. High ideals are hard to maintain. Descent is easier than ascent. It is easy to give way and let the life run. To let the life run, to give up the battle, means defeat and disaster. To maintain our ground under

the adverse pressure of temptation we require clear thinking and a steady exercise of the will. We need light and strength. And where can we obtain this necessary equipment? Only from God. "Without Me you can do nothing."

Now, at no time is God more liberal with His gifts of Light and Strength than in those precious moments when He is giving the greatest of all His gifts—and that is during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Those, therefore, who often assist at the Holy Sacrifice: most of all, those who assist at it daily, are the best equipped for the battle; they are the hundred-per-centers; they are the conquerors. For, as we draw near to the Source of all Light and Strength, we are furnished with the arms we require for success in our warfare: our understanding is enlightened and our will strengthened.

IV.

DAILY MASS WILL KEEP YOUR CONSCIENCE CLEAN.

To keep the conscience clean is a very important matter indeed. To keep the conscience clean means to keep it continually in harmony with the purposes of God and thus to enable us to fulfil the end for which we were created. We are here on probation for a great destiny; we are on trial, in a condition of warfare not without its many dangers; and the state of our conscience is the index of the success or failure which accompanies our battle for God and our souls.

Now, as I have pointed out in the previous section, we do not live in an ideal world where angels and archangels are met at every hand's turn. On the contrary, we live in the midst of conditions in which sin abounds. Temptation is in the air we breathe like the microbes of deadly disease. We associate with people who, to all appearance, scarcely give a thought to the claim of God. We hear plenty of irreligious talk; irreverent jests, perhaps disgustingly filthy suggestions, and we may see actions revoltingly at variance with honour and virtue. The hard and thoughtless world in which we pass so much of our time has often a spirit totally different from that which we find in a truly Christian home. It is difficult, as St. Bernard says, to pass through the world without being stained by the dust of the world. In other words, it is not easy in such circumstances to keep the conscience clean. We need, as Our Lord warned us, "to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation." Without vigilance and prayer we easily become victims as we pass through an infected area.

It may be noted here that we must not be too severe in the judgment we pass on those acquaintances from whose minds flow sin and evil suggestions as pestilential odours rise from a filthy sewer. Perhaps these unfortunate people sin largely through ignorance; they know no better. They may have been brought up in careless homes in which the claims of the spiritual life were never honoured, and in which they were denied the opportunities given to ourselves in the midst of a Christian household backed up by the teaching in a good Christian school. And so we may say of those misguided acquaintances as Our Lord said of those who treated Him with such barbarous inhumanity: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But when this charitable allowance has been made, we have to recognise as one of the conditions of our spiritual struggle that sin abounds, temptation is in the atmosphere around us, and it is a part assigned to His faithful followers by Jesus Christ to pass through this world of infection as rays of healthy sunlight pass into a pestilential area alleviating the corruption while they themselves remain untouched by the prevailing evil. "I ask not," said Our Lord in His exquisite prayer to His Father for His followers, "that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil."

Assistance at daily Mass is the great purifier, the great tonic for the health of the conscience. Spiritual strength and encouragement are the great bulwarks against temptation. We get that strength and encouragement when we often assist at the Holy Sacrifice. During Mass we are in contact with the great Source of all light, strength and comfort, and those gifts are bestowed on us more liberally in that great offering than at any other moment. Men whose hearts are full of spiritual comfort will not descend to sinful pleasures. He who assists often at Mass and has begun to taste the delights of a close association with God in this gracious mystery of love and wonder, will feel no leanings towards those sordid gratifications which defile the conscience. Having tasted of the Bread of Life, they will have no hankering after "the husks the swine did eat." The Holy Sacrifice, therefore, will keep the conscience clean. And with this healthy and happy state of the conscience will follow other precious blessings of a high order. For a clean conscience extinguishes the fires of purgatory, irradiates the death-bed with consolation, brings to the soul that peace

that passeth understanding and which can only come from harmony with the purposes of God, and it increases the glory of the Crown that awaits us in eternity.

