

## HOMILETICS

● D. Tither, C.S.S.R.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (DEC. 1)

CHRIST WANTS US TO LIVE HUMBLY

**"May we worthily prepare for the coming feast of your Redemption." (Post. Com.)**

Today we start our preparation for Christmas. We look into our lives and ask if we are measuring up to Christ's ambitions for us. Are we sharing His attitude to God—are we striving after His attitude to His Father and our neighbour—His humility?

These days, humility is not such a popular virtue. Many interpret humility as weakness. They will say that they have their rights and their privileges and they are not going to let people push them around. They reflect in greater or lesser degree the attitude of the leader of the Communist Party in Russia some years ago. He said: "Your gospel says if someone strikes you on the right cheek turn the other one and let him strike you there too. But I say that if anyone strikes my cheek I will strike him back on both cheeks." No one, we say, is going to push me around.

True Christ does not mean that in the practice of humility we should lose our self-respect; but He does want us to be humble. "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart". What does it mean to be humble? It means many things. But perhaps we could say in intelligible modern terms that it means selfless generosity, or giving of oneself for the advantage and convenience of another. It means considering that our time, our talents, our gifts, since they come from God, are to be used for the happiness and wellbeing of others.

This was so true of Jesus Christ. He did all that He did for the goodness and glory of God. His whole life was a service of God the Father. "I do always the things that please Him". "I do as the Father has commanded Me". At all times, though He was the most perfect of men, with unlimited capability, He used all that talent and all His energies were devoted

to the furtherance of the will of God. That is how Christ wants us to live—recognizing that we are but sons of God our Father and all we do ultimately depends on Him.

If you leaf through the Gospels you will notice how Jesus practiced true humility with reference to his fellow human beings. This great Person, this most perfect of men, this God-man, the Gospel tells us, spent His whole life with His brethren. A man so sensitive, so brilliant, did not hesitate to give all His energy and all His time to the poor people around Him. He was constantly claimed by the needs of others. When the need arose, He answered it. Year after year, to put oneself at the disposal of the people, without murmur, year after year, to let others make demands on ones time takes real humility. A doctor or professional man knows this, yet if what he does is good and beneficial to the people, he will never lose his respect. Rather the people will respect him more for it.

On one occasion, Our Lord had worked a great number of miracles and then left the town. He went out to a lonely place and prayed. The disciples followed Him out there and said: "The people are searching for You". But he was not interested. He had done His work and should pass on, without seeking a reward. The time He used was God's, the work He was able to do was for God, and the instruments He used, His power was from God. He sought nothing for Himself.

A great man comes to a barrio or to a town. By his kindness to the people, by the way he speaks to them, by the way he puts up with inconvenience, the people are able to judge his character. If he passes the test they will say he is 'simpatico'. This must have been a remark often passed of Jesus. Of course some great men affect this attitude, but to maintain it as all times as Jesus did, requires real virtue... requires real humility. He took the part of the oppressed—the people who could expect that no one would take their part. He took the part of the people who were being maltreated. He did not side with the powerful but with the powerless and defended them. He defended the children when the apostles were threatening to drive them away because surely they were clambering all over Him as children are wont to do and causing Him considerable inconvenience. "Suffer the little children to come to Me".

Then He defended sinners against the self-righteous. The Pharisees said to Him "Why do You eat with sinners?" And He replied. "They that are whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick". And so on.

These are very simple things, giving our glory to God, giving of our time to others, and taking the side of the oppressed and lonely... these are only simple things, but they are the stuff of which humility is made. To do these things for a few days is easy perhaps. To do it for a life-time requires real virtue.

A girl in the office will not readily defend her companion who is unpopular and who is the butt of criticism. The child without humility or the teenager without humility will not readily submit to the seeming inconsistencies of his parents unless he recognizes that all he has from his parents and after them, from God.

The family without humility that has been offended by another family will not readily approach that family and say that they would like the quarrel to be patched up, they would like a reconciliation. Would not this mean a lowering of their own respect, and lowering of their dignity? In the eyes of their enemies, indeed, but in the eyes of God, he could only recall the example of Jesus Christ himself and His utter selflessness and self-giving. Pray for humility; that prayer... Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine... should be often on our lips. Recall the memory and the words of Pope John XXIII. I would be regarded as a fool, I would not mind only to stand by what the Gospel declares, the unalterable teaching of Jesus Christ... He wants us to be gentle and humble... (*Journal of a Soul*)....

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (DEC. 8)

### IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

#### **"He has clothed me with garments of Salvation" (Intr.)**

At the Consecration of the Manila Cathedral, rebuilt after the War, a very colorful ceremony took place. A cardinal, the personal envoy of the Pope, surrounded by over 100 bishops from many lands, dedicated the Cathedral to Mary's Immaculate Conception. Fittingly, the day chosen was this very day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the Cathedral and the City of Manila, and of the whole Philippines. Long before this doctrine was officially defined, the Philippines was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Mother of God.

What does Immaculate Conception mean? It does not refer to the conception of our Lord. Jesus Christ had no earthly father. He was conceived by the direct action of the Holy Spirit. But that event is honored on 25th March, the Feast of the Incarnation, nine months before Christmas Day.

Our Lady was not conceived by a miracle. She was conceived and born like every one else. She had a father and a mother like all have. She was the fruit of the beautiful union of two canonized saints, St. Joachim, and St. Anne. The Immaculate Conception refers rather to her soul than her body.

Now to just say that Mary was preserved from original sin, in prevision of the merits of her Son, does not say everything, by any means. That is viewing the matter negatively. It was not just the absence of original sin that made her conception unique. It was the presence of the Divine Life. As a preparation for her being the Mother of God, she was given this Divine Life, not just before she was born, but from the very moment she was conceived, from the first instant of her existence.

In all history there was only one Son who existed before His Mother. Jesus Christ, as God, existed from eternity. Now, what son, having in his power to make his mother as beautiful as possible, would not do so? Jesus, the most dutiful of Sons, saw to it that His chosen mother would be in every way fitted for her role. Not only would she never, for an instant, be under the dominion of Satan, but she would be created pulsating with the Divine Life.

And, with every beat of her royal heart, in her complete receptiveness to the will of God, that Divine Life would grow and increase, until we find her, at the age of 16 or so, astonishing an archangel. The words "full of grace" mean being replete with divine life, so that there could be no more.

