

Alter Christus

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

Catechism on the Priesthood and the Holy Mass

By Saint John Vianney

Catechism on the Priesthood

My children, we have come to the Sacrament of Orders. It is a Sacrament which seems to relate to no one among you, and which yet relates to everyone. This Sacrament raises man up to God. What is a priest! A man who holds the place of God - a man who is invested with all the powers of God. “Go,” said Our Lord to the priest; “as My Father sent Me, I send

you. All power has been given Me in Heaven and on earth. Go then, teach all nations... He who listens to you, listens to Me; he who despises you despises Me.” When the priest remits sins, he does not say, “God pardons you”; he says, “I absolve you.” At the Consecration, he does not say, “This is the Body of Our Lord;” he says, “This is My Body.” St. Bernard tells us that everything has come to us through Mary; and we

may also say that everything has come to us through the priest; yes, all happiness, all graces, all heavenly gifts. If we had not the Sacrament of Orders, we should not have Our Lord. Who placed Him there, in that tabernacle? It was the priest. Who was it that received your soul, on its entrance into life? The priest. Who nourishes it, to give it strength to make its pilgrimage? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, by washing that soul, for the last time, in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest - always the priest. And if that soul comes to the point of death,

who will raise it up, who will restore it to calmness and peace? Again the priest. You cannot recall one single blessing from God without finding, side by side with this recollection, the image of the priest.

Go to confession to the Blessed Virgin, or to an angel; will they absolve you? No. Will they give you the Body and Blood of Our Lord? No. The Holy Virgin cannot make her Divine Son descend into the Host. You might have two hundred angels there, but they could not absolve you. A priest, however simple he may

Saint John Vianney

St. John Vianney, also called Curé d'Ars, (born May 8, 1786, Dardilly, France - died August 4, 1859, Ars), French priest who was renowned as a confessor and for his supernatural powers. He is the patron saint of parish priests.

He was ordained in 1815 and was made assistant priest at Écully, France. In 1818 he became priest of the small village of Ars, which he made a model parish and from which reports of his holiness and his supernatural powers soon spread. He was known for his devotion to the Virgin Mary and to St. Philomena and was dedicated to the sacrament of reconciliation (confession)



for his parishioners. From 1824 he suffered attacks that he believed were caused by the Devil, who allegedly on one occasion set fire to Vianney's bed. By 1827 Ars had become a pilgrimage site, and, every year from 1845 until Vianney's death, about 20,000 persons visited Ars to see Vianney and especially to make their confession to him. The holy curé spent as many as 12 or 15 hours daily in his confessional. He was canonized by Pope Pius XI.

be, can do it; he can say to you, "Go in peace; I pardon you." Oh, how great is a priest! The priest will not understand the greatness of his office till he is in Heaven. If he understood it on earth, he would die, not of fear, but of love. The other benefits of God would be of no avail to us without the priest. What would be the use of a house full of gold, if you had nobody to open you the door! The priest has the key of the heavenly treasures; it is he who opens the door; he is the steward of the good God, the distributor of His wealth. Without the priest, the Death and Passion of Our Lord would be of no avail. Look at the heathens: what

has it availed them that Our Lord has died? Alas! they can have no share in the blessings of Redemption, while they have no priests to apply His Blood to their souls!

The priest is not a priest for himself; he does not give himself

absolution; he does not administer the Sacraments to himself. He is not for himself, he is for you. After God, the priest is everything. Leave a parish twenty years without priests; they will worship beasts. If the missionary Father and I were to go away, you would say, "What can we do in this church? there is no Mass;

Our Lord is no longer there: we may as well pray at home." When people wish to destroy religion, they begin by attacking the priest, because where there is no longer any priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no longer any sacrifice there is no religion.

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A priest, however simple he may be, can do it.

When the bell calls you to church, if you were asked, "Where are you going?" you might answer, "I am going to feed my soul." If someone were to ask you, pointing to the tabernacle, "What is that golden door?" "That is our storehouse, where the true Food of our souls is

kept.” “Who has the key? Who lays in the provisions? Who makes ready the feast, and who serves the table?” “The priest.” “And what is the Food?” “The precious Body and Blood of Our Lord. “ O God! O God! how Thou hast loved us! See the power of the priest; out of a piece of bread the word of a priest makes a God. It is more than creating the world. Someone said, “Does St. Philomena, then, obey the Curé of Ars?” Indeed, she may well obey him, since God obeys him.

If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I should salute the priest before I saluted the angel. The latter is the friend of God; but the priest holds His place. St. Teresa kissed the ground where a priest had passed. When you see a priest, you should say, “There is he who made me a child of God, and opened Heaven to me by holy Baptism; he who purified me after I had sinned; who gives nourishment to my soul.” At the sight of a church tower, you may say, “What is there in that place?” “The Body of Our Lord.” “Why is He there?” “Because a priest has been there, and has said holy Mass. ”

What joy did the Apostles feel after the Resurrection of Our Lord, at

seeing the Master whom they had loved so much! The priest must feel the same joy, at seeing Our Lord whom he holds in his hands. Great value is attached to objects which have been laid in the drinking cup of the Blessed Virgin and of the Child Jesus, at Loretto. But the fingers of the priest, that have touched the adorable Flesh of Jesus Christ, that have been plunged into the chalice which contained His Blood, into the pyx where His Body has lain, are they not still more precious? The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus. When you see the priest, think of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Catechism on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

All good works together are not of equal value with the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men, and the holy Mass is the work of God. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison; it is the sacrifice that man makes of his life to God; the Mass is the sacrifice that God makes to man of His Body and of His Blood. Oh, how great is a priest! if he understood himself he would die. God obeys him; he speaks two words, and Our Lord comes down from Heaven at his voice, and shuts

Himself up in a little Host. God looks upon the altar. "That is My well-beloved Son," He says, "in whom I am well-pleased." He can refuse nothing to the merits of the offering of this Victim. If we had faith, we should see God hidden in the priest like a light behind a glass, like wine mingled with water.

