

# WHY NOT BE A PRIEST?

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## OUR LORD IS WAITING

Although the sky with God's handwriting upon it, the trees and flowers, rivers and lakes, the fields laden with the gifts of God—although these things are sufficient to keep the thought of Our Lord before you, still it is necessary, gentle reader, from time to time for you to enter into the quiet seclusion of your heart, to turn aside from the cares of everyday life, from the noisy bustle of the world, and to consider how you stand in the great business of salvation.

We read in Holy Scripture how "Jesus therefore being weary with His journey, sat thus on the well" (John iv, 6). He needed rest, it is true, because, like us, He felt the broiling heat and the dusty road. He was subject to human infirmities, human hardships. So He sat beside the well, awaiting the return of His Apostles; and, as He looked down at the water below, He must have longed in His thirst for a draught of that element which He had created.

True, He was awaiting the arrival of His Apostles. But more anxiously was He awaiting someone else. It was ever His yearning to extirpate vice and sin from among men. It was ever His wish that the reign of hell and darkness should cease, and that this world should bring forth fruits of righteousness. And so it was that He forgot both thirst and fatigue in His desire to convert the Samaritan woman whose arrival He was awaiting.

Our Blessed Lord is still waiting, gentle reader. He is thirsting more feverishly for souls than He thirsted on that memorable day for water. Think of those shipwrecked mariners who have died with tongue, lips, and mouth parched and dried from want of moisture! This, their physical thirst, when compared with Our Lord's thirst for souls, is as the drop put alongside the ocean. This thirst for souls came down from heaven with Him; it lived with Him; it ascended with Him into Heaven.

Are you doing anything, gentle reader, to slake His thirst for souls? Are you not more cruel than the Jews if, beholding Him languishing in His burning thirst for souls, you refuse Him the refreshment He requires of you?

He is speaking to you through the mouth of the Hierarchy. Our Bishops are like lonely shepherds in the wilderness, crying out for more shepherds to come and care for the sick lambs of the flock; to carry them to the sheepfold of the Holy Church of God, of Him Who once sat weary beside the well.

## GOD SHOULD COME FIRST

Are you, kind reader, going through life without a definite aim or purpose? Are you led hither and thither by the impulses of every moment?

Perhaps you are consumed with anxiety and trouble, endlessly worrying about the affairs of this life, about health and pleasure, about getting on in the world, about money-making, and a thousand other things, with little or no concern about the one great thing of importance— namely, the love of God.

See how men plan and look ahead when they are in quest of some mountain clime or seaside air where they are anxious to spend a few fleeting days in search of rest and health. Minute enquiries are made; every particular feature is closely scrutinized; and all this for a benefit which is often uncertain and at all times transitory.

The things of real importance cannot be seen, felt, nor touched. We are inclined not to pay any attention to them. The world, the flesh and the devil are dragging us away from all thought of them.

Cherish whatever plans or just ambitions you will, surely God should come first! Nothing outside of Him should attract us. He should have no rival in our affections. He should be our first thought in the morning, our last at night. The things of heaven are to be preferred to all others. Love of God is the richest treasure the heart of man can hold. A holy life, a pure mind, a sinless conscience are things divinely beautiful and ever to be cherished.

Do you ever realize the power of love for Our Lord? It was love for Him which raised the confessors and virgins of the Church to such heights of virtue. It is love for Him which keeps our Catholic people pure, holy and undefiled, cheerful and resigned in a world of poverty— in a world which tempts them with the chance of material betterment if they will only forsake the faith.

How happy, then, we can be, and how miserable! If we love Him, He will lead us along the way to heaven; He will

strengthen us against temptation; will raise us up with loving forgiveness if we fall, and we shall die in His arms and be at rest for ever and ever.

### AGENTS OF OUR LORD

Did it ever occur to you, kind reader, that everything you have belongs to God? Your energy, your mentality, all that you hold and produce—all belongs to Him. You should live, then, possessing the things of earth as if you did not possess them, using them in so far as they help you to God.

