

By Way of Introduction

Practically all books on the Mass have been written by priests. That is natural enough. It is the priest who is the celebrant of the Mass, as it is the priest who is the custodian of the Blessed Sacrament.

Yet the Mass should be of intelligent importance to the layman and the laywoman. The Catholic who lays any claim to Catholicity assists at Mass at least once a week. He has heard—so often that the phrase has become a mental tag—that it is the Mass that matters. In recent years he has been reminded that he is a co-priest assisting the ordained priest in the offering of the Mass to the Blessed Trinity.

So naturally the layman has lately been doing a deal of thinking again about the Mass and what it means to him and to the rest of the laity.

Well here is a booklet on the Mass, a booklet written by a young layman. He has not studied theology. He has no intention of becoming a priest; he has every intention of staying on the outer side of the communion rail while Mass is being celebrated.

In this booklet he tries to show laymen and laywomen what the Mass should mean to the lay person. He speaks as a member of the laity to members of the laity. He is not a priest preaching on the value of the Mass; he is a young man, not too long out of college, expressing through the mouths of his fictional characters his own ideas of why the Mass is important and how the Mass can come to be for the man and woman who enjoy bridge and pre-midnight sandwiches a more precious and intelligible thing.

This view point is what makes this book-let unique. Here is no priest talking as a priest to his people. Here is a young lay-man expressing in the words and phrases of young people his reasons for thinking that the Mass is precious and those things that he believes must be done by the laity to make the Mass more and more the central point of the layman's life.

If you happen to be a member of the clergy or a religious, the views of a young layman will probably be of real interest to you. If you are a member of the laity, you will undoubtedly be glad that for once religious ideas and ideals and an exalted appreciation of the Mass are expressed by one of your own lay associates.

But let Art Kuhl parade for you his modern and very human characters, and let them express for you the thousands of intelligent laymen and laywomen in our modern Catholic world, what the Mass has come to mean in the lives of the laity. For myself, I have found this inspiring.

A Layman Looks at the Mass

By ART KUHL.

ROSS winced as he dropped the jack of diamonds on the last trick. "Don't throw anything, pardner," he begged, in mock alarm, as he ducked under the bridge table. "I didn't know the gun was loaded."

Joan glared at him with seeming intent to kill. "Imagine," she apostrophised the empty air and the other grinning couple, "letting yourself be squeezed out of the setting trick!"

"That's game, seven-hundred rubber, and the evening," announced Lou, in a manner that was not so free from triumph as she had hoped it would be. She circled the scores and laid down the pencil.

Ross emerged from under the table. "What do you mean the evening?" he demanded. "I crave revenge and an opportunity to redeem myself for that last hand. How about another rubber."

Ted glanced at his watch. "Not a chance. It's a quarter to twelve now. We've time to empty the icebox before twelve. Besides with that marvellous Rockford system of bidding that you've been using, we'd trim you in another round."

"We Rockfords, suh, are proud of my bidding. And anyway, what does twelve o'clock have to do with it? Tomorrow's Sunday, and you can sleep an ear off."

Kitchen Supper.

"Say, listen," Lou protested, "I have every intention of going to Mass and Communion tomorrow morning. And I'm not going to get big round circles under my big brown eyes if I can help it."

Ross moved his chair to a position against the wall. "Frankly," he said, "I think the Drapers are afraid to take us on again, but far be it from me to make disparaging remarks."

A few minutes later the four were gathered around the kitchen table and a rather nightmarish assortment of ham, cheese, pickles, rolls, and the last lingering remains of cold roast beef.

"Ross," said Lou, admiringly, "you may not know how to play bridge. But what you can do to a sandwich!"

Ross tucked a large bite of ham-cheese-beef-and-pickle sandwich into the corner of his mouth. "Good, huh?"

Ted gestured toward the clock. "You've have only ten minutes in which to finish that particular mouthful, Ross. Need help?"

"One nice thing" – Ross grinned and swallowed – "about me; I never need help in eating. And besides I don't see why you should be so confoundedly worried about the hour."

"What's the matter with him, Joan?" asked Lou. "Has the boy turned heathen on you?"

"I wouldn't be very much surprised at any turn he'd take—even if he turned a bright and sickly pink."

Shank of the Morning.

"Hey, now! Lay off. I'm no heathen. I go to Mass every Sunday morning—bright and early at eleven-thirty."

"Where did you get that bright-and-early stuff?" punctured Joan. "Last Sunday you barely managed to slip into a pew before the Gospel was read."

"That's me all over—almost perfect timing."

"You should try going to Mass sometime," suggested Ted, taking a last swallow of coffee.

"I just told you—Oh, I see. A wise guy, huh? Look! Don't I have a friend in the crowd?"

"Don't look at me," said Joan. "Not after you've cut my throat."

