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# the CORD

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# The Liturgy of the Holy Mass: III

*Father Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M.*

*(Continued)*

At the Last Supper, when all was in readiness for the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave thanks to His heavenly Father<sup>1</sup> and then took bread and wine and changed them into His Body and Blood. In a similar way, in the Holy Mass, when the preparations have been completed and the bread and wine made ready for the consecration, the Church gives thanks to God. The Preface is the prayer of praise and thanksgiving that serves as an introduction to the Canon, the principal prayer surrounding the central action of the Mass.

The Offertory prayers come to a close with the Secret, which sums up, as it were, the intentions of the priest and people to offer to God the gifts which will soon be transformed into Christ. The priest's final words of the Secret, "World without end," are answered by an "Amen," by means of which the faithful approve and ratify, so to speak, the prayers of the Offertory. The dialogue between the priest and people which follows manifests the fact that the prayers that are to be said will be expressing the mind of both priest and people. The mutual greeting, "The Lord be with you" and "And with thy spirit," as we have already seen, shows the bond of charity and common purpose that joins them together in the prayers and actions of the Mass. "Lift up your hearts" invites the people to raise up their hearts and minds in prayer. The priest accompanies his words with the symbolic action of raising his hands, which had been resting on the altar, to the height of his shoulders. The faithful assure the celebrant of their response to his invitation with the words, "We have lifted them up to the Lord." Aware of the approaching act of sacrifice, the people have already begun to turn their minds and hearts to the sacred action. The words of the priest are an echo of those of Jeremiah the Prophet, "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens."<sup>2</sup> St. Cyprian explains: "Let the mind dwell on nothing else than that alone for which it prays. Therefore, the priest also before prayer prepares

<sup>1</sup>Cf. 1 Cor. 11, 24.

<sup>2</sup>Lam. 3, 41.



the minds of the brethren by first uttering a preface, saying 'Lift up your hearts,' so that when the people respond, 'We lift them up to the Lord,' they may be admonished that they should ponder on nothing other than the Lord."<sup>3</sup> "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God" is the thought that follows naturally from the turning of our minds and hearts to God, and the people readily agree that, "It is truly meet and just."

These words of the faithful are repeated by the celebrant as he begins the Preface. The formula for beginning this prayer of praise and thanksgiving, for such the Preface is, is an echo of the lofty expressions found in the Apocalypse: "Worthy art thou, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power."<sup>4</sup> "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals."<sup>5</sup> "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing."<sup>6</sup> The Psalmist also expresses the propriety of giving praise and thanks to God: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High."<sup>7</sup> In a sung Mass the solemn tone of the Preface is most in keeping with the elevated content of the words as they praise and thank God at this time just before the priest and people enter into the most sacred prayers and actions that lead to the Consecration of the Mass. Since the Preface is primarily a hymn or prayer of praise and thanksgiving, its purpose is to prepare the hearts and minds of the faithful with the proper dispositions for participating worthily in the sacred actions which follow. Thanks are given to God the Father through His beloved Son for the works of salvation. For this reason there are several Prefaces proper to the principal feasts and seasons of the liturgical year. It is "right and helpful to salvation" to give thanks to God "always and everywhere", but on certain days, such as Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, and others, as well as feasts of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, there is special reason for thanks, and in the Preface on such days, the particular Mystery of the feast is mentioned together with the reason for giving thanks to God for it. In the Roman Missal there are fifteen different Prefaces; the Franciscan Missal adds three more: Preface of St. Francis, of St. Dominic, and of St. Clare.

Since the Preface is a solemn prayer of praise as well as of thanks, it is appropriate that the words of the Preface should make mention of

<sup>3</sup>St. Cyprian, "The Lord's Prayer", *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyprian: Treatises*, Vol. 71, p. 153, New York, Fathers of the Church, Inc. 1958.

<sup>4</sup>Apoc. 4, 11.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. 5, 9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. 5, 12.

<sup>7</sup>Ps. 91, 1.

the angels, those creatures of God who constantly sing His praise and glory. Most propitiously, therefore, the Preface ends by making use of the words of the angels themselves:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,  
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.<sup>8</sup>

To the words of the angels are added the acclamations of the populace as they hailed Jesus at His entry into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday:

Hosanna in the highest!  
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest!<sup>9</sup>

These words of praise should help us to prepare our hearts for the coming Sacrifice.

When the priest recites the Sanctus at the end of the Preface, he bows in humble reverence as he repeats the words of the angels, imitating their gesture of profound adoration before the majesty of God. As he continues with the words with which Christ was greeted at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the celebrant stands erect and signs himself with the Sign of the Cross, the sign of victory.

The Preface introduces us to the Canon of the Mass. The most sacred, the essential, part of the Mass is the Consecration. In the Consecration the Sacrifice of the Cross is renewed. The bread and wine that we have offered up to our heavenly Father become the Body and Blood of His divine Son. The mystical separation of this Body and Blood, through the twofold Consecration, renews the death of Christ on the Cross. This is the basic reason why the Mass is not only a sacrifice, but the same Sacrifice as that of the Cross. On the Cross the sacrifice was accomplished by the bloody death of Christ; in the Mass the sacrifice is accomplished by the unbloody, mystical death of Christ. This act of sacrifice is accomplished by the prayers and actions of the priest at the altar. There are several prayers said both before, during and after the Consecration; taken together, these prayers make up the Canon of the Mass. The name, Canon, signifies the standard formula, the fixed set of words, that accomplish the act of sacrifice. While there are several parts, or separate prayers, we may say that the Canon is one long, continuous prayer, enveloping, as it were, the act of Consecration. For our spiritual benefit, we can better appreciate the Canon by considering the several parts in themselves. Each of these prayers is designated by its opening words.

The first three prayers of the Canon are prayers of petition and

<sup>8</sup>Lk. 6, 3.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Matt. 21, 9.



remembrance. The *Te igitur* requests the "most merciful Father" to accept "these gifts" and to "bless" them, that is, to transform them by His power into what they are to become. The petition that we make in this prayer is present in the form of a "remembrance"; that is to say, we beg God in accepting the offerings to be especially mindful of those who make the offering. The first remembrance we make is for the needs of the Church, and in particular the leaders and members of the Church. The priest bows over the altar as he begins this prayer as a sign of his humility in presenting the petition to the Father.

We therefore humbly pray and beseech Thee, most merciful Father, through Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord, that thou wouldest receive and bless these gifts, these presents, these holy, unspotted sacrifices, which above all we offer Thee for Thy holy Catholic Church. Mayest Thou deign to pacify, guard, unite and govern it throughout the world, together with Thy servant . . . our Pope . . . our Bishop, as also all true believers and promoters of the Catholic and Apostolic faith.

