

The Douay Catechism of 1649

by Henry Tuberville, D.D.



Lord, from henceforth now, saith the spirit, they rest from their labours, for their works follow them." Apoc. xiv. 13.

Q. 940. What is the best preparation from this judgment?

A. To remember often that of Heb. x. 31. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And that of 1 Cor. xi. 21. "For if we did judge our selves, we should not be judged."

Q. 941. What understand you by hell?

A. That such as die in mortal sin "shall be tormented there both day and night, and for ever and ever." Apoc. xx. 21. "There shall be weeping, howling, and gnashing of teeth; the worm of conscience shall always gnaw them, and the fire that torments them, shall never be extinguished." Mark viii. 44, 45.

Q. 942. What understand you by heaven?

A. That the elect and faithful servants of God, shall for ever reign with him in his kingdom, "where he hath such delights and comforts for them, as neither eye hath seen or ear hath heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Q. 943. How prove you that?

A. Out of Matt. vii. 21. "He hath doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Q. 944. What profit is there in the frequent memory of all those things?

A. Very great according to that, "In all thy works remember the last things, and thou shalt never sin." Eccles. vii. 40. which God of his great mercy give us grace to do. Amen.

Chapter 22.

The Substance or Essence, and Ceremonies of the Mass, Expounded

Q. 945. WHAT is the mass?

A. It is the unbloody sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, under the forms of bread and wine. The word Mass, used in English, being derived from Missa, Latin; and the word Missa, though it may have other derivations, may be well taken from the Hebrew word Missach, which signifies a free voluntary offering.

Q. 946. Who instituted the substance or essence of the Mass?

A. Our Saviour Christ at his last supper, when he consecrated, i.e. converted the substance of bread and wine into his own true body and blood, and gave the same to his disciples, under the outward forms of bread and wine, commanding them to do what he had done in commemoration of him. Luke xxii. 19.

Q. 947. Who ordained the ceremonies of the mass?

A. The church, directed by the Holy Ghost.

Q. 948. For what end did the church ordain them?

A. To stir up devotion in the people, and reverence to the sacred mysteries.

Q. 949. For what other end?

A. To instruct the ignorant in spiritual and high things by sensible and material signs; and by the glory of the church militant to make them comprehend something of the glory of the triumphant church.

Q. 950. What warrant hath the church to ordain ceremonies?

A. The authority of God himself in the old law, commanding many and most stately ceremonies in things belonging to his service. See the whole book of Leviticus.

Q. 951. What besides?

A. The example of Christ in the new law using dust and spittle to cure the blind, the deaf, and dumb. He prostrated himself at prayer in the garden three times. He lifted up his eyes to heaven and groaned, when he was raising Lazarus from the dead, which were all ceremonies.

Q. 952. Did he use any ceremonies at the last supper, where he ordained the sacrifice of the mass?

A. He did; for he washed the feet of his disciples, he blessed the bread and the cup, and exhorted the communicants.

Q. 953. What signify the several ornaments of the priest?

A. The Amict, or linen veil, which he first puts on, represents the veil with which the Jews covered the face of

Christ, when they buffeted him in the house of Caiaphas, and bid him prophesy, "who it was that struck him."

2. The Alb signifies the white garment, which Herod put on him, to intimate that he was a fool.

3. The Girdle signifies the cord that bound him in the garden.

4. The Maniple, the cord which bound him to the pillar.

5. The Stole, the cord by which they led him to the crucified.

6. The priest's upper, Vestment, represents both the seamless coat of Christ, as also the purple garment with which they clothed him in derision in the house of Pilate.

7. The Altar-stone, represents the cross on which he offered himself unto the Father.

8. The Chalice, the sepulchre or grave of Christ.

9. The Paten, the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.

10. The Altar-cloths, with the corporal and Pall, the linen in which the dead body of Christ was shrouded and buried. Finally, the candles on the Altar puts us in mind of the light which Christ brought into the world by his passion, as also of his immortal and ever shining divinity.

Q. 954. What meaneth the priest's coming back three steps from the Altar, and humbling himself before he begins?

A. It signifies the prostrating of Christ in the garden, when he began his passion.

Q. 955. Why doth the priest bow himself again at the Confiteor?

A. To move the people to humiliation; and to signify that by the merits and passion of Christ, (which they are there to commemorate) salvation may be had, if it be sought with a contrite and humble heart.

Q. 956. Why doth he beat his breast as Mea Culpa?

A. To teach the people to return into the heart, and signifies that all sin is from the heart, and ought to be discharged from the heart, with hearty sorrow.