"Seriously, Ross," Ted said, tilting his chair back against the kitchen cabinet, "you ought to try going to Mass. You'd probably be surprised by it."

"And just as seriously, Ted," said Ross, "I think you're a little nuts. You can attend Mass without receiving Communion. And Mass is Mass, whether you go at eleven-thirty or in the wee sma' hours around nine."

"Oh, I'll admit that you don't have to get up at that aftermath of the breaking dawn. I'll even admit that you really don't have to receive Communion."

Ted paused, as if he were considering the advisability of going on. "Mind if I ask some questions?"

Ross cheerfully nodded and mumbled something that was muffled by a last mouthful of the gargantuan sandwich.

"Well," continued Ted, "what's your idea of the Mass?"

Definition.

"Aha!" said Ross, and he reached for another piece of rye bread. "Religion 43, two-hour lecture. Open quote: The Mass is a continuation of the Sacrifice of Calvary and a repetition of the Last Supper. Close quote."

"There," Joan announced to Lou and Ted; "I knew that I'd eventually find out what he learned at college."

"I wonder whether he really learned that," said Ted, taking the sting from the words by laughing. "Come, Ross, my lad. Break down and expound the definition."

"Okeh. As long as I'm going back to the catechism class, I'll uphold my fair name. It's the Mass that matters. At the Last Supper, Christ took bread and blessed it. Then over the bread He said, 'This is My Body.' He took wine, blessed it, and said over it, 'This is My Blood . . . which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.' He gave this bread, which had become His Body, and this wine, which had become His Blood, to the Apostles and told them to eat and drink. Then He said, 'Do this for a commemoration of Me.' The priests of the Catholic Church still do this in commemoration of Christ, and that's the Mass."

Ted started to say something, but waved him into silence.

"On Calvary," Ross continued, "Christ's Body and Blood were really separated, for Christ offered Himself to His Father and died the bloody death of the Cross. In the Mass, Christ's Body and Blood are again separated—this time verbally mystically—and Christ dies a mystical death. He offers Himself as a victim to His heavenly Father; this is the unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar, the Mass." He paused. "Right, teacher?"

Shifted.

"Well—" began Ted, a little dubiously. "If you don't mind my saying so, the whole thing sounds like something you'd memorised in order to pass a test."

"Check," Ross agreed. "You could always count on old Father Johnson to ask that question on the final, so I just learned the answer and had it cold."

"That's precisely—" began Ted again, but Lou interrupted him.

"How about moving the discussion into the other room?" she asked. "That is, if you're sure that the edge is off your appetite, Ross."

"Can I help you with the dishes?" asked Joan.

"Not these few. I'll just leave them here till morning."

Ross picked up a slice of pickle and demolished it. Then as he rose, he held out a pack of cigarettes to Ted. "Smoke?"

"Thanks. I have some in the other room, but I'll take one of yours if you don't mind." Ted took one of the cigarettes and tamped it on the crystal of his wrist watch. As the foursome entered the living room, he lit Ross's cigarette and then his own.

"Mind if I ask some more questions, Ross?"

"Fire away, youngster. Fire away. I'm the little boy that knows all the answers."

Principals.

"All right, little boy. First what do you do at Mass?"

Ross was plainly a little taken aback by the question. "Why . . . well . . . Oh, sometimes I say the Rosary. Sometimes

I just pray. What has that to do with it?"

"Sometimes you say the Rosary and sometimes you just pray. Forgive me for pointing, but is that really your notion of the thing to do at the unbloody Sacrifice of Calvary, the eternal Last Supper?"

"Oh, well . . . after all—"

"I know. Before you were just giving definitions you'd learned in order to pass an examination. Now we're talking about what you do. Suppose I ask you another question. What are the parts of the Mass?"

"A cinch! The Offertory, the Consecration, and/ the Communion."

"Those are the principal parts. I mean the whole business."

"Wait a minute now. Let's not—"

Barbed Banter.

"Come on, Ross," urged Joan, unmercifully. "You're the bright little boy that knows all the answers. Remember?"

Ross thought for a moment. "There's the Epistle and the Gospel. Then there's the Creed and the collection. Then there's the Consecration and the Preface . . . No— it's the other way around, isn't it? . . . Well, anyway, after the Consecration there's the Communion. And then . . ." He paused.

"And then he goes home," supplemented Joan.

"Evidently," said Lou, "he comes in in time for the Epistle, goes to sleep, wakes up, goes to sleep again, and so on."

"Ross Rockford, average Catholic," Ted summed up.

Ross grinned rather sheepishly. The two couples knew each other well enough to make banter like this the usual order of the evening, but Ross felt that somehow he was now being put on the spot with something close to vengeance.

"All right," he said. "So I have something to learn. Tell me the worst."

"Sure you can stand it?" Ted asked.