The bread and wine are "these gifts, these presents, these holy, unspotted sacrifices" which we ask the Father to receive and to bless. As he begs God to bless these offerings, the priest kisses the altar and then makes the Sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, deriving from the altar, which represents Christ, the power to give a blessing. His action of blessing the elements of the sacrifice signifies the action we beg the Father to take on these same materials, namely, to exercise His divine power and transform them into the Victim of the Sacrifice. We present our petition with humility and confidence. Then, presuming on the merciful granting of our request, we ask that this offering be accepted in behalf of the needs of the Church. "In this act of Sacrifice through the hands of the priest . . . the faithful themselves, united with him . . . offer to the Eternal Father a most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the needs of the whole Church."<sup>10</sup> Our remembrance, then, is for the Church as a whole, and her needs. The needs of the Church that are mentioned are peace, protection, unity, and direction for guidance. This last help sought pertains particularly to the leaders of the Church. That the needs of the Church may be obtained from God, we pray in a special way for those to whom the leadership and direction of the Church has been entrusted. This is in accordance with the mind and example of our divine Master Himself, Who prayed for St. Peter, whom He chose to be the visible head of the Church. "But I have prayed for thee, (Simon), that thy faith may not fail; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren."<sup>11</sup>

It is proper that not only the Pope be mentioned in this prayer of remembrance, but the Bishop also, because Christ prayed not only for Peter, but for the other Apostles as well. "Holy Father, keep in thy name those whom Thou has given me, that they may be as we are . . . Those whom Thou has given me I guarded."<sup>12</sup> Then, in our prayer, we include "all true believers and promoters of the Catholic and Apostolic faith." This again is according to the example of Christ: "Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their word are to believe in me."<sup>13</sup>

The next part of the Canon, or as we may say, the second prayer of remembrance, mentions in particular certain persons whom the celebrant considers deserving of mention by name. These persons are those who have been special benefactors of the Church and whose names, in the days of the Early Church, were written on tablets (diptychs) to be read by the celebrant at this part of the Mass. These written tablets are no longer used, so the celebrant is free to name all those who are dear to him or who are worthy of special mention. The prayer is the *Memento, Domine*:

Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids . . . and all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee; for whom we offer, or who offer to Thee, this sacrifice of praise for themselves and their families, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their salvation and welfare; and who now pay their vows to Thee, the eternal God, living and true.

Besides those mentioned specifically by name, the prayer recommends to God "all here present." Since the priest acts in behalf of the faithful, having been "appointed for men in the things pertaining to God,"<sup>14</sup> he acts in the name of the members of the Mystical Body when he offers this sacrifice of praise. Therefore, it can be said that the faithful, in union with the priest, offer the sacrifice for themselves and for all those dear to them. All who are present for the Sacrifice of the Mass, are, as it were, co-offerers with the priest. Hence, it is evident why we should assist at this Divine Mystery. As we participate more wholeheartedly in uniting ourselves with the celebrant at Holy Mass, we derive greater graces and fruits from "our" sacrifice, including "the hope of (eternal) salvation."

As we continue into the third prayer of remembrance, the *Communicantes*, we become more conscious of the meaning of the doctrine of Communion of Saints. This is the third time in the Mass that this union of the faithful with the saints is proclaimed. In the

<sup>10</sup>Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*.

<sup>11</sup>Luke 22, 32

<sup>12</sup>John 17, 11-12.

<sup>13</sup>John 17, 20.

<sup>14</sup>Heb. 5, 1.



Confiteor and in the prayer to the Holy Trinity among the Offertory prayers, this membership in the Mystical Body of Christ encourages the faithful to call upon the saints in heaven both to show them due honor and to ask their assistance. "That there may be no disunion in the body, but that the members may have care for one another. And if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it, or if one member glories, all the members rejoice with it."<sup>15</sup> United together in Christ, we pay honor to the saints in heaven and ask their intercession.

In communion with and honoring the memory, first, of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and also of the blessed apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Thaddeus, Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and of all the saints; through whose merits and prayers grant that we may in all matters be defended by the aid of Thy protection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

In naming particular saints to honor and to ask their intercession, we, that is, the Church, select the Blessed Mother in the first place, since she is the Queen of all Saints and Mediatrix of all Graces; and the Apostles, since they were the first to be made members of the Mystical Body; and then twelve martyrs, who were especially known and venerated in the first centuries of the Church. While these names indicate the antiquity of this prayer, of the Canon, the Church honors and calls upon the aid of all the saints in heaven, that by their help "we may be defended by the aid of (divine) protection." At Holy Mass, we, the faithful on earth, in offering this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, unite with "a great multitude which no man could number . . . standing before the throne . . . with palms in their hands."<sup>16</sup>

After the celebrant had completed the action of making the Sign of the Cross over the bread and wine as he recited the words, "these gifts, these presents, these holy, unspotted sacrifices," he continued the prayers with his hands held apart, shoulder high, in an attitude of supplication. Now as he begins the next prayer, he joins his hands and holds them outspread over the bread and wine soon to become the Body and Blood of Christ. Holding his hands with the palms open over the gifts that are being offered to God, the priest recites the prayer,

*Hanc igitur:*

This oblation, therefore, of our service and that of Thy whole family, we beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to receive; and to dispose our days in Thy peace, and to command us to be delivered from

<sup>15</sup>1 Cor. 12, 25-26.

<sup>16</sup>Apoc. 7, 9.

eternal damnation and to be numbered in the flock of Thy chosen ones.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here we repeat our plea for the gracious acceptance of these offerings by God. The action of imposing his hands over the elements offered has a twofold significance for the priest. It indicates positively that the particular bread and wine on the altar is what is being offered to God. It also has a symbolic meaning. The priest indicates by his action that the offering is representative of the persons making the offering. That is to say that the offering becomes a victim of propitiation for the people who offer these gifts for themselves. This bread and wine will soon be the Body and Blood of Christ; Christ offers Himself on the altar for our sake, on account of our sins. We should understand, then, how Christ truly becomes a victim for our sins. We beg God to accept this offering which we, the minister and all the faithful, make as a true sacrifice of worship and atonement for sin.

The last prayer before the Consecration is a connecting prayer which brings us to the most solemn moment of the Mass. As a final plea for the acceptance of the gifts offered, this prayer emphasizes our repeated request as we beg God so to accept and approve and bless our offerings that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Which oblation do Thou, O God, we beseech Thee, deign to make in all respects blessed, approved, ratified, reasonable, and acceptable, that it may become the Body and Blood of Thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sign of the Cross which the priest makes over the elements five times during this prayer has mostly a symbolic meaning of blessing. These crosses emphasize all the more strongly the urgency of the plea contained in this prayer. This sign is made over both the elements together at the word "blessed", the word "approved", and the word "ratified"; then at the word "Body", it is made over the bread, and at the word "Blood", it is made over the chalice of wine. The intimate connection between Calvary and the Last Supper is dramatically demonstrated in the repeated use of the Sign of Calvary with the material elements of the Last Supper. We can understand more clearly that the Sacrifice of Christ is about to be renewed on the altar.

When we come to the actual Consecration of the Mass, what words can we use to send our hearts and our thoughts heavenward to adore the Body and Blood of the Son of God present on the altar? The adorable Presence is placed upon the altar through the words of the priest as he repeats the description of the institution of the Mystery of Faith as given by the sacred writers themselves:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Cf. 1 Cor. 11, 23-25.



Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands and with eyes lifted toward heaven, unto Thee, O God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, did bless, break, and give to His disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this:

For This is My Body.

At this point the celebrant adores the Blessed Sacrament, elevates it so that the faithful can see and adore, and then he adores again. Then the priest consecrates the Precious Blood, continuing with the inspired words:

In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His Holy and venerable hands, and giving thanks to Thee, He blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: Take, and drink ye all of this:

For this is the chalice of My blood, of the new and eternal testament: the mystery of faith; which shall be shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.