Are you, first of all, a credit to your religion? Nothing advances so much Our Lord's interests as a holy life: nothing is so injurious to Him as a life of sin. Those outside the Church, and even many within the fold, may care little for God. They may make no attempts to please Him, but they are severe critics of those who profess to obey God's commands.

You are a member of the Church militant; you are in the fighting line of Our Lord's army. Are you endeavouring to make a better world around you—a world in which everyone may have his share of happiness? Or are you going through life like a shadow, darkening the lives of others? Are you of use to no one, soon to be regretted by no one, to be forgotten as soon as the tomb swallows what is perishable?

From the worldly viewpoint, he is most useful who makes two blades of grass grow where but one grew before, who increases production, discovers outlet for capital, provides more employment, makes new inventions.

To what end were Our Lord's actions directed? To the salvation of mankind, to His Father's business. In the stable at Bethlehem, in the holy house of Nazareth, in His journeyings to and fro, it was to do His Father's business.

Are you, gentle reader, doing Our Lord's business? "Why stand you here all the day idle?" asked the householder in the parable of those whom he met in the market-place.

Are you standing all the day idle? The night cometh when no man can work. You should be about Our Lord's business. For this, and this only, do you exist. For this, and this only, has God given you the precious gift of life—a gift which is awful, too, because you can make your life or mar it.

### THE HARVEST IS GREAT

Did it ever occur to you that we are all children of the same Heavenly Father, members of the same great family; and although accident of wealth and social standing may separate us, yet the common tie of brotherhood joins us together, children of the one Great Father?

Are you indifferent to the fate of the race that God loved so much that He died for it? Wherever we go, in whatever circle we move, we find ample opportunity for the exercise of Christian duties. The words we utter, the deeds we do, either help or harm souls dear to the Sacred Heart.

All the nations are to be gathered into the fold, a countless multitude—all tribes and tongues, human beings of every age, men and women of every social rank. All should find a place in our heart, no matter what creed, race or colour.

"Send me half a million priests," writes a missionary from India, "and I promise to find them abundant work at once."

Not counting the so-called Christians of the world, there are nearly one thousand million pagans (1,000,000,000) on the face of the globe. Were they to stand shoulder to shoulder, they would form a line four hundred thousand miles (400,000) long. For all of these Our Lord died. Willingly would many of them listen to God's holy word.

We have to protect the honour of Our Lord, of Our Lady, of the Catholic Church, in the midst of an unbelieving, wicked world. We should raise the faltering, strengthen the weak, lead back the prodigals who "live riotously and herd with swine"—lead them to the light and love of their Father's home.

There are families where religion is dead; houses where God's enemies are welcome, but He is not; where the sanctity of the marriage tie is profaned; where vice reigns instead of virtue; where children are brought up as if there were no world but this; where all that is good and holy is laughed to scorn.

Walk down our busy streets; look into crowded assemblies; listen to the conversation of those you meet in train or tram. God might be non-existent for all you hear of Him.

You should have recourse to Our Lord and ask Him to teach you the value of souls, to teach you to grow in love for them day by day. Ask Him to help you to set hearts on fire with zeal for Him; and, if you do, then serene and lovely peace will reign within your bosom, peace so deep that nothing could destroy it—the peace of God, the peace of an untroubled conscience, the peace which Our Lord wished to His disciples when He said: "Peace be to you!"

#### VALUE OF A SOUL

How comes it that each and every one of us is an object of abiding interest to God, to His saints, to His angels? Because we, each of us, have an immortal soul which can never die; a soul whose history will never have "Finis" written to it.

Let us consider the beauty of a soul. We must measure its value by the price God has put upon it. It was created by God. When defaced and blurred by sin, the Blood of Our Lord restored its beauty. Stand beneath the Cross and see the most innocent One that ever lived suffering the punishment of the most abandoned and incorrigible criminals. Again, see the agonized Mother, in speechless, nameless grief, embracing the lifeless body, looking with the glance of love at those glazed eyes which do not see, at those pressed lips which may not part in speech.

On behalf of the soul the Sacraments were instituted, and also the Church. On it Our Blessed Lord lavished His mercies and His graces.