"After the lunch that boy packed away, he can stand anything," insisted Joan. "Go ahead, Ted. Maybe you can convert him to the Church."

The Missal.

Ted rose, walked over to the little end table, and picked up a rather thick book that was bound in soft black leather. "Remember, you asked for it," he warned. He handed the book to Ross. "Ever see one of these before?"

Ross flicked through it. "Of course. It's a missal. Never could figure out how to use the darned thing."

"So simple even you could follow it. This one happens to be the one on which I was reared. Lou gave it to me — in fact, it was the first present she ever gave me. There are a great many of them, missals I mean, and I suppose that most of them are just as good as this one, some of them perhaps better.

"But first I'll try to convince you that you need a missal. Then I can try selling you on this one.

"Let's get back to your book-learned definitions. You said that the Mass was the repetition of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Now, in every sacrifice there has to be a person who offers the sacrifice. Who is that person in the Mass?"

Offering.

"That's easy. Christ is the high priest in the Sacrifice of the Mass as in the Sacrifice of Calvary—page 231, lower part of the page."

Ted looked at Joan and Lou. "He really knows the book, doesn't he?" He turned back to Ross. "Then maybe you can tell me what part the priest plays in the Mass."

"The priest is Christ's representative. Ask me another."

"Nope. You can relax for a while. From now on I carry the ball. You're perfectly right in saying that the priest is Christ's representative. The priest offers the Sacrifice in the person of Christ. But it's not the priest alone who does that. The priest is the only one that can consecrate the bread and the wine and perform the actions of the Sacrifice. But every Catholic is able to and should offer the Sacrifice.

"If you'll read the missal some day, you'll find that the priest at the altar very seldom uses the first person singular. His prayers are always in the plural—we and us. At several times during the Mass he calls upon the people to pray with him. Always his phrase is 'your sacrifice and mine,' not 'my sacrifice.'

Dependence.

"And that's not just meaningless rhetoric. It's the expression of a very real fact. We, the Catholic people, are supposed to be offering the Sacrifice with the priest. After all, every man owes certain things to God. Remember your special ethics? Thesis one: Every man owes God both interior and exterior devotion."

"I remember almost flunking a quiz on that thesis. I wrote interior and ulterior, and Father O'Byrne thought I was trying to kid him."

"Ten to one you can't remember why man owes God that devotion," said Lou.

"You're on," said Ross, grinning. "Pages six and seven: man is absolutely dependent upon God. Any reasonable

man who examines the world and his position in it realises that; since he's reasonable, he has to admit that the creature is dependent on the Creator. The admission of that dependence is in the mind, an admission of the soul, and hence it is a true interior devotion. But since man is a creature composed of body as well as soul, he has to express his dependence with his body as well as with his mind. And since he is a social creature, he has to express that dependence in a social way. That simply means that he has an obligation to render God exterior devotion."

"Dear me!" said Joan, in mock amazement. "The boy is a child prodigy."

"Oh, I'll admit that in my small way I'm something of a colossal genius."

The Continuation.

"Careful, there," admonished Ted. "You'll have an inferiority complex if you don't watch yourself. Well, it so happens that one of the most natural ways for man to show exterior devotion is through sacrifice—through the offering of something valuable to God.

People used to kill cows and sheep and goats and offer them to God as an acknowledgment of His control over living things. In doing that, men used these animals as representatives of themselves, and so in a sense they were saying to God, 'I am giving you this lamb to let you know that I am willing to give myself to you.'

"Now that was fine, so long as there wasn't any better way of expressing dependence, so long as there wasn't any better sacrifice to offer. The better sacrifice, however, came in the person of Christ, Who made the supreme sacrifice—the sacrifice of His life. After that, of course, it would have been somewhat silly to offer the sort of sacrifices that had been offered under the Old Law, for those sacrifices were merely foreshadowings of the sacrifice of Christ.

"At the same time Christ decided to do more than die once and for all, more than offer His life and let it go at that. The Sacrifice of Calvary was sufficient for salvation, but man still had the obligation—yes, the need—to offer sacrifice.

"Watch those two words, obligation and need. Man has an actual need for sacrifice; it is only natural then that God should give him the possibility of filling that need. Man is actually obliged to offer sacrifice, to offer it in payment for an infinite debt, and the Sacrifice of Christ is the only sacrifice that can really pay that debt in full. It is almost a syllogism: Man has a need to offer sacrifice, but that sacrifice must be infinite, therefore . . .

Earlier Times.

"God has given us the opportunity to fill the need and meet the obligation by making it possible for us to participate in the Sacrifice of Christ. God didn't limit that possibility to the priest; He gave it to all of us. We are, all of us, supposed to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass along with the define Catholic Action as the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. We laymen and laywomen really share in the work of the priest." Ted paused. "All right so far?" he asked.