Then he again adores the Blessed Sacrament, elevates the chalice, and adores again, saying as he does so, "As often as you do these things, you shall do them in remembrance of Me." The words of St. Francis come to our mind at this time and give expression of our sentiments at this sacred moment: "Let man be struck dumb, let the whole world tremble, the heavens themselves be amazed, when the Son of the living God lies upon the altar under the hands of the priest. O wonder of wonders! The only-begotten Son of God, the Lord of all creation, abases Himself so deeply that for man's salvation He deigns to conceal Himself under the form of a morsel of bread!"<sup>18</sup> Affirming our belief in the Real Presence of Christ on the Altar, we adore Him and praise Him and thank Him and beseech His mercy. Most of all, we thank Him and beseech His mercy because this act of transubstantiation has not only changed bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, but this Consecration has renewed the Sacrifice of the Cross, the sacrifice of our Redemption. "For by the 'transubstantiation' of bread into the Body of Christ and of wine into His Blood, His body and blood are both really present: now the eucharistic species under which He is present symbolize the actual separation of His body and Blood. Thus the commemorative representation of His death, which actually took place on Calvary, is repeated in every sacrifice of the altar, seeing that Jesus Christ is symbolically shown by separate symbols to be in a state of victimhood."<sup>19</sup>

After the Consecration, we should unite ourselves even more closely with the priest as he continues with the prayers of the Canon.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Meyer, James, O.F.M., *The Words of St. Francis*, p. 146, Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press 1952.

<sup>19</sup>Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*.

The prayer immediately following the Consecration mentions our participation in the intention of the celebrant as he offers the Supreme Victim to God. Since we are included in this prayer, we should be aware of the proper attitude of mind we should have for this remembrance. The Consecration itself has accomplished the act of sacrifice, but now we put into words our offering of this very Victim:

Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants and likewise Thy holy people, recalling the blessed Passion of the same Christ Thy Son, our Lord, together with His Resurrection from the grave, as also His glorious Ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy excellent majesty, of Thy gifts and presents, a pure victim, a holy victim, an immaculate victim, the holy bread of eternal life, and the chalice of everlasting salvation.

It is true that "Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more,"<sup>20</sup> nevertheless it is fitting that, according to His command, "Do this in remembrance of Me,"<sup>21</sup> His priest offer up this same sacrifice together with the faithful, "a holy nation, a purchased people."<sup>22</sup> In this prayer, then, we remind almighty God, that we, the faithful, are united with the priest in making this offering of His divine Son to His infinite majesty. With full appreciation of the Victim offered, the priest makes use of the Sign of the Cross symbolically as he states the characteristics of this Victim, "pure, holy, immaculate," hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. While offering this divine Victim to the divine majesty, the priest bows over the altar, mindful of his own sinfulness, and mentions several sacrifices of the Old Testament which prefigured the Great Sacrifice he now offers here on the altar.

Upon which do Thou deign to look with favorable and gracious countenance, and receive them, as Thou didst deign to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy high priest Melchisedech offered unto Thee, a holy sacrifice, an unspotted victim.

As these patriarchs offered gifts that were imperfect and figurative, but yet were found acceptable and pleasing to God because of the pure and devout sentiments with which they were offered, we pray that our disposition of mind and heart may be in keeping with the holiness and purity of the Gift we offer.

That we may understand the role of the angels in our prayers and sacrifices, we should recall the words of St. John in the Apocalypse: "And (an) angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he might offer

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martyrs were mentioned, so now in this prayer after the Consecration, the specific names of fourteen saints, seven male and seven female, are mentioned. These are the names of martyrs who were especially honored in Rome during the first few centuries of the Church.

The last prayer of the Canon reaffirms most emphatically the source of all the blessings and graces that we have been pleading for from God. This source is none other than Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Victim Himself: "for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus."<sup>80</sup> This Mediator we acknowledge as the bestower of "all good things."

By whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, sanctify, vivify, bless, and bestow upon us all these good things.

Then after making the Sign of the Cross over the Body and Blood of Christ three times, while saying the words just mentioned, the celebrant uncovers the chalice, picks up the Sacred Host, and makes the Sign of the Cross with It over the cup of the chalice three times, and twice outside the cup, saying the concluding words,

Through Him and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory. World without end. Amen.

As he comes to the end of the prayer, the priest, holding the Sacred Host in his right hand, elevates the chalice of Precious Blood slightly in both hands, and immediately sets it down again on the altar and covers it with the pall. This last action shows the proximity to the Communion and could be taken to signify the showing of the Sacred Species to the faithful in order that they might long the more earnestly to receive their Savior in Holy Communion. This conclusion reflects the thought of St. Paul: "For from him and through him and unto him are all things."<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> 1 Tim. 2, 5.  
<sup>81</sup> Rom. 11, 36.

(To be continued)



"Blood of Christ, inebriate me."

Father Regis F. Marshall, O.F.M.

Water constitutes the greater portion of our planet. Philosophers of ancient days even advanced the opinion that all substance could be reduced to water. Man himself is about 80 percent water. Out of control water can become a fright. Moonsoons, typhoons, and floods are a constant threat to man. A lack of water prematurely ages the face of the earth leaving a tired leathery look on its terrain. Without water our sphere would be a cloddy corpse. Nevertheless, what a benediction we have in water! It is the refreshing, invigorating water of a spring rain that awakens a dormant nature slumbering silently beneath its blanket of sod. The same rain cleanses and scours the earth of the ugly residue of a persevering winter. Water initiates a welcomed compromise with the dust of a midsummer's day. What a luxury water is for the battle weary soldier! How necessary, despite arguments to the contrary, for the toddlers just in from the sand-box! How carefully does not the surgeon lave with it! How awesome and indispensable is the role of water at Baptism! Finally how adorable is water in its mingling with wine, when at the august moment of Consecration at Mass, the contents of the chalice is changed into the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ! He was the same Christ, the Redeemer of the world, Who, from the hill of salvation, cried out, "I thirst!"

The beauty of the Garden of Paradise owed much of its enchanting beauty to water. With the sin of our first parents Eden became a strange, barren land, a foreign territory. Innocence was blotted by an irremovable stain. Adam now possessed the jaded look of a sinner desperately in need of a cleansing. Of itself water could not supply the detergent power. However, God in His paternal goodness did not abandon Adam. From the beginning punishment was blended with promise. Hope, expectancy, and longing were injected into the horarium of Adam's life. But this attitude too could not wash away his guilt. Has anyone prayed more earnestly than David for such a cleansing? Despite an undiluted sincerity his lavabo still left its tattle tale gray. The argument was simple. God was offended. An infinite ransom was demanded. God's inscrutable plan called for the shedding of the Blood of Christ, the God-Man. Without this shedding there was to be



no remission of sin. The contract between God and man could be signed only with the Blood of the Lamb. Christ willingly attached His signature, not with any cryptic letters, but in a language all could readily understand. One does not need a dictionary to decipher the sufferings of Christ. Without the Precious Blood the unhappy would be more unhappy. With it there is new life in a wondrous revival, an incomparable transfusion. If the deluge in the days of Noah was an enormous downpouring of the wrath of God, now in torrents of affection, in a Niagara of Love, God sheds His Blood that our sinful nature might be lifted from the troughs of our abysmal nothingness to the very crest of Heavenly glory. As Father Faber so beautifully phrases it, "Everything that is holy on earth, is either the leaf, bud, blossom, or fruit of the Blood of Jesus". So fertile is this precipitation that the earth is made more beautiful than the Paradise of old. What dignity is now added to our planet in the shedding of God's Blood. This is its native place. Its mystical shedding in every Holy Mass makes of this earth a revolving paten, a spinning chalice, an object of adoration to every angel. Because the ransom has been paid in full we can now trustfully pray, "Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean". Because the Good Lord always answers a contrite prayer with, "I will, be thou madest clean", (Matt. 8:3) do we continue to pray, "O Christ, the exemplar of all martyrs. Who didst shed Thy Blood for me in a sevenfold offering, and daily, not seven but seventy times seven in the Sacrifices throughout the world, teach me to cry out in humble imitation of You, 'I thirst'".