Mary was indeed, like everyone else, redeemed by her Son, Jesus Christ. But, whereas the redemption was applied to us after our birth, on the never-to-be-forgotten day of our baptism, with Mary it was applied before her existence began, at her conception. It was a fitting preparation for her dignity as chosen mother of the Divine Son, as the favorite Daughter of the Eternal Father, as the Beloved Spouse of the Holy Spirit. She was to be the mother of the Divine Word, she would provide the flesh in which He would become one of us, redeem us, be glorified and sit at God's side forever. If we ask why God gave her this unique favor, made this unique exception for her, the reason is this—the flesh in which God would become incarnate was to be derived entirely from her.

To hark back to the Consecration of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception—Our Lady, looking down from heaven must have been delighted. And yet, it's actually in the power of each one of us to give her far greater pleasure, more exquisite delight. We can, each of us, consecrate ourselves, wholly and entirely—our body, living temple of the Holy Spirit, a Sanctuary where the Holy Trinity may dwell, and our soul, to our Immaculate Mother. Dedicate ourselves, our soul with all its faculties, our body with all its members to Mary Most Pure.

Brethren, you know human nature well. You know the very best way to please a mother is to say that her child resembles her. Says "your baby is very like you," and a mother is thrilled no end. Mary, our Mother in heaven, is delighted when we, her children resemble her by living lives of purity. Purity, the virtue by which we live as dedicated children of God should, aware that our bodies and those of others deserve the deepest

reverence and respect. Aware that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, aware that Christ lives in our body, that our incorporation into Christ includes our body so that impurity would be an unthinkable profanation of Christ's body, aware that our body will arise glorious when Christ our Brother returns.

Ask her on this day, ask her everyday of our lives, for the spirit of reverence for our bodies and the bodies of others; ask her with confidence, through her immaculate conception, to make our bodies pure and our souls holy. Such a prayer, said in all sincerity, she will surely answer, as she has done and is doing for countless children of hers.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (DEC. 15)

CHRIST WANTS US TO LIVE JUSTLY

**"Make straight the way of the Lord." (Gospel)**

As Christmas approaches our preparation must grow more and more intense. Tomorrow the Aguinaldo Masses begin, and during these days, the picture of the tempestuous St. John the Baptist, calling for a change of heart, will be presented in each Mass. Making straight the way of the Lord involves two things—our relations with God and our relations with one another—qualities of the Bible sum up under the word Justice.

Justice is a thing we talk about much these days: just laws for the land, just decisions in the courts, just wage, just settlement of debts; just distribution of wealth.

The more we speak about it, the more elusive it becomes and the further we seem to get away from true justice. Perhaps this is because we do not know the meaning of true justice or understand properly where true justice is to begin. Justice is a virtue and it is a virtue that Christ wants us to practice. The politician, or the judge, or the school principal or the tax collector are not the only ones who must practice justice. We must *all* be just.

**How? We must act justly towards God.**

This is the example and teaching of Christ. Long before He came on earth the prophets foretold that His coming would bring an era of justice. Certainly He lived as a truly just man. Certainly He has given us an example of justice which if we would but strive to put it into practice, would solve difficulties and remove the lawlessness that we so vehemently deplore. He was a just man. This is the testimony even of pagans. The wife of Pilate spoke to her husband: "Have nothing to do with this just man". The centurion who witnessed his death on the Cross remarked: "Indeed this was

a just man". He was spoken of by the prophet: "I the Lord love justice. I hate robbery and wrong". (Is. 61)

This was first in relation to God. How did Christ set about bringing a reign of justice into this world? By setting forth clearly the rights of God and following them. He said of Himself: "I do always the things that please Him". He is the Lord and Creator of the Universe... as a man I am bound to follow Him. Many think that justice here on earth begins with men and ends with men. Not so! Unless we give God His honour and due we cannot hope to bring about a just society in which to lead lives of peace. How zealous Christ was for the honour and dignity of God. On the only record occasion that He was angry; He was moved to anger because of the sellers in the temple making of His father's house common market, He knotted a rope and drove them out headlong.

We have experience of the flagrant injustice shown to God in our own time. Consider the large number of people who take no interest in spiritual things, as if there were no God; the large number of people who refuse to honor God on Sunday even though His law expressly demands that. When we are tempted to complain that this is unjust and that is unjust, that the crying need of our country is justice, let us ask ourselves first how do we stand with God. So many treat Sunday as any other day, devoting it exclusively to profit making, the pursuit of their own satisfaction and pleasure.

A country is as good as its people. A country deserves the laws that it has. If we are inclined to complain, let us question ourselves and see whether what is not good here is due in large part to our lack of respect for God.

### **Christ wants us to live in justice with our fellow men**

A sense of justice should be present always in our dealing with our fellow men. Let us learn to respect them... let us learn to respect all men. Whether they are poor, or rich, or whether they are feeble, or young or old... let us learn to see that they are creatures of God, and loved by Him. Unless we have this sense of justice for them, we will not be prepared to recognize that they have rights.

We clamor for social justice, for the equal distribution of wealth, but we are not prepared to practice charity towards our neighbour. Only charity makes a programme of social justice realistic. We clamor for equal distribution of wealth but we heed little the teaching of the Gospel. Whatever we have left over of our means or property, we should give to others who need our help.

We clamor for justice in the courts, but as fathers of families who display favoritism in the home. We refuse to allow our children to follow their own will even though that will is clearly the best suited for them. We stand in the way of their marriage or their employment, simply because it is

not what we want... As children we want our laws to be just; we might even demonstrate towards this end, but we forget the duties that we owe our parents at home. We clamor for justice in the courts, but as employers, or as managers in the office, we are prepared to resort to favoritism or calumny to place a person in a certain position or to remove him for it.

We are disturbed when we read of so much poverty in the world, of so much suffering and undernourishment, of a so-called population explosion, of the gap between the rich and the poor... and this notwithstanding all the advances made in science and technology and education. This, my dear people, proves only one thing.

We are appalled at the lawlessness in our country, despite the money spent on police agencies and reforms and group therapy and any other programmes aimed at reform. All this proves one thing only. That science and technology has not learned, despite the progress that it has made, to cure men of greed, and inhumanity to men. Only the tender love of God, only a recognition of God as creator and men as God's creatures, only the example of Jesus Christ Who gave us an example of true justice, only a constant attempt by all men to put this into practice is going to solve our difficulties.