Ross said nothing, but nodded his head in obvious interest.

"Now, it used to be possible for the congregation to participate in the Mass a great deal more actively that we do to-day," Ted continued. "Just take one example: At the Offertory, when we drop a nickel into the basket and hope it will sound like a quarter, the people used to come up to the altar rail and offer the actual bread and wine that were to be used in the Consecration. That is, at least some of the offerings were used for that purpose. The rest went for the support of the pastor and for the poor. But the point is that the priest used the people's bread and wine; it was the people's sacrifice, and the people knew it to be so.

The Chant.

"They knew it so well that they used to chant the prayers along with the priest. They knew Latin, of course, and they could follow the prayers of the Mass without having to use prayer books. In fact, they probably couldn't have read the books, even if they had had them. But when the priest finished a prayer, the people would just naturally chant the Amen, which meant that they approved the prayer, that they thought that the priest expressed their own thoughts very well. Their responses to the priest were perfectly natural, and it is from those responses that many of our Mass prayers originated.

"From those responses, too, come the plain chant, the chant that the great St. Gregory formalised as the Gregorian chant. It is because the chant is strictly liturgical, because it permits all of the people to participate in the Sacrifice, and because it isn't so synocopated and distracting as is most of the modern stuff—it is for those reasons that the modern liturgical movement in the Church is trying to revive the Gregorian chant."

Joan interrupted. "I don't like to sing Gregorian. It sounds terrific when you have a choir of girls singing it."

"Of course it does," Lou agreed. "But church choirs are supposed to be made up of men, and Gregorian is suited to men's voices."

"You'll have to go a long way before you get the masculine portion of our parish into the choir loft," countered Joan.

"Naturally, but—"

Ted lifted a restraining hand. "Hold it, you two," he begged. "You're starting down a side street."

"And up a blind alley," put in Ross. "Don't let Joan get started on this chant business."

The Link.

"Besides," continued Ted, "the question of Gregorian chant is for the moment a side issue. The important thing is that the congregation used to say the prayers at the Mass, and they said them aloud. If you haven't had the thrill of hearing an entire congregation going step by step along with the priest, you ought to attend one of the dialogue Masses that are sometimes celebrated these days. It would open your eyes."

Ted reached for another cigarette, and Ross made use of the temporary break.

"All of which is nice history. But so what?"

"Don't rush me, Ross. Don't rush me," Ted flicked out the match. "Those prayers that the congregation used to say aloud are the same prayers that are used in the Mass to-day. There's a thought in that, you know; just occurred to me. Whenever you're saying the prayers at Mass, you're uniting yourself in a very real way with all the Catholics of all times. There's St. Thomas, and St. Theresa, and St. Joan, and St. Albert, and St. Gregory—the whole line of the saints behind you. You're one with the Christians of the fifth century, and of the twelfth century, and of the twenty-fifth century, too, if there will be a twenty-fifth century."

A Drama

"But that's off on a tangent. We were talking about the prayers themselves. Since you've never used a missal, you probably haven't much idea of the power of those prayers."

"Not Ross," said Joan. "He stopped learning prayers after he'd finally mastered the Confiteor. And that took him until he was twelve."

"No cracks, lady," growled Ross. "Carry on, my friend," he said, looking to Ted.

"Ever hear of the drama of the Mass?" Ted asked.

"Yes. Not that the phrase means very much."

"Not to you, perhaps. But it happens to convey a very significant truth. The Mass is a series of actions and prayers that go to make up a real drama. In fact, the Mass is a prayer and an action in five acts."

"Let's run through it briefly. Stop me if anything I say sounds a little weird." He flipped the missal open and as he talked glanced occasionally at the pages. "At the very beginning of the Mass the priest comes to the foot of the altar and recites a prayer that is based on the Old Testament psalm 'Judica Me,' in which he prays God to help him approach the altar worthily. Now, if the priest alone was supposed to say that prayer, you would be perfectly justified in sitting by and starting to pull out your Rosary. But remember that you, and all the rest of the people in the congregation with you, are supposed to be offering this Mass too. You are approaching the altar in just as real, even if not so visible, a way as the priest is approaching it. So you should be praying for God's help, too."

Celebrants.

"Then the priest prays the Confiteor: He confesses that he has sinned, and he asks God's mercy. After the priest has prayed, the acolytes repeat the prayer. Remember that the servers are really members of the congregation; they help in the actions of the Mass as well as in the intentions and the prayers, but really they are doing only what all the rest of us in the Church should be doing. You'll find that in a dialogue Mass the entire congregation says the prayers that the acolytes say at the altar, and the only difference between a dialogue Mass and the usual Mass should be that in the dialogue Mass the prayers are said aloud."