V.

INTIMACY WITH JESUS CHRIST.

Daily Mass will bring you into close contact with the Source of all grace. It will teach you how to live on terms of the closest intimacy with Jesus Christ.

In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius there is a petition prefixed to each meditation on the hidden and public life of Our Lord—namely, that God may give us an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ—*cognitio intima*. It is a beautiful and deeply suggestive expression. Many of those who know Our Lord do not know Him intimately. Intimate knowledge is deep—not like that of superficial acquaintanceship. To know intimately is to know not only with the mind, but with the heart. “Give me a lover,” says St. Augustine, “and he knows what I mean.” An intimate, a feeling knowledge of Jesus Christ is one of the most precious things in the spiritual life. We have an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ when we regard Him not merely as a great and wonderful Being Who rules the Universe, but as our personal Friend, our Companion, Lover, our Ideal, our beautiful One, our Hero and our King.

This intimate knowledge, which is an inexhaustible source of consolation, may come suddenly or through a gradual growth. But to all who assist at daily Mass it comes sooner or later. And then the world is a pleasanter place than before. For being on intimate terms with the Lord and Master of the Universe, the Universe itself becomes homely and friendly.

It is no longer a topsy-turvy world, but, as Chesterton found on the occasion of his conversion, “the whole world turns over and comes right.”

Intimacy with Jesus is a lovely thing, and precious beyond words. And He Himself desires this intimacy and invites us to it. “Come to Me all ye who labour and are burdened;” “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things unto Myself.” “Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not.” Even the children He wants to gather round Him. Even the sinners: “The Son of Man has come to save them.” “I am the vine, you the branches. Abide in Me.” “Greater love than this no man hath that he give his life for his friends.” And to add one more precious bond to the intimate knowledge and love to which He invites us, He gave us His own Mother. “Behold,” He says to us all, “your Mother.” And as Mary introduced Him into the world, and presented Him to us as the greatest Gift that ever came from heaven to earth, so she wishes to take us to Him as devoted and intimate lovers. As His Mother she desires this for His sake, and as our Mother she desires it for us.

Therefore, since both Jesus and His Mother desire us to have this intimate knowledge and love, it must be within our reach.

We need this great Friend. Our heart pines for someone who will understand us, who will give us sympathy and affection, who will be faithful in all the chances and changes of life. Jesus fills the part as none other can.

Life has many vicissitudes. Sooner or later the shadows will fall on our path. No one can escape. There will be disappointments, anxieties, the faithlessness of friends, the wiles of enemies, the death of those we love, sickness, perhaps old age with its feebleness and humiliations. Apart from those who die in early life, no one can escape the cross. Sooner or later it presses on every shoulder. In our distress we need a true friend and consoler. Where shall we find one that can be compared with Jesus Christ? Nowhere. “My burden,” He says, “is light, and My yoke is sweet. Come to Me and I will give you rest.”

In the daily Mass we come into intimate contact with the unfailing Friend Who, in every trial, will be at our side, and Who, when others desert us, will stand by our side and enfold us in His arms.

VI.

HAPPINESS.

Daily Mass will make your heart light and cheerful. It will throw a halo of happiness over your days.

When we mention the word happiness we strike a chord that vibrates in every heart, for everyone desires happiness, everyone seeks it. And, moreover, everyone seeks it all the time, not at isolated intervals. It is a universal

quest.

If we were to sum up all the efforts and all the longings of humanity in a single formula, it would be the Quest for Happiness. The sailor on the sea, the soldier in the army, the miner in the bowels of the earth, the aviator soaring through the sky, the merchant in his office, the hermit in his cell, the drunkard in his orgies, and the public sinner are all seeking for happiness under various forms. Many, indeed, seek it where it cannot be found, but all seek it and never cease from this tireless quest.