Q. 957. Why doth the priest, ascending to the Altar, kiss it in the middle?

A. Because the Altar signifies the church, composed of divers people, as of divers living stones, which Christ kissed in the middle, by giving a holy kiss of peace and unity, both to the Jews and Gentiles.

Q. 958. What signifies the Introit?

A. It is, as it were, the entrance into the office, or that which the priest saith first after his coming to the Altar, and signifies the desires and groanings of the ancient fathers longing for the coming Christ.

Q. 959. Why is the Introit repeated twice?

A. To signify the frequent repetition of their desires and supplications.

Q. 960. Why do we add unto the Introit, Gloria Patri, &c. glory be to the Father, &c. Amen?

A. To render thanks to the most Blessed Trinity for our redemption, accomplished by the cross.

Q. 961. What means the Kyrie Eleison?

A. It signifies, "Lord have mercy on us," and is repeated thrice in honour of the Son, and thrice in honour of the Holy Ghost.

Q. 962. Why so often?

A. To signify our great necessity, and earnest desires to find mercy.

Q. 963. What means the Adoremus?

It signifies, "Glory be to God on high;" and is the song which the angels sung at the birth of Christ, used in this place to signify, that the mercy which we beg, was brought us by the birth and death of Christ.

Q. 964. What means the Oremus?

A. It signifies, "Let us pray;" and is the priest's address to the people, by which he invites them to join with him, both in his prayer and intention.

Q. 965. What means the Collect?

A. It is the priest's prayer, and is called a Collect, because it collects and gathers together the supplications of the multitude, speaking them all with one voice and also because it is a collection, or sum of the Epistle and Gospel, for the most part of the year, especially of all the Sundays.

Q. 966. Why doth the clerk say, Amen.

A. He doth it in the name of the people, to signify, that all concur with the priest, in his petition of prayer.

Q. 967. What meaneth the Dominus Vobiscum?

A. It signifies, "Our Lord be with you," and is used to beg God's presence and assistance to the people, in the performance of that work.

Q. 968. Why is it answered Et cum Spiritu tuo, "and with thy spirit?"

A. To signify, that the people with one consent do beg the like for him.

Q. 969. Why are all the prayers ended with Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, &c. "Through our Lord Jesus Christ?"

A. To signify, that whatsoever we beg of God the Father, we must beg it in the name of Jesus Christ, by whom he hath given us all things.

Q. 970. What signifies the Epistle?

A. It signifies the old law; as also the preaching of the Prophets and the Apostles, out of whom it is commonly taken: and it is read before the Gospel, to intimate that the old law being able to bring nothing to perfection, it was necessary the new should succeed it.

Q. 971. What means the Gradual?

A. It signifies the penance preached by St. John Baptist, and that we cannot obtain the salvation of Christ, but by the holy degrees of penance.

Q. 972. What means the Alleluiah?

A. It is the voice of men rejoicing, and aspiring to the joys of heaven.

Q. 973. Why is the Alleluiah repeated so often at the feast of Easter?

A. Because it is the joyful solemnity of our Saviour's resurrection.

Q. 974. Why between the Septuagesima and Easter, is the

Tract read in the place of the Gradual?

A. Because it is a time of penance and mourning, and therefore the Tract is read with a mournful and slow voice, to signify the miseries and punishments of this life.

Q. 975. What is the Tract?

A. Two or three versicles between the Epistle and the Gospel, sung with a slow, long protracted tone.

Q. 976. Why do we rise up at the reading of the Gospel?

A. To signify our readiness to go, and do, whither, and whatsoever it commands us.

Q. 977. What means the Gospel?

A. It signifies the preaching of Christ; and is the happy embassy or message of Christ unto the world.

Q. 978. Why is the Gospel read at the North end, or left side of the Altar?

A. To signify that by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, the kingdom of the Devil was overthrown.

Q. 979. How prove you that?

A. Because the Devil hath chosen the North (figuratively infidels, and the wicked) for the seat of his malice. "From the North shall all evil be opened upon all the inhabitants of the land." Jer. i. 14. and Zach. ii. 7.

Q. 980. Why doth the priest before he begins the Gospel, salute the people with Dominus vobiscum?

A. To prepare them for a devout hearing of it, and to beg of our Lord to make

them worthy hearers of his word, which can save their souls.