"But we were talking about the Mass itself. After the acolytes have said the Confiteor, the priest goes up to the altar; as he goes, he prays that God will make him worthy to enter into the holy of holies. Now, since the people are also really going up to the altar to offer the Sacrifice, they should join in the prayer. In fact throughout the rest of the Mass it is the people and the priest who together are participating in the Sacrifice. The Church has surrounded that single central act of Sacrifice with a great many beautiful prayers and actions, prayers and actions that are intended to contribute toward the Sacrifice and hence should be said by all the celebrants. The people—you among the others—are celebrants, even though not in the same way, just as the priest is. It's as simple as that."

"The priest goes to the right-hand side of the altar and reads the introit, the prayer that sets the tenor of the Mass of the day. This prayer is part of the proper of the Mass. All the prayers that are fixed, that don't vary from Mass to Mass, are included in what is called the common of the Mass. The prayers that vary according to the particular day are included in what is called the proper of the Mass."

"Hold on a minute, will you?" interrupted Ross. "As long as you're instructing the ignorant, you might just as well do a good job of it. Would you mind telling me what the introit is, anyway? This business about setting the tenor of the Mass is all right, but all I can think of is a quartet and a pitch pipe."

"Make it words of one syllable, Ted. His mind becomes dizzy at higher planes," cautioned Joan.

"Simple words it is. The word introit simply means the entering. We are entering into the Mass. The prayer itself is taken from the Psalms, again the Old Testament, you see. In seasons of joy the introit is a joyful psalm; in seasons of penance it is a plea for mercy. Catch?"

"Carry on, maestro."

"After the introit the priest and the acolytes or ministers recite the Kyrie, the plea for mercy. You see the Mass is still in its first act, an act in which the people, penitent and humble, ask for God's mercy and pardon.

Dead Languages.

"And, of course, you remember, that the words Kyrie eleison are Greek. That's one of the reminders of the Greek traditions within the Church and one of the evidences of the universality of the Church."

Ross raised his hand. "Teacher! teacher! I got a question."

"Yes, Master Rockford?"

"Lay off the master stuff, lug, or I'll start baby talk. But seriously, can you give a simple explanation for the use of Latin and Greek in the Mass? It seems to me that—"

"I know," interrupted Ted. "It seems that it would be easier to follow the Mass if the prayers were in English. Well, the basic explanation is probably this: Latin and Greek are dead languages. The modern languages, because they are alive, are constantly changing; a word in English may not mean to-morrow what it means to-day. In Latin there's no chance of that, and you have to remember that the Mass is an important—really the most important—liturgical action. The procedure of the Mass has been formalised, and it has to stay that way.

"But besides that there's the question of universality. I don't know whether you've ever been to Mass in a church where the congregation is made up of people whose native tongue is a foreign language. I have. When the priest delivers the sermon, in Italian or Bohemian, let's say, I can't understand a word of it. But when the priest prays the Mass in Latin, I'm on perfectly familiar ground. Latin today doesn't hold the position it held in the Middle Ages, when Latin was really the universal tongue, but for Catholics the Latin in the Mass comes close to universality; Latin establishes a common ground of understanding.

Looking Forward.

"Why, I remember a short story that Evelyn Waugh, the English Catholic novelist, wrote about the universality. In the story he pictured himself as having been miraculously transported to London in the twenty-first century. Negroes controlled the entire island, and every landmark that he had once known was levelled to the ground. He could not understand the language; he could not understand the customs. There was not one thing that he could recognise—until he happened to see a priest at an altar and he heard the words, Domine, non sum dignus. Other things may change; the Mass, and the Church that rests upon the Mass will never change."

"Sounds reasonable enough," said Ross. "I've been intending to ask someone that question, but it always slips my mind."

Joan looked at him with affected concern. "Poor fellow! He has so many things to think about."

Ted laughed. "Now, let's see. Where were we?"

"The Kyrie."

Oremus.

"Oh, yes. After the Kyrie comes the Gloria, a hymn of praise to God. It's characteristic both of the Mass and of the Church in general that a hymn of praise follows immediately after a prayer for mercy. There's something of the fear of God in that, a wholesome fear; not a fear that makes us cringe, but a fear that lets us love and praise God. When the Gloria is completed, the priest turns to the congregation and says, 'Oremus.' Remember what I said about his praying constantly in the plural? He doesn't say that he is going to pray, or that the people three rows from the back of the church should help him pray. He simply says, 'Let us pray.' Then he prays the collects of the day."

"And at just about that point Ross tries to remember what the second joyful mystery is," inserted Joan.

"It's the visitation," snapped Ross. "Go ahead, Ted, and ignore the little lady's interruptions. What's this collects business?"

Second Act.

"The collects are part of the proper of the Mass. You recall the proper—the part that varies according to the Mass of the day. Well, the collects are so called because they are a collection of the intentions of all the people. The priest gathers up all the prayers of the people and puts them before God.