Even a limited experience of life impresses us with the fact that disappointment is common, that happiness for many is a matter of isolated moments, or, if more prolonged, is often only of a very partial and unsatisfactory character. Tennyson wrote:

*“That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more:
Too common—never morning wore
To evening but some heart did break.”*

It is a striking character of the literature of the present day, and of the nineteenth century, that the note of disappointment and sorrow is continually harped upon by the poets and the philosophers. The poet represents to us Joy standing ever at the gate of life bidding adieu. Burns the great poet of Scotland, writes that “man was made to mourn.” Oscar Wilde has told us “that hearts were made to be broken.” Schopenhauer defines the life of man as “a remorseless struggle for existence with the absolute certitude of defeat.” Byron writes:

*“The glance of melancholy is a fearful gift.
What is it but a telescope of truth
That robs the distance of its ecstasies,
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real.”*

The poets admit the joyousness of childhood, but harp on the theme that sorrow comes with expanding reason. “In my wisdom there is woe and in my knowledge tears.” Shelley, in one of the most admired lyrics in the language, looks up at the skylark twittering his wings in the morning sky over dewy meadows and pouring out his song of joy—“his unpremeditated lay.” The poet longs to sing like the lark a note of joy, but confesses it is beyond him. He cannot sing like the lark, which has no forecast of disappointment, no retrospect of sorrow.

*“We look before and after,
We pine for what is not
Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught,
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.”*

One of the most beautiful lyrics in the language—perhaps the most beautiful—is the Ode to the Nightingale, by Keats. It is steeped in melancholy. Deep dejection and disappointment run through all the exquisite harmony of the lines. Verifying Shelley’s statement that “our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought,” the song of the nightingale awakes in the heart of Keats a strain of deepest sadness, reminding the bewildered listener that disappointment is common, that beauty fades, that love is disillusioned, that old age comes with its slow step and palsied hand in a world “where but to think is to be full of sorrows and leaden-eyed despairs.”

The theme might be indefinitely prolonged. And is there no remedy for the sadness that presses on the heart of man? Yes, and only one. The remedy is to attune the heart to harmony with Him Who made it.

God made the heart for Himself, and by an inexorable law written in the very fibres of our being that heart cannot know the thrill of genuine happiness and joy unless it is in harmony with Him Who made it. “Our heart,” said St. Augustine, “is restless till it finds rest in Thee.” “Two evils,” said the Lord through the prophet Jeremias, “have My people done. They have left Me, the Fountain of living waters, and have digged for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

And so the thirst of the heart is unappeased. The Psalmist, looking for joy, strikes the right note when he says, “I looked on my right hand and on my left, but there was none that cared for my soul. I turned to Thee, O God: Thou art my refuge and my hope in the land of the living. So I will go over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle with the

song of joy and praise, with the noise of one feasting.”

Happiness is a gift of God. “My peace I leave you, My peace I give you, said Our Lord. “Not as the world giveth do I give it unto you.” That is to say, not the spurious imitation given by the world, but the genuine article that comes from God alone. Jesus Christ says, “Come to Me all you who are burdened and I will refresh you.

Happy, then, are those who know where to find the waters of refreshment, the happiness for which we are all thirsting, and who approach frequently, even daily. “the place of the wonderful tabernacle,” where they can receive from the Heart of Jesus Christ Himself the peace and happiness for which their own hearts thirst. The very first note struck by Christianity in the world was a note of joy, vibrating from angels’ voices in the air of our world on that first Christmas morn: “Behold I bring you tidings of a great joy that shall be to all the people.” “Come to me,” says the world, “and I will give you restlessness.” “Come to Me,” says Christ, “and I will give you rest.”

Let us, then go to God Who has made us for Himself. He will give us the peace that passes understanding. He will give us the consolation for which our heart pines. Therefore, let us go to Him in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, not occasionally, but daily. There, in close contact with the source of all joy, we find the solace which elsewhere we seek in vain.