As you walk along the street you may meet many with whom you are acquainted, and others, too, who are strangers to you. Think of the crowds to be met at a football match or at patriotic gatherings! Did it ever occur to you, gentle reader, that all these have souls which will live for ever? Skim over the pages of history; think of the millions who have died; think of the multitudes who were the victims of God's righteous indignation; think of those whose lives have been handed down to us as a warning. All these, kind reader, are living in the next world.

We must, must live on; and if we could raise the veil and look forward a million years into the future, we would see ourselves living still.

Are you doing anything to benefit the souls of those you see around you? Are you helping them in the matter of their salvation, and thus enabling them to enjoy the blessed company of Our Lord and His saints for ever and for ever?

#### SIN TO BE COMBATED

There are hideous spots on the fair brow of every boasting city. This may be within the sweep of your eye, next door, perhaps, to your own home.

We brush elbows with people who say that this world is all, and that man had better make the best of it.

Godless! What an awful expression! Without happiness, without peace! How gloomy, how hopeless, that soul which, in the hour of misfortune, does not know God!

If we but look into the faces and into the lives of many around us, we can see the warning written. He has the sore heart who lives only to indulge his own wicked inclinations. It is not God's martyr, standing calm amid the flames, that is racked with bitterness and fear; but it is the devil's martyr, who has made his own body and soul a curse to himself and a curse to the whole world about him.

"No ear can hear, no tongue can tell, The tortures of that inward hell."

Are you doing anything to lead these souls to the heights to which they are destined? If they are lost, then, century after century, aeon after aeon, through countless ages they will be confined to the place of torment.

Surely you who wear the badge of the Sacred Heart of Him to Whom a cry of pity was never addressed in vain can bring to these sufferers Our Lord's glad tidings of peace, can pour oil and balm into their gaping wounds, can scatter among them the treasures of His light and love!

#### THE PRIEST, ANOTHER CHRIST

Our Lord's mission upon earth was one of peace. All through His weary wanderings on the hillside, on the mountain top, from the fisherman's boat, in the temple, by the wayside, by the shore of lake and sea, in the homes of the poor, in the dwellings of the rich, He went about bringing the glad tidings of peace.

Wherever He moved a mystic influence went forth from Him, softening, subduing, attracting all those who came in

contact with Him. There was no human sorrow but had an echo in His compassionate heart. The grave of Lazarus witnessed His tears; the home of Martha and Mary His consolation. Thousands followed Him, eager to gaze upon His face, anxious to hear His voice, happy with the happiness of heaven if some word were addressed to them. Those upon whom His sacred hands rested felt themselves thrill under His hallowed touch.

When Our Lord ascended into heaven He withdrew His visible Presence from earth, but not His power. True, unlike the Apostles, we do not hear His voice, nor do we witness His hands raised to bless the sick, to free the soul from the chains of sin. His influence, however, did not cease with His death, for there is someone to whom He delegated His power; there is one to take His place, and that one is the priest.

Those outside the Catholic Church fail to understand our conception of a priest. Sometimes they attribute to ignorance, superstition, or enslaving fear the reverential respect which is everywhere accorded to the clergy by our Catholic people.

To those outside the Catholic Church the priest is ever a puzzle, a mystery; but to Catholics, the priest is Our Lord's representative, the minister of the Sacraments, the dispenser of the manifold graces of God. If Our Lord were to come upon earth in person to administer the Sacrament of Penance, He would say what the priest also says, "Ego te absolvo" ("I absolve thee"), but His sacred words would be no more effective than those of the priest in the neighbouring confessional. Because when the priest is saying Holy Mass, hearing confessions, standing by the bedside of the dying and applying the Holy Oils, the words and acts of a man like ourselves are heard and seen, but it is the Man Who is God Who gives them force and power. In the person of His priests, Our Lord goes about saving and healing. To sum it up in one phrase, the priest is another Christ—Alter Christus.

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (John xx, 21), Jesus said to His Apostles. These self-same words are as clearly spoken to every priest going forth on his mission as to those who first heard them from Our Saviour's sacred lips.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy," the Angel said to the shepherds when Our Saviour was born. And so there is brought to the world good tidings of great joy on the day of the priest's ordination, because he is to take the place of Our Lord. "Come, follow Me," Our Lord says; and from the ranks of men arises an apostle to bear His Name and His Gospel to strange lands and peoples.