Without the Precious Blood our world would have been a blighted earth. Our address would still have been somewhere east of Eden. The dead would have been committed to the ground without hope. "I love you with all my heart" would have had but a social value. Hearts would have had to learn to beat another way. Like Lady Macbeth, in vain would we have looked for a detergent for our sins,

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand

Will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red."

(Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act III, Sc. II)

In consonance with our Franciscan heritage we believe that, precluding sin, we still would have possessed the Blood of Christ, so pure a treasure, still so precious. We might have had a Sacrament without a Sacrifice. But there was sin. The destiny of the Precious

Blood was changed. Through it the news of the Gospel became the good news, that Friday of the Passion a Good Friday.

Perhaps the joy on earth which most closely resembles that of Heaven is the knowledge that, in the sufferings of Christ and in the Precious Blood, I have the master key to happiness without end. My days are now lived in comparative quietude in the certitude that every shaft reaches its mark if that mark be God. Like Joseph, I too can wear a coveted multi-colored coat of virtue, one stained and dyed with the Blood of the Cross. In sighs of relief and gratitude I now realize that there is not a single blotch of sin, however odious, that cannot be bleached in the Blood of Christ. There is no derelict, no hulk of a foundering ship, however tempestuous the seas, that cannot be buoyed by the Blood shed on Calvary. On Golgotha Linus pierced the Side of Christ and found it empty of its treasure. Never again would anyone, who sincerely thirsted, be denied and found wanting.

Cardinal Newman once wrote, "This may not be the age of saints, but all times are the age of martyrs". Our Franciscan ancestry did not hesitate to shed its blood in behalf of Christ. How earnestly did not our holy Father himself desire martyrdom. The Holy Land, stained with the Blood of Christ and given to the Friars for protection, has also tasted a goodly portion of Franciscan blood. In searching for models to imitate these are our heroes who were not afraid to emulate the prodigality of Christ.

The shedding of Christ's Blood was not happenstance nor fortuitous.

It was a premeditated offering, measured out drop by drop. The mystery is not that Christ so willingly shed His Blood and died for us but, why in living, so many hearts fail to beat for love of Him. Christ gave His own Blood, in return so often He is offered gall. The chalice of His Blood is lifted daily, we fail to stoop to offer but a cup of ordinary water. At the tomb of Lazarus when Christ shed tears it was said, "Behold how He loved him". We at times like the indifferent Pilate standing in the courtyards of the world can say at most of Christ, "Behold the Man". Meteorologists inform us that the earth is getting warmer. If only the same could be said of human hearts. In the place of a cardiac coolness if only our hearts would beat in tune with the two hearts that beat as one, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. How eagerly do we not seek the aid of nature, her water currents, trade winds, and jet stream. Unless we become as little children Heaven will not be ours. We can become as little children by drawing our succour from that true Fountain of Youth, that Well-Spring of mercy and love, the Most Sacred Heart. Perhaps our day is in need of that good ole Saturday night bath where



in the confessional genuine heatitude is found. "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. 22:14)

In words of comfort and hope our Saviour tells us that "In My Father's house there are many mansions. Behold I go to prepare a place for you." We have all recieved this invitation. If you take a second glance at it you will note that this invitation is embossed in the Blood of Christ, punctuated with His five wounds, and sealed with a love beyond description. As we grow older we become more sensitive to the wind and the cold. So also an awareness of this unbounded love should make our continued devotion more sensitive, more personal, more intimate. Pray that the Blood of Christ may ensanguine your heart, empurple your deeds. In the Blood of Christ we have a crimson tide of mercy, the tidal wave of love, the whirlpool that ever attracts and draws. "And I if I be lifted up from this earth will draw all things to Myself." (John 12:32)

They have left Thee naked, O  
that they had!

This garment too I would they had  
denied.

Thee with Thyself they have too richly  
clad;

Opening the purple wardrobe in Thy  
side.

For Thee to wear, but this, of Thine  
own Blood.

(Richard Crashaw)

## You Have Wounded My Heart

*The Life of St. Charles of Sezze, Franciscan Lay Brother*

*Raphael Brown, Tertiary*

(Continued)

### 10. LITTLE COUNTRY — FLOWERS

What was Charles' way of life during those five years between the ages of fifteen and twenty, before he could enter the Franciscan Order? His autobiography gives us only a few glimpses into that period. Fortunately the testimony of witnesses in his Process of Beatification discloses several striking and charming anecdotes which the Saint's humility prevented him from recording.

We know that he spent the five years out in the fields and on the hills around Sezze, either farming or watching over flocks of sheep. Most of the time he was all alone, and he "greatly enjoyed solitude." Whenever he could go out alone, he was glad to do so, for thus he could give more time to prayer.

"When I went into the fields to do my work, I would attach the oxen to the plow, and before beginning to work, I would kneel on the ground, raise my mind and heart to God, and with hands joined I would pray the Our Father and Hail Mary with other prayers. And I would begin my work in the name of God or of Jesus, as St. Paul teaches (Col. 3:17), first making the Sign of the Cross, as my father had taught me."

While engaged in plowing when Charles heard the midday Angelus he would kneel down and pray, letting the placid oxen go on without him. As a matter of fact, those good-natured animals were so well trained by Charles—or by his guardian angel—that they would often continue plowing the fields even when their young master went off to pray or do some spiritual reading or take the discipline. Once he left them stolidly plowing away and went to attend Mass; on returning he found that they had plowed more than half the field as skillfully as if they had been guided by an expert hand.

The other shepherds and farm boys of the district liked Charles, but they also made fun of him when they saw him holding his rosary. They informed him that such things were all right for old folks who already had one foot in the grave, but not for healthy young men like him.

However, one winter day a startling incident made them change their



attitude toward him. A sudden rainstorm sent the shepherds running to the shelter of a shed. But they persuaded the kind-hearted Charles to go out in the rain and lead the dispersed flock to shelter. While he was doing them this favor, they played a practical joke on him by drinking all the wine in his flask and filling it with water. When he returned and took a drink, they burst into loud laughter. Charles calmly asked them why they were laughing and then offered them his flask. Finally his brother Francis took a drink from it—and discovered that it contained not water but first-quality wine, definitely superior to that which they had drunk from it before they filled it with water. When the rest of the shepherds tasted this mysterious new wine, they quickly stopped laughing and changed their opinion of Charles.