Q. 981. Why then doth he say, Sequentia sancti Evangelii, &c. The sequel of the Holy Gospel, &c.?

A. To move attention, and to signify what part of the Gospel he then reads.

Q. 982. Why doth the clerk answer, Gloria tibi Domine, Glory be to thee, O Lord?

A. To give the glory of the gospel to God, who hath of his mercy made us partakers of it.

Q. 983. Why then doth the priest sign the book with the sign of the cross?

A. To signify that the doctrine there delivered, appertains to the cross and passion of Christ.

Q. 984. Why after this do both priest and people sign themselves with the cross in three places?

A. They sign themselves on their foreheads, to signify they are not, nor will be ashamed to profess Christ crucified: on their mouths to signify they will be ready with their mouths, to confess unto salvation: and on their breast to signify that with their hearts they believe unto justice.

Q. 985. Why at the end of the Gospel, do they sign their breast again with the sign of the cross?

A. That the Devil may not steal the seed of God's word out of their hearts.

Q. 986. What means the Creed?

A. It is a public profession of our faith, and the wholesome fruit of preaching the Gospel.

Q. 987. What means the first offertory, where the priest offers bread and wine mingled with water?

A. It signifies the freedom wherewith Christ offered himself in his whole life unto his passion, and the desire he had to suffer for our sins.

Q. 988. What signifies the mingling of water with wine?

A. It signifies the blood and water flowing from the side of Christ; as also the union of the faithful with Christ.

Q. 989. Why then doth the priest wash the ends of his fingers?

A. To admonish both himself and the people to wash away the unclean thoughts of their hearts, that so they may partake of that clean sacrifice: As also to signify, that the priest is, ought to be clean from mortal sin.

Q. 990. Why then after some silence, doth he begin the preface with an elevated voice, saying Per omnia sæcula sæculorum?

A. To signify the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem, after he had lain hid a little space; and therefore it is ended with Hosana, benedictus qui venit, &c. which was the Hebrew children's song.

Q. 991. What else meaneth the preface?

A. It is a preparation of the people, for the approaching action of the sacrifice; and therefore the priest saith, Sursum corda, lift your hearts to God; so to move them to lay aside all earthly thoughts, and to think only on heavenly things.

Q. 992. Why at these words, Benedictus qui venit, Blessed is he

that cometh in our Lord's name, doth he sign himself with the sign of the cross?

A. To signify that the entry of Christ into Jerusalem was not to a kingdom of this world, but to a death upon the cross.

Q. 993. What is the Canon?

A. It is a most sacred, essential, and substantial part of the mass, because in it the sacrifice is effected.

Q. 994. Why is the Canon read with a low voice?

A. To signify the sadness in our Saviour's passion, which is there effectually represented.

Q. 995. Why doth the priest begin the Canon bowing his head?

A. To signify the obedience of Christ unto his Father in making himself a sacrifice to sin.

Q. 996. What meaneth the Te igitur, clementissime Pater, &c. Thee therefore, O most clement Father, &c.?

A. It is a humble and devout supplication to God our heavenly Father, made in the name of all the people, that he would vouchsafe to accept and bless the sacrifice which we are offering unto him for the peace, unity and conversation of the whole Catholic Church, and likewise for the Pope, our prelate, and all the other the truly faithful.

Q. 997. Why in the middle of this prayer doth the priest kiss the altar, and sign the Host and Chalice thrice with the sign of the cross?

A. He kisseth the altar, to show the kiss of peace which Christ gave us, by

reconciling us to God in his own blood. He signeth the Host and Chalice thrice to signify that our redemption made upon the Cross, was done by the will of the Holy Trinity.

Q. 998. What meaneth the Memento Domine famulorum famularumque tuarum:

Remember, O Lord, thy servants, men and women, &c.?

A. It is a commemoration of the living, in which the priest remembers by name, such as he intends chiefly to say mass for, and then in general, all present and all the faithful, beseeching God by virtue of the sacrifice, to bless them, and be mercifully mindful of them.

Q. 999. What means the Communicantes and memorum venerantes, &c. Communicating and worshipping the memory, &c.?

A. It is an exercise of our communion with the saints in which having recounted the names of the blessed virgin Mary, and many other glorious saints, we beg of God by their merits and intercession, to grant us the assistance of his protection in all things.

Q. 1000. What signifies the Hanc igitur oblationem, this offering therefore of our servitude, &c. when the priest spreads his hands over the Host and Chalice?

A. It is an earnest begging of God to accept the sacrifice that is presented to be offered for the safety and peace of the whole church, and salvation of all from eternal damnation.