#### DISPENSER OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

The Catholic priest is not merely a good man who is engaged in the preaching of the Divine Word. He is more than that. He is what St. Paul calls the dispenser of the mysteries of God; and to us Catholics there is always divinity hedging him around.

What graces and blessings does not the priest bring to his people! He takes the child from the mother's arms and sanctifies it in the waters of Baptism; and he receives, through godfather and godmother, its solemn renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Our Lady brought forth Our Lord in the stable at Bethlehem. At the priest's bidding He descends upon the altar. "For every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb. v. 1). The priest personates Our Lord, and does the very thing the Master did at His Last Supper, and what He did after another manner next day upon the Cross.

In (John ii., 24) we read that "Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men." Yet He unreservedly trusts Himself to the priest as to another Joseph, for the priest is the custodian of the Blessed Eucharist; he holds the key of the Tabernacle wherein is stored the Bread of Life; he raises the Blessed Sacrament aloft in benediction; he carries Our Lord to the bedside of the sick and dying.

The confessional is a haven to which the storm-tossed, the sin-stained, turn for pardon and pity. It is, perhaps, Saturday night during a mission. The local Catholic church is partly in darkness. In the sacred building all is silent except near the confessional, where the soft murmuring of voices is heard. Now and again the gentle sound of a footfall breaks upon the ear, as someone enters or leaves the tribunal of penance. Among the crowd of kneeling figures is one who for years has committed sins of the blackest dye. His soul, so precious in the sight of God, is covered with a moral leprosy. He has found in iniquity nothing but bitterness of spirit, and now he has come to make everything

right with his God and Master. With difficulty he drags himself into the confessional. True, he tells his troubles to a human being, but that human being has a divine compassion. The priest's heart is full of joy, because a sinner has found grace. God's representative speaks no harsh words, but gently and with consideration he ministers to the soul diseased. Some few words of absolution are pronounced, and straightaway the sinner who has been dead spiritually, casts off the mantle of iniquity, throws aside the robe of death. His heart is flooded with a divine joy; he feels an unspeakable relief, because he is regenerated, he is free.

There are those youths and maidens upon whose plighted troth the benediction of the Church is invoked in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, to enable them to bear each other's burdens.

Our priests breathe words of consolation, patience, and hope to the sick and the dying.

These are no fairy tales, but wonders which take place every day in our midst.

#### OUR PRIESTS, FRIENDS OF HUMANITY

How noble the office of the priest! How grand his vocation! No eulogies are high enough for those whose days are spent in patient, wearying toil for the good of souls.

Our priests bring comfort, encouragement, contentment, guidance. Theirs are services which cannot be estimated in money; they do not figure in the statistics of the country's wealth. Yet they are more profitable to their country by their ministry than they would be by commercial, military, or political services.

Surely, there is no body of men whom our Catholic people can trust so unreservedly, even in temporal affairs, as our priests! No body of men who, for the most part, are so disinterested, so educated, so prudent, so worthy of confidence as our priests, those men who are in daily, affectionate contact with their flocks!

In the midst of the throng of sinful men whose deeds are for ever crying to heaven for vengeance, our priests send forth their holy prayers; they hold back the punishments that are about to descend, and they bring, instead, God's blessings.

Our priests train up souls to fit them for heaven. They are guardian angels ever at our side to breathe warnings into our ears, to protect us from evil, to lead us to God. They warn us not to be led away by false teachers, even if they are in the guise of angels of light. In the schools they instruct little ones, and unfold to their tender minds the beautiful story of Our Lord's love for souls! Glorious that message which they communicate from the pulpit! Momentous those themes which they discuss Sunday after Sunday!

At one time we behold our priests administering in a stately cathedral in the midst of a gorgeous throng; at another time, in a humble cottage surrounded by misery, plague or death. It is all the same whether their call leads to houses of affluence or to the districts of pestilence shunned by men.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy," the Angel said to the shepherds. Who bring the same glad tidings to souls just as hungry for Christ as were the shepherds of old, if not the priests? They take the bitterness out of poverty; their visits produce smiles on the faces of the weary and the wretched; they light up the fires of hope in the eyes of those sunken in disappointment and poverty. They attenuate the horrors of war; visit the bloodstained battlefield; brighten the gloomy dungeon.