VII.

THE BLESSING OF EARLY RISING.

The early rising usually connected with daily Mass is itself a great blessing of the natural order, a blessing poured over both health and character.

In the first article of this series I referred to the so-called difficulty of early rising; here I further elaborate the subject.

At the very outset of this concluding “reason” I should like to be considered reasonable. There are certainly some, even a good number of people, who, however much they might like to get up early and go to daily Mass, cannot do so. They have domestic duties at home which prevent their presence at daily Mass, and they can please God very greatly by attending with a pure intention to those duties. There are also many people in the country who are so far away from a church that it is impossible to go to daily Mass, even if daily Mass is celebrated in the district.

But, all this being said, when I think of the question of early rising I can scarcely help smiling. It is amusing to think of the purely imaginary terrors associated in the minds of the multitude of our fellow-citizens with getting up in the morning. Most people, I fear, get up unwillingly. They have to be forced out of bed. They get up because they can’t help it. They have to get their breakfast and they have to catch a certain tram or train to get to the place of their employment. And they arrange their hour of rising for the last moment consistent with carrying on the compulsory business of life. They are compelled to get up. They have all heard some time or other of the excellent song of Harry Lauder:

*“It’s nice to get up in the mornin,
But it’s nicer to stay in bed.”*

And when they hear the second line of this verse they say to themselves: “Those are my sentiments.” But it is all a vast delusion. It is nice to get up in the morning, and it’s not nicer to stay in bed. And I suspect that Lauder himself, in spite of his song, would be in full agreement; for he took good care of his health.

Now, is it not a deplorable thing that the whole order of time of so many of us is regulated by a kind of compulsion which takes away our liberty of choice? Just consider a normal day in the life of the normal citizen. He gets up at the latest hour consistent with getting to his work on time. He goes to bed overnight at the latest hour consistent with getting what he considers to be a sufficient amount of sleep for his physical well-being. And his day from the hour of rising till the hour of the evening meal is regulated by the occupations of his business or trade. Except for the leisure of the weekend a very small portion of his life is regulated by himself. He lives almost entirely under the compulsion of inexorable pressure.

Not so the person who rises for early Mass. He is not forced to get up. He gets up because he so arranges for it; and connected with his early voluntary rising he goes to bed early by an extension of the same liberty of choice. This has a bracing effect on the character.

But it has also a bracing effect on the health. There is the healthy walk to the church in the lovely fresh morning, which is the best hour of the day; there is the peace and happiness of Mass. And what contributes more to health than peace and happiness? There is the feeling of a priceless treasure acquired, a good deed done, a bright and happy beginning to the day. And then there is the walk back to the house, and the return home with lithe and springy footsteps, and a glow of health and happiness in the eyes. To add a motive of a purely natural order: there is a healthy appetite for breakfast! No, it's not "nicer to stay in bed"—emphatically not.

What wonder, then, if all the gifts mentioned in the foregoing sections and many more equally great, fall to those who go to daily Mass; for at the tremendous words of Consecration an act takes place which, of all the acts that take place throughout the whole world, is the most pleasing to God. God is disposed to be more liberal on such an occasion. Now, if we assist at Mass we share in a special manner in that most pleasing offering. We offer up that gift to God along with the priest, and we receive in return immense blessings. You know the words of the priest when he turns to the people before the more solemn part of the Mass and says, "Orate fratres," etc. That is, in English, "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be favourably received by the Lord God Almighty." Note the words "mine and yours."

This sacrifice is the greatest gift offered on earth to God. If you assist at daily Mass you are one of the offerers of that gift. It is Christ's offering, and the priest's offering, and your own offering.

Avail yourself, then, of every opportunity of assisting at Mass and approaching the Holy Table. Don't make excuses too easily. See if you have not hitherto been neglecting the most precious opportunities. When the church bell rings out for Mass in the morning, think of the magnificent invitation that is offered to you. Don't lose the opportunity, but leave your bed in the fresh early morning, and draw near to the source of all light, and life, and peace.