One evening in the hills far from a village or farmhouse, nine shepherds sat down for supper with Charles, but found that all they had to eat was some bread and one dead swallow. Charles insisted on cooking the bird himself and then asked the oldest one in the group to divide it into ten portions and to distribute them. The young men had a good laugh at this suggestion, but they adopted it and were amazed to discover that somehow there was quite enough meat for all ten hungry men. Moreover, the small remnants of water left in their flasks had changed into sufficient wine to quench their thirst.

On another occasion—it was a hot summer day—Charles found himself with several peasants in a dry and remote section without anything to drink. All were suffering intensely from thirst, but there was no stream or spring nearby. He urged them to trust in God. Then he went down into a completely dry ditch and cut away some tangled clumps of brushwood. Next he called to his companions to join him, and they were surprised to see a muddy pool growing before their eyes until it developed into a small stream of clear, fresh water that ran through the ditch.

## 11. THREE WARNINGS

Charles' twentieth birthday came and went—and still he did nothing about joining the Franciscan Order, as he had resolved to do five years before. For some reasons which he never clearly explained, he kept putting it off. He admitted frankly in his autobiography that his formerly burning ardor for the Franciscan life had "cooled off." Perhaps too he dreaded the opposition of some of his relatives to his becoming a lay brother.

However, in his words, "the hand of the Lord, who sees all, struck

"him forcibly three times, giving him three successive warnings or promptings.

The first, not long after his twentieth birthday in October, 1633, was a prolonged illness. For several months he lay weakly in bed, suffering from continual fever and very sharp pains in the stomach.

Apparently this sickness was not enough. One day, therefore, he suddenly saw before him the traditional figure of Death: a terrifying, moving skeleton with a long, sharp scythe, which it raised over him, all ready to deal him a fatal blow! While the thoroughly frightened young man shouted for help, he felt a ray of divine light strike through his soul and enlighten it: God wanted him to keep his promise. So he exclaimed aloud several times: "Yes, Lord! I do want to become a religious!"

Soon afterward he was quite well again. Yet he still put off taking the decisive step which he fully realized God wanted him to take.

The means which Providence used to give him the third sharp reminder was none other than his beloved oxen. But it was preceded by several minor warnings. One of the oxen was rather temperamental, and several times, while hitched to the plow, it took fright and stamped the other oxen into a reckless dash across the field. Each time this happened, Charles felt an inner voice telling him: "the Lord no longer wants you in the world!"

Then one day, just as Charles, standing between the oxen and the plow, was adjusting their harness, the animals suddenly dashed away, dragging him along. As he fell before the plow, in desperation he shouted the Holy Names: "Jesus! Mary!" And he saw the sharp plow "miraculously" rise up in the air and pass over his body without even touching him. After standing up, he knelt in prayer, thanking God for saving his life, and once more he promised to enter the Franciscan Order.

By this time an entire year had slipped by. Charles was now beginning his twenty-first year. His nearly fatal accident had occurred in October, 1634. But five months later—despite all three serious warnings—he had not yet made a formal application to join the Order. Years later he described his prolonged hesitancy as laziness.

Finally, one morning in February, 1635, as he was going out to the fields with his oxen and reciting some prayers on the way, the Blessed Mother of God appeared to him and said: "My son, if you want to keep your promise to me, enter the Order as soon as possible!"

After this heavenly apparition, which he called "a most pure intellectual vision," he remained in a kind of trance for quite a while, feeling ineffable consolation and a burning love for God in his heart.



Now at last the Blessed Virgin's intervention achieved what the illness, the vision of Death, and the accident in the fields failed to bring about: Charles decided to leave the world.

## 12. OBSTACLES

One morning soon afterward Charles went to the Franciscan Friary for confession. His mother used to encourage him to confess to the Friars by praising their great kindness. This time he spoke about his vocation to Father Bonaventure of Rome, who was "a very prudent and experienced man."

However, the priest was in no hurry to initiate the necessary formalities. Instead he stressed the gravity of such a decision and merely advised the young man to think it over prayerfully. As a matter of fact, this interview left Charles, in his own words, "little satisfied."

Next he confided in Brother Angelo of Sezze, a lay brother who had already helped many other youths to join the Order. But Brother Angelo only said that it was not the right time just then.

Finally Charles told his father and mother and older brothers about his plan. Despite their great affection for him and despite his major contribution to the support of the household, "with the help of the Lord, they consented," he wrote, "for they did not want to prevent me from doing good." His devout father would have been glad to see all his sons in the service of God.

The only member of Charles' immediate family who raised any objection was his nineteen-year old brother Giovanni Battista. The two were bound by warm mutual affection. But Charles overcame his opposition by telling him that he had promised God he would become a friar.

Having obtained his family's approval, Charles then went to his parish curate, Don Giuseppe Piacentini, a very apostolic theologian and preacher, and disclosed his vocation to him. On hearing about it, the worthy priest was greatly edified and exclaimed with unusual fervor (using St. Augustine's Latin phrase): "The ignorant and unschooled come and conquer Paradise, while we with our learning go down to Hell!" He therefore undertook to teach Charles what he needed to know to perform the duties of a lay brother, such as serving Mass.

However, in spite of his parents' consent, some of Charles' close relatives raised a storm of disapproval over his desire to be "a mere lay brother." As he put it, "these poor people had no other light than to see the vanities of the world, and in their opinion, for me to become a Franciscan Brother was a great humiliation for the whole family."

Charles effectively refuted their objections by pointing out that several of the best families of Sezze counted some Franciscan lay brothers among their sons, that the Order included some great Saints who had followed their Founder by not becoming priests, and finally that religious orders did not require that all their members be priests.

But the one influential person who was most strongly opposed to his decision was his mother's brother, a canon of the Sezze Cathedral named Don Francesco Macini, who was then serving in Rome in the court of Cardinal Antonio Barberini. This uncle sent word back from Rome that he simply would not hear of Charles' becoming a lay brother.

His opposition was a serious disappointment to the young man, who had been hoping that the canon's position of influence in the Church would be of great help to him in being accepted by the Franciscan Superiors. In fact Charles admitted that his uncle's unexpected opposition robbed him of his peace of heart, and as a result he now spent quite a few sleepless nights.

The uncle's next strategic move to shake Charles' resolution was to send him word through a mutual friend that he would actually transfer his canonate to his nephew if the latter would only change his mind. In other words, if the youth would become a secular priest, he would have a comfortable life-long position in the Church's service.

Charles' reaction to this seemingly tempting offer was characteristic. He said to himself: "Tell me, Giovan Carlo, if you were given the choice, would you rather be a cardinal of the Church or a poor friar of St. Francis?" And he replied—both to himself and to his uncle: "Without any regret at all I would give up being a Cardinal, and I would gladly take up the life of holy poverty in a religious order."

At about the same time, Charles had to deal with another threat to his vocation which he described as "no less dangerous." One day a close friend, in the course of a casual conversation, cleverly steered the talk to the subject of marriage and then openly urged Charles to marry a certain young lady. The future Saint quickly interrupted him and exclaimed forcefully: "Take care not to mention to me again what you have just spoken of!" This brusque reply left the friend utterly speechless, and he walked off without saying another word.

At this point Charles had encountered so many obstacles to his vocation that he felt he was "crossing an ocean of troubles, like a ship without sails or oars, battered by storms, and guided only by Providence." Looking back later on his trials, he realized that "when we want to undertake great and important projects, God does not wish things to go easily and pleasantly but laboriously, in order that our undertakings may be based on the solid rock of virtue."