"Amen, amen I say to you, unless your justice exceed that of the Pharisees."  
(Mt. 5.20.)

## AGUINALDO MASSES

### The Mass, A Gift (Dec. 16)

At the beginning of the Aguinaldo Masses, let me congratulate you who have made the sacrifice of being here this morning, to join Christ Our Brother in offering the Mass to our Father in Heaven in preparation for Christmas.

You noticed that the readings in this Mass are about the preparation done by St. John the Baptist before Jesus began His Ministry. The readings everyday till Christmas will be about different aspects of this preparation.

Once, in a city in South America, a policeman noticed a woman seemingly gathering something on the roadside. The road was in a populated place, and many children were playing and running about. The woman was bending down, then straightening up, and the policeman noticed she was putting something into her bag. Suspecting something, the policeman approached her and asked: "What are you putting in that bag?" The woman was startled and she did not answer at once. Said the policeman: "Open the bag and show me." The woman smiled, opened the bag, and showed the officer pieces of broken glass: "I decided to collect these," she said "so the feet of the children playing here would not be hurt."

The removal of harmful things along the road done by that woman is like the preparing of Our Lord's path by St. John the Baptist. It is just what we should be doing during these nine days.

I hope all of you will return each morning at this time, and that you will bring others with you tomorrow. Even though it is a little cold, let us make the sacrifice of getting up early, so we can be with Christ here, offering His sacrifice to God. This is the best possible preparation for Christmas. If we really mean what we are saying by the action of joining Christ in the Mass, then our lives will be pleasing to God — there will be nothing in our lives that could prove an obstacle to Christ's living in our hearts, we will come to know Him so well that we will see things through His very eyes, as it were, loving the things He loves hating the things He hates.

The Mass is a gift, the very best gift, that we make to God our Father. Why do people give gifts? Surely, to express their love for another person. Our love for another can be expressed in words, of course, but it is more emphatic, more purposeful and complete, if along with our words, we give a gift. A man can say to his wife: "I love you," but, if he gives her a gift while saying it, she is all the more certain that he means what he says.

But a gift is more than a message of love. In some way the gift stands for the giver. In the marriage ceremony, when the newly-married give rings to one another they mean: "I give myself to you. This ring represents me, it signifies my intention of giving myself to you completely."

Sacrifice, the highest kind of worship, means these two things. It tells God that we want to love Him, and that we want to give ourselves to Him. What better preparation for Christmas than this — to mean our Mass!

We'll be thinking during these days of the gifts we will give our loved ones during Christmas. What a perversion of right order it would be if the only one we forgot were the One whose birthday Christmas Day is — our Savior Jesus Christ who was born on December 25, 1968 years ago. Let our thanksgiving — present for that birthday be this Novena of Masses.

### **The Mass, A Sacrificial Gift (Dec. 17)**

Suppose a couple of lovers have had a quarrel. Hasty words were spoken, hasty answers made, and unthinking anger led to a break. Suppose the young man, thinking it over, wants to make it up. He does not dare to visit her house and apologize in person. She is angry. She might refuse to see him or listen to him. What will he do? He buys the nicest box of candy and sends it to her. When she gets it she knows perfectly well what it means. He is saying by his gift: "I still love you. I'm sorry for losing my temper. Forgive me. Let's be reconciled."

What happens if she refuses the gift? She knows the gift stands for him, represents him. If she refuses it, he will know he is rejected and not forgiven. If she accepts it, it means she accepts him and forgives him. If she accepts the gift, the bond of love is restored as if there had been no break.



In practice, things won't stop there — hardly! Knowing he is accepted and forgiven, he comes to visit her. She receives him, thanks him for the gift and asks him to share it with her. She gives him what is now hers (because she accepted it) but was his (because he gave it.) The gift represented him, it became hers when she accepted it. There is a deep meaning in this — they have a common union expressed by the gift they are both eating — eating together connotes friendship. Even before Our Lord came and offered His perfect Sacrifice, the sacrifices God ordered His people to offer Him, ended with a community meal in which those present ate together what had been offered in Sacrifice. They became guests, as it were, at God's table. God's accepting the gift meant that friendship was restored or increased. But, the crowning act of the offers getting back the gift, which had become God's, as their own community meal, completed, perfected, rounded off the friendship. Men always felt that if they joined in eating a gift that had been accepted by God, they were again His friends.

It is exactly this way at Mass. We bring our desire for friendship with God. We bring our longing for union with God. We realize our dire need of a bond between us and our God. We will try our best to set up this bond by doing what men have always felt to be the normal, natural way of doing this — by offering God a sacrificial gift.

There has only ever been one perfect sacrificial gift to — God the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, true God — yes, but truly a man also — on the first Good Friday. That sacrifice achieved perfectly the reason for any offering of sacrifice — to bring about friendship between God and men. The Man who offered it was as truly human as you and I, but He was also God, so the sacrifice He offered of His own life — His own Body and Blood, to His Father, was of course, accepted.

So, on Calvary we have a gift of infinite value — the life of God became man, His death, freely accepted, made Him a victim. His life was a sacrifice of infinite value, giving infinite worship to His Father.

The night before He died, He made it quite clear that His death was to be a sacrifice. He had said long before: "This My Father loves in Me, that I am laying down My life to take it up again afterwards. No man can rob Me of it, I lay it down of My own accord. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." And now, at the first Mass, He made of the bread His Body "to be given for you" and of the wine His Blood — "to be shed for you and for many."

And God, infinitely pleased with what we offer at Mass — the same Body that was nailed to the Cross, the same Blood that poured from His wounds, gives Him back to us our food as a sign of our friendship, with God and with one another.

That is why we should communicate at every Mass — not just on Christmas Day and big feasts, but every time we are at Mass. It ratifies,

confirms, perfects our union with Christ, and with one another in Christ—the purpose of every sacrifice.