"After the collects comes the Epistle, which also varies according to the day. The Epistle is usually taken from one of the actual letters of the Apostles. In the early Church the priest would read to the people some letter that he had received. If you were in a church in Ephesus, the Bishop might read at the Mass a letter that he had received from Paul. The letter was read to instruct the people, and today the Epistle is read for that same purpose—instruction.

"You'll notice that we've come to the second act of the drama, an act devoted to teaching. First act penitence; second act instruction.

"After reading the Epistle, the priest reads the Gradual, the transition from the Epistle to the Gospel, and then he prays the Munda cor meum, a prayer that asks God to help the priest announce the Gospel worthily. Then he reads the Gospel." "Go ahead, my lad," said Joan, nudging Ross, "Show Ted what you know. Tell him that that's the point at which everyone stands up."

"Cute little trick, isn't she?" said Ross. "Sometimes I think I'll cut her pretty little white throat."

"Not in the middle of the Gospel, Ross," protested Lou. "Carry on, Ted. The night's not as young as it was earlier."

Permission.

"Well, after the Gospel there's the Credo, the last part of the second act of our drama. The Credo is a summation of all the teachings of the Church, and our recitation of the creed is in the nature of a seal upon the instruction that we have received.

"And with the Creed you come to the end of the Mass of the Catechumens. You see in early Christian times the people who wanted to be received into the Church had to take a great deal more instruction than do people today. And while they were being instructed, they were permitted to assist only at the opening of the Mass. That is, they could remain during the first two acts—the penitence and the instruction—but they had to leave before the first principal part of the Mass.

"You can see from as simple a thing as that the high reverence in which the early Christians held the Mass. It was so sacred that only those who had been duly received into the Church were permitted to attend and to assist. Permitted, mind you. And to-day we practically beg people to attend Mass.

Symbolism.

"But as Canon Skerritt in 'Shadow and Substance' would say, we digress. After the recitation of this acceptance of the articles of faith—the Credo—comes the Offertory, the first principal part of the Mass. The Offertory prayer itself is part of the proper of the Mass, and it is followed by a series of prayers and actions that are part of the preparation for the Supreme Sacrifice, which is to be offered to God.

"I wish I had time to run over some of the prayers and the actions—the mingling of the water and the wine, the washing of hands, and the rest. You have there some of the most beautiful symbolism in the world: the act of pouring the water into the wine, representative of the incorporation of human nature in the divine nature of Christ and of our incorporation in His Mystical Body; the washing of hands. But I'm off on a tangent again. Right now it's the third act of this drama of the Mass with which we're concerned.

Preface.

"You'll admit, Ross, that it would be sort of silly to arrive at one of Shakespeare's plays at the opening of the third act. Maybe only the third act is essential to the understanding of the next two and of the play itself; may be you can get from that third act an idea of what went on in the first two acts. But it's still silly to skip two acts of a five-act drama. And you do that every time you slip into church just in time for the Offertory. You're cutting corners, taking just the bare essentials, and missing a great deal.

"All of which, I suppose, sounds like so much harangue.

"At any rate, this third act continues through to the preface, which bridges the gap between the ordinary of the Mass—that's the whole first part—and the canon, the more solemn and second part. The preface itself is a solemn prayer of thanks-giving to God, and it comes immediately after the secrets, the prayers of priest and people for special intentions. The secrets are part of the proper of the Mass; the preface itself varies according to the liturgical season and for special feasts, but it varies less frequently than do the other prayers of the proper. One preface is used throughout an entire season—Lent, for example—or for a special feast and the octave of that feast.

Mystical Crucifixion.

"The preface closes with the Sanctus, the altar bells are rung three times, and the entire congregation kneels. The Mass moves to its climax, the fourth act of the drama, the solemn action of the Sacrifice itself, the Consecration. Praying through the saints to Christ and through Christ to God, the priest asks the blessing of God upon the Church and upon all living Catholics. There is a special prayer for the living whom we want especially to remember. Again the priest prays that God will accept the Sacrifice. And then he pronounces the words of Consecration and Sacrifice.

"The first words bring Christ, really living, upon the altar. The incarnation is in a sense repeated at that moment. The second words, the words spoken over the wine, mystically crucify Christ again, though really the whole rite of Consecration is truly sacrificial. Christ is again offered, the divine victim, to His Father.

"And it's not just the priest's sacrifice; it's our sacrifice—the sacrifice of every living Catholic. It is consequently true that those Catholics that are present at the action itself should join in the offering of the victim.

We Are Sacrificed.

"And now the Sacrifice is again presented to God, and again the priest prays that God will accept it—"

"Pardon me," said Joan. "Is Ross the only one to be instructed?"