Nowhere in the world are there such champions of righteousness as the priests. None are more eloquent than the priests on behalf of the world's spiritual and temporal welfare. They realize that thorough moral training must go hand in hand with mental development, not only in the upbuilding of the true Christian, but also as the best means of safeguarding the interests of our country, since honesty and obedience form the strongest pillars in the temple of liberty.

Our priests do not limit their work to their own native country. They go to foreign cities and alien people, and teach salvation in Our Lord's name. They bravely face all manner of trials and hardships. They preach to kings and peoples as long as life is left in them. They take up the banner of the Cross, and carry it on until it is finally set in triumph above the ruins of the temples of false gods.

#### THE WORLD WITHOUT PRIESTS

Did it ever occur to you, gentle reader, that, without the priesthood, the world, spiritually, would be a wilderness,

for there would be no longer those streams of grace that water the garden of God?

Without the priesthood the Catholic Church, now alive with hymns of praise and sacrifice, would be like a city of the dead. "I shall strike the shepherd, and the flock shall be scattered."

In our churches we breathe the air of the presence of Our Lord. We are continually reminded of Him, because He is the guest of our Tabernacle. We kneel, even as Mary did, at His feet. Perhaps we feel our hearts aglow almost as the disciples of Emmaus,, Our faith is enlightened and quickened in the Catholic Church owing to the noiseless, mysterious, but ever-active influence of the sacramental presence of Christ.

Without the priesthood we would be deprived of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is the manna of the soul. As we pass through the wilderness of this world on our way to the heavenly city, we are to be fed with the Bread from heaven. It contains the Author of life. Incomparably is it the greatest of the Sacraments. It is a sovereign remedy against evil. It heals the wounds left by sin in the soul; it weakens our strong inclination to evil. Bread is the staff of life, and all that ordinary bread does for the body, the Living Bread of the Eucharist does for the soul.

Our footsteps may falter climbing the hill of perfection. We may grow weary travelling the way of virtue. Doubts may assail our faith.- Once dormant passions may be lashed into fury. The enraged billows or the sea of temptation may threaten to engulf the frail barque of our lives. There is one to whom we may then turn, and pour into his ear the tale of our woes, and that one is the priest.

The priest is the friend in the hour of death. There is one thing that most people dread, and it is the gloomy hour of death. When everything we have gathered and treasured seems dust in our groping hands, when every drop of our blood seems cold and heavy, when we feel ourselves sinking, then we need special help in that inevitable hour, at that lonesome passage from time to eternity. That special help comes from the priest.

Verily, we may liken the priesthood to a flower that sheds its sweet fragrance on the passing breezes which waft it to distant corners; to a tree whose branches are weighed down with ripe, mellow fruit ever ready for the hand that is stretched forth to partake of them; to a sunbeam that brings life to the lowest lichen in the most bidden nooks and crannies.

#### EVERY PARISH ITS OWN HISTORY

If you but look around, kind reader, you will see Catholic schools, Catholic churches, presbyteries, and Catholic orphanages. These all had to be built, to be kept in repair and supported. The priests are the ones upon whom the work chiefly devolved.

They travelled, perhaps, from door to door, from one end of the city to the other, in order to obtain the necessary funds to build these structures.

Under trying difficulties they laboured and persevered, in season and out of season, until they completed those magnificent buildings which are a lasting memory to their zeal and faith.

They realized in full measure the importance of the Catholic school. They fully understood that, without this necessary adjunct to the parish, no effective work could be done for God. It came home to them very forcibly that no general can carry on a campaign with the base of his supplies cut off.

They were grand old men, the Irish priests of the heroic days—the days of the long, tedious drives, the days of journeys on foot or horseback, over mountains, across rivers, through woods—the days of the sick calls hundreds of miles away, when the poor Irish immigrant got his death-stroke, in the falling earth of the "deep-cut" in railway building or of mine where he dug for gold.