VIII.

SUPPLEMENTARY THOUGHTS: FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT GO TO DAILY MASS.

There are many who would dearly like to assist at daily Mass and who fully appreciate the "Reasons" that have been explained, but are quite unable to carry out their wishes. They feel they are missing something of great importance; something that would greatly contribute to their happiness and to the smooth running of the intricate wheels of existence.

But much as they envy those who have the opportunity of grasping the great treasure of daily Mass, they themselves are debarred by urgent household duties or by the fact that there is no Mass within a reasonable distance. God in His goodness sees and blesses their holy desire. For such men and women of good will I add these supplementary notes.

You wish to lead a full life, to fulfil in a thoroughgoing way the purposes of existence and, therefore, to lead a life entirely in harmony with God. Now, since it is impossible for you to assist at frequent weekday Mass, see what you can do to supply its place as far as possible. Grasp at the opportunities of a perfect service of God that are within your reach. We have not far to go: "The Kingdom of God is within you."

(1) First of all, then, get up in time and say your Morning Prayers well. *This* will bring down the blessing of God on the whole day. Your Morning Prayers will include your Morning Offering. Make that offering slowly and earnestly. Look forward to the day's work and your relations with your neighbour and offer up in advance every detail of the day for the Intentions of the Sacred Heart. That is a good beginning.

(2) Say Grace before and after meals— a good old custom and one which helps to develop the habit of purifying your intention.

(3) If your work is outside in the city or in the fields purify your intention again as you open the door to go forth. "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, watch over me today, bless me, and keep me from all sin." Or something of the kind.

If your work is in the home, retire for a few moments when the first rush of work is over and pay a visit to the home altar or shrine of the Sacred Heart, and say a little prayer. You can unite your intention with all the Masses that are being offered throughout the world. This is an easy and fruitful devotion.

(4) If your home is not yet consecrated to the Sacred Heart, see about getting this done without delay. If it is already consecrated it will be easier for you to make the little visit to the sacred image of Our Lord. The Handbook of

Consecration (3d. posted from The “Messenger” Office) gives all the particulars of the consecration of the home to the Sacred Heart, and includes a collection of beautiful prayers to be used at periodical renewals of consecration. For a short visit to the home shrine one or another prayer may be used from the handbook.

(5) A great spirit of faith and love enters the home when the image of the Sacred Heart is suitably honoured. “I will bless those homes where an image of My Sacred Heart is exposed and honoured”; that is one of the Twelve Promises, and millions of people have had experience of the fulfilment of that Promise. To honour the sacred image is both easy and consoling. Place a few fresh flowers before the picture or statue of the Sacred Heart and keep a little lamp, the flame of which will be an outward testimony to all that in this home the Sacred Heart is honoured. In such a home and where such a welcome awaits Him, Our Lord will love to dwell. “If anyone love Me,” said Our Lord at the Last Supper, “My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him.”

(6) At least a visit to the home shrine is possible for all—and desirable. But, even if weekday Mass is impossible, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament some time during the day may be quite feasible, especially when a person’s business takes him into the city where churches abound.

This daily visit is, therefore, greatly to be recommended, either when going to business or returning in the evening.

(7) Lastly—to omit other suggestions which could be made—have a copy of the “Imitation of Christ” and read a page, or even half a page, a day. Good reading and spiritual thoughts greatly nourish the soul and make our prayers more fruitful.

Don’t tell me that all this is too “high” for a person in the world. I want you to aim high. We have before us a mighty destiny stretching through all Eternity, and this brief period of earthly existence will soon be over. Meanwhile, we have to make the most of a short time of trial which is only a preparation for a life without end.

Nihil Obstat:
F. MOYNIHAN,
Censor Deputatus

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