### The Mass, A Gift Entirely Pleasing To God (Dec. 18)

During the last War, there was a patrol of soldiers behind enemy lines. Suddenly, a hand grenade was thrown among them. An officer, seeing it, threw himself on it. It exploded, but he was the only one killed. Unless he had made that timely sacrifice they would all have been killed by the fragments. Those who owe their lives to his brave action, think of the words of our Lord: "Greater love that this no man has that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The greatest sacrifice ever took place on Mt. Calvary, where Jesus, as our Representative, offered His life to reconcile us with God. The Mass is the renewal of Calvary — it not only recalls what happened there, it makes it truly present here and now, and applies it to our souls, reminding us of its culmination, when Christ our Brother will come again to lead us Home to our Father.

Christ willingly laid down His life on the Cross. His last words were: "Father into Your hands, I commend my spirit." A man, *the* Man, the Representative of all men, offered His life as a sacrifice to God on that First Good Friday.

This Victim was accepted by God. Three times during the life of Jesus, the Heavens were opened and God Our Father said: "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." This Man pleases me, when I look at Him, I see all men, because He represents all. I accept His obedience till death, to make up for the disobedience of all the rest. I will take mankind back into my favor, because of this Man's sacrifice.

The sign of God's acceptance was the Resurrection of Christ. God raised Him up from the dead as a sign that His submission to death was completely pleasing to Him. The success of a sacrifice is its being accepted by God. God raised Christ, exalted Him, took Him up to Himself, and established Him as Son of God in power. It was in the person of Christ our Brother that union with God was first achieved.

But, because He is our Brother, His death and resurrection, recalled and represented at Mass, involves also the union with God of all of us, His brothers and sisters. That's why we come to Mass, to proclaim our oneness with Christ our Head, to secure the redemption He earned for us as our Brother.

Something very important that we must remember is this — He not only redeemed us — paid the price for our sinfulness and rejection of God; He also raised us up to live with His own risen, divine life. We were not only

freed from sin, we were made holy, brought into union with God, caught up into the very life of God "made sharers in the Divine nature," by reason of God's accepting His sacrifice, raising Him to His own right hand.

Everything was achieved by Christ's death and return to His Father. All that remains is for it to be applied to our lives. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself a Man, knew well man's need to offer sacrifice. He knew that the natural way of expressing worship was sacrifice. He would not have this natural need of ours frustrated. He left us the very same sacrifice—His own sacrifice of Himself, infinitely pleasing to God, to be our sacrifice.

That's what we are doing here every morning, as we gather round the Altar, and prepare for Christ's birthday anniversary. We recall all He did and suffered for love of us, especially His death and return to His Father; united most intimately with Him, we offer the reenactment of His sacrifice to God in perfect worship.

And God, infinitely pleased with the perfect offering of His Son, accepts the gift, and us too, in so far as we are striving to have Christ's attitude to God. To give us the grace and the strength to do that, He invites us into most intimate communion with Christ and with one another towards the end of Mass in the Sacred Banquet. He wishes to share with us His life, love and happiness. Let's not disappoint Him; let "No Mass without Communion," become our motto. Then we will share God's life, then will our union with Christ grow day by day.

### The Mass — Our Sacrifice (Dec. 19)

You heard of St. John of Arc. While still quite a young girl, she became the leader of the French Army and drove the conquering English out of her country. In gratitude to the little town of Domremy, from which she came, its citizens have never been asked to pay taxes. The sacrifice of Christ was much greater—it redeemed us all, without our deserving it, so that we are surer of salvation than ever.

We know, and please God we will come to realize more and more, that the Mass we're offering now, makes present once again the sacrifice of Christ. We do not repeat Calvary; it is not that the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension of the Savior happen all over again. They are made present here and now, and we, along with Christ, offer them again. He knew we would want to worship God perfectly, and He left us the means for doing so in the Mass.

We know there are differences between this sacrifice today and what happened on Calvary. We don't see His Blood flow from His Body—we don't see Him at all—we see the sign which indicates His Presence.

But there is another difference, and it is very important. On Good Friday in the year 33, Christ offered His sacrifice as He then was. Except

for His Mother and a few friends, He was alone. Now, in the year 1968, on the 4th day of the Aguinaldo Masses, He offers Himself, *as He is now*. That is to say, He is not alone, all of us who are baptized are united with Him in offering. It was with His physical body that He offered Himself on Calvary, it is with His Mystical Body that He sacrifices today. "And you are Christ's Body, members of it," says St. Paul.

We, all of us, (not just the priest who stands at the Altar, but everyone of us) are used by Christ. He offers the Mass through us. The whole Christ, Head and Members, offers the Mass. So, you are not just here, watching a sacrifice being offered by a Priest, as the visible representative of Christ, the Chief One offering Mass. It's not just being offered with your approval. No! you are the members of Christ, you are offering it with Him. You, the brothers and sisters of Christ, are not just spectators at His sacrifice, you are most intimately united with Him in His act of sacrificing.

For too long we've forgotten this. We've thought of the Mass as something the priest of the altar does for us, yes, on our behalf, yes but we regarded ourselves as prayerful spectators, and the sacrificing as the function of the priest and the priest alone.

You ask: Isn't Mass a sacrifice? Isn't sacrifice a priestly act? The answer is yes. But all who are truly baptized share in the priesthood of Christ. St. Peter, the first Pope, in his first Encyclical, tells us that the baptized laity are a chosen generation, royal priesthood. "You are now a holy priesthood, able to offer up that spiritual sacrifice which God accepts through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2.5.) And again: You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated people, whom God means to have for Himself. (1 Pet. 2.9)

And St. John, speaking on behalf of all Christians, says to Christ: "You have made us a kingdom unto our God, and priests."

What then, you'll ask is the need of an ordained priest? The answer is that only an ordained priest can *produce* a sacrifice, but once it's produced, all the baptized have a share in Christ priestly power to offer it."

We've noticed, now that we have the Mass in the vernacular, that the prayers of offering are always in the plural. The priest never says *I* offer, No, it's always *we* offer. He addresses us: "Pray brethren that *my* sacrifice and *yours* be acceptable to God." It's our sacrifice. We offer it

At our baptism, we became members of Christ, the Great High Priest, the one Mediator between God and man. Our highest dignity is our sharing in His Priesthood. Our greatest privilege is joining with Him in offering His Sacrifice — the Mass. How enthusiastic, how delighted we should be to do this, not just on these days before Christmas, but as often as we possibly can. Not just on Sundays, not merely when we're obliged to do so, but as frequently as our daily duties allow. Can we believe that we really offer the

Mass, that Christ wants us here, to use us as co-offerers, and find it in our hearts to be absent?