When the Irish were almost crushed to death under the heel of a ruthless oppressor, when they were forced to come here to Australia to gain the livelihood which was denied them in their own country, their priests followed them, and with untiring zeal administered to their needs.

With this in mind, it is not difficult to understand the love for priests which found expression in the lines:—

*"Who in the winter's night*

*Soggarth Aroon,*

*When the cold blast did bite,*

*Soggarth Aroon,*

*Came to my cabin door,  
And on my earthen floor  
Knelt by me, sick and poor,  
Soggarth Aroon."*

Did it ever occur to you that all our priests were once boys, even as you now are? The things of earth were as real to them as they are to you. These who are now priests had, and still have, the same minds, the same desires of human sympathy, the same love for parents, for kindred, for home. The world held up its attractions to them, its pleasures, its ambitions, its free forgiveness of every sin that is not a violation of its own customs. Science held up its treasures to them. These things are all hollow, we grant; but, yet, how many resist their charm?

Are you anxious to follow in the footsteps of our holy priests? Are you living upon earth as a pilgrim in a far-off land, with no eyes for the sights around, no thought but for the goal of our pilgrimage, the everlasting home where so many of those who have gone before are awaiting our coming?

#### VICTORIES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There are victories of peace which are no less renowned than those of war. The Catholic Church has such victories, but where would she be except for her priests?

It is difficult to measure the value of Mother Church in the every-varying, ever-shifting scene of worldly affairs.

She brings peace instead of contention, light instead of darkness. Where chaos reigns, she introduces order. She brings to savages the priceless blessings of civilization. But where would she be except for her priests?

She gathers her children into her ample fold, into her motherly, all-embracing arms. She knows no difference of race, language or colour, time, place or social condition. She ignores all distinctions, and speaks to each and every one with the voice of God's representative. All are invited to her table where she breaks Bread for the soul hungering for God. Each and every one is sure to receive from her lips the self-same truths, be his abode among the snows and ices of the north or beneath the burning sun of the tropics. Language may divide nations, but with her it makes no difference.

The greatest moral power at work today in the community is the Catholic Church. She does work of the highest value in training the citizens of the future to take their place in the great battle-ground of life. But where would she be except for her priests?

In her firm defence of the code of Christian morals, in her undaunted upholding of the principles of authority, in her unwavering stand for Christian truths, Mother Church is peerless.

The strength of nations depends upon the purity, the integrity, the stability of the home. Who is guarding this, has ever guarded it? It is the voice of the Catholic Church that rings strong throughout the land in defence of the indissolubility of the marriage tie, denouncing the grave scandals of divorce which are blackening the pages of history.

The Catholic Church speaks in firm and steady accent. She stands up boldly before haughty kings and overbearing princes. She does not heed the demands of a fickle, changing world. She is devoid of human respect in fulfilling her divine mission. She is steadfast in the face of hostile Governments.

The Catholic Church comes fearlessly before the capitalist and the labourer, teaching each his duty—warning the employer not to regard the worker as a machine; warning the worker that he must give conscientious labour for fair wages.

Like a fountain on a crowded thoroughfare, Mother Church is ever bubbling forth, singing in her rich flow, dispensing joy with no shortening of her stream, no lessening of her bounty, but just giving, giving to everybody all the time.

#### VANITY OF VANITIES

What is it, kind reader, we seek in every conscious act? Is it not happiness? It is nothing else. One looks for it in the pleasures of life; another in the pursuit of earthly things; one in the pursuit of gain; another in intellectual pursuits.

You may be prompted to go where you will, to obey every impulse, to enjoy yourself to your heart's content; but, remember, if you live to gratify your passions, if you live a life of selfishness utterly unmindful of others, if you

pursue wealth, honours, distinctions for their own sake, then you are labouring in vain.

Look around on the world of today! There are many who give themselves up to a career of pleasure and amusement, dissipation and luxury. They act and talk as if life were one great holiday, without responsibility. Like butterflies, they spend their precious time fluttering from one pleasure to another. But are they happy? "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," is the heartbroken testimony of every soul that sells its birthright for the pottage of worldly pleasure.