It was now Lent, and his troubles were still not over. Both he and his favorite brother Giovanni Battista fell ill. Charles soon recovered but his brother's condition became so serious that the doctor gave up all hope, and the young man was given the last Sacraments.

One day while Charles and his mother were sorrowfully preparing the clothes for the dying brother's funeral, she said to him, weeping: "My son, if your brother dies, you cannot join the Order, for there is no one else to support us. Your father is old now, and the other three brothers and two sisters are children. Think what will happen to us without you two!"

Although Charles was sorry to see his good mother so grief-stricken, her words did not disturb him, and he simply urged her to have confidence in the Blessed Virgin's help. He also reminded her how, after a younger brother had been born deformed, her prayers to the merciful Madonna had been rewarded in a few days by the complete disappearance of the baby's deformity.

Charles told his mother he would be back soon, and he went out to a little shrine called "The Madonna of the Support," on a path leading down to the plain. Whenever he passed by there, he would greet the Blessed Mother with a Hail Mary and Hail Holy Queen, adding an Our Father in honor of the Child Jesus in her arms. This time Charles knelt before the holy image and prayed fervently and confidently for his brother's recovery: "O Most Holy Madonna, I will not leave here until you cure him for me, so that I can keep my promise to you." For quite a while he remained on his knees, until he understood interiorly that his request had been granted. At home he found his brother already improved, and within a few days Giovanni Battista was well again.

Now as Lent was ending, Charles had two encouraging experiences. One night in a vision he saw himself at the bottom of a deep pit filled with brambles and thorns. For a long time he struggled manfully to get out, but could not advance a yard. Tired and perspiring he suddenly saw two holy Franciscans in the habit of the Reformed Roman Province. They said to him very gently and kindly: "Son, what are you doing here, all out of breath?" He answered: "Fathers, I am trying to get out of this place, and I can't!" Then each of the friars very compassionately grasped one of his hands, and in a second they lifted him out and set him down on a beautiful plain. In later years when he described this vision to his Franciscan friends, they were convinced that the two friars were none other than St. Francis and St. Anthony of Padua.

Soon afterward, while going with his oxen from one field to another,

he met two Franciscans on their way to Rome. They gave him their usual greeting. "Thanks be to God! Praised be Jesus Christ!" Walking along they talked with sincere fervor about the Kingdom of God. Charles then revealed his plans to them, asking for their advice. They urged him to go to the headquarters of the Province in Rome on the coming Octave of Easter, for novices were due to be received then. Charles was deeply moved by this providential meeting, which he considered a special grace from God. He became all the more convinced of it when he noticed that his beloved oxen, who were usually very nervous when near strangers, remained perfectly gentle and calm as long as the two friars accompanied them.

Charles decided to go to Rome on the Sunday after Easter.

### 13. TWO TRIPS TO ROME

On the appointed day Charles set out for the fifty-mile journey to Rome. An older brother bound for Nettuno accompanied him part of the way and then asked a local man who was also going to the big city to guide Charles. This man was glad to be of help when he learned that his companion was on his way to enter the service of God.

Charles had been to Rome only once; in 1625, when he was twelve years old, his family had made a Holy Year pilgrimage to the Eternal City. Now he was led to the Albergo del Paradiso, (which still exists) near the Piazza del Paradiso and the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle.

The first thing he did was to visit his uncle, who gave him a friendly welcome and once more tried to persuade him to become a priest, claiming that he would not be able to perform the strenuous duties of a lay brother. Together they went to the historic Friary of San Francesco a Ripa in Trastevere, which was built on the location of the medieval hospital where St. Francis himself had resided during several of his visits to Rome.

There, however, the friars informed them that novices were not being accepted just then, and that Charles would be notified by mail when to return to be received into the Order.

The Saint went home with a happy heart, and endured meekly mockery of some young men who, on seeing him back again, made fun of him and of his plans.

After a short interval the fateful letter arrived from Rome. Charles' loving mother induced him to stay one day longer, so that the whole family could gather for one last meal together, which he said "was for us like Easter!"

At the end of the meal his mother, "wounded" (as he put it) "by a



mother's love," said to him sadly: "My son, I think this is the last time we will eat together, and I don't know whether I will see you again. So I beg you, by that love I have always had for you, to give me something you use all the time, that will remind me of you when I see it and console me in my sorrow." He tried to cheer her up, and gave her his rosary.

By a happy Providence, his close friend Pietro planned to go to Rome on the same day. While Charles was joining the Reformed Franciscans, Pietro was entering the Capuchin Order. The two young men therefore left Sezze together early in the morning.

In Rome both took lodgings in the Albergo del Paradiso and then went to see Charles' uncle, who informed him that he had arranged everything with the Franciscan Superiors for his reception the next day. The uncle walked back to the inn with them, and commended them warmly to the inn-keeper who was a good friend of his.

Charles was surprised and happy to find that his uncle, whose opposition had in past months made him lose sleep and shed tears, had now completely changed his attitude and was helping him to carry out his intention to be a lay brother. He gratefully attributed this welcome change to the action of the Holy Spirit.

The next morning Charles went to San Francesco a Ripa, accompanied by his friend Pietro. There he was interviewed by one of the Superiors and then presented to the board of definitors and the Father Provincial. All went well until they examined his legal documents (baptismal certificate, etc.), in one of which one of the sharp-eyed Superiors found a slight technicality missing. After an animated discussion they decided that Charles would have to obtain a new certificate signed by a notary, and they sent him to one whose office was near the Ponte Sisto.

As two witnesses had to sign the document, Charles' friend Pietro told the notary that he would be one and that later in the day he could have an acquaintance from Sezze staying at their inn sign it too. This not-quite-legal suggestion so angered the notary that he accused them both of being spies sent by the police to trap him into falsifying a document, and he threatened to have them arrested and sent to jail. When he went out to call the police, Charles and Pietro ran away. Both were frightened and Charles was quite discouraged.

Providentially they met his uncle on the street, and he conducted them to another notary, a young man from Sezze who had gone to school with Charles.

Then the two went back to San Francesco a Ripa—only to be told that the new document lacked a seal! But one of the Superiors ruled

that that detail could be taken care of later and that Charles should spend the night there.

Noticing that a poor working boy was being received into the Order with him, Charles generously bought for him a few things that he needed, and also purchased the material for his habit.

The next day Charles and his friend Pietro visited the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. On leaving he gave away his last coins to some beggars at the church door, "for the love of God." Then the two went on to the Shrine of the Madonna della Vittoria. There he fervently commended himself to the Blessed Mother, praying to her to grant him victory over his spiritual enemies during this year's novitiate, and promising her that after being professed he would come back to her Shrine to express his thanks to her.

At midnight he was summoned to attend his first night office in choir, after which the friars took the discipline with iron chains. Charles found it an inspiring experience.

The next morning before he was due to leave for the novitiate, his uncle came to make one last attempt to have Charles become a priest by urging the Father Superior to tell the young man to return to Sezze and study for a year before being enrolled as a seminarian. The friar replied: "Let's see what *he* says. I will agree to it if he is willing."

During this last test of his perseverance while still in the world, Charles was aware of an interior voice telling him: "If you retrace your steps backward, your father will soon die—and then it will be farewell forever to the religious life!"