An early Council of the Church, exhorts everyone to be at Mass as often as possible "lest Christ be lacking in one of His members."

It's not just our prayers in Mass He wants, He wants our free loving gift of ourselves, our whole lives, all we do, all we suffer, united with His gift of Himself. Don't resist. Don't disappoint Him.

### **How We Should Participate In Mass (Dec. 20)**

There is a town in Marinduque called Boac. Every year during Holy Week, the citizens conduct a Passion Play, and people come from far and wide to see it. Only those born in Boac take part. One takes the part of Our Lord, others the Apostles, His Mother, and so on. But others have the part of the crowd, speaking and sometimes even shouting together.

Now, let us suppose you had gone to Boac to see this Passion Play. But on this occasion all the main parts were spoken by one actor and the parts of the crowd done by one small boy. Even if they spoke every word of the script, you would be disappointed. And suppose that the other people of Boac who had been given a part of the play just stay at the back, or maybe each one is just reading some book, taking no real notice and no part, saying absolutely nothing. Wouldn't you think it strange, wouldn't you be disappointed?

Something very like this happens when people take no part in Mass. The people of God, assembled by the Holy Spirit, come to join Christ, not in offering a Passion Play, but the real thing, the Passion itself. Anyone, even a pagan, may watch, but only the baptized have the right to take part. And what do they do? They have their assigned responses, but many are content to leave them to the altar boy. Instead of answering, they are looking around, or reading their own prayer books, as though the Church were a library. It is indeed good to read spiritual books but not at the time of Mass!

By reason of our baptism, all of us, have a share in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. This means that we have the right and the privilege, it is a real duty.

What we need is not just to change our way of acting, but our way of thinking. In the old days we either read something good, but not necessarily connected with the Mass, or prayed the Rosary because we felt we should be doing something. Now, we must change not just our way of acting, but our attitude. We must come to realize that we really share in the Priesthood of Christ, but we exercise the Priesthood by saying our proper parts at Mass and meaning what we say.

For instance, when at the beginning of Mass we ask Our Lord to have mercy on us, let us be convinced that it is to Christ our Brother that we are calling out, that He alone can help us, that He has commanded us to call on Him for help. Let it be a cry from the heart: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Then there are the greetings. The priest greets us, addresses us: The Lord be with you. Everybody is addressed, everybody should answer: And with your Spirit. These words are not addressed to the boy who happens to be serving the Mass, and he should not be the only one to answer. We are wished the greatest of all blessings, the closest possible union with Our Lord, how could we possibly ignore it?

And the Amens at the end of the prayers said in the name of all, especially at the end of the Canon — This Amen should be said with enthusiastic faith. In the early Church the Amen of the people used resound like thunder — let us not be of the number who whispered it or do not say it at all. To say Amen means that we agree completely with what is said and done, that we are wholeheartedly behind the prayer and action. Say your Amen as though you mean it. Make it sound as if you mean it.

Most important of all, offer yourselves, all you do, all you suffer, everything about you, along with Our Lord to God the Father. The ideal time to do this is at the Consecration when our gifts are transformed into the very gift of Christ Himself His immolated Body, His Blood poured out. Our miserable shabby offering is transformed along with the bread and wine, and seeing our willingness to try and be like Christ, God accepts us along with Him.

We have only 4 more mornings left before Christmas. Let's redouble our readiness to be one with Christ at the time of Mass. Christian till we meet again tomorrow to join Him once more as a sincere co-offerers of the Mass.

### **Prolonging The Mass (Dec. 21)**

Some years ago, a priest from Nueva Ecija, named Father Guilas, was dying. A brother priest visited him, and asked was he still able to offer Mass. "No more," said Father Guilas, and gently tapping his bed said, "This is my Mass." What he meant was: "Every time I offered the Mass, I renewed my desire that God's will be done in me always. This illness, this suffering is God's Will for me now, this is my Mass." There is nothing phony in the life of a Christian if his every action is a continuation of his offering of the Mass.

Everyday for the last six days we've been coming here to join Christ in His act of sacrifice. We declare, by our action of offering sacrifice, that we realize we belong to God and that we're giving ourselves to him, not just at this time, but all throughout the day, all through our life. If sacrifice

means anything, surely it means that we're living for God, and want to be one with Him, in Christ, all day long. These would be something quite unreal, something false and insincere about our offering sacrifice unless we wanted to be like Christ, with whom we offer the Mass.

At the end of Mass each morning you are told to go in peace, the Mass is ended. This means far more than a dismissal. It really means, "Go, you are entrusted with an assignment. Go, and live out the Mass. Prolong your Mass. Let everything you do, be much a dying to yourself and a rising with Christ as to be a fitting renewal of what offering Mass implies.

Our Lord referred over and over again to the fact that He had been sent, entrusted with an assignment. "I do the work of Him who sent me." (Jo 9.4). And He said to His disciples: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you. (Jo 20.21). We have the same work to do as that assigned Jesus Christ by His Father.

Our union with Christ, our identity with Him is intensified in every Mass. Every communion confirms our right to say: "I live, not I but Christ lives in me." We've offered ourselves to God along with Christ, we now carry out the consequences of that offering, overcoming our sinful inclinations putting up with trials. And we do this also in and with Christ.

At the Last Supper, the First Mass, He prayed for us this very intention. "Father," He prayed: "You've sent me into the world on your errand, and I've sent them into the world on my errand." (Jo 17.18) Yes, we are to bear Christ into the world, carrying His truth and His saving action to other men. Our dealings with God do not finish at the end of Mass, they are to continue over into our daily lives.

Maybe we feel that we would like to remain forever before the Altar. But, that's not what God wants. St. Peter on Mt. Tabor saw a glimpse of Our Lord's glory and would have liked to stay there always, not returning to the workaday world. But Jesus led him down from the mountain, telling him about the Cross. He tells us the same after Mass: "There is work to be done, there is suffering to be borne, you must live out your Mass."

It is not easy to prolong the Mass into our daily lives. We would prefer not to have to work or study. We are not attracted to self-denial. Yet, we must not live like others who have not shared in Mass or been united with Christ in Communion.