"Not at all. What's the trouble?"

"There's something that worries me. Christ is the divinely acceptable victim in the Sacrifice. God couldn't possibly refuse to accept Him. Then why do we have to pray so much that God will accept our sacrifice?"

Ted looked perplexed. "Why—" He was silent for a second. "Say, I've never thought of that before. It seems a little

silly, doesn't it?"

"Come, come Ted. I'm ashamed of you," chided Lou, "You have to remember something about the corporate sacrifice, Joan," she continued. "And it's a good point in this whole business of participation. Mind my butting in, Ted?"

"Not at all, honey. Enlighten away."

"There's the usual reason for our prayers of petition, of course. We are reminding, not God, but ourselves, of our dependent position. But there's also a secondary reason.

"For you see it isn't just Christ who is being sacrificed. If we really assist at Mass, we're offering ourselves at the moment of the Sacrifice. We're throwing in our intentions, our thoughts, our acts, our lives, ourselves with that Sacrifice; at that moment we are very much one with Christ, and we're part of the—immolation is the word, isn't it? Now, Christ by Himself is perfectly acceptable to God, but we more or less clutter up the whole thing. We have to beg God to accept us, because we're not so perfect as sacrifices go. Clear?"

Return Gift.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Ted. "Nice smart wife I have, huh?"

"Someone in the family should have brains," Ross suggested.

"Is that why you're thinking of marrying Joan?"

"You've got me, Ted. All my ulterior motives revealed."

Lou coughed. Ted took the hint. "Maybe we'd better finish this whole thing. Lou's ready to wind the cat and put the alarm clock out for the night.

"The prayers after the Consecration include petitions to God and the saints and reach their climax in the prayer that Christ Himself instituted, the Our Father.

"Now, the prayers lead to the fifth act of the drama, the act of reward. These prayers are in the same tenor as were the prayers at the foot of the altar at the beginning of the Mass, prayers of humility and penitence. But there is a difference. For now the priest and the people are preparing to receive God's return for their sacrifice—Holy Communion. Just before the Communion itself come the words of the 'Domine, non sum dignus,' and there is no hypocrisy in saying, 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof' and then receiving the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Christ; that's merely a simple recognition of a fact.

"We of ourselves aren't worthy, but Christ is good enough to come to us anyway."

Welded Whole.

"This whole discussion started just about at this point. Its true that you can assist at Mass without receiving Communion. But Communion is a return action; its the action that completes the high point of the Mass, the Sacrifice. We never give anything to God without getting a return, and

His first return to us for the sacrifice of His Son—and of ourselves—is the greatest return that could possibly be made, the Body of that Son. You don't have to receive Communion, but it's rather stupid not to. In other words, it's not quite like Hamlet without the prince of Denmark, but it's like Hamlet without the murder of Hamlet's father—you lose a great deal of the purpose.

"Mass and Communion—the two together constitute the great high spot of living. Each by itself is marvellously powerful; together they are a perfect whole and, being complete, are even more; marvellously powerful than they are when they are considered separately.

Outline.

"After the last great act in the drama of the Mass comes the epilogue, which is still an important part of the Mass. The three principal parts of the Mass, the three essentials, are the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion; so the real essentials are completed with the administration of Communion. But the epilogue consists in thanksgiving to God for the gift of Communion.

"It is not essential, any more than it would be essential for me to thank you for lending me a cigarette or a book. But the thanksgiving fall some place in the order of divine courtesy, thanking God for the great gift of His Own Son.

"Well, my children, that's the Mass, in a general sort of outline. Some of the things that I've mentioned don't occur in all Masses. The 'Gloria,' for example, is omitted during the Passiontide. Some things that I have mentioned don't occur in other Masses. In a Solemn High Mass you have the blessing of the incense and the incensing of the altar. But in general this whole speech of mine has been a drama outline of the Mass.

"It's the most powerful prayer that has ever been instituted, this Mass. It's the most significant act that is performed in the world today. Why, if the Mass had never been instituted, and if you heard tomorrow that Christ was to return for one day to be offered upon an altar in repetition of Calvary, I think you'd walk miles to be present at that Sacrifice. But you don't have to do that. The Mass goes on every day, every hour of the day somewhere.

The Mystical Body.

"It's the Mass that matters—and that's more than a cliché."

"And it's because the Mass is so important that even pious prayer books and your own prayers—except, of course, your prayers before and after Communion—seem somehow out of place at that time. Everything but the liturgical prayers fall short of the Mass, and it's not quite good sense to accept substitutes."

Ted paused.

"You need a drink after that speech," suggested Ross, for lack of something more appropriate to say.

"I'm still not breaking my fast. But let me wind up my little lecture, since I've already gone this far," said Ted.