Money cannot "minister to a mind diseased, nor pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, nor raze out the written troubles of the brain." Song, dances, wine, wassail may distract the mind for a short time, but they fail to fill the human heart with contentment. Never does the day close but countless human hearts are left broken. From the lips of every human being who knows the ways of the world comes the verdict of Solomon.

You have heard, doubtless, of that verdict of the wisest of men, Solomon. He was wealthy, learned, influential, with countless opportunities of indulging his every whim and fancy. Moreover, he did not refuse himself anything that he desired. "Vanity of vanity, and all is vanity," was the verdict uttered in the bitterness of his heart.

Alexander is another example. After conquering all the world that was known to him, he wept because there were no more worlds to subdue.

Are you, gentle reader, in pursuit of earthly pleasures? They are like bubbles which shimmer before the eye and seem all bright and beautiful until we extend our hand to catch them. Then they betray their true character, for our hand will enclose naught but a miserable drop of dirty water.

#### THE HAPPINESS OF THE PRIEST

The faithful priest does not know the weariness of spirit and the tedium of life which is so common among the devotees of pleasure. His heart is light and his spirit buoyant; his soul flooded with sunshine and happiness.

Good work, zeal for God, sacrifice—all this makes for joy; and the priest will look at the bright side of things.

The priest realizes that the true meaning of life as taught by Our Lord and proved by all who follow Him is this—viz., that God and His love alone can satisfy our souls, and that true life is to live loving Him.

There is happiness in the heart of the priest on the day of his ordination; greater still is his happiness when he says his first Holy Mass; but no words can express the joy that reigns supreme within his soul when there kneels at his feet in humble confession a poor sinner telling out his inmost trials and worries.

What more inspiring for the priest than to know that he brings the oil of gladness and the wine of joy to the hearts of his fellow-creatures! What more glorious than to be blessed by the heart-broken, the downtrodden; to have his name woven into the daily prayers of waifs and widows; to be a staff to the weak, a comfort to the disconsolate, a blessing to all!

#### DANGERS

Although his office is high, noble, sublime, angelic, still the priest is a frail mortal, subject to nature's weakness.

The dignity of the priesthood is one of responsibility. This is dinned into the ears of the young levite from the earliest days of college life till, kneeling at the Bishop's feet, he is clothed with the mantle of priesthood.

No soldier will give battle with the enemy until he is carefully drilled and exercised. No wrestler, swimmer, boxer will ever enter into contest with another without previous training.

So it is with the priest. To carry out his vocation he must retire from the world, because he whose call is to combat the spirit of the world, its doctrines, its maxims, must gain strength in seclusion from it. He must first realize in himself what he must bring home to others, that there are only two solemn realities in life—God and the soul.

There are long years of study under careful masters. Add to this habits of prayer, mortification, holy and enlightened direction under suitable guides, and you will gain some idea of the importance Mother Church sets upon the training of her future priests.

In lectures, in sermons, in works of devotion, from his confessor's lips, in texts written around the walls of the college, this one lesson is taught—viz., the value of the human soul, the responsibility of those to whom these souls are committed.

The day of ordination comes. The Litany of the Saints is chanted. The candidate is prostrate before the altar. He is clothed in the sacred vestments. The Bishop anoints the outstretched hands of the young levite, saying: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to consecrate and sanctify these hands, that whatever they bless may be blessed, and whatever they consecrate may be consecrated and made holy, in the Name of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen." The hallowed hands are wrapped in white linen cloth. Verily, they are hallowed, because they will hold Our Lord's Sacred Body; they will distribute the Blessed Eucharist to countless souls hungering for the Bread of Life. The young levite receives the power to offer Mass for the living and the dead, and to forgive sins in God's name. He is a priest for ever. No matter what calamity he may meet with in after life, it will not affect the spiritual character of the priesthood, stamped for ever on his soul.