Therefore Charles answered firmly: "Very Reverend Father, if you consent, I wish to receive the habit now and to be a lay brother."

The friar gave him a warm embrace and exclaimed: "Go ahead, my son! God bless you and go with you!"

After thanking him, Charles said goodbye to his uncle and to his dear friend Pietro.

Now at last, on May 12, 1635, he was ready to leave Rome—and the world—and begin the new life to which God had called and guided him.

As he later wrote in his autobiography, gratefully summing up the many graces he had received during this protracted period of his vocation, God "had been preparing in my soul a secret and rapid and short road to ascend to divine contemplation."

(To be continued)



## PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS SOLANO

*By Sister M. Josephine, F. SS. S.*

What do I have, Lord Jesus, that you did not give me?  
What do I know that you did not teach me?  
What can I do if you are not near me?  
What am I worth, if you are not united to me?

Forgive me the sins I have committed against You,  
For without any merit of mine was I created by You,  
And without any asking of mine redeemed by You!

A great thing it was for You to have redeemed me;  
But no less powerful will it be for You to forgive me.  
For all the blood You shed

And the cruel death You suffered  
Was not for the angels who praise You,  
But for me and all sinners who offend You!

If I have denied You, allow me to confess You.  
If I have insulted You, allow me to praise You.  
If I have offended You, allow me to serve You.  
For it is death rather than life to live without spending  
myself entirely for You!

*(A translation from the Spanish made by, Father Leonard-M. Puech, O.F.M.)*

## COLORED LIGHTS

*By Sister Teresa-Clare, O.S.F.*

Your love is as the sunlight in my life, dear Mother Mine,  
My life—a stain glass window—without beauty till you shine;  
The pictures on my window are shapeless, drab, and gray,  
Till your love-shine falls upon them chasing all the gloom away,  
My varicolored actions then take on a glorious hue,  
As work or prayer or sufferings are sweetly shared with you.  
Place your Jesus in my temple-heart and let His love shine out  
Through my worthless stain glass window upon all who stand without.  
May they see the life of Jesus upon my window pane,  
As He lives and shines out from me making all the figures plain.  
Shine in upon my window with Marian beauty, Mother Mine,  
Shine out, O love of Jesus, with a beauty all divine.

## Crosses Over Nagasaki: IX

*Father Gerard Huber, O.F.M.*

*(Continued)*

### *Ox Carts Pass Through the Cities*

With tranquil joy the prisoners in Kyoto looked forward to the day of their martyrdom. No one could notice the least sign of fear or despondency among them, there was no word of complaint, nor of hope for escape. The damp walls of the prison re-echoed only to their prayers and hymns of thanksgiving. They encouraged and served one another with loving reverence as persons singularly favored by God. Even the prison guards, who had grown hard and unfeeling because of their continuous association with criminals, became gentle and respectful in the face of serene heroism. Feeling deeply the injustice of the situation, they presented a public petition for the release of the missionaries. The petition, as might be expected, was politely ignored by the court officials.

Meanwhile Christians from ever corner of Japan came hurrying to Kyoto, asking permission to see the prisoners and to speak with them. Permission was not granted; but they were at least allowed to rent houses near the prison. Many who could find no lodging simply remained in the prison yard, protecting themselves against the biting cold as well as they could. They showed no fear of any possible consequences of their open confession of faith; and in fact, no one had the heart to molest them. Many high dignitaries were among these loyal Christians. For example, there was the secretary of the governor of Osaka, a well-born Japanese known only by his Christian name of Victor. In virtue of his office he had free access to the prisoners at any time. And in fact, he visited them daily, making every effort to alleviate their physical discomfort and to assure them of the fidelity of his fellow Christians.

Sakon, the twenty-year old son of Governor Maeda of Kyoto, was a man distinguished by prudence and noble military virtues. He stood in high favor with Hideyoshi, who had appointed him daimyo of Tamba only a short time before. On receiving news of the persecution, he summoned his younger brother, Constantine, and his cousin, Michael. With deliberate emphasis he said: "We three bear the name of Christian. Up to now we have concealed our faith; but now we must declare it openly. It is my decision to go to Kyoto and



proclaim my Christian faith. Will you follow me?" He had scarcely finished speaking when his brother and cousin cried out as if in one voice: "This has been our wish for a long time! Come, let us go at once!" Without delay they had their horses saddled and rode at a gallop toward Kyoto. In Fushimi, where they rested their horses for a while, they met the famous hero, Takayama Ukon, who had come from Kanazawa for the same purpose of declaring himself a Christian. When they presented themselves to the Governor of Kyoto, however, they met with firm opposition. He flatly refused to allow them to take any step that could seriously harm the welfare of Japan as a whole. In point of fact, if these men from the best families of the country had frankly appeared before Hideyoshi and asserted their loyalty to the condemned foreign priests, certainly they would have aroused his anger and precipitated a wholesale massacre throughout the country. Bowing to the level-headed prudence of the governor, they remained quietly in Kyoto, contenting themselves with visiting the prisoners and trying to ease their situation as much as possible.

On January 3, shortly before daybreak, a court official appeared and announced to the prisoners that their ears and noses were to be cut off that day as a sign of disgrace. Scarcely had he made the announcement when the catchpoles came and led the prisoners to Kamikyo, the place of execution outside the city. There they were lined up in row and the sentence was read to them. Thereupon they were led one by one to the center of the square where their left ear-lobe was cut off with a sharp knife. As they were bracing themselves for the next ordeal, a courier rode up and forbade any further mutilation of the prisoners. This order had been issued by the intrepid Ishida, who still hoped to save the prisoners, or at least to have the death sentence commuted to banishment. He therefore took the bold step of countermanding Hideyoshi's order for the mutilation of the noses.

When the condemned men had been led back to prison, Victor, secretary to the governor of Osaka, made the catchpoles give him the severed ear-lobes. He wrapped them in a cloth of fine linen and sent them to Father Organtino in Osaka as precious relics. When Father Organtino received these bloody testimonials of faith, he thanked God for the grace bestowed upon his fellow-Christians and moistened the blood-stained linen with his tears. Then he summoned the Christians of Osaka, told them that the first stage of the prisoners' martyrdom had been accomplished, and showed them the testimony of the severed flesh. His voice trembling with emotion, the aged missionary cried out: "These relics will strengthen the faith of Christians throughout the world. They are a precious treasure; so precious, indeed, that they

purchase heaven. You faithful and blessed confessor! In a few days the morning dew will fall upon your mangled bodies, and the lowly earth will receive your ashes. Yet these relics the world will keep and honor always and without end!" Then he placed the relics on the altar of the church and prayed aloud: "Our Lord and Savior, turn Thine eyes upon us. These relics are the first-fruits of the Church in Japan. They are the first testimony of our labors for Thee in this country. May the blood which these blessed men have just shed bring forth a multitude of Christians in Japan, and may it be to the salvation of all people in this beloved country!"