"You know, of course, that the Church just now is witnessing a tremendous revival of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. That dynamic doctrine of the Christian religion is based upon the fact that Christ is the head of a real body, a living body, the Church, of which we are the members—the arms and the legs. Now, one of the figures that Christ used when He was speaking of this doctrine was, 'I am the vine; you the branches.' It's obvious, of course, that this means that we, the members of the Mystical Body, receive our life through Christ.

Corporate Action.

"In Baptism we are all made members of that Body, and as a consequence we are made sharers in the supernatural life of Christ. We become His brothers, the heirs to His Kingdom. And the best way we have of renewing that supernatural life and increasing it is through the Holy Eucharist.

"Doesn't it follow then that we really ought to assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass and to receive Communion as frequently as possible?"

"But there's more than that in this doctrine. We must frequently assist at the corporate devotions of the Church, for the very essence of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ implies and even demands a corporateness of action. We are all members of Christ, and therefore we are all members one of another. And the greatest act of corporate worship is the Mass.

"Remember that word corporate. It isn't enough to go to church, to sit through a Mass, and then to go home. We have to co-operate with one another if the worship is to be truly corporate. And the way to do that is to join the priest and the other members of the congregation in the prayers of the Sacrifice, the prayers of the Mass."

Italics.

"All of which," interposed Ross, "comes back to the missal. And I still don't know how to use the book."

"If I've convinced you that you should use one," said Ted, "the rest is easy. Look." He opened the missal at a page that was marked by one of the ribbon bookmarks. "At this point the common of the Mass begins. In this particular missal the prayers are printed both in Latin and in English, the Latin in the left-hand column and the English in the right-hand column. You can follow the prayers in English or in Latin. Some missals have only the English; others have only the Latin. You can take your choice.

"The common of the Mass follows in the order in which it is printed here. You'll notice that preceding some of the prayers there is a small-type italic paragraph. Those paragraphs explain the actions of the priest at that particular time, or the liturgical season when that prayer is said. If you'll follow just the actions of the priest once or twice with the missal, you'll soon be able to recognise, just by watching him, what part of the Mass the priest is praying at any given time. You'll have to know that in order to have an idea of the entire movement of the Mass.

First Steps.

"You won't have any trouble in following the common of the Mass with a missal. The only trouble—if you have any at all—will come in following the proper. That section is printed farther back here in the book." And Ted opened the missal at another page that was marked with a book ribbon. "This is the proper for the Mass of to-morrow," he continued. "You can see that there are very few prayers in the proper: the Introit, the Collects, the Epistle, the Gradual, sometimes a tract, sometimes an alleluia, the Gospel, the Offertory, the secrets, the Communion, and the post-Communions. When you're following the Mass and you come to the Introit, let's say, you turn to the proper and read the Introit. Then you turn back to the common and continue with the ordinary of the Mass."

"Run through the thing once or twice, and you'll find that it's easy enough. Most priests pray the Mass slowly enough to enable you to follow with your missal without any difficulty at all.

The first few times you use a missal you may have to follow the Mass very slowly, and maybe you won't be able to read all of the prayers and still keep up with the priest. But if you've observed the actions of the priest, you'll know at just what part of the Mass he is, and you can skip and catch up with him again. After a while you'll find that you can follow without any difficulty, and you won't have to skip any of the prayers.

Dismissal.

"Some missals are arranged only for use on Sundays. This missal happens to be a daily missal. That means that the proper of all feasts is included here. If you go to daily Mass and want to follow the Mass with a missal, all that you have to do is get the order of Masses. You can get it from certain calendars or from the 'Ordo,' which is published by the diocesan chancery office. The whole thing is really very simple.

"You could have a priest show you how to use the missal if I haven't made it quite clear, or, if you want to, you can

get a missal and bring it over some evening. Lou and I have been using the missal so long now that we give instructions in our sleep."

"And speaking of sleep," interposed Lou, "much as she hates to interfere with the education of the Rockford lad, little Lou begs to announce that she's tired and wishes her company would go home."

"Ross," said Joan, "see what you've done. You're having us chased out of the house."

"Mea culpa—which proves that I do know something about the Confiteor."

"Quit showing off your talent, and let's get going."

The four arose and began that earnest babble of conversation that marks the end of an evening. Finally, Joan and Ross were at the door.

And Conclusion.

"Good-night," said Ross. "And thanks for the instruction, Ted."

"Good-night, and thanks for listening to me."

Joan and Ross waved a last goodnight and got into their car.

"Ah . . . Joan," said Ross, tentatively. "Yes?"

"What Mass are you going to in the morning?"

"Nine-thirty."

"I'll come by and pick you up at a quarter after. Okeh?"

Joan looked at him for a moment as if she were about to say something. But she evidently decided against it, for she merely mm-m-ed an assent.

"Nice people, the Drapers," said Ross.

"Very nice."