There are pitfalls best known to the priest himself. He must put forth personal effort, personal energy. He must watch; he must pray. He must have a persevering consciousness of the value of life. Whether in prayer or under trial, his confidence must never weaken. He must never deserve the rebuke addressed to Peter: "Oh, ye of little faith!" He must trust God, trust Him always to the end; he must trust Him against appearances; trust Him when He seems silent, and the heavens appear as brass. With God by his side there will be nothing to fear. He can watch the storms of trouble arising, but the world will be powerless, sin powerless, mankind powerless. The frail barque of his destiny will be steered clear of shoals and rocks to the haven of eternal peace, for the Master will be in the boat of his life, just as He was with His disciples on the lake of Genesareth.

### QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY

To be a priest there is no need of a strong interior attraction for the sacerdotal state, no need for a special voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in the heart, inviting to the priesthood.

All that is required in a candidate that he may give himself to the priesthood are the two conditions of fitness and correct intention.

Though sin in the past is no obstacle to future ordination, yet to those at present in the habit of sin we should address the warning of Almighty God to Moses: "Come not nigh hither, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

To be a priest one need not be a genius. In this regard we cannot do better than quote the words of the eminent Cardinal Gibbons: "Experience shows that solid judgment with moderate attainments is far more serviceable to religion than brilliant talents combined with deficiency in practical taste. The occasions for the display of genius are rare; the opportunities for the exercise of mother-wit and discretion occur every hour." Bearing this in mind, the candidate should hesitate from turning from the service of God on the plea of not having sufficient ability to attain the knowledge expected from those in holy orders, and, in this juncture, we cannot, perhaps, do better than quote those lines:—

*"The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night"*

### "LORD, THAT I MAY SEE!"

A patriot soldier of old called upon the youth of his native land, and said: "I offer you nothing but rags and hunger and hardships, but let him who loves his country follow me." They crowded in multitudes to his standard.

In recent years the young men of the various nations went to war, amid the encouraging shouts of their fellow-citizens, with banners flying, with martial music thrilling their generous souls. They left home; severed the dearest ties that bind strong hearts; were deprived of the pleasures of life; underwent unaccustomed hardships.

Shall love of country speak in trumpet-blasts, and shall the call of our Captain, Christ, awake no echo in our hearts? Why not aspire, gentle reader, to be an officer in the army of Our Blessed Lord? Opportunities are at hand; encouragement is not lacking.

If men would only see how magnificent a thing it is to fight for Our Blessed Lord, to render Him service on this battlefield of good and evil! If they would see how glorious it is to stand beside their Divine Captain whilst the nations

rage against Him; to go forth with His blessing to the attack, and bring back the trophies of victory to His feet; to be faithful to Him in darkness and in light! If they knew Him as they ought, His goodness, His beauty, His loving kindness, their hearts would be set on fire with love of Him, and they would care for nothing else.

We read in the Gospel of St. Luke (Chapter 18) that on one occasion, as Our Lord drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging. He heard the sound of many voices and the tramping of many feet, and when he asked what all this meant he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

This poor man, who had lost his sight, had heard of the Wonder-worker that was going through the length and-breadth of the land, doing all things well, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb. And so it was that he cried out, saying: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The disciples would have him hold his peace, but he would not be rebuffed. He was ready to brave anything to get his heart's desire. And so he cried out much more: "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Our tender, merciful Lord listened to that prayer. He must have seen the agony of that soul. And there fell upon the ears of the blind man words sweeter than any music: "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" With a heart full of joy he burst forth into the prayer of his life, "Lord, that I may see!"

Our Lord is the same today, gentle reader, as He was on that occasion when the blind man cried to Him for mercy. You, too, gentle reader, should say to him "Lord, that I may see." You should ask Him to remove the scales from your spiritual eyes, that you may see the necessity of being about His business, of instructing the ignorant, of consoling the afflicted, of admonishing the godless; the necessity of ever sowing in their hearts the seeds of faith, hope and charity, of encouraging those seeds so to blossom that the world may be filled with the good odour of Christian virtues.

What joy in life yours will be, gentle reader, if you follow Our Lord in the Sacred Ministry! What happiness in death! But what happiness in heaven for ever and ever with Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

Nihil obstat:

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Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur:

✠ D. MANNIX,

Archiepiscopus Melbournensis.

1951