Some of us even fail to see the connection between the Mass and our lives. We try to live on two levels — a special level for Mass and prayers and another "practical" level for ordinary things. Now, we are Christians all the time, everything a Christian does is, or should be, done by Christ: everything in our lives is a thanksgiving for our Mass, a preparation for the next.

At times this calls for heroism. We may find our work boring and monotonous, our companions tiresome, even insincere. We'll be tempted maybe.

and find it difficult to be kind, honest and pure. But we must mean what we do at Mass, and rely on God's grace to keep us true to that offering.

Maybe someone tricks us, double-crosses us, betrays us. But in Mass we offered Christ as a Victim and joined ourselves with Him. If only we use these trials to live out our Mass, we feel the truth of His words that His yoke is sweet and his burden light. He'll allow no cross to come our way that could be bitter or heavy, if only we offer it along with him, as an extension or prolonging, a living-out of our Mass.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (DEC. 22)

### CHRIST WANTS US TO LIVE HONESTLY

**"Windings ways shall be made straight and rough roads made smooth."**

A group of friends were recently discussing an absent acquaintance whom everyone admired. They tried to analyse just what made him so truly likeable, just why everyone was so attracted to him. And then, one of them said: "He is just so truly genuine and sincere, there is absolutely nothing hollow or phony about him". All agreed that he had hit on it, their friend was a perfectly sincere man.

Higher praise could hardly be given than that a person is completely straightforward and utterly genuine. Our Lord told us: "If your eye be single, your whole body will be lightsome". He warned us not to have complicated motives, not to be phony, to have complete integrity. Sincerity is the quality most sought for by people of the present day. If they find Christians saying one thing but doing the opposite they decide there and then that if that's Christianity they have no use for it.

Christian integrity is not something we will learn out of books. Christian sincerity will unconsciously arise from a life of union with Christ. If we share and maintain His outlook and approach, we will be genuine, and our life be what it ought to be—a radiation of Christ, a reflection of His straightforward sincerity in all aspects of living.

To be practical—in regard to persons, ourselves first of all. Are we guilty of insincerity in our relations with God? If there be some line of contact that we know to be displeasing to God, but are determined *not* to give up? Are we perhaps even hypocrites, pretending to be what we are not? The one class of people with whom our Lord was most displeased were those who put an appearance of being good and holy while in reality they were anything but good and holy, those who lived by one standard while demanding another from everyone else. If we detect this vice in our heart, let us promise God to root it out. If for instance we find we have a sinful standard



in business and we want it not to appear in our relations with God, let's straighten that out—our relations with God cover *all* our life.

The same is true when others praise us. None of this humility-with-a-hook; none of this disclaiming qualities we have hoping to draw further compliments. Accept praise gracefully realizing that the qualities praised come from God and belong to Him, but be objective enough to know how much is true and how much is exaggerated in the praise others give us. No amount of praise makes us one bit better than all we are in the sight of God, and no amount of blame makes us worse. What we are in the sight of God, that we are and nothing more.

In our relations with others, are we sincere? Do we perhaps indulge in flattery, false exaggerated praise of those whose favor we seek? To praise beyond truth is not Christian.

If we saw others in the eyes of God, then we would realize that what makes for greatness in others is the degree in which they share the Divine life. Not incidental things like wealth of possession or any worldly consideration affects the esteem of a sincere Christian for others. The only degree to be looked up to is the degree of sharing in the Divine life. Mary, who attained the highest degree was called full of grace, full to repletion with the Divine life. Esteem others in proportion to their closeness to God.

The same is true about occupations. St. Paul points out that in the human body there are many members but not all had the same function. But, the various functions assigned to us by the will of God as members of Christ's body should not cause rivalry or division. "The eye does not say to the foot; I have no need of you". It does not matter what we do, it's how we do it that's important. If ever the tendency to jealousy were deliberately fostered in our lives, it would thwart the designs God has for us. Be glad that others have good qualities, be glad that God uses others to do His work.

An old doctor had a practice in a town in England. The town grew, and the work became too much for him. A young doctor arrived and hung out his shingle. And in time he became quite popular. The old doctor, sad to say, became jealous. Came a day when the young man was to perform an important operation on which his reputation would depend. The old man through jealousy, had him phoned several times during the night before the operation. The result was that the young doctor got hardly any sleep. He came to the operation tired. And the patient died on the table. God grant that we see the terrible consequences of jealousy.

Doing the will of God at all times and in all circumstances is the sum-total of holiness. Religion is a lot more than saying prayers or hearing mass at fixed times, and then living in a way that Christ would never approve. "Not every one who says to Me; Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven. "Our Lord told us that His blessed Mother, whom we have

so much in mind as Christmas comes near, was more blessed in fulfillment of God's will than even in being His mother.

So let us not live on too levels. Let us not try to have our relations with God in one sealed-off compartment and the rest of our lives in another. That of course is impossible, and would make our lives insincere, and make us phony.

There are only two days left before Christmas. Let us beg our Saviour to remove from our lives anything that is ungenueine or insincere.

### **Rounding Off The Sacrifice (Dec. 23)**

Our Lord told a story of a man who prepared a banquet and invited guests. But, at the time of the banquet, they were not interested. They refused to come, offering various alibis and excuses. The man then said: "The banquet is ready, but those invited were not worthy." And he sent his servants to invite everyone they met. He even sent them into the highways and hedges, telling them to compel people to come in. But those who despised the invitation were excluded from the festivities.

There is a lesson here for us. We give our gift to God during Mass. In the beginning\* it is just bread and wine, of little meaning and hardly any value. Christ makes it of infinite value at the Consecration by transforming it into Himself. We give meaning to it in the degree that we offer ourselves along with it. Together with Christ our Brother, we offer the gift, now rich in meaning and infinite in value, to God our Father in worship.

But, is that all? No! there is a return gift an exchange of gifts. (There has preceded an exchange of words — we first talking to God and then God talking to us in the first part of the Mass. Our words went to God, His words came back to us. We spoke, He replied.) And afterwards, there is a similar exchange of gifts.

Along with Christ, in Him and through Him, we offer the perfect gift to God. Our gift goes up to Him, and then His gifts come down to us. He prepares the banquet for us, and He earnestly invites us to take part. Holy Communion is integral to the Mass. Our sacrificial worship is somehow incomplete if we leave out Communion. We have not rounded out the Sacrifice, we have not had an exchange of gifts with God. Surely it is not natural not according to good manners and right conduct, if we refuse to accept God's return of our gift.

