

THE ORDER OF PENANCE AND OF JOY

By Fr. Faustine, O.F.M.

V. DAILY MASS THE TERTIARY'S JOY

"And I will go in to the Altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth." (Ps. XLII.)

"Every Mass thou hearest," says Father Cochem, O.M.Cap., "perceptibly increases thy future felicity." As a person who mounts a stairs rises higher at each step, in like manner he who hears Mass ascends higher in grace. The higher he mounts, the nearer he comes to God; the more clearly he knows God, the more dearly does he love him, and the greater is his enjoyment of him. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is, truly, a source of spiritual joy and happiness, and therefore the holy Rule enjoins on all members of the Third Order according to their circumstances, the practice of attending holy Mass daily. "Those who can conveniently do so, should assist daily at Mass." (Chap. ii, 11.)

"By means of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass," says Father Spirago, S. J., "the fruits of the sacrifice of the Cross are applied to us in a most abundant measure; more particularly we obtain thereby forgiveness of sin, certitude that our prayers are heard, temporal blessings, and eternal rewards." In the Mass, Christ is our Advocate with the Father, the propitiation of our sins.

Our Lord once said to St. Mechtilde, "My condescension in the Mass is so great, that there is no sinner who assists at it, to whom I would not gladly grant forgiveness, if only he asks me for it." The Council of Trent declares that, by the Sacrifice of the Mass, we obtain the remission of the sins we daily commit. "If thou dost often hear Mass," says Father Cochem, "thou mayest hope that thy purgatory will be short and not severe, because by fre-

quently assisting devoutly at holy Mass, thou hast to a great extent expiated thy sins."

Consider how quickly the penitent thief, who witnessed the sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross, was admitted to heaven.

As the sacrifice of the Mass is more excellent than any other act of worship, so the prayers offered during Mass are far more efficacious than any others. St. Francis de Sales says that prayers offered in union with the divine Victim have an inexpressible power; favors can be obtained at the time of Mass, which can be obtained at no other. "Let him who is always complaining that he can not pray well," says Father Cochem, "go to Mass, that Christ may pray for him and instead of him, and supply what is wanting in his prayers."

Among the temporal blessings conferred on us during Mass, we may note these especially: God protects us from misfortune, assists us in our work, and blesses us in our temporal substance. Regarding the eternal rewards obtained at holy Mass, Father Spirago writes: "The Cross is the tree of life laden with celestial fruits, and by the Mass these fruits are given to us. In the sacrifice of the Mass we are made partakers of the merits of Christ; they are, it is true, applied to us by the other means of grace, but far less frequently and abundantly. At the time of Mass, God gives lavishly; from no other source do the streams of grace flow so copiously as from the altar. In the Mass, the Son of the Most High God comes down from the garden of paradise, bringing to us from thence celestial riches and treasures of infinite value."

If you reflect, dear Tertiaries, on

these many advantages derived from holy Mass, then must you surely be grateful to your holy Rule for thus encouraging you to a practice which is so productive of spiritual joy. Be diligent in hearing Mass, and you shall most certainly find in it all that you need, your joy here below and your eternal happiness in heaven.

Amid all the vicissitudes of life, you will find peace and support at the altar. "At one time, it will be Mount Calvary for us, where we may weep tears of sympathy for our Savior, and of grief for our sins and for those of others; at another time it will be Mount Thabor, where heavenly joy will be poured into our sorrowing hearts, and the tears will be wiped away from our eyes. Yes, at the altar we shall find that Mount of Beatitudes where we may learn the vanity of all earthly things, and the way to true and lasting pleasure" (Father Mueller, C. SS. R.). Persevere, therefore, as far as circumstances will permit, in the practice of attending holy Mass daily, and you will taste the sweetness experienced by the Royal Prophet, "How lovely are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!.....Better is one day in thy Courts above thousands. ...Blessed are they that dwell in thy House, O Lord: they shall praise thee forever and ever" (Ps. lxxxiii, 1, 11, 6.).

"The House of God, and the worship of God," writes Bishop Keppler, "are rich in sublime poetry, in heart-stirring joy. Here the Christian people find their heavenly home, their spiritual drama and art-exhibition." The Tertiary can, therefore, derive joy not only from holy Mass itself, but also from the many and beautiful ceremonies which accompany all the services of the Church. These approved ceremonies of the Church are justly called by Hugo de St. Victor "Sac-

raments of Devotion." Each and every one of these ceremonies has its own special meaning and joy. Throughout the ecclesiastical year, the life of the Christian is filled to overflowing with joys of the noblest kind. Every festive season has its own peculiar joys. Not even during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent is joy lacking. How full of joy is the message renewed each year by the Christmas angels, and again by the Easter Alleluja!

The more we strive to enter into the spirit of these ceremonies to understand and appreciate them, the greater will be our devotion and the deeper and more lasting our joy. The more we inquire into the countless species of plants and animals, and the more we study their wonderful construction and mode of life, the more shall we be filled with awe for their Creator, whose power and wisdom we recognize in them. Thus, too, the better we are informed about the manifold religious ceremonies and their signification, the more pleasure and profit shall we derive from them, and the more will they incite and foster in us reverence and devotion at the Holy Sacrifice.

Since, therefore, almighty God has vouchsafed, in His great love and mercy, to give us the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, let us frequently assist at it in order to partake of its countless blessings. Remember, dear Tertiaries, that there is no half hour so well spent, as the half hour devoted to the attendance at Mass. For the Mass is a mine of inexhaustible wealth, a bourn of grace, a perennial fountain of blessings. It is the sun that dissipates the clouds of the divine wrath and that restores serenity to the heavens. It is the miracle of miracles, the mystery of God's boundless love for man.