

METHOD OF HEARING MASS;
OR, PIOUS PRACTICES

By means of which you may derive great benefit from assisting at the Holy Sacrifice.

BEFORE MASS

On your way to the church, consider that you are going to Calvary, there to witness the most sublime and affecting spectacle that can be imagined, that of a God made man, who immolates himself on a cross, suspended between heaven and earth, in order to reconcile earth with heaven, and man with God. Consider with lively faith that the sacrifice of the Mass is the renewal of that of the cross, or rather, that it is, according to the Council of Trent, the same sacrifice, with this sole difference, that, on the altar, it is accomplished without the shedding of blood, and that consequently it produces the same effects, since the Victim and He who sacrifices are the same, Jesus Christ, who, by the ministry of His priests, offers Himself to God His Father.

These considerations should inspire you, while on your way to the church, with sentiments of reverence, confidence, and devotion.

Having entered the church, and chosen a place where you may be free from distractions, resolve to avoid those faults which you are liable to commit when assisting at Mass, and beg of God the grace to be faithful to your resolutions. You will then express your desire to attain the ends for which the Holy Sacrifice is offered, namely, to render to God the honor due to Him in acknowledgment of His supreme dominion over all creatures; to obtain from His infinite goodness mercy and forgiveness of your sins; to thank Him

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for the innumerable benefits received from Him, and to implore a continuance of His favors.

DURING MASS

There are many ways by which you may secure to yourself the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice. Much latitude is left, on this point, to the devotion of the faithful. Some use the prayers for Mass to be found in any of the Prayer-Books, while others prefer to recite the Rosary or the Litanies, with pious exercises suited for every day in the week, or else the Office of the Dead, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, or that of the Sacred Heart. Choose those prayers which seem best to you, taking care, however, that these vocal exercises do not so occupy you as to exclude the consideration of the three principal parts of the Mass: the *Offertory*, *Consecration*, and *Communion*. Adopt for these precious moments some fixed practices of devotion, which may assist you to participate largely in the graces attached to them. A few may be here suggested.

1st. At the OFFERTORY. Whilst the priest elevates the Host on the paten, pronouncing the words, *Suscipe, sancte Pater, hanc immaculatam Hostiam*, "Accept, Holy Father, this unspotted Host," unite your offering to his; place yourself in spirit on the altar of sacrifice, and say from your heart, Deign, Heavenly Father, to receive the offering which I humbly make to Thee of my body and soul, with all their senses and faculties. They are the gifts of Thy bounty. To Thee do I surrender them, and I declare before the holy angels who now surround this altar, that I desire to use them only in conformity with Thy holy will made manifest in Thy commandments. My most fervent wish is to belong wholly to Thee, and to devote myself in all things to the advancement of the glory of Thy Holy Name, to the salvation of others, and to my own sanctification. Sustain me by Thy grace, I

entreat Thee, O Father of Mercy! that I may persevere to my last breath in these dispositions. Having thus prayed and offered yourself to God, make a brief examination, considering how far your conduct has hitherto corresponded with the profession you have just made, in order that you may henceforth prove more faithful.

2d. The CONSECRATION or ELEVATION. At this solemn moment, when the priest elevates before the congregation the Divine Victim concealed under the appearance of the consecrated Host, contemplate with lively faith your beloved Saviour, as He was beheld by those who had nailed Him to the cross, covered with blood and wounded for your sins, and in the midst of His agonizing pain, forgetting Himself to plead your cause with His Father, and to implore pardon for you in that cry which He uttered from His heart, *Pater, dimitte illis*. "Father, forgive them."

This contemplation should inspire you with lively sentiments of admiration, love, and gratitude, with horror of sin, contrition, and boundless devotion.

Having expressed these sentiments, unite with Jesus in the prayer which He offered to His heavenly Father on behalf of all mankind, contemplate in succession the five wounds, which are, as Saint Bonaventure says, "so many places of refuge, so many voices raised in supplication, to intercede for us," and at each one ask some particular grace or favor.

At the wound of the right hand: Pray for the Sovereign Pontiff, and for those bishops, priests, and missionaries who labor under his direction for the salvation of souls, that their zealous exertions may be crowned with the fullest success. At the wound of the left hand: Pray for the conversion of heathens, Jews, heretics, and schismatics, and for the return to God of all bad Christians who are in league with hell against Jesus Christ and His holy Church. At the wound of the right foot: Pray for the members of

your family, beginning with those most closely connected by affinity; for your benefactors and friends; and likewise, as Christ ordains, for your enemies. At the wound of the left foot: Pray for the souls in Purgatory, particularly those who have most claims on your charity. At the wound of the heart of Jesus: Pray for yourself: place in that heart, burning with love, all your cares, troubles, fears, hopes, and desires.

By adopting the habit of thus offering your petitions in a certain order, corresponding with the five wounds of our Divine Lord, you will always be able, in a few moments, and without effort, to offer an universal prayer, pleasing to God, and most beneficial to your neighbor and yourself.

3d. The COMMUNION. On those days when you have not the happiness of approaching the holy table, you should not neglect to make a *spiritual communion*, which, according to Saint Teresa, "is sometimes as advantageous as actual communion." This consists in forming in your heart with great devotion, three acts namely, an act of contrition, as nearly perfect as possible; an act of charity or love of God; and an act of ardent desire to approach the Holy Communion and derive from it the abundant graces which it confers on those who prepare to receive it worthily.

AFTER MASS

Examine briefly:

If you have followed exactly the preceding counsels.

How you have employed the intervals of time which separate the principal parts of the Holy Sacrifice.

If you have been careful as to your exterior deportment, and vigilant in avoiding distractions.

If all has been well done, return thanks to God; if otherwise, ask pardon for your negligence. Before leaving the holy place, beg of Jesus to bless all your occupations during the coming day, as well as the good resolutions that you have made during morning prayer or meditation.