I'm not talking here of obligations, but only of what is right and seemly in our relations with God our Father. If you bring your earthly father a gift, say on his birthday, and he invites you to share it with him, could you possible refuse to do so? It would be downright undutiful to refuse and he

would rightly be disappointed. We'd never be guilty of such conduct towards our earthly father. Much less, should be so to God our Heavenly Father. All who have offered the gift should join in the banquet to which all are invited. In other word, all should join in the banquet to which all are invited. In other words, all should communicate at every Mass.

If we miss Communion, we fail to avail ourselves of the most precious grace, the most wonderful blessing of all. Can we really believe in our hearts that Christ is there, not as a reward for being good, but as an infinite divine remedy to stop us being bad and not communicate? Suppose I were to promise that each communicant tomorrow on the Vigil of Christmas would be given a 100 pesos! How the word would spread around the parish, how many would make a real effort to be here and at Communion. Now, it would be blasphemous to compare a hundred pesos or a thousand or a million pesos with the infinitely valuable grace of communion with Christ and with one another in Christ.

This is the ideal, this was the practice of the early Church — everyone who offers Mass should receive Holy Communion. If there are 500 at Mass, there should be 500 Communions. If there are only 499 communions, someone has spoiled the perfect rounding-off of the sacrifice. Someone has omitted his gift exchange with God.

I'm sure that the explanation of this is not indifference, not with good people like you who have been coming here every morning for the last 8 days. It is rather that you don't realize that Mass and Communion belong together, that Mass demands Communion. Maybe you think that Confession and Communion belong together, that Confession is necessary before Communion.

That, of course, is a big mistake. We don't need Confession for each Communion. We only need Confession if we have a mortal sin, if we've been so wicked that we deserve hell. But, if we've only venial sins, no matter how many, and no matter how long since our last confession, our privilege is Communion at every Mass. Communion, of itself, forgives venial sins.

Don't say: "Even though I've no mortal sin, I don't feel worthy." Look, no one is worthy, not even the blessed Mother. But God invites us, Christ wants us at Communion, so as to be less unworthy, so as not to be undernourished, or worst, to die of starvation. Let's heed this invitation, let's not have Him disappointed, let Communion at each mass round-off our gift exchange with God our loving Father.

### **Full Participation (Dec. 24)**

Tomorrow is Christmas Day. Many will attend Mass who have not done so far a long time. Let's give them good example. Sixty years ago, a young French writer, named Paul Claudel, attended Midnight Mass. He was not

the least interested in religion, but wanted to get atmosphere for a story he was writing. The crowded Church, the fervor of the people impressed him deeply. The way they sang and prayed together made him aware of the emptiness and the loneliness of a life where men are rivals rather than brothers. And when at Communion time, they rose as a body to receive back from God their Father the Gift they had offered, Claudel resolved to make a complete and thorough study of his religion. He did, and the next Christmas saw him there, not as an observer, not as an outsider, but making his first Holy Communion. Today, Claudel is one of the greatest living Catholic writers — thanks to the example of a Mass where people knew what community worship means.

If you visit this Church this afternoon, you will see many people occupied at various devotions. Some will be visiting the Blessed Sacrament, some praying the Rosary, some making the Way of the Cross, others near the Confessionals preparing for Confession or praying their penance. They will be busy with their private devotions as individuals. All good and proper, in the right time, and the right place.

But, once Mass starts, we are a Community. Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in a very special way in our gathering. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is not as individual that we are gathered at the time of Mass, but as a Body — the Body of Christ Himself. He Himself has laid down what we are to do at Mass, it would be a scandal if we were not willing to fit our activities into His plan. People who want to say their own prayers at Mass have not awareness of what being a Community means.

The first thing to do is to be here in good time. It is a real discourtesy to God and a distraction to others to come late. Think on what you are going to do — to offer a gift to God. The most important thing by far is to mean with all our hearts what we do and say at Mass, else we'll deserve the Savior's condemnation: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."

Then, once Mass begins, join enthusiastically in the Community singing — there is no better way to make us realize we *are* a community. And answer the responses in a good firm voice that comes from the heart — it's downright rude not to, if we only realized it. At the time of the readings and sermon, listen! Close your books, even your missals, and use those ears, opened at baptism, to listen. God is speaking to you, awaiting your response.

I surely don't need to tell you to stand, kneel, and sit with the community. Anyone, who would walk *paluhod* while the Gospel is being read, or kneel reading a Novena during the sermon has not the remotest idea of what Mass means. We're not protestants who believe in private judgment, who believe, behave, and worship exactly as they please, in their own way and not

in God's way. Let's worship in God's way, in Christ way, as a body, and we'll give good example.

The last thing I'll exhort you to, and not just for tomorrow but always, is to make Communion a part of your Mass. Any other conduct towards God our Father would be unnatural and ungrateful. Imagine the impact on those who have some share of faith left alive, who put an appearance at Mass at Christmas, if every real Catholic advanced to the Altar rail, come Communion time. If we should our union with one another in Christ symbolized and brought about by our communicating. "The one bread makes us one body, though we are many in number. The same bread is shared by all." (1 Cor. 10.17.)

This is what God our Father wants, this is what Christ our Brother asks of us, this is what the Holy Spirit, who binds us into a Community at Mass will bring about in us, if only we grow out of our wrong individualistic approach to Mass and Communion, and realize that this something we do as a Community.

### Christmas Day (Dec. 25)

It was evening when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem. There was no room for them at the inn, so they had to spend the night in a wayside shelter — a stable for beasts. There were actually beasts in it, we are told, but no better place could be found. There was the mystery of the ages to happen, there was Christ to be born.

Suddenly at midnight, without opening the sacred tabernacle of His Mother's Body Christ, true God, but truly also one of ourselves, came into His Mother's arms. There in the bleak coldness of that cave, she could look down on the Child in her arms and say: "My child and my God."

Outside, there rises and swells a heavenly harmony, the like of which the world had never heard. A choir of angels singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill." Shepherds watching their flock are startled. But the leader of the angels reassures them: "Do not be afraid. Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Savior... and this will be a sign to you—you will find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

No wonder the shepherds exclaimed: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this word which is comes to pass." Follow them there, see them kneeling and worshipping that Child, that Emmanuel — "God with us." No longer need He seem utterly other and distant, no longer need be unduly afraid of Him, from now on He is one of ourselves — a baby for whom we can feel nothing but love, an obedient youth who made His home a happy one, a man of

sorrows with whom we can sympathize, a human reflection of the love and kindness of God our Father.