After the Consecration, when I hold in my hands the most holy Body of Our Lord, and when I am in discouragement, seeing myself worthy of nothing but Hell, I say to myself, "Ah, if I could at least take Him with me! Hell would be sweet with Him; I could be content to remain suffering there for all eternity, if we were together. But then there would be no more Hell; the flames of love would extinguish those of justice." How beautiful it is. After the Consecration, the good God is there as He is in Heaven. If man well understood this mystery, he would

die of love. God spares us because of our weakness. A priest once, after the Consecration, had some little doubt whether his few words could have made Our Lord descend upon the Altar; at the same moment he saw the Host all red, and the corporal tinged with blood.

If someone said to us, "At such an hour a dead person is to be raised to life," we should run very quickly to see it. But is not the Consecration, which changes bread and wine

into the Body and Blood of God, a much greater miracle than to raise a dead person to life? We ought always to devote at least a quarter of an hour to preparing ourselves to hear Mass well; we ought to annihilate ourselves before God, after the example of His profound annihilation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist; and we should make our examination of conscience, for we must be in a state of grace to be able to assist properly

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at Mass. If we knew the value of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, or rather if we had faith, we should be much more zealous to assist at it.

My children, you remember the story I have told you already of that holy priest who was praying for his friend; God had, it appears, made known to him that he was in Purgatory; it came into his mind that he could do nothing better than to offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for his soul. When he came to the moment of Consecration, he took the Host in his hands and said, "O Holy and Eternal Father, let us make an exchange. Thou hast the soul of my friend who is in Purgatory, and I have the Body of Thy Son, Who is in my hands; well, do Thou deliver my friend, and I offer Thee Thy Son, with all the merits of His Death and Passion." In fact, at the moment of the elevation, he saw the soul of his friend rising to Heaven, all radiant with glory.

Well, my children, when we want to obtain anything from the good God, let us do the same; after Holy Communion, let us offer Him His well-beloved Son, with all the merits of His death and His Passion. He will not be able to refuse us anything.

Catechism on the Real Presence

Our Lord is hidden there, waiting for us to come and visit Him, and make our request to Him. See how good He is! He accommodates Himself to our weakness. In Heaven, where we shall be glorious and triumphant, we shall see him in all His glory. If He had presented Himself before us

Jesus is in the tabernacle to console us; and therefore we ought often to visit Him. How pleasing to Him is the short quarter of an hour that we steal from our occupations, from something of no use, to come and pray to Him, to visit Him, to console Him for all the outrages He receives!

in that glory now, we should not have dared to approach Him; but He hides Himself, like a person in a prison, who might say to us, "You do not see me, but that is no matter; ask of me all you wish

and I will grant it." He is there in the Sacrament of His love, sighing

and interceding incessantly with His Father for sinners. To what outrages does He not expose Himself, that He may remain in the midst of us! He is there to console us; and therefore we ought often to visit Him. How pleasing to Him is the short quarter of an hour that we steal from our occupations, from something of no use, to come and pray to Him, to visit Him, to console Him for all the outrages

He receives! When He sees pure souls coming eagerly to Him, He smiles upon them. They come with that simplicity which pleases Him so much, to ask His pardon for all sinners, for the outrages of so many ungrateful men. What happiness do we not feel in the presence of God, when we find ourselves alone at His feet before the holy tabernacles! "Come, my soul, redouble thy fervour; thou art alone adoring thy God. His eyes rest upon thee alone." This good Saviour is so full of love for us that He seeks us out everywhere.

Ah! if we had the eyes of angels with which to see Our Lord Jesus Christ,

who is here present on this altar, and who is looking at us, how we should love Him! We should never more wish to part from Him. We should

wish to remain always at His feet; it would be a foretaste of Heaven: all else would become insipid to us. But see, it is faith we want. We are poor blind people; we have a mist before our eyes. Faith alone can dispel this mist. Presently,

my children, when I shall hold Our Lord in my hands, when the good God blesses you, ask Him then to open the eyes of your heart; say to Him like the blind man of Jericho, "O Lord, make me to see!" If you say to Him sincerely, "Make me to see!" you will certainly obtain what you desire, because He wishes nothing but your happiness. He has His hands full of graces, seeking to whom to distribute them; Alas! and no one will have them. Oh, indifference! Oh, ingratitude! My children, we are most unhappy that we do not understand these things! We shall understand them well one day; but it will then be too late!

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Our Lord is there as a Victim; and a prayer that is very pleasing to God is to ask the Blessed Virgin to offer to the Eternal Father her Divine Son, all bleeding, all torn, for the conversion of sinners; it is the best prayer we can make, since, indeed, all prayers are made in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ. We must also thank God for all those indulgences that purify us from our sins... but we pay no attention to them. We tread upon indulgences, one might say, as we tread upon the sheaves of corn after the harvest. See, there are seven years and seven quarantines for hearing the catechism, three hundred days for reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Salve Regina, the Angelus. In short, the good God

multiplies His graces upon us; and how sorry we shall be at the end of our lives that we did not profit by them!

When we are before the Blessed Sacrament, instead of looking about, let us shut our eyes and our mouth; let us open our heart: our good God will open His; we shall go to Him, He will come to us, the one to ask, the other to receive; it will be like a breath from one to the other. What sweetness do we not find in forgetting ourselves in order to seek God! The saints lost sight of themselves that they might see nothing but God, and labor for Him alone; they forgot all created objects in order to find Him alone. This is the way to reach Heaven.



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