Q. 1001. Why then doth he sign the offerings again five times?

A. To signify the mystery of those five days which were between our Saviour's entry into Jerusalem and his passion.

Q. 1002. What meaneth Qui pridie quam pateretur, who the day before he suffered, &c.

A. It is but a repetition and representation of what Christ did at his last supper, where he took bread, blessed it, &c. and immediately precedes the words of consecration spoken by the priest, by which he sacrificeth to God.

Q. 1003. What are the words of consecration?

A. "Hoc est corpus meum. &c. This is my body; This is the cup of my blood, of the New and eternal Testament; a mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you, and for the many, to the remission of sins." Matt. xxvi. 27, 28.

Q. 1004. What meaneth these words?

A. They signify according to the letter, what they effect and cause, viz. a change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; and in a mystery also they signify, unto us the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Q. 1005. Why after consecration of the Host, doth the priest kneel and adore?

A. He kneels and adores, to give sovereign honour to Christ, and signify the real presence of his body and blood in the blessed sacrament which he then holds in his hand.

Q. 1006. Why after consecration of the wine, doth the priest kneel and adore, saying, Hæc quotiescumque feceritis, &c. that is, "As often as you shall do these things, you shall

do them in remembrance of me." 1 Cor. xi. 25?

A. He kneels and adores, to give sovereign honour to Christ, and to signify the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the chalice, then on the altar, and he speaks these words to signify, that as often as we say, or hear mass, and offer up this sacrifice, we must do it as Christ hath commanded us, in memory of his passion, resurrection and ascension: and therefore he goes on, beseeching God by all those mysteries, to look propitiously upon our holy and immaculate host, as he did upon the sacrifices of Abraham, Abel, and Melchisedech, and to replenish all that partake thereof, with heavenly grace and benediction.

Q. 1007. Why after consecration of each, doth the priest elevate, or lift up the consecrated host and chalice?

A. That all the people may adore the body and blood of Christ, as also to signify, that for our sins his body was lifted on the Cross and his blood shed.

Q. 1008. For what other end doth he elevate the host and chalice?

A. That he, with the whole multitude, may make oblations of Christ's body and blood unto God, which after consecration, is one of the most essential parts of the whole service of the mass, and signifies that oblation, wherewith Christ offered himself unto God upon the altar of the Cross.

Q. 1009. Why then doth he again sign the offerings five times with the sign of the Cross?

A. To signify the five wounds of Christ, which he represents to the eternal Father for us.

Q. 1010. What means the Memento?

A. It is a commemoration of the dead; in which the pries first nominates those whom he intends especially to apply the sacrifice unto; and then prays in general for all the faithful departed, beseeching God by virtue of that sacrifice, to give them rest, refreshment, and everlasting life.

Q. 1011. Why after the Memento for the dead, doth the priest elevate or raise his voice, saying, Nobis quoqueveccatoribus, "and to us sinners also," &c.?

A. In memory of the supplication of the penitent thief made to Christ on the Cross; that so we also (though unworthy sinners) by the virtue of the sacrifice, may with him and the holy saints, be made partakers of the heavenly kingdom.

Q. 1012. Why then doth he again sign the Host and Chalice three times with the sign of the Cross?

A. To signify, that this sacrifice is available for three sorts of men: for those in heaven, to the increase or glory; for those in purgatory, to free up them from their pains; and for those on earth, to an increase of grace and remission of their sins; as also to signify the three hours which Christ did hang living upon the Cross, and all the griefs he sustained in them.

Q. 1013. Why then, uncovering the chalice, doth he sign it five times with the Host?

A. His uncovering the chalice is to signify, that at the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent asunder. The three crosses made over the chalice, signify the three hours which Christ

hung dead on the cross; the other two made at the brim of the chalice, signifying the blood and water flowing from his side.

Q. 1014. Why is the Pater Noster said with a loud voice?

A. To signify, by the seven petitions thereof, the seven mystical words which Christ spoke upon the Cross with a loud voice, viz. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. 2. To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. 3. Behold thy mother; woman behold thy son. 4. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me. 5. I thirst. 6. Into thy hands I commend my spirit. 7. It is consummated."

Q. 1015. What means the priest laying down the Host upon the corporal, and then covering the chalice again?

A. It signifies the taking of our Saviour down from the Cross, and his burial.

Q. 1016. Why, then is the priest silent for a time?

A. To signify our Saviour's rest in the sepulchre on the Sabbath?

Q. 1017. Why is the Host divided into three parts?

A. To signify the division of our Saviour's soul and body made on the Cross, and that the body was broken, and divided in three principle parts, namely his hands, side, and feet.