There is only one Christian Feast, the Feast of Easter, summing up all that God did and His doing in sending His Son, to be born in Bethlehem, to die on the Cross, for our salvation, to be raised up and enthroned in power so that we might share His Divine Life, and to come again in glory to lead us Home to our Father.

But, our finite minds cannot grasp all of this at once, so the Church has many feasts to recall its different aspects. Today's celebration, one of the most touching and joyful, recalls that day 1968 years ago, when God the Son was born as an infant. For all that the Mass is the high point of the celebration (the English Christmas means Christ's Mass) — it is not the birth of our Lord that's renewed here. It's not the Baby who was born in Bethlehem who comes on the Altar and enters our hearts in Communion,—no, it's Christ as He is now, Christ in His risen glory. But the event we specially recall is His birth. We've looked forward to it all Advent, many of you prepared for today by the Novena of pre-dawn Masses. And the urgency as the day came nearer—five days ago it was: "On the fifth day Lord would come to you." And yesterday: "Tomorrow you will see His glory." And now He is with us: "Thou art My Son, this day I've begotten thee."

We recall His birth into the world, we remember that He is still in the world, in the Church, especially in the Church's sacraments, and we look forward to the tremendous day, the exhilarating Day when He will come again to lead all who chose to belong to Him, to God His Father and ours, to an eternity of life, love and happiness in His Home.

On this wonderful day, may all of us reecho the words of the shepherds: "Let us go over to Bethlehem. . . . "May we, like they, find the Child with His Mother and offer Him the undying loyalty, the heartfelt love of our hearts.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS (DEC. 29)

### CHRISTMAS WANTS US TO LIVE PURELY

The first crib ever made on earth was made by St. Francis of Assisi. To make real for people what happened on that first Christmas night he has a cave on hillside fitted out like that in Bethlehem, with the figures that are now so familiar to us—the infant Jesus at the center in a manger, Mary and Joseph at either side, the shepherds, the ox and the ass. St. Francis was the deacon at the Midnight Mass and preached on his favorite topic—the love we should have for God Who sent His own Son to redeem us.

Through Christ, the kindness of our Heavenly Father has appeared. At Christmas time especially we are reminded of the love and goodness shown by God's having become a helpless infant to demonstrate His love. "The Lord is little, and greatly to be loved." Our return of love is to be much more than sentiments or feelings, it's to be a heartfelt response.

Our Lord tells us clearly that our loving Him is independent of feelings and emotions. It's a matter of the will. — if we want to love Him then we will prove it the way He said we should. "If you love Me, keep my commandments". He that keeps My commandments, he it is that loves Me." Today let us consider the sixth and ninth commandments, in which He tells us He wants us to live purely and chastely.

All that God has created is good, if used in the way God intended when He created. Our bodies are good and everything about them is good. Christ, Whose birthday we honored last Wednesday had a body exactly like ours. He grow from childhood into adolescence and adulthood. His plans and purposes for propagating the human race are good and holy. But these powers given us by God must be used in accordance with God's purposes.

A Christian, whose body has been sanctified and consecrated by baptism, must, with God's help, control the rebellious desire of the body for sinful and unlawful satisfaction. Our body is really, for all that we can fully understand how, one with Christ's body. Provided we keep this oneness with Christ till the very end of our lives, our body will be glorified and enthroned forever with Christ's. These thoughts make impurity unthinkable as a defilement, a desecration of Christ's own body. Will preserve this reverence for our body by remaining close to Christ by frequent prayer, and especially by frequently deepening our union with our Lord through Holy Communion. "It is the boast of the Catholic Church that she can keep her children pure because she gives them Jesus for their food and Mary for their mother".

To be chaste to share in the victory of Christ over sin. One of the disastrous results of Adam's sin was the rebellion of our sexual urges. But Christ, the new Adam, overcomes sin and through Him, so do we. In frankness and reverence, let us consider the reasons for doing so, and the means to be used.

The Bible praises chastity in glowing terms. "No price is worthy of a continent soul." "How beautiful is the chaste generation with glory". Christ chose pure souls for His Mother, His foster-father, His precursor, His favorite disciple, and He praised purity so highly and demanded it so urgently.

A realization of what happened to us at baptism, when our bodies became one with Christ, Sanctuaries of the Adorable Trinity, due to be raised glorious at Christ's return, will prompt us to a real desire for purity, which is the most important element in obtaining it. "Know you that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit? Glorify God in your bodies". Christ has taken us entirely, even our sexual powers.

The first safeguard of chastity is humility—a complete distrust of ourselves, that make us avoid, by careful watch of our senses, any attachment or place or object that could lead us to sin. “Pride goes before a fall”.—This is nowhere so truer than in keeping pure. “If you want to be pure, be humble, if you want to be very pure, be very humble”. (St. Ambrose) Not a paralyzing terror that would petrify us but a complete distrust of our own weakness, together with an unlimited trust in God who assures us that He is faithful, that He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able provided we have the humility to avoid all dangers.

Then there is prayer. A writer in the Bible says: “As I knew I could not be continent unless God gives it, therefore I went to the Lord and besought Him with all my heart.” Earnest prayer, prayer from the heart, especially in moments of temptation or when prompted by pride to take risks.

Self-denial of course is necessary. If, we indulge ourselves in every possible way, we will never have the moral fibre that is essential for resisting the invitations and allurements to forget our identity with Christ and yield to our impure inclinations.

Above all, the strength that comes contact with Christ in the sacraments. To have His precious Blood poured over ourselves in penance, purifying us, strengthening us. Then, the infinite divine help of Holy Communion! How many, who have fallen into unchastity, have regained purity of body and soul by frequent communion.

Devotion to the Blessed Mother, the Virgin most pure, the Immaculate Mother. To confide ourselves to her protection, as her property and possession is to commit ourselves to making her Christian life, her modesty, her chastity the model of our own.

With next Wednesday New Year's Day, may we be renewed by Him “Who makes all things new” in our appreciation of the fact that He wants us, and is infinitely ready to help us, to live purely.