Ishida reported to Hideyoshi that the first part of the sentence had been duly executed. Noticing that Hideyoshi seemed to be in a mild and reasonable mood, Ishida again pressed for the release of the prisoners. The reaction of the Taikosama was favorable, and Ishida left the palace with high hope for his prisoners. "If nobody stirs the water," says a Japanese proverb, "it will settle and clear up." This seemed to be the case with Hideyoshi. Gradually the turmoil in his soul had calmed down, and with quiet had come clear thinking and insight. That was the way Ishida had left him. But then came Jakuin and his accomplices, and the water was stirred again. The next morning Ishida held in his hands the following edict: "These men have lied in saying that they were ambassadors of the governor of the Philippines. They came to Japan and have remained here without permission. They have transgressed our official prohibition and have openly taught the heresy of the Christian religion. Therefore they are to be crucified in Nagasaki without delay."

Every statement in the decree contained an obvious lie. Ishida knew it—and in fact so did every well-informed Japanese. Clearly, hatred of Christianity alone had dictated the terms.

The noble Ishida, who had made so many efforts to secure the release of the men whom he knew to be innocent, was now forced to act. He was quite convinced of the injustice of the whole affair, but there was nothing left for him to do but proceed with the execution of the sentence. This he did with a heavy heart.

According to the custom of the country, Ishida had the sentence of the Shogun written on a large board fastened to a pole. It was to be carried in front of the condemned men on their way to execution. The prisoners were led out of jail, and seated by threes on ox carts. They were thus to be driven through the streets of the city. According to Hideyoshi's intention, this spectacle was to serve as a warning to those who might feel inclined to embrace Christianity. However, it turned out that the very opposite effect was achieved. The progress



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through the city became a magnificent triumphal procession, something to rival the most spectacular demonstrations ever given to Hideyoshi. The entire population lined the streets of the capital. Hundreds upon hundreds of Christians followed the carts, either praying the rosary or singing hymns. As often as the soldiers tried to disperse them, they replied: "We, too, are Christians and wish to die together with these men."

The more streets the procession passed through, the longer it grew, so that the pagans who were standing along the way were filled with wonder. "What a powerful effect this Christian religion has on the heart of a man," one of the onlookers remarked. No word of ridicule or hatred passed the lips of the pagans; there was nothing but admiration among them as they looked into the radiantly joyful faces of the condemned men. In fact, many of the pagan bystanders were so powerfully impressed by the obvious exultation of the Christians that they joined the procession, declaring that they, too, had chosen to follow Christ.

Thus the procession through the city, intended by Hideyoshi to humiliate the prisoners and to make them a spectacle of shame and contempt, became instead the great missionary success of the Franciscan Friars. The Christians became stronger and deeper in their faith; the pagans, if they did not actually attach themselves to the Christians, were filled with admiration at the power of the Christian ideal. The bonzes, however, who had instigated the persecution, hid themselves, realizing only too well that they had defeated their own purpose. In the vain hope of putting an end to the affair, some of them besought Ishida to stop the procession, since it was proving to be a triumph for Christianity. Ishida knew this very well; therefore he deliberately ordered the prisoners to be led through the city for a still longer time. It was the only revenge he could still take against the evil, unscrupulous Jakuin and his like-minded followers.

As the persecution was nearing its end, Father Peter Baptist raised his eyes and looked upon the large group of Christians and pagans following the carts. He drew himself up as far as his bonds permitted, and in a clear, ringing voice he preached a short admonition to the Christians, and strove to console them in their grief. Following his example, Father Martin also preached. The substance of his sermon was written down by one of the Christians and preserved.

"Today," said Father Martin, "God has given me and my fellow prisoners a grace so great that words cannot describe it. The honor of martyrdom has been awarded to us, through no merit of our own. From ancient times, the saints of the Church, among them our holy

Father Saint Francis, have cherished in their hearts an ardent desire for the crown of martyrdom. But God did not grant this grace to all of them. Yet, to us who possess no merit or value, this crown is about to be given. Oh, what happiness! What inexpressible happiness! We left our native country to come to a strange land; we experienced sorrow, pain, privations of every kind; we were seized and cast into prison with nothing to protect us from the bitter cold but these thin garments. But if we compare all that we have endured so far with the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, our portion of suffering is exceedingly small—less than a single hair from the tail of the ox that draws our cart. Among the saints of former times there are many who died on the cross, or were thrown from a rocky precipice, who were decapitated or cast into boiling oil, who were burned in fire or drowned in water. But they all patiently endured their torments and met death with joy for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been condemned to crucifixion, the same penalty that was inflicted upon our divine Saviour. He sweat blood in the garden of Gethsemani; He was seized by rough soldiers and dragged before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate; He endured countless insults and sufferings, then died for us, nailed to the cross. My dear brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and shed His precious Blood for us sinners. This we must never forget. Let us show our gratitude to Him by our fidelity. Let us pray for grace; let us ask Mary, the Refuge of Sinners, to help us, and let us implore the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier and of all the angels and saints. In any case, let us not trust to our own strength. Let us consider all suffering as expiation for our sins, and let us strive for the eternal joys of heaven."

These words filled the Christians with deep sorrow, but at the same time urged them to draw closer to the missionaries. They crowded around the carts in such numbers that they forced the drivers to halt. The officials, who were themselves wholly in sympathy with the prisoners, did not interfere but rather allowed the Christians to take leave of their spiritual fathers as slowly as they wished. When at last it began to grow dark, they gently pushed the people to the sides of the street and led the prisoners back to jail.

As the condemned stepped down from the carts, Paul Milki went up to the Franciscan priests, embraced them, and expressed his gratitude that the divine mercy had allowed him the grace to meet martyrdom in the shadow and under the guidance of the sons of Saint Francis. The soldiers and officials wondered much about this strange kind of gratitude, and one of them murmured: "What kind of people



are these Christians! What reason can they have to rejoice in suffering and disgrace?"

The next morning before sunrise the prisoners were placed on pack-horses and taken to nearby Fushimi, where they were again led through the streets of the city. From Fushimi they were taken to Osaka where they were placed in the prison in the upper city, since night had already fallen. On the following day Osaka, too, witnessed the spectacular procession through the streets.

A young boy who bore the Christian name of Maximus, the son of Cosmas Takeya, had been living with the Franciscans, but Father Peter Baptist had sent him home to Osaka on account of illness. When the prisoners were led through the streets of Osaka, the sister of Maximus hurried into the room where the sick boy was lying, knelt at his bedside and wept silently. Although she was unable to speak because of the intensity of her grief, the boy quickly surmised that the procession was about to pass the house. He rose from his bed, dressed himself, and rushed out into the street. He forced his way through the crowd and caught up with the cart on which Father Peter Baptist was sitting. The boy called out in a loud voice, while tears streamed down his pale cheeks: "Shimpusama (priest), why do you leave me behind all alone?" Then he turned to the cart on which the three boys were sitting and called to them: "Louis, did you forget what we promised one another?" The boy was in such sorrow and confusion that he did not even wait for an answer, but ran on to the cart on which his father was sitting. "I am a Christian, too," he cried, "and I want to die with my father. Please, take me—please let me die with my father!" All who saw the anguish of the child were moved to tears. Finally a soldier seized his arms and tried to draw him away from the side of the cart to which he was clinging. But the child resisted so stubbornly that the soldier lost control of himself and struck him across the face. He fainted from the blow, and his mother, who had at last succeeded in reaching him, picked him up and carried him home. From that day on the boy's health declined rapidly, and he died on the same day and at the same hour that his father was crucified in Nagasaki.

*(To be continued)*