Q. 1018. Why after this doth he sign the chalice three times with a particle of the Host, and raise his voice saying, Pax Domini, &c., The peace of our Lord be always with you?

A. To signify that the frequent voice of Christ to his disciples, Pax vobis, Peace be to you; as also to signify the triple peace which he hath purchased for us, by his Cross, namely, external, internal, and eternal.

Q. 1019. Why then is the particle of the Host put into the chalice?

A. To signify the reuniting of our Saviour's body, blood and soul, made at his resurrection; as also to signify, that we cannot partake of the blood and merits of Christ, unless we partake of his cup of sufferings.

Q. 1020. Why is the Agnus Dei, or Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, said with a loud voice?

A. To commemorate the glory of our Saviour's ascension, and to signify that he was slain like an innocent lamb to take away our sins and give us peace.

Q. 1021. Why is the Pax, or kiss of peace, given before communion?

A. To signify, that peace and mutual charity, which ought to be among the faithful, who all eat of one bread and of the Eucharist and are all members of one mystical body.

Q. 1022. What means the three prayers said by the priest before the communion?

A. They are said in honour of the blessed Trinity. In the first he begs peace for the whole church, and perfect charity among all Christians. In the second, he beseecheth God, by the body and blood of Christ, (which he is there about to receive) to free him from all evil. In the third, that it may not prove to his damnation and judgment, by an unworthy receiving of it, but to the

defence and safety of his soul and body. And this immediately precedes the consummation of the Host and Chalice, which is another of the most essential parts of the whole service of the mass.

Q. 1023. What signifies the consummation of communion?

A. It signifies Christ's burial, and the consummation of his passion.

Q. 1024. What means the Domine non sum dignus, &c.?

A. It signifies, "O Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; but only say the word," &c. And it was the Centurion's prayer, by which he obtained health for the sick boy, Matt. viii. 8. And teacheth us not to approach this sacrifice, but with an humble and contrite heart.

Q. 1025. What means the prayers said by the priest after communion?

A. They are thanksgiving to God for having made us partakers of his unbloody sacrifice of the Altar, and by it also of the bloody sacrifice of the Cross.

Q. 1026. What means the words Ite Missa est?

A. They signify, that the Host is offered, Mass ended, and the people dismissed; representing the voice of the angel dismissing the apostles and disciples when they stood looking up after Christ ascended into heaven, with, "O ye men of Galilee, why stand you here looking up into heaven?" Acts i. 11.

Q. 1027. What means the priest lifting up his hands and blessing the people?

A. It signifies the blessing which Christ gave his apostles and disciples at his ascension, with his hands lifted up.

Q. 1028. What signifies the Gospel of St. John?

A. It signifies the Apostles preaching the gospel to all nations. Luke xxiv. 50.

Q. 1029. What is the missal?

A. It is the Mass book, wherein this holy service is contained.

Chapter 23.

The Primer or Office of our Blessed Lady, Expounded

Q. 1030. WHO composed this office?

A. The church, directed by the Holy Ghost.

Q. 1031. Why is the Primer so called?

A. From the Latin word Primo, which signifies, first of all, so to teach us, that prayer should be the first work of the day, according to that, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be given you.

Q. 1032. Why is the office divided into Hymns, Psalms, Canticles, Antiphons, Versicles, Responsories, and Prayers?

A. For order, beauty, and variety sake.

Q. 1033. What warrant have you for that?

A. Out of Col. iii. 16. "Sing ye in your hearts unto the Lord in spiritual Psalms, Hymns, and Canticles."

Q. 1034. Why should the laity pray out of the Psalms, which they little understand?

A. 1. Because, by so doing, they pray out of the mouth of the Holy Ghost. 2.

Because, if they do it with devout and humble hearts, it is as meritorious in them, as in the greatest scholars; for a petition hath the same force, whether it be delivered by a learned or unlearned man; so hath also prayer. 3. Because a psalm is of the same value in the sight of God, in the mouth of a child, or woman, as from the mouth of the most learned doctor.

Q. 1035. Why is the office divided into seven several hours?

A. That so it might be a daily memorial of the seven principal parts, and seven hours of our Saviour's passion.

Q. 1036. What ground have you for that?

A. Out of Zac. xii 10. "At that day I will pour out upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and prayer, and they shall look up at him whom they have pierced."

Q. 1037. What meaneth at that day?

A. The day of grace, the new law.

Q. 1038. What means the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem?