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CATHOLIC DOCTRINE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CATHOLIC POETRY

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts

by

Sister M. Hilda Stubna, C.S.A.
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Date 25 June 1963 Approved S. J. Sackett
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CATHOLIC DOCTRINE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN

CATHOLIC POETRY

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how effectively Catholic poets have utilized Catholic doctrine in their poetry.

I became interested in the topic through a study of Catholic poets in two courses; one in Modern Catholic Literature and the other in Modern Poetry. With the aid of bibliographies from these courses, and direct correspondence with many of the poets themselves, I procured and read all available poetry containing Catholic doctrine, to ascertain the phases of doctrine most commonly used. I found that the Eucharist, Mary, Prayer, Suffering, and Death were subjects chosen by the majority of poets. Having limited the study of doctrine, I limited the poets to be included to those who (a) had published books of poetry and not merely isolated poems in various magazines, and (b) had written on several of the doctrines utilized.

Having obtained the poems and poets to be included, I explained enough of the doctrine to make it understood by a non-Catholic and to make it pertinent to the poem in question. This proved to be the most difficult to accomplish since what seemed so obvious to me as a Catholic was inadequate explanation to a non-Catholic reader. Professor Sackett,

(a non-Catholic), proved his unusual counseling ability in his invaluable suggestions, questions, and discussions which helped to make this paper readable for both Catholic and non-Catholic alike. Careful guidance of a paper on theology is extremely necessary for the misuse of a word can jeopordize the validity of the doctrine and destroy the integrity of the thesis

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PREFACE

It is my purpose in the following thesis to demonstrate that there are at present several Catholic poets who carry the message of Catholic doctrine; that the use of doctrine in their poetry makes their work passionately emotional; and that this places them in the tradition of Catholic literature and establishes a common bond between themselves and their readers.

Sources which provided suggestions as to the poets to be studied were courses in Modern Catholic Literature (Marian College), Modern Poetry (Fort Hays Kansas State College); such Catholic periodicals as _Poetry_ (New York), _America_, and _Commonweal_; correspondence with several of the poets themselves. Poets who had published books were included to the exclusion of those who had appeared only in periodicals. I must confess that another criterion applied to the poets in this investigation was their literary quality, both as estimated by the reviewers and critics and as evident to me from the poems themselves. While the tradition of Faith is common to all Catholics certain poets have the ability to express their way of life more vibrantly and warmly than others.

Doctrine itself arouses a passionate emotion in Catholic writers, and this is enhanced by the Act of Faith required to accept it. In the words of Cardinal Newman, "this real assent is looked on as being the stronger, more

vivid idea, involving the entire man." This acceptance of doctrine fires the emotions of the poets who, in turn, reflect this passion in their poems.

Catholic doctrine not only places the poet in tradition but also provides a common bond between poet and reader; for a Catholic, then an explanation of the doctrine within the poetry is unnecessary. It is because I have directed this thesis toward the non-Catholic reader interested in Catholic poetry that I felt obliged to explain the doctrines which I found in the poems included in this thesis.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Monsignor Michael Moran for reading the thesis to check the theology. Furthermore, I am sincerely grateful to Mother M. Rosita, C.S.A. and her Council who made this study possible; to Sister M. Muriel, C.S.A. who taught me to enjoy poetry; to Mr. Marc Campbell for procuring the necessary books; to Sister Mary Ann, C.S.A. for proofreading and Sister M. Gabriella, C.S.A. for typing this thesis.

Grateful acknowledgment must likewise be given to my committee consisting of Doctor Clement Wood, Doctor Roberta Stout, Doctor Howard Reynolds, and Mr. Richard Marcus for their interest and constructive criticism. I owe special acknowledgment and a debt of gratitude to Doctor Samuel Sackett whose judgment, perseverance, and guidance brought this study to a satisfactory conclusion.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the centuries, Catholic literature has adapted its purposes -- which are to define, to defend, and to disseminate the teachings of Christ, the Word -- to the specific needs of the immediate era.[1] After the first Pentecost, the Evangelists wrote the divinely inspired Gospels to explain and spread the Word. Periodically thereafter heresies sprang up, such as Nestorianism and Manichaeism, and the Fathers of the Church, among them Augustine and Ambrose, defended the Word by their apologetical writings. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries comparatively little advancement was made in literature, but during the twelfth century a gradual literary awakening developed into the Golden Age of Catholic literature which was fostered by philosophers and poets as Albertus Magnus, Aquinas, Bernard, Bonaventure, Dante, and Duns Scotus. Since God raised up men accomplished in His designs in specific eras, these men were to spread the Word in an age of great intellectual activity. However, after this illustrious period came an era of decline which was occasioned in some measure by the scientific, economic, political, religious, and social upheavals of the next six centuries.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Catholic literature again developed into a strong force as a protest

against materialism and atheism. In England, the literary leaders were John Henry Cardinal Newman, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and later Graham Greene, and in France, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Claudel, and Francois Mauriac. The movement was, and with the exception of poetry continues to be, weak in America.

Among the chief American poets who have contributed to the Catholic literary revival are Brother Antoninus, Father Daniel Berrigan, Robert Lowell, Thomas Merton, Jessica Powers, Allen Tate, and Sisters Mary Francis, Honora, Madeleva, and Maura. An examination of their poems shows that now as in the past ages, Catholic literature continues to deal with the problems of grace and the conflict of the soul between grace and sin in the light of the doctrines of the Church. Five of the most common doctrinal themes used by these poets are the Eucharist, Mary, Catholic practices, sufferings, and death. It is the purposes of this thesis to demonstrate how effectively these contemporary American Catholic poets have utilized these dogmas of Faith in poetry.

The poems utilized for discussion have been chosen for their literary excellence as well as for the clarity with which they exemplify the use of these tenets by the poets in question. Where two or more poems exemplified the same theme, I have chosen for my example the best in literary quality, or the one making the most direct reference to the doctrine being discussed. Consequently, I have excluded some fine poems because they compared less favorably with another or because

they used dogmatic themes either too loosely or too generally. Other poems, moreover, were omitted from the present study because they either dealth with subjects other than the five areas I intended to consider or because they treated the subject in a generally Christian rather than a specifically Catholic manner. These dilemmas were my reasons for excluding the work of seven Catholic poets who would have merited a place in this thesis -- John Brunini, Angelico Chavez, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, William Lynch, Phyllis McGinley, and Sisters Jeremy, Maris Stella, and Therese.

In each chapter I have explained the doctrine which forms the subject and then have illustrated how it has been exemplified in the poems following. Occasionally, in order to make some sections of doctrine clear, I have had to explain aspects of them which were not specifically exemplified in the works of the poets under consideration. Poems which illustrated more than one doctrine are used in other chapters as well.

In the event that neither the poets nor their works are familiar to the reader, I have compiled a complete list of all the poems discussed in these chapters into an appendix. The remainder of this introduction will consist of short biographies of each poet.

Brother Antoninus is also known to some of his readers as William Everson, the author of The Residual Years. He was born in Sacramento, California, in 1912 but grew up in

Selma.[2]

After an unsuccessful marriage, he joined a group of writers that began the "San Francisco Renaissance." A divorcee aroused his curiosity in the Catholic Faith. After both he and she became Catholics, they parted company since the Church ruled both previous marriages were valid.

He wrote poetry for a year on a Guggenheim Fellowship, then joined the Catholic Worker Movement, and finally became a Dominican lay brother without vows. The Crooked Lines of God contains poems which are mainly autobiographical.[3]

Kenneth Rexroth says of Brother Antonius" poems, "Honesty, simplicity, modesty, complete commitment to communication are requisites for a good poem. Brother Antoninus" poetry possesses all these. Brother Antoninus is more or less a disciple of Robinson Jeffers, but I think he has made a harder or more honest instrument of Jeffers' style than his master. The difference of ten years of writing make a collection of poems of stunning impact, utterly unlike anything being written nowadays."[4]

Father Alfred Barrett spent most of his life within the vicinity of New York City, for he was born on Long Island in 1905 and was educated at Xavier High School and St. Andrews-on-the-Hudson, where he obtained both his B.A. and his M.A. It is customary for the Jesuits to teach three years after finishing their philosophical studies and before beginning their theological ones. Father Barrett remained in New York

at Canisius College, where he taught poetry. Shorty after his ordination, in the early thirties, he was appointed chaplain of both the Catholic Poetry Society and of a regiment of the army. The former position was of a two-year duration, but in the latter he was promoted to major before he was discharged in 1946. His only book of poetry is called Mint by Night (1939). His untimely death in 1955 cut off a promising career.[5]

His poetry was reviewed by J.K. Merton as follows: "We have here a first collection of the poems of a recently ordained priest. But no member of his society is ordained while still very young (Father Barrett was 32), the work offered us is fully mature. This poet knows how to use his tools."[6]

Father Daniel Berrigan is a Jesuit-poet from upper Minnesota. He was born in 1921 and at the age of eighteen entered the Society of Jesus. He taught at a Prep School in New Jersey after completing his philosophy at Woodstock, Maine. After his ordination in Boston, in 1952, he spent the following year studying in France. On his return from abroad, his assignment was another teaching position in Brooklyn, New York. Father Berrigan's first book of poetry, Time Without Number, published by Harcourt, Brace, and Co., won the Lamont Award of the American Academy of Poets. His second volume, Encounters, was also received very favorably by the critics. He has recorded many of his poems at Harvard

University. Between duties of teaching theology at LeMoyne College, lecturing occasionally at various colleges, and writing poetry, Father Berrigan has been writing television scripts, the names of which are Hope, Miserere, and Springs of Silence.[7]

Robert Hillyer has this to say of Encounters: "Father Berrigan's verse demands intellectual attention before awarding emotional content. Of the poems on personages in the Bible, the best one is on St. Joseph ... There are many successes among the miscellaneous poems, too. They are the ones in which the author's bold and abrupt imagery are not too extreme. The poem on the Cathedral of Chartres is a small masterpiece of metaphor and association."[8]

Sister Mary Francis, a Poor Clare contemplative nun, playwright, and poet, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, February 14, 1921. Before her entrance into the religious life, she lived in and around St. Louis where she attended St. Alphonsus elementary and high schools, Junior College, and St. Louis University. In 1942, she entered the Poor Clare Monastery -- contemplatives speak of their convents as monasteries -- in Chicago, but was appointed to be one of the pioneers to open a new house in Rosewell, New Mexico, 1948. Not only has she had two volumes of poetry published, Whom I Have Loved and Where Caius Is, 1955, but Sister has now been actively engaged in playwriting as well. Three of the seven plays which she has written are La Madre, which has played at

the Blackfriar Theater in New York; Counted as Mine, an operetta which will play in the same theater next fall; and Domitille, which has played at the graduate school at Notre Dame University; and will soon be released to the public.[9]

Sister Honora had spent most of her life at New Hampton, Iowa, where she was born October 2, 1899. At the age of eighteen, she entered the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters in Dubuque, Iowa. Having secured a diploma from the Kleine Dubuque Conservatory and the Progressive Series in St. Louis, she was entitled to teach piano, theory, and violin. However, after she obtained her B.A. from Loras College, she taught more English and less music classes, until finally, all her graduate work at both Loyola University and Catholic University was taken in English. Although Sister teaches at St. Mary's High School in Cascade, Iowa, in winter, and Briarcliff College in summer, she has found time to compile one book of poetry, St. Francis Would Know Answers, 1960, and is beginning work on the second.[10]

John Logan was born on January 23, 1923, in Red Oak, Iowa, and remained there until he entered college. Having taken his first degree at Coe College in zoology, he continued his education at the State University of Iowa, where he subsequently earned an M.A. in English. Among his teaching positions, he lists an Episcopal boys' school in Honolulu; a high school in Michigan; St. John's College, Annapolis, Md.; and Notre Dame. His stories and poems have been accepted by

nearly every major literary periodical in our country, and he has been anthologized in Italian, Spanish, and English. Mr. Logan is poetry editor of the Critic magazine, edits his own poetry magazine, Chicago Choice, and has had two volumes of poetry published, Cycle for Mother Cabrini (1955) and Ghosts of the Heart (1960).[11]

This review appeared in the New York Times Book Review: "What characterizes Logan's clear, unrhymed verse is the autobiographical work -- open, confessional, painful ... It is in the scenes of his own life that you feel the real power of his verse."[12]

Robert Lowell, like Allen Tate, is one of the leading American poets today. At one time, he had been an editorial assistant at Sheed and Ward; however, for the most part, he did free lance writing and it was his poetry which brought him three great awards; the Academy of Arts and Letters Award, Pulitzer Prize, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. A New Englander by birth, he has lived in the vicinity of Boston, his birthplace, from the date of his birth, March 1, 1917, up to the present. He was educated at St. Mark's School, Kenyon College (from which he graduated Summa Cum Laude), and Harvard. He has written four volumes of poetry which are Land of Unlikeness (1944), Lord Weary's Castle (1946), The Mills of the Kavanaughs (1951), and Life Studies (1959).[13]

The citation included here is typical of the favorable light in which most critics regard his poetry: "At their best

there is a great hope for poetry, and indeed for America, in these poems. Without Whitman's loose though buoyant optimism, they are directed just as surely at a people and a land of unfilled promise. The voice is vibrant enough to be heard, learned enough to speak with authority, and savage enough to waken all but the dead."[14]

Sister Madeleva was born in Cumberland, Wisconsin on May 24, 1887, and spent the early years of her life in the nearby woods learning much of nature, which she incorporated in both her teaching and her poetry later in life. Having completed her secondary schooling in Cumberland, she attended the University of Wisconsin for one year, after which she transferred to St. Mary's College, Indiana. On the completion of her junior year at college, she entered the Community of the Holy Cross. The following year she received her B.A. and shortly after began her teaching duties. In 1918 she received her M.A. from Notre Dame University and seven years later her Ph. D. from the University of California. Despite her duties as dean of St. Mary's College, she spent a year studying at Oxford and traveling extensively throughout Europe and the Holy Land. She retired recently as president of St. Mary's. The nine awards she has received for her poetry are:

Gold medal from National Poetry Center

The Siena Medal in 1948

Medallion for Woman of Achievement

Brotherhood Award of South Bend Conference of

Christians and Jews

Campion Award in 1959

First Christian Culture Award

Award of Honor

Spirit Award of Merit

Ursula Laurus Medal

Some of her books of poetry are <u>Four Girls</u> (1941), <u>A Song of Bedlam Inn</u> (1946), <u>American Twelfth Night</u> (1951), and <u>The Four Last Things</u> (1959).[15]

Herbert Burke wrote of her in the <u>Library Journal</u>: "Sister Madeleva's audience which has grown faithfully over the past decades will be happy with this volume .... Sister Madeleva's lyrics, in all their variety of form and richness of mood and subject ... reflect a mind at the top of its bent, seeing truly with all its senses. Proper nature poems, they sing of the sacredness of things."[16]

<u>Sister Maura</u>, a New Yorker by birth, was born in Brooklyn, New York. She entered the Convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame where she subsequently completed her college work at the convent school, the College of Notre Dame of Maryland. She attended the Catholic University for her M.A. She is presently teaching in her Alma Mater and is frequently contributing poems to both religious and secular magazines. Her volumes of poetry are <u>Initiate the Heart</u> (1946), and <u>The Word is Love</u> (1958).[17]

Marnie Bacon reviewed her poems in this manner: "Sister

Maura writes her quatrains with grace ... The simple prayers for refugees, for persons of all faiths will find sympathetic readers everywhere."[18]

Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk at Gethsemani, Kentucky, was born January 31, 1915, in the southern part of France. Since his parents, who were artists, traveled extensively, Thomas Merton spent the greater part of his childhood in Europe. He attended Oakham School in England, where he took the higher certificate in French, German, and Latin. After the death of his father in 1930, and since his mother had died ten years previously, Thomas Merton returned to America and enrolled at Columbia, where he obtained his M.A. It was due partly to the teaching of Mark Van Doren, a non-Catholic, and partly to Jacques Maritain's books of philosophy that Merton became a Catholic in 1938. While attending Columbia, he reviewed books for the _New York Times_ and the _Tribune Sunday Book_ sections. After graduation, he taught a year at St. Bonaventure's in New York, and then joined the Trappists in Kentucky. Of this decision, he says: "What I needed was the solitude to expand in breadth and depth and to be simplified out under the gaze of God, more or less the way a plant spreads out its leaves in the sun. That meant that I needed a Rule that was almost entirely aimed at detaching me from the world and uniting me with God."[19]

His books of poems are _Thirty Poems_ (1943), _A Man in a Divided Sea_ (1946), _Figures for an Apocalypse_ (1948), _Tears

of the Blind Lion (1950), Selected Poems of Thomas Merton (1959), and Strange Islands (1959).[20]

The fact that Thomas Merton's poetry has undergone several changes accounts for the diversity of opinion among critics regarding his work. This is an example of a review taken from the San Francisco Chronicle: "This is Catholic poetry of a strange order; it is almost crossing the line into experimentalism and yet it is deeply religious. Merton may well be as one critic (Robert Lowell) has said the most important Catholic poet since Francis Thompson."[21]

John Frederick Nims, one of the editors of Poetry Magazine, was born in Muskegon, Michigan on November 20, 1913. Having graduated from both St. Cyril's Elementary School and Leo High School, he studied for two years at De Paul University, but was graduated from Notre Dame, obtaining both his B.A. and his M.A. from that institution. In 1945, he earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. He held teaching positions at the University of Toronto, Notre Dame, and a year each at Milan and Florence. He has five books of poetry published: The Iron Pastoral (1947), A Fountain in Kentucky (1950) Knowledge of the Evening (1959), and Poems of St. John of the Cross (1960).[22]

L. L. Salomon has written of Nims' poetry: "This second volume is even more extraordinary (than the Iron Pastoral) for many of the poems in A Fountain in Kentucky will outlive our time ... A Catholic poet, he is not pietistic, a student of

the classics, he is not a stuffed shirt. In his esthetic, the poem is the becoming, the substance of his material determines its organic form."[23]

Jessica Powers, a Carmelite contemplative nun whose name in her religious life is Sister Miriam of the Holy Spirit, was born in Mauston, Wisconsin, February 7, 1905. Her schooling consisted of an elementary education at St. Patrick's School, Mauston High School, and a year at Marquette University. After living in Chicago for two years, and returning to Mauston for ten, she went to New York where she had her first book of poetry published, The Lantern Burns (1939). On her return to Wisconsin, she entered the Carmelite Monastery in Milwaukee. Shortly after Sister's entrance, she compiled her second volume of poetry, The Place of Splendor which was published in 1946. Except for a period of time spent at River Pines, Wisconsin, in recovering from tuberculosis, Sister Miriam has been in Pewaukee where she is now novice mistress.[24]

G.E. Hokins speaks of Jessica Powers' poetry in the following way: "Miss Powers has no talent for self-advertisement; she is neither eccentric nor loud, her work speaks for her and it is disciplined and intellectual."[25]

Father Raymond Roseliep began his theological studies in Washington, D.C. at the Catholic University after graduating from Loras College. Four years later, he was ordained and celebrated his First Mass in the Dubuque Cathedral. His first assignment was that of assistant pastor and manager of the

archdiocesan newspaper. After he obtained his master's degree in English, he taught at Loras College, where he is located at the present. In 1954, he received his Ph.D. at Notre Dame University; and in 1960, had his first volume of poetry, The Linen Bands, published. Some of his poems have been recorded for the Lamont Library at Harvard.[26]

Joseph Joel Keith says of The Linen Bands, "It is a remarkable achievement. On the strength of my recommendation, Harvard invited Father Roseliep to make recordings of many of these poem."[27]

Eithne Tabor writes, "I was born in Arkin, South Carolina, in 1930. My father was an educator there, and in 1940, we moved to Washington. He is now retired from teaching at Georgetown University. Most of my education was gained at Eden Hall (Convent of the Sacred Heart) in Philadelphia. At the close of 1948, as I was about to enter college, I suffered a nervous breakdown and was admitted to St. Elizabeth's Hospital. It was during my stay there that I wrote "The Cliff's Edge." In 1952, I was recovered enough to resume my studies at the Catholic University, graduating as a member of Phi Beta Kappa in 1956. After working several years, lastly as a research assistant at the Folger Shakespeare Library, in 1960 my health failed again and I returned to St. Elizabeth's where I am at the present."[28] Miss Tabor's only book of verse is The Cliff's Edge: Songs of a Psychotic.

One of the favorable reviews which this book received

was Gerald McDonald's, "Articulate and wonderfully expressive (see "Breakdown" for instance) -- Miss Tabor's work has poetic validity which reaches beyond the psychological interest. The poems are not published as a stunt stressing the sensational or morbid. We are assured that the author wanted her poems printed and that their publication may help to improve her condition."[29]

Allen Tate, one of the leading literary figures of our times, was born November 19, 1899. Having received his primary education at home, he entered a private school in Louisville, Kentucky. Later, he went to Georgetown Preparatory School and Vanderbilt University, from which he was graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1928. He was a member of the group of southern writers known as the "Fugitives" along with Robert Penn Warren, and John Crowe Ransom. In 1928, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship, became Phi Beta Kappa orator at the University of Virginia and Phi Beta Kappa poet at William and Mary, and received an honorary Litt. D. from the University of Louisville.[30]

The following colleges are some of the schools in which he has lectured: Harvard, Vassar, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, New York University, the University of Virginia, and the University of Louisville.

In 1950, Mr. Tate became a Catholic. Some of his books are Winter Sea (1944), and Poems 1922 - 1946 (1947).

Robert Fitzgerald reviews Allen Tate's poems in this

fashion: "Allen Tate's poems are beautiful examples of what a hard, select intelligence can press out of rather deep insights -- insights that are self-consistent and profound."[31]

A brief resume of each poet's biography should prove useful in understanding his attitude towards Catholic doctrine as it is revealed in his poetry. The poems themselves will reveal what doctrine has done for him.

[1] Sister M. Muriel Tarr, C.S.A. lecture on Modern Catholic Literature, Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisc., 1952.

[2] Donald Allen, ed., "Brother Antoninus," The New American Poetry (New York: 1960), p. 427.

[3] Time, May 23, 1959, 73.

[4] Kenneth Rexrothe, "The Crooked Lines of God", New York Times Book Review (March 27, 1960), 10.

[5] Matthew Hoehn, ed., Catholic Authors, I (Newark: '57), 22.

[6] J.K. Merton, "Mint by Night," Commonweal (November 4, 1938), 54.

[7] Father Daniel Berrigan (Personal Letter) January 20, 1962.

[8] Robert Hillyer, "Encounters", New York Times Book Review (April 10, 1960), 40.

[9] Abbess Immaculata of Rosewell Monastery (Personal Letter), February, 1962.

[10] Sister Honora (Personal Letter), March, 1961.

[11] John Logan (Personal Letter), February, 1962.

[12] Harvey Shapiro, "Ghosts of the Heart", New York Times Book Review (October 23, 1960), 32.

[13] Who's Who, 1960, "Robert Lowell", p. 1782.

[14] Shelden Rodman, "Lord Weary's Castle," New York Times Book Review (November 3, 1946), 7.

[15] Hoehn, I, 487.

[16] Herbert Burke, "The Four Last Things", Library Journal (January, 1960), 127.

[17] Sister Maura (Personal Letter), February, 1962.

[18] Marnie Bacon, "Initiate the Heart", Saturday Review of Literature (January 4, 1947), 24.

[19] Thomas Merton, The Seven Storey Mountain (New York, 1943), p. 3.

[20] Hoehn, I, 530.

[21] John Nerber, "A Man in a Divided Sea", Poetry (December 1946), 165.

[22] Hoehn, II, 388.

[23] L.L. Salomon, "A Fountain in Kentucky", Saturday Review of Literature (March 11, 1950), 27.

[24] Jessica Powers (Personal Letter), November 14, 1960).

[25] Sister Mary Baird, "Burns the Great Lantern", The Catholic World (February, 1949), 354.

[26] Father Raymond Roseliep (Personal Letter), April 20, 1961.

[27] Joseph Joel Keith (Personal Letter), August 28, 1961.

[28] Gerald McDonald, "The Cliff's Edge: Songs of a Psychotic", _Library Journal_ (January 1, 1951), 49.

[29] Eithne Tabor (Personal Letter), February 4, 1962.

[30] Hoehn, II, 574.

[31] Robert Fitzgerald, "Poems 1922-1947", _New Republic_: _18_ (April 26, 1948), 31.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The only feasible point of departure from which to discuss the Eucharist is God, with an understandable notion of Who He is. St. John aptly chooses a four-word description of Him: O Theos agape estin: "God is love."[1]

Love is an experience common to all men. But of the two kinds of love, the eros and agape, man knows only the eros, the contingent, passionate love arising out of his need for satisfaction, out of his emptiness which yearns to be filled. He can never achieve the agape without supernatural help, for the agape is the love which overflows and gives of its abundance. This is the divine agape in which God Who needs nothing can give Himself without limit; and the love which He is, is an infinite giving of Himself.[2] He has chosen to do this giving of Himself to men through the sacraments in general, and in the Eucharist in particular.

Strangely enough, although the Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love, the word itself means "thanksgiving," a Greek word deriving from the fact that Our Lord gave thanks to His Father at the Last Supper before instituting the Holy Eucharist. However, a more all-embracing definition of the Eucharist is contained in the antiphon of Corpus Christi:

"O Sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion renewed, the mind filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given to us." [3] The Eucharistic banquet is spiritual food for men; in It Christ is contained, offered, and received under the appearances of bread and wine; It is the sacrifice of Calvary re-enacted in an unbloody manner; and finally, It is the means of grace, and a pledge of future glory, for Our Lord said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day." [4]

These are the basic tenets of Faith regarding the Eucharist; however, to appreciate the Eucharistic themes found in poetry, a more thorough discussion of these major beliefs is necessary. Therefore, this introduction will include an explanation of the sacramental system and the position of the Eucharist therein, along with a description of the preliminary miracles attending the Eucharist both as to Its institution and proof, as well as Its relative permanency.

After the sacramental character of the Eucharist has been defined in this manner, It must be discussed in Its sacrificial capacity as well. Since the sacrifices of the Old Law are but prototypes of the New, a few examples of Jewish sacrifices will establish a clearer understanding not only of the relationship existing between the Old and New Law, but also the identity of the Sacrifice of Calvary and the Mass.

The introduction will conclude with a discussion of the doctrine of the indwelling, the life of God in the soul. This presence of God in the soul is possible to anyone in the state of sanctifying grace, for grace is a sharing in the life of God.

In order to realize the need of the sacramental system in the life of man and the position of the Eucharist therein, man's physical and spiritual composition must be taken into consideration. Because he is a creature composed of body and soul, a man can live on three levels of existence. The first is the animal level in which he satisfies the basic needs of his body. The second is the rational level in which he exercises his faculties of mind and will. The third is the supernatural level in which he shares in the life of God through sanctifying grace. The first two levels of existence are proper to man as man; the last is not.[5] He attains this divine level and retains it through the sacramental system of grace.

This system consists of the seven sacraments which Christ instituted as an outward means of receiving the graces He earned for men by His death on the Cross.

St. Thomas says that all the sacraments are either a participation in the Holy Eucharist, or a means whereby the soul is prepared for it.[6] Briefly, this is accomplished in the following manner; Baptism initiates the child into the life of God and future communion in the Eucharist; Penance restores

to the soul the friendship of God when, or if, such friendship was destroyed by mortal sin; Matrimony blesses the union of husband and wife, expressing symbolically the union of the love of Christ (the new Adam) with the Church (the new Eve) in the betrothal of the Redemption. Orders are the means by which men are ordained priests through whom the faithful obtain the sacraments. Extreme Unction prepares the soul for that everlasting communion of which that here below is but the pledge.[7] Holy Communion is greater than all the other sacraments since not only His grace but the Author of grace Himself is present with It.

In the last analysis, the Eucharist is not so much to be comprehended as It is to be believed. Faith is necessary to grasp this tremendous mystery. However, by tracing the course Our Lord took in presenting It to His Apostles, the mystery can be accepted with greater facility.

By way of preliminary preparation for the institution of the Eucharist, Our Lord performed three specific miracles, which were the changing of the water into wine, the multiplying of the loaves, and the walking on the water. In these, He showed His power over water and bread, along with His ability to alter an object's relationship to space.[8]

Chronologically, too, the miracles had a special significance. The miracle at Cana was quiet and produced almost no reaction among the people. It was a subdued forerunner of

greater things to come. Next, He multiplied the loaves in a spectacular miracle in which five thousand participated and to which they bore witness. Then He broke from the excited mob who would make Him their provident King, and appeared to His Apostles by walking on the water. He came to them to strengthen them in their Faith in Him, for great Faith is needed to believe in the Eucharist -- Faith and Love.

The Faith He confirmed in them, came in good stead, for immediately on arriving at Capharnaum, He gave His promise of the Eucharist: "Amen, Amen, except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."[9] From now on, many walked no more with Him. Because they lacked Faith in Him, He let them go without comment or explanation.

In promising the Eucharist to men, Christ did not intend to institute cannibalism, for His Body would ascend to Heaven, where He continues to present His glorious wounds to the Father in our favor. He meant He would give men His Body to eat and His Blood to drink in some miraculous way.[10]

The promise He made at Capharnaum, He fulfilled on Holy Thursday, when He took bread, blessed and broke it, saying, "'This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ... In like manner he took also the cup after the supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you.'"[11] It is a matter of Faith that these words are proof of the institution of the

Eucharist. They are repeated almost verbatim in all three synoptic gospels (Matt. 26: 26-28; Mark 14: 22-24; Luke 22: 19-20) and in I Cor. 11: 23-26.[12]

It is likewise a matter of Faith that the conversion of the bread into His Body and the wine into His Blood is as absolute as the conversion of the water into wine at Cana.[13] Only the outward appearances of both bread and wine have remained; the essence of both bread and wine have been converted into Christ's Body and Blood. This conversion is known as transubstantiation, and it occurs at the Consecration of every Mass.

Because of the hypostatic union in Christ, when His humanity becomes present under the accidental appearances of bread and wine, His divinity resides concomitantly therein. This is why Catholics adore the Eucharist. Moreover, since God the Son is present, the Father and the Holy Spirit are likewise present in the Eucharist, circumincessionately.[14]

As previously stated, the bread and wine are the outward signs of the Eucharist; therefore, as long as these accidental appearances of bread and wine remain, Christ is physically present. This is known as the relative permanency of the Eucharist, and it is this which makes it possible to retain Christ in all the tabernacles throughout the world.[15]

It is quite obvious, then, that when the accidents of bread and wine undergo a chemical change either by fire or by

dissolution, Christ is no longer present, physically. When a person communicates, Catholic theologians hold, Christ remains physically in the body for a period of about fifteen minutes; after that, He remains by His grace. It is thus that He is spiritual food for men.

Because the primary end of the Eucharist is to be a constant spiritual nourishment for and inspiration to men, His existence must be perpetuated among them. This is possible by consecrating more Hosts which can only be done during the Sacrifice of the Mass. Hence, the Eucharist as a Sacrifice must be considered.

Properly understood, a sacrifice is an exterior offering made by man to a supreme being and destroyed in some way, thus expressing the former's dependency on the latter. Although sacrifices have been the chief means of homage paid to deity throughout the ages, this discussion will be confined to the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the New, since the Old have a direct bearing on the only one in the New, the Mass.

In the Jewish rite, there were two types of sacrifice, bloody and unbloody. Both were prototypes of Our Lord. Abel's offering of a lamb was a bloody sacrifice,[16] while Melchisedech's offering of bread and wine was an unbloody one.[17]

Christ in the New Dispensation was the bridge-builder between God and man. He, because of the hypostatic union, was the only worthy offering capable of appeasing Divine Justice.

He was the Priest -- Christ means the "Anointed One," -- and He was the Victim. The offering of Himself was made in an unbloody manner on Holy Thursday and in a bloody manner on Good Friday. Therefore, the Sacrifice of the Cross is the same as that of the Mass, for the Priest and Victim are the same, only the manner of offering is different.

Now the essence of the Mass is the Consecration, for then the priest takes the host, blesses it and says, "This is My Body." Then taking the wine, he says, "This is My Blood."[18] The double consecration is His Mystical death. The Flesh and Blood which were separated physically on Calvary are mystically separated here.

The <u>raison d'être</u> for the institution of the Eucharist is to be spiritual food for men. St. Thomas explains this doctrine in detail:

> The matter of the Eucharist is a food; its proper effect must be analogous to that of food. He who assimilates corporal food transforms it into himself; this change repairs the losses of the organism and gives it the necessary increase. But the Eucharistic Food, instead of being transformed into the one who takes it, transforms him into Itself. It follows that the proper effect of the Sacrament is to transform us so much into Christ that we can truly say; 'I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'[19]

This discussion of the indwelling concludes the formal explanation of the Eucharist in respect to both its sacramental and sacrificial characters. The poems will proceed along the lines of the introduction beginning with a reference to Christ walking on the water in Daniel Berrigan's

"Resurrexit," and continuing with poems which exemplify either the sacramental or sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. Thomas Merton's "Early Mass", is the first of these; then, Sister Madeleva's "Raiment" and "Unto the End"; Sister Maura's "The Old Nun"; Daniel Berrigan's "In Memoriam"; Brother Antoninus' "Canticle of Christ in the Holy Eucharist"; and the last two by Jessica Powers "A Consecrated Place" and "The Place of Splendor."

Although the reference to the walking on the water is very slight, the recalling of this miracle deepened the Faith of the Apostles in Him. They had to believe or drown.

> They tossed unseaworthy
> when the walker of waves stood there, and the
> floor pitched them green ...
> believe or drown.

The necessity of a strong Faith was needed both at the institution of the Eucharist and after the Resurrection. Although Christ proved, by eating fish after His Resurrection, that He was not a ghost, He refrains from proving Himself so concretely in His Eucharistic miracle. It must be accepted with Faith and Love.

A firm belief in the divinity of Christ is shortly followed by a desire for a closer union with Him. This is accomplished in the Holy Eucharist. Expressions of belief and love are contained in Thomas Merton's "Early Mass".

> There is a Bread which You and I propose.
> It is Your truth. And more: it is ourselves.

There was a wickedness whose end is blessing.
Come, people, to the Cross and Wedding!

There is an implication of the Sacrifice of the Cross in the words "There was a wickedness whose end is blessing," and an invitation to receive Communion in "Come, people, to the Cross and Wedding" is the symbol of the Eucharist used by Our Lord Himself in inviting guests to the wedding. The parable states that a guest came without a wedding garment, of course, by this is meant grace, and the wedding is Holy Communion.

Sister Madelèva, too, uses the symbol of the wedding garment for her poem, "The Raiment." The stanza which expresses this is as follows:

Garment of flesh and blood, late bread and wine
Daily I don this raiment wrought for me
O Christ, be Thou a wedding robe divine
Around my soul's poor nakedness let shine
The white apparel of divinity.

"The Raiment" dealt almost exclusively with the Holy Communion, whereas "Unto the End" contains many aspects of the Eucharist both as a sacrifice and as a sacrament. First of all, the name itself implies the relative permanency of the sacrament; then, practically every stanza thereafter refers to either the Consecration of the Mass, Holy Thursday, or lay participation in the Mass. Specific reference to the Consecration is as follows:

Thy stoled priest but knocks at heaven's blue grating,
His bidding heard

Cometh the Word
Incorporate in Bread and throbbing Cup.

Lines which are an implication of the First Mass of Holy Thursday are:

And finite, rests the Infinite Who first
Raised to Thy lips this Bread, this Holy Grail.

The final stanza speaks of lay participation in the Mass, so that each Catholic is, in a sense, an "alter Christus."

Thy spirit rests on me
I am Thy priest forever; time's alarms
Threaten but futile harms;
Lifting the pure, white Body of Thy Christ to Thee
Myself am lifted safely to Thy dear arms.

Symbolism is an effective method of writing poetry on the Eucharist. Sister Maura uses it in a most original manner in her poem on the Eucharist, "The Old Nun".

Standing up or sitting down
it is the same
Her back is knuckled out and hunched
her eyes have lost the flame
of seeing;
Sound has crunched itself to murmurs,
that is all.

She who sits in chapel
in the last dim stall
Like some old hunting dog
who keeps the scent,
Nose-pointed, ears set,
on the way his master went.

The hearth brushed,
the hound drowsing
Is suddenly stirred
by the faintest rousing

Sound of the horn
the Hunter, the Hunter
A golden cup
filled with Hunter's scarlet --
Up, dog, up.

Sister Maura utilized the doctrine of transubstantiation which occurs at the Consecration. After the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, both Species are elevated for the adoration of the Faithful. The elevation is accompanied by the ringing of a bell.

Intense Faith in the Eucharist on the Old Nun's part in the preceding poem finds a counterpart in the priest of Daniel Berrigan's "In Memoriam". Three major aspects of the Eucharist, namely, the Mass, Communion, and the indwelling are included in the following poem.

The Consecration and death of the priest are mentioned as one thought. "The white Christ of the altar broke him apart; that Wine he raised, desired and drank him to its hungry heart." Symbolically, the mystical death of Christ becomes the physical death of the priest.

Holy Communion, when received by a dying person is called "Viaticum," food for the last earthly journey. "Even the Host, bending to him like a lover stood beside at the end unrecognized." After death, however, Faith will not be necessary; therefore, Viaticum is the last mystery "to trouble him or us."

The final doctrine included in the poem is that of the indwelling or the life of grace in the soul. The heavenly

Jerusalem is the place where God is. The soul is in the state of grace, possessing God, and is therefore, the "invisible Jerusalem and the king's temple".

This temple that went up, "stone on stone with no sound of hammers breaking the holy hours," is built by the prayers which increase grace in the soul and which were said for the dying by both priests and students.

Although both Faith and Love are necessary in receiving the Eucharist, the two previous poems stressed the necessity of Faith, while the following poems express the necessity of Love. The first of these two poems is Brother Antoninus' "A Canticle to the Christ in the Eucharist."

> There is nothing known like this wound, this knowledge
> of love.
> In what love? In which wounds, such words? In what
> touch? In whose coming?
> You gazed. Like the voice of the quail. Like the buck
> that stamps in the thicket.
> You gave. You found the gulf, the goal. On my tongue
> you were meek
> In my heart you were might . . .
>
> The flow of thy voice in my shrunken heart was the
> cling of wild honey,
> The honey that bled from the broken comb in the
> cleft of Tamalpais . . .
>
> Your face was aflame. Your mouth was the rinse of wine,
> your tongue, the torrent.

The poet expresses his love for Christ in the Eucharist in metaphor. Christ is like the "insistent quail, the strong buck, the sweet wild honey," References to Holy Communiom is clearly evident in the lines: "On my tongue you were meek."

The poet continues with the doctrine of the indwelling: "The flow of thy voice in my shrunken heart was the cling of wild honey."

Awareness of God within, the poet finds expression in the line, "the voice of God in the shrunken heart." To be able to hear this voice, one has but to heed the admonitions which Jessica Powers offers in "A Consecrated Place".

God sets His dwelling in eternal now
And makes the now of time a meeting place
Between Himself and man. He will endow
Only the Present moment with His grace.
Who leaves this area God bends to bless
Stumbles down slopes of waste and weariness.

God utters in the soul of every man
The ultimate message that is his alone.
Who runs abroad to heed what words he can
Is toward the chasm of confusion thrown
Let him come home, betake himself to prayer
And kneel down in his soul and listen there.

The practice of awareness of God is possible to a soul only after it deliberately rids itself momentarily of all earthly distractions. This recollected spirit becomes habitual to a soul after some time and a more profound contemplation ensues. Deep recollection is the theme of Jessica Powers' poem, "The Place of Splendor".

Little one, wait.
Let me assure you this is not the way
To gain the terminal of outer day.

The steps lead down
Through valley after valley, far and far
Past the five countries where the pleasures are.

Walk till you hear
Light told in music that was never heard
And softness spoken that was not a word.

The smothered roar
Of the eternities, their vast unrest
And infinite peace are deep in your own breast.

That light-swept shore
Will shame the data of grief upon your scroll
Child, have none told you? God is in your soul.

The poems of the indwelling indicate the close relationship which the Holy Eucharist establishes between God and man. All the poetry on the Eucharist reveals both God's love for man and man's need of this love. One sees, too, why the Eucharist is called the Spiritual Food for man. It is only through this Food that man can continue to share in the life of God.

Footnotes

[1] Thomas Merton, *The Living Bread* (New York, 1956), p. 49.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 50

[3] Dom Gasper Lefebvre, *St. Andrew's Daily Missal* (St. Paul, 1957), p. 694.

[4] John 6: 55.

[5] Most Rev. Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York, 1949), p. 258.

[6] Lefebvre, p. viii.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 448.

[8] Rev. Clarence McAuliffe, *Sacramental Theology* (St. Louis, 1958), p. 135.

[9] John 6: 54.

[10] McAuliffe, p. 119.

[11] Luke 22: 19-20.

[12] McAuliffe, p. 118.

[13] Ibid., p. 138.

[14] Ibid., p. 150.

[15] Ibid., p. 160.

[16] Genesis 4: 4.

[17] Ibid., 14: 18.

[18] Matthew 26: 28.

[19] Marmion, p. 266.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIESTHOOD

The necessary relationship which exists between the Eucharist and Holy Orders was established by Our Lord at the Last Supper in the words: "Do this in commemoration of Me."[1] By this command, the Apostles obtained the power to consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and to transmit this power to other men at ordination.

At this time, the palms of the priest are blessed with oil to make them as worthy as possible to perform their duties, the chief of which is the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Other duties include administering the sacraments, preaching the gospel, and assisting souls in both spiritual and material need whenever possible -- in short, to be another Christ.

Sublime dignity of the priesthood is evident in all poems concerning this sacrament. The priest himself recognizes the dignity of the state and the thought of the great responsibility which is his, often overwhelms him, -- at least this was Father Raymond Roseliep's attitude in his poem, "The Linen Bands," and Father Alfred Barrett's in "Hands of a Priest."

An indication of the respect with which the laity regard the priesthood is manifested in Sister Mary Francis' poem, "A Young Nun to Her Brother Newly Ordained," and

Sister Madeleva's "The Young Priest's Mother".

Father Raymond Roseliep uses the theme of his attitude toward his priestly duties as the theme of "The Linen Bands".

> My hands are busy in a blessing way
> Since then, and they absolve and they unite
> and in several sacraments, anoint:
> they pour water that is life. Today
> I pause to wonder why they often shake
> when lifting bread so light within the Mass . . .
> Each time I watch a young man pray, then go,
> my facile breath grows audible and tight,
> and mind re-girds the will with strips of white
> that have the burning quality of snow.

As an alter Christus, the priest never loses the sense of responsibility, the sense of sublime power which is his; therefore, the longer he is a priest, the deeper his humility grows, as he realizes more and more his own unworthiness. The humility which counterbalances the dignity of the priesthood is emphasized by Father Alfred Barrett in "Hands of a Priest".

> Hands of a priest, my hands, you still clutch
> at evil, but to whiten, not to smutch
> The souls that feel your more than Midas touch
> Hands of a priest, my hands, that God you serve
> because He shaped you, flesh, and bone, and nerve
> Will nestle in the cradle of your curve.

Father Barrett mentions the duties of a priest, along with the Christ-like attitude with which he should perform them. The greatest obligation, the primary end of his priesthood, he places at a climactic position, in the poem, namely to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Eucharist gives the beauty to and enhances the dignity of the priesthood.

Even though the priest regards the priestly state with fear and humility, he has been preparing for his role for twelve years. He has relatives who, on the contrary, are not as prepared for this spiritual transformation in one of their own. Adjustments which a sister must make is the theme of Sister Mary Francis' "A Young Nun to Her Brother Newly Ordained".

So much the same ...
The old familiar smile
The voice with timbre I have always known
Dreams in your eyes are those I call by name.
Young Christ, you are so poignantly the same
As yesterday...

And who shall guess,
Hearing our words the same
And seeing us tread the old, familiar ways
The terrible, shining secret of your hands!

The Faith and joy of the young nun when speaking of her brother are typically Catholic, for it is a great honor to have a brother who is a priest; but the joy and Faith are even greater for the mother whose son is a priest. These emotions are predominate in Sister Madeleva's poem, "The Young Priest's Mother".

And I am his beyond the extremest guesses
Of men, bound by indissoluble bands
Forever. It is not only he who blesses
And holds me close, but oh, he understands
Why adoration burns in my caresses,
What wounds I kiss upon his beautiful hands.

One finds in all the poems on the priesthood the underlying love for and dignity of the Eucharist which gives such

status and power to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The priest in perpetuating Christ's existence among men has a power which even the angels do not share.

These are the doctrines and poems which contain the essential teachings of the Church on the Eucharist. The subject because of its very profundity must be handled with a finesse uncalled for by many other doctrines. The basic emotion prevalent in the Eucharist is love, benevolent love. Such a theme demands enough subjective expression to obtain sincerity, warmth, and depth, as well as an equal amount of objectivity to achieve the universality and dignity which is characteristic of true art. The poets herein cited chose a lofty theme and executed their craftmanship in masterly fashion as can be seen by such poems as "Early Mass," "The Raiment," "Unto the End," "In Memoriam," "Hands of a Priest," "The Linen Bands," "A Young Nun," "The Consecrated Place," and "A Young Priest's Mother."

If Sister Maura felt that "reason, doctrine, and the gracious working of the Holy Spirit be great things to write about,"[2] who will question it after such examples have testified to the truth of her statement?

Footnotes

[1] Corinthians 1: 24.

[2] Sister Maura, "These be Great Things," Spirit, January, 1960,. p. 180.

CHAPTER IV

MARY--GOD'S MOTHER AND OURS

> My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior: because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid: for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed because He who is mighty has done great things to me. . .[1]

Mary, in the "Magnificat," succinctly states her position before God and man. Of all possible creatures, God selected her to be His Mother and He did so because of her humility. While she recognizes the honor which men must accord to her, she simultaneously gives all credit to God, "He has done great things to me." Because she is His Mother, and because Christ willed her to men from the Cross, Catholics have a warm, deep devotion to her. Of such devotion, Bishop Sheen says that there is never any danger of thinking too much of Mary; the danger lies in thinking too little of Christ. Indifference to one leads to indifference to the other.[2]

This veneration shown to Mary by Catholics is rarely understood by non-Catholics who sometimes mistakenly interpret it as a form of idolatry. Nothing is farther from the truth. There are two main types of devotion within the Church: latria, the worship offered to God alone, and dulia, the veneration given to the angels and saints. A higher respect is given to Mary which is different in degree not in kind from that given to the rest of the saints; this is hyperdulia, which is both inferior in degree and different in kind from latria.

The devotion given to Mary, then, derives from her divine maternity. It is the raison d'etre of all her prerogatives which can be grouped into two classes: functions and privileges. The former are comprised of her divine maternity, spiritual maternity, universal mediation, and universal sovereignty, while the latter comprise her Immaculate Conception, virginity, and fullness of grace.[3] Although the grouping is not, and is not meant to be absolute, it has the advantage of deciding which dignity takes precedence in determining feasts. It will also be the order in which her prerogatives will be analyzed both in the discussion and the poetry.

Stated negatively, the term, Mother of God, does not mean that Mary is a goddess similar to those of mythology. She is the mother of a person Who is God and not mother of that person inasmuch as He is God.[4] To understand this clearly, one must begin with the hypostatic union in Christ.

This union is none other than the two natures in Christ, human and divine. His Godly nature derives from the spiritual generation of the Father. God thinks a Word which is the perfect image of Himself as the Thinker. Because it has been eternally generated, God, the Thinker, is called the Father, the Word is the Son of the term of the generation.[5] Now, Christ, the Son of God, has existed from all eternity. When He willed to take on a human nature, He did it in time, in a unique generation neither wholly intellectual nor wholly carnal.

For Mary, by her fiat, conceived of the Holy Ghost and thus offered to give flesh to a person Who is God. The body she formed in her womb was the body of God; hence, she is the Mother of God.[6]

Mary, at the Annunciation, became not only the Mother of God, but the Mother of men as well. Her spiritual maternity is described simply by Father Neubert.

> Our spiritual regeneration began in the mystery of the Annunciation; for without the Incarnation we would still be buried in the death of sin . . . she knew from the prophets . . . the consequences which would result for us and for her from her answer to Gabriel. In giving this answer, she realized that our life or our death depended on it. Her fiat of acquiescence to the divine message was a fiat of acquiescence to our supernatural birth, a fiat of acquiescence to her function as our Mother.[7]

The promise she made at the Annunciation, she fulfilled to the letter on Calvary, for what Christ suffered mentally and physically, she suffered spiritually. While Christ's merits alone redeemed the world, having suffered in strict justice, she, by suffering as befitted her station, became co-redemptrix of mankind. Also, it is the opinion of Catholic theologians since the third century that Christ's words on Calvary, "Woman, behold thy son,"[8] was His proclamation of Mary's spiritual motherhood of all men.

Now, Mary's function as spiritual mother lies in obtaining graces for all men. This is not overestimating her prerogatives, for it is God, and not Mary, or even the humanity of Christ, who is the principal, efficient cause of grace. Mary, however,

prepared the supernatural cell, grace, by meriting it through her union with her Son.[9]

Mary offered more than life and suffering; she sacrificed her own Son. To the suffering which Christ endured, she added hers lovingly and meritoriously. For her co-redemptive act, God willed that she distribute all graces and virtues of the Holy Ghost to whom she wishes, how she wishes, and as much as she wishes.[10]

Mary's title of distributrix of all graces makes her of necessity a mediatrix between God and man. These conclusions can be drawn from Scripture, primarily from these passages in which God, wishing to accord special graces to various people, used Mary as His intermediary instrument. Examples of such mediation are the sanctification of John, the Baptist, the gift of Faith to both Jewish shepherds and the Magi, and the miracle at Cana. In each case, she is the means whereby God is glorified the more in the individual. No one loves her for her own sake; it is for His sake.

It is clearly evident that all of Mary's titles and honors derive from her association and union with her divine Son. Her title of Queen is another illustration of this truth. Jesus is King from all eternity both by nature and by conquest, whereas, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine kinship, by conquest, and by a unique vocation, through Him, with Him, and subordinate to Him.[11]

Again, Christ is King in the proper sense in that He

exercises a threefold power: legislative, executive, and judicial. Mary, too, is Queen in the proper sense of the word in enforcing His threefold powers. Her will is ever in harmony with His. It is to encourage and to help her spiritual children obey the decrees of her Son that she has sometimes appeared to various people throughout the centuries to admonish, encourage, and correct them. Since her apparitions were in her role as Queen of the Universe, it would be well to study them in great detail.

Apparitions are known as private revelations. Now, for clarity's sake, a distinction must be drawn between public and private revelation. Jean Guitton gives a detailed description of public revelation as follow:

> The Church is the society founded by Jesus Christ to guard, develop, and spread abroad the message revealed progressively from the earliest ages and reaching its plentitude in Christ. The germ entrusted to Abraham had by then reached its perfection of form and had but to maintain itself so until the end of time. The story of its develment, from Abraham and the first beginnings to Christ was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, first by the prophets then by the apostles and the evangelists. But when the apostolic generation was ended and the New Testament written, the official Revelation was closed forever. The message can be seen more clearly, but it can receive no addition.

"Seeing the message more clearly" can be accomplished through a private revelation which consists in an apparition from heaven to an individual to explain some doctrine already revealed, or to admonish, or to encourage someone. The Church, fully cognizant of human frailty, is cautious about such appearances and is favorably inclined toward those only which

after thorough investigation proved to be authentic. Those which have withstood such examination are those at La Salette, Guadalupe, and Walsingham.

On the whole, though, apparitions are a prerogative rarely exercised by Mary. She is more frequently exercising her Queenship in consoling the Poor Souls, bringing them relief and deliverance from pain, for she is Queen, not only of the Church Triumphant, but of the Church Militant and Suffering as well.

Having defined Mary's main functions of maternal and spiritual maternity, universal mediation and sovereignty, her privileges will require a like scrutiny. Of these, the chief one is her Immaculate Conception.

To properly understand Mary's unique privilege, it might be well to review the conditions which prevailed in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve existed in the state of original justice. This state was one of perfect harmony in the universe. The lower powers of the soul were subject to the intellect and the will. These in turn, were in submission to and in accord with the will of God, through sanctifying grace. There was peace, too, since peace, according to St. Thomas, is the tranquility of order. They had gifts of integrity, which were meant to perfect human nature itself. In sinning, Adam lost this original justice both for himself and for his descendants.[15]

Now, in sin, his reason and free will rebelled against God; his lower nature rebelled against the higher. The net result was ignorance in the intellect, weakness of will, and sufferings and death for the body--all were the material effects of original sin. The spiritual effects were the broken friendship of God and the ever present tendency to sin.[16]

By Baptism, which was procured for men by Christ, original sin is removed from the soul. The friendship is restored, but the material effects remain.

All men are born in original sin. Mary was the only exception to the rule. From the first moment of her conception, she was preserved from the stain of original sin. Duns Scotus, a Franciscan theologian, formulated the renowned argument, _Decuit, potuit, ergo fecit_ --"It was fitting, He was able, and, therefore, He did it."[17] It was not, however, until 1854 that Mary's Immaculate Conception was defined as a doctrine of Faith by Pope Pius IX.

Being as she was in the state of sanctifying grace from the moment of her conception, Mary was always pleasing to God. She never knew concupiscence or bodily disorders of any kind. In her was the harmony, order, and divine peace which had once prevailed in original justice in the Garden of Eden.

While Mary had fullness of grace, hers was unlike that of Jesus, for He is the source of all grace. Everyone, Mary included, receives grace from Him. What graces Mary possessed can best be described through a comparison with Eve. All the

supernatural and preternatural gifts which Eve had possessed and subsequently lost were Mary's in the new dispensation. God picked the most perfect creature He could find and endowed her with all possible gifts and graces when He selected her to be His Mother.

Mary's virginity was the outpouring of a sacrificial love. Now, married love can either be digestive and selfish, democratic and reciprocal, or finally, sacrificial; whereas, virginal love can only be sacrificial, for there is but one interest--His; and His interests center on the promotion of the spiritual kingdom on earth--saving souls and begetting spiritual children for heaven.[18]

Mary became the Mother of God without violating her virginity, since His birth was miraculous. By being a Virgin and Mother, she showed the world the need for both. Although she was a Mother, she had only one Child, Who was Jesus. The Church has upheld this doctrine in the face of all heresies. The five tenets issued by the Council of Trent in her defense are as follows: 1. Jesus alone is described in the New Testament as the Son of Mary. 2. The expression,'brothers of the Lord', can designate any relative of Jesus. 3. The most famous of these 'brothers of the Lord,' concerning whose relationship we have some information, have definitely a mother other than the Blessed Virgin. 4. This mother seems to be the sister or the sister-in-law of the Blessed Virgin, wife of the brother of

St. Joseph. The 'brothers of the Lord' would therefore be first cousins of Jesus. 5. Catholic tradition, although hesitating for some time on the identity of the 'brothers of the Lord' has been constant in its affirmation of Mary's perpetual virginity.[19] Furthermore, one finds her virginity expressed in the Apostles' Creed, Natus ex Maria Virgine.[20]

Mary's final privilege is her Assumption. Bishop Sheen rests the belief in it on two philosophical premises, love and life. The intense love of Jesus for His Mother and her equally intense love for Him pulled her into heaven with Him. The "pull of God's love"[21] on the hearts of all men is ever present, but with man's darkened intellect and weakened will, few people actually experience it. Mary, however, loved Him deeply enough to feel it.

Life is the other premise on which Mary's Assumption rests. Life is unitive; death is divisive. The higher the life, the more immanent its activity. God is perfect life because He has inner intellectual activity. He is Pure Act. Mary, too, because of her Immaculate Conception, has a highly integrated and unified life consisting of integrity or physical purity, mental purity without desire for a division of love, and a psychological purity which freed her from concupiscence.[22]

Mary has a still higher life resulting from her divine maternity. If the laws of the Church protecting the sacred

vessels and the tabernacle which contain the Blessed Sacrament are so strict and solicitous in safeguarding the Sacred Species, how much more would God have protected the most pure body which contained Him for nine months? For these reasons the Church defined the Assumption as a doctrine of Faith, the feast of which occurs on August 15.

Since the discussion of Marian doctrine has clarified many points of Mary's life which have been utilized by Catholic poets, the poems in which such tenets are found, will be analyzed along the lines of the discussion of doctrine, beginning with her divine maternity in Sister Mary Francis' "The Listener" and Raymond Roseliep's "Mary Descending Calvary". Poems dealing with her spiritual maternity will be Robert Lowell's "A Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady" and Sister Maura's "Our Lady of the Refugees"; her universal mediation is the theme of Thomas Merton's "Quickening of John the Baptist" and Sister Madeleva's "A Word for Shepherds and Angels". References to Mary's sovereignty are prominent in Thomas Merton's "La Salette", Sister Mary Francis '"Guadalupe", and Robert Lowell's "Our Lady of the Walsingham". Thomas Merton's "Duns Scotus", has reference to the Immaculate Conception, and Sister Honora's "Splendor of the Imagination", to her Assumption.

Although Mary's divine maternity is the theme of each stanza of "The Listener", the startling description of the Word of God descending under the heart of a virgin to become

flesh, is particularly appealing.

> The soft strung Word
> Lost in negotiation
> Pierced Mary's bosom
> Like a clarion
> In her there was no din,
> There was no traffic,
> Mary was full of listening
> Full of grace.

One finds here, too, the humility of the Magnificat. God had done great things to her, and henceforth all men would "call her blessed." At the moment, she was too busy adoring God within her.

When Mary's Child was born she experienced a joy whose depth found its equivalent in sorrow when He died. The loneliness she felt while He lay in the tomb is comparable to the pain of loss experienced by the damned, except, of course, that hers was not a moral loss. This more than common heartache is felt in Father Roseliep's "To Mary Descending Calvary."

> The preying silences with claw and beak
> bury loneliness in the vein at dusk
> now that you know here on the skull-curved peak
> the golden kernel has outgrown the husk:
> even the pulse's litanies are dumb
> once more than comradship has plainly gone
> and you place your step beside
> the numbed and reverential shadow that is John.

The last lines show the affinity existing between her divine and spiritual maternity. She had to undergo this suffering for the souls of mem, and it was because she sacrificed Him that she could place her step beside the numbed and reverential shadow that was John thereby accepting her spiritual

motherhood not only of John but of all men as well.

Because of her role on Calvary, men will call her Mother; what this entails is aptly illustrated by Robert Lowell in "A Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady." While the poem both by title and theme is a supplication in his grandsire's behalf, the poet pleads his own interests.

> O Mother, I implore
> Your scorched, blue thunderheads of love to pour
> buckets of blessings on my burning head
> Until I rise like Lazarus from the dead.

The poem is similar in content to the words of the Hail Mary--"Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Mr. Lowell begs for her continual prayers until he, too, has arisen, like Lazarus, from the dead. This is exactly what is meant by her spiritual motherhood; she is to aid her spiritual children in accomplishing their salvation. The most effective means she can employ are her prayers for souls.

Regardless of whether the appeal be personal or universal, material or spiritual, she will be a mother to her children living in exile. While Robert Lowell asked for Mary to fulfill the personal spiritual needs of himself and his grandfather, Sister Maura's request is both more universal and somewhat more material in nature, for she pleads for refugees the world over in "Our Lady of the Refugees."

> A thousand Bethlehems
> mask dark tonight,
> the eyes of friendly little homes
> have lost their light;
> pathetic heaps of poor dear things
> are laid aside; a small bird sang
> where latched door swings.

Mother, whose sad Egyptian flight
preceded all these
guide them in Faith beneath familiar stars.
Our Lady of the Refugees.

Ultimately the poet's request is as spiritual as Lowell's for the poem concludes on a plea to guide these refugees in Faith to aid them to endure their lot. This poem reveals the same confidence in Mary that the preceding poem contained; and both obtain this spirit from the traditional Catholic belief that no one ever appealed to her in vain.

In the foregoing poem, Sister Maura combines two dogmas of Mary, at least inferentially--that of spiritual maternity with that of universal mediation. The first is the cause of the second. Because she is the mother of all men, she brings special graces to certain people on special occasions. One of these was the sanctification of John the Baptist in his mother's womb, which occurred when Mary visited her aging cousin, Elizabeth, to aid her in her confinement. Thomas Merton speaks of the sanctification in "The Quickening of John the Baptist."

And the unborn St. John
Wakes in his mother's body
What secret syllables
Woke your young faith in mad truth
That an unborn babe could be washed in the Spirit of God.

The soul born in original sin is incapable of an act of Faith until it receives Baptism. John's Faith preceded his baptism, and it is this rare gift obtained for him by Mary

which incites the poet's admiration.

This privilege was accorded the man who was to be the last prophet of all, the man destined to prepare the way for the Messiah. Another example of great graces offered to men was that which was given to the shepherds on Christmas night. Witness the symbolic use of the Lamb which is the gift she gives to the shepherds in Sister Madeleva's "A Word for Shepherds and Angels".

> Then mayhap their hearts will be opened as mine with pain;
> They will understand how my first born, my only Son
> Will be our unblemished Lamb -- and slain and slain
> Angels, and shepherds, tonight I bring you the Word.

To be able to recognize God in this Babe was indeed a great grace, a rare gift, since there was nothing spectacular about either Child or couple watching over Him. True, the angels had sung from the heavens and an angelic messenger had announced the birth, but angels were not an unusual sight among the Jews,[23] consequently, these of themselves did not produce wonderment. Except for the angelic songs and the mysterious star, the miracles and signs by which Christ proved His divinity were sadly lacking at the moment. To discern the King of Kings in this lowly Babe was the great gift of Faith which Mary brought to them.

Mary's interest in and love for the shepherds was expressed in presenting her Child to them. She showers this same devotion on her children of today, or she would not appear periodically to plead with them to do penance and to pray. Throughout the ages she has pleaded. God's anger toward His

creatures would not disturb her to the point of appearing in such places as La Salette and Fatima as she has done, unless it were that she is concerned for men and the consequences described in Thomas Merton"s "La Salette".

> Your words, your prophecies, were all forgotten!
> Now one, by one,
> The things you said
> Have come to be fulfilled ...
> John in the might of his Apocalypse could not foretell
> Half the story of our monstrous century,
> In which the arm of your inexorable Son
> Bound, by His Truth, to disavow your intercession
> For this wolf-world, this craven zoo ...

Now, while it is true that individual suffering is not proportioned in equal measure of guilt, national calamities oftentimes are, and this is precisely why Mary appears to men -- to warn them to do penance in order to appease the anger of a just God. She knows, moreover, that her intercession will fail to obtain clemency for men if they persist in evil, for He, too, is bound by His Truth.

Mary"s only apparition in America, at Guadalupe, was not to warn men of impending danger, but rather to encourage the sorely oppressed Indians living under Spanish domination. She, in choosing Juan Diego as her messenger to the Bishop, raised the status of the Indians in the eyes of their conquerors. While the poem of "Guadalupe" was written to celebrate that event, it does not reflect the joy experienced at that time. Instead, it voices the same forefoding depicted in "La Salette".

> We plunge our prayers like swords
> Deep in the lifting bosom of your mercy

And all the world"s a lonely Tepeyac
Yearning to kiss your feet.

One senses the anxiety prevalent in the world in the poet's use of "plunging swordlike prayers" into Mary"s bosom for redress. The last lines are seemingly an echo of the legend of Walsingham in England, that when pilgrimages are again made to Walsingham in honor of Mary, England will once more be a Catholic country. The world needs but a direct command from her to pay homage to her, even as a chapel at Tepeyac brought Guadalupe to her feet, at her express command.

One penance which prevailed during a pilgrimage in former years is mentioned by Robert Lowell in "Our Lady of Walsingham".

There once the penitents took off their shoes
And then barefoot walked the remaining mile ...
until you lose track of your dragging pain ...

The section which best expresses her intercessory power with God, however, is as follows:

This face, for centuries a memory
Non est species, neque decor,
Expressionless, expresses God; it goes
Past castled Sion. She knows what God knows

Seemingly, her tremendous power lies in the fulfillment of the old prophecies, and her knowledge through a prevenient grace of all the sufferings she would endure and overcome from the Crib to the Cross. It is also a knowledge of the souls who would accept and reject the graces which she earned in-

directly. But in this as in all others, her will is one with His. The poet, then, concludes by recalling the legend cited previously, that is, that if the world would ask for her aid, there would be peace.

Perhaps the finest tribute paid Mary in recent years has been the definition of the Immaculate Conception as a dogma of Faith. Thomas Merton in "Duns Scotus" praises Mary indirectly, for he praises the theologian for having such great, rare wisdom in pronouncing the solution which would eventually become a doctrine of the Church. The poet does not overrate Duns Scotus for his wisdom and reasoning when one realizes that such eminent theologians as Alexander of Hales, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Albert were at a loss to explain how Mary was exempt from original or actual sin. They all believed she was but could not explain it. Since Mary's Immaculate Conception is treated inferentially throughout the poem, no direct reference can be cited.

Because she was always free from original sin, Mary was not actually subject to the penalty of death. She conformed, as her Son before her, to all the matters of the law; therefore, she submitted to death; the Church, however, holds that her body was taken to heaven. Sister Honora fancifully describes what must have occurred when Mary entered heaven, in "Splendor of Imagination".

> ... A haloed army joined expectant tones
> In lapis lazuli our Mary came
> past prophets, straightway to her Son.
> Her eyes still Bethlehem;
> And Easter locks, the same as Galilee.
> A wedge to their surprise from "Romeo".

And as a woman would
She ran to where her husband stood.

That Mary would first greet her Son and then go to her husband, Joseph, is very logical and soundly dogmatic. Very often the fact that Joseph was the foster-father of Jesus and the real husband of Mary is either glossed over or ignored. Seemingly this neglect arose because in the earliest days of Christianity, Christ's divinity or humanity was attacked by various heresies, and the fear of repeated occurrences of such errors prompted greater stress of the virgin birth and diminished the emphases of Joseph's role in the lives of Jesus and Mary.

Devotion to Joseph and recognition of his care of Mother and Child are of current interest in the Church. Bishop Sheen, in describing the part played by Joseph as the husband of Mary, states that theirs was a marriage of souls, and therefore, an absolute separateness of body, which was performed to protect Mary's name until the appropriate time had arrived for announcing the virgin birth, possibly right after the Resurrection.[24] Secondly, Joseph could testify to the purity of Mary, for he, too was told by the angel that this birth was miraculous.[25]

When all the evidence is collected, it is quite obvious that Joseph played an extremely privileged role. He was the type of man to whom a woman like Mary would run.

The task of summarizing the chapter about Mary is simplified after analyzing the poetry since the poets through their own

devotion to her demonstrate the characteristic devotional Catholic. All of her privileges and functions were exemplified in some way by each poet, for example, her divine maternity was prominent in Sister Mary Francis' "The Listener", and Father Raymond Roseliep's "To Mary Descending Calvary". Robert Lowell and Sister Maura did justice to her spiritual maternity in "A Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady", and "Our Lady of the Refugees", respectively, while her universal mediation was the theme of Thomas Merton's "Quickening of John the Baptist", and Sister Madeleva's "A Word for Shepherds and Angels".

Poems on the apparitions of Our Lady are "La Salette", by Thomas Merton, "Guadalupe", by Sister Mary Francis, and "Our Lady of Walsingham", by Robert Lowell, all of which have reference to her sovereignty. Thomas Merton's "Duns Scotus", deals with her Immaculate Conception inferentially, and Sister Honora's "Splendor of the Imagination" treats of her Assumption.

It is interesting to note that literature and art about the Mother of God are highly influenced by the Marian doctrines of current interest. In the early days of Christianity, the doctrine of the divine maternity was expressed in art by Madonnas of various descriptions. From the Middle Ages to the present, the artists and poets reveal her interest in humanity since her spiritual maternity and Queenship have been increasingly prominent. The foregoing examples of Marian poetry bear witness to men that Mary, now as in ages past, have continued

to be a subject worthy of artistic expression both in art and literature. It likewise fulfills the prophecy she foretold: ". . . from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."[26]

Footnotes

[1]Luke 1: 46-55.

[2]Most Rev. Fulton Sheen, The World's First Love (New York, 1952), p. 67.

[3]Very Rev. Emil Neubert, Mary in Doctrine (Milwaukee, 1954), p. 15.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 18

[5]Sheen, p. 69

[6]Neubert, p. 22.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 49

[8]John 19: 27.

[9]Neubert, p. 89.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 106

[11]Ibid., pp. 143-144

[12]Jean Guitton, "Our Lady's Appearances in the Modern World," The Mary Book (New York, 1950), p. 287.

[13]Walsingham devotion began in the time of Edward the Confessor, Guadalupe Apparition in Mexico, 1822, La Salette, France, 1846.

[14]Neubert p. 146

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 149

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 150.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 158.

[18]St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I (New York, 1948), Q. 103, A. 3, p. 506.

[19]Sheen p. 168

[20]Neubert, p. 188

[21]Dom Gasper Lefebvre, St. Andrew's Daily Missal, p. 869.

[22]Sheen p. 137

[23]Ibid., pp. 137-138

[24]Lefebvre, p. 89

25

[25]Patrick Temple, Pattern Divine (St. Louis, 1948), p. 17.

[26]Matthew 1: 20, 21.

CHAPTER V

CATHOLIC PRACTICES

A. LITURGICAL PRAYER

Catholic devotional practices often perplex many non-Catholics. Consequently, the following chapter has been organized to clarify suitably the major aspects of these devotions in order to insure a meaningful reading of liturgical and non-liturgical poems.

Actually, the term, "Catholic practices", is rather anomalous, but for want of a more generally acceptable expression it will suffice. The term, as it stands, would seem to imply that a Catholic performs a variety of isolated religious exercises having no bearing on or relationship to the next. For example, assisting at Sunday Mass, reciting the Office, and dealing with one's neighbors are seemingly three distinct and wholly unrelated actions; whereas, the opposite is true, for these exercises, varied as they may seem to be, are assimilated by the soul into one integrated whole spiritual force which is directed perpetually Godward in either adoration, thanksgiving, petition, or atonement. Just as all colors blend into a new color, white, so all Catholic practices fuse into a new prayer, a way of life.

The Catholic's way of life is for him a way of acknowledging the supremacy of the Creator and the dependency of the creature on Him. While all men have this inherent desire to

worship a Being infinitely greater than themselves, a Catholic fulfills this need for worship in the Church's two main types of prayer--liturgical and non-liturgical.[1] For the sake of economy and clarity of expression, the chapter will treat of liturgical prayer with a followup of the liturgical poetry and then discuss non-liturgical prayer and a similar inclusion of poetry.

Now, while all prayer is a raising of the mind and heart to God, liturgical prayer is the public, official worship which the Church and all its baptized members, through the Headship of Christ, offers to the heavenly Father.[2] The full cycle of this sacrificial act extends to all the members of this divinely organized society through the sacraments which sanctify souls, and through the sacramentals, which sanctify the forces of nature for the use of souls. This sanctification of nature obtains through the re-presenting of the mysteries of the life of Christ in what is called the liturgical cycle of the year and through the same celebration of the lives of the saints in the sanctoral cycle of the Church year. A similar sanctification of the day is accomplished through the recitation of the Divine Office, the Opus Dei, at given periods, known as the Hours. The liturgical cycle sanctifies the natural rhythmic pattern of the day.[3]

Of the three cyclic periods of the Church year, the basic, liturgical and sanctoral,[4] the one of immediate interest is

the liturgical year, the seasons of which are mainly Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. The cycle begins with Advent, which is a four-week preparation for Christmas. It emphasizes the happy expectancy both for the relived first coming of the Saviour and for His second coming at the instant of death, at which is applied to the soul the sentence to be delivered at His future coming at the end of the world. Catholics observe Advent with a spirit of joy at His first coming; penance and prayer in anticipation of His second coming.[5]

Advent closes with the celebration of the birth of Christ on Christmas Day. The theme of this season is one of love and joy in the possession of a Redeemer and the hope of a future possession of Him in eternity. This joy finds outward expression in the giving of gifts and the promotion of peace among men.[6]

Christmas joy reaches its climax in the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, for it celebrates the Feast of the Three Kings who, having come to adore their King, were given the gift of Faith for themselves and the gentile world. The Epiphany season of the next six weeks is primarily a season of thanksgiving and desire to manifest Him to the pagan world and the immediate world of the community.[7]

This joyous season passes into a sobering pre-Lenten period of three weeks--the names of which are Septuagesimas, Sexigesimas, and Quinquagesimas--so that actually there are

seventy days of preparation for Easter, representing the seventy years which the Israelites spent in the Babylonian captivity.[8]

The strict Lenten period of penance and prayer, however, begins only on Ash Wednesday. This season derives from the forty days Our Lord fasted and prayed in the desert before allowing Himself to be tempted. The Church in former ages used this period to instruct catechumens in the faith and to deepen the contrition of public penitents, both of whom prepared in such manner as to receive the sacraments of Baptism and Penance, thus rising spiritually with Christ on Easter Sunday. Now, however, Lent is a period of penance for all Catholics without discrimination.[9]

On the opening day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on the forehead of each Catholic as a reminder that he is but dust and ashes; and furthermore, unless he dies to himself by way of penance, he cannot rise spiritually with Christ either in the present life by grace or in the future by the resurrection. The role of penance for a Catholic particularly during this season is vital since it is the only means of re-establishing the hierarchical order of the universe, namely, the subjection of the lower to the higher nature or the control of the soul over the body which was the original harmony intended by God for the world. Man destroyed this order by sin and the body dominated the soul.[10]

Now, only through penance can men, who had upset it, help to re-establish God's design, as is possible to a degree through penance and prayer.

Lent, then, is a given time for a Catholic to show his loyalty to Christ in His warfare against Satan; this loyalty finds expression in atoning for his own sins as well as for the sins of others by way of penance. He deepens his faith in the last three days of Lent, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday as he shares in the Church's compassion for our suffering Saviour.[11]

Holy Thursday celebrates the institution of the Holy Eucharist and the priesthood, for on this day Christ, the High Priest of the New Law, transformed the old ritual feast of the Passover into an even more sacred meal in which He, the Pascal Lamb, gave Himself as food to those who believed in Him.[12] The Church, today, celebrates this event with one Mass in each Church out of deepest gratitude. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed all night for the adoration and thanksgiving of the faithful who are thus reminded of Christ's rebuke to His Apostles, "Could you not watch one hour with Me."[13]

On Good Friday, the symbolic rites of sacrifice were fulfilled in reality--the bloody immolation to God only because they represented the real sacrifice to come, one which was worthy of Him, Christ the Son.[14] The Church celebrates

this redemptive act in a spirit of desolation and mourning. No Mass is celebrated; instead, there is a Communion service for priest and people of Hosts which had been consecrated the day before. There is likewise, a public veneration of the Cross in which the Cross is placed conveniently in the front of the Church where the people can come forward and kiss the five wounds. The spirit of desolation is enhanced with the singing of the Reproaches, by removing of all consecrated Hosts from the tabernacles, and by the extinguishing of the sanctuary lamp.

The darkened church, the empty tabernacle, and the hushed atmosphere prevail until the services begin on Holy Saturday night. The lights, bells, and music of the joyful Alleluias of the services are symbolic of Christ's victory over death and sin. Easter is the greatest feast of the Church since it is His greatest miracle and His proof of divinity. The Easter season continues for a period of fifty days and contains another feast, the feast of the Ascension of Christ into heaven.

Pentecost is the feast which closes the Easter season and begins that of the Pentecostal season which continues up to Advent. The feast day itself, however, commemorates the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. The season thereafter stresses apostolic desire and action in the faithful along with an emphasis on the role of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of the faithful as well as man's continual need of

Him. Living by faith, hope, and love, a man can withstand the turmoil of life, but the initial supernatural strength to do so comes from the Paraclete.

The final feast yet to be mentioned is one belonging to the liturgical-sanctoral cycle, and it is the feast of Candlemas Day, February 2. This, too, was originally a Jewish feast in which the new-born child was offered to God and bought back again. For the woman, it was a spiritual purification after childbirth. Neither Our Lord nor Our Lady were under any Law in this regard, but both conformed to the Law in this as in all other things.[15]

Because Simeon called Christ the "Light of the Gentiles"[16] the church blesses candles, some of which are carried in a procession immediately afterward. The candles represent Christ, the wick His divinity, and the wax--which must be beeswax since it is the purest--represents His humanity. It is Our Lady's day as well, for Simeon had made a prophecy regarding her--that a sword of sorrow would pierce her heart.[17]

With this feast the discussion of the liturgical and liturgical-sanctoral cycle is completed. It is easily understandable that with so many phases of the lives of Our Lord and Our Lady along with saints, some feasts will rank in greater importance than others. The subject as to the arrangement of these feasts is too complex to be discussed in detail here and is not essential to this paper; however, feasts are

ranked as First, Second, and Third Class. Formerly, the feasts were divided still more into doubles, simples, and memories. Although the selection of feasts is simplified by this arrangement, the rank still determines the Mass or Office which will be recited for the day, since each feast has certain prayers to be said both in the Mass and in the Office. Of course, the Mass, per se, is the highest praise which can be offered to God regardless of the feast day prayers incorporated in the Mass.[18]

A description of the liturgical principle of the Mass can be stated as follows. Christ as the Victim of the Mass gives it true value. Man, however, who is called to participate in the priesthood of Christ[19] and who is moreover, a social being, offers himself to God in this social exterior action. Actually the gift that is really acceptable to God is the love each person has for every other person. St. Irenaeus says, "When we love one another, God truly receives the Blessed Eucharist from us as a pleasing gift from His friends, and it gives Him the glory we owe Him".[20]

The principle of social prayer of the Office operates the same way. This devotion is relegated to priest and religious primarily due to the frequency of recitation and the language difficulty. Although some religious chant the entire Office, others recite it in a modified form. Now, because it is the official prayer of the Church, regardless of the number who pray it, each individual is an ambassador for the Church offering praise to God.

The Office consists of the psalms primarily, which are recited three times a day. This prayer is divided into eight sections called hours. These are Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline, Matins, and Lauds. Of these the first four are chanted in the morning, the next two, though originally intended for night prayers, in the late afternoon; and the last two though originally morning prayers, usually near sundown. The contemplatives retain the original horarium by reciting Compline for night prayer and Lauds about two in the morning.

Just how much effort must be exerted in performing this exercise at two in the morning will be appreciated if one knows that Matins is the longest of the hours; nine lessons are chanted in all. The first three are taken from Scripture, the next three from the liturgical feast, and the last three from portions of a homily on the day's gospel. However, most of the Office is so arranged that the entire psalter (150 psalms) will have been recited within the normal week.[21]

The close relationship between Mass and Office is observable from the following statement: "We meditate the text of the liturgy, of the Word of God as is presented to us by the Church; and then we take our own part, become active participants in the offering of the Mass, both with the offering of the Mass and the whole prayer of the Church. The prayer of the Church is an answer to the Word of God, which is made of

the Word of God itself--the Divine Office. All of this leads to the full realization, the full achievement in us, of what Holy Communion is, that is, the manifestation in us of the life of the Risen Christ.

These then, are the major aspects of liturgical prayer and the liturgical cycle which are now to be analyzed in terms of liturgical poems. Since the Mass and Office are the highest forms of praise which man can offer to God, it would be well to begin with them. The first poem will be Thomas Merton's "Early Mass," then three on the Office, beginning with Sister Maura's "On Reciting the Evening Office," Sister Honora's "Between the Printed Psalms," and Thomas Merton's "After the Night Office; Gethsemani." The poems on the liturgical seasons will describe those seasons as they follow in respective order; Brother Antoninus' "Advent," Sister Mary Francis' "Lenten Invitatory," John Logan's "Monologue for the Good Friday Christ," and Daniel Berrigan's "Resurrexit," and "Pentecost."

It may seem a little strange that after having spent a chapter on the Holy Eucharist, it should again be found in another aspect, this time as a liturgical prayer. The poem, "Early Mass," is a fine exemplification of what is meant by liturgical prayer: it shows the objective, universality of this prayer which is permeated with Christ's truth, holiness, and power.

There is a Bread which You and I propose . . .

It is Your truth. And more: it is ourselves.
Because we think His Latin we are part of one another,
Together when I am away ...

Bless and restore the blind, straighten the broken limb
These mended stones shall build Jerusalem ...

The doctrine of the Mystical Body is contained within these lines. Even though the poet is not present at the liturgical prayer, since he is a part of this living body, the Church, he shares in the prayers. While praying, each soul goes out to his needy bretherm extending compassion to the sorrowing and rejoicing with the joyful. These prayers will build the walls of grace, the invisible Jerusalem, the Holy City.

A similar aspect of universality is found in the recitation of the Office as was prevalent in "Early Mass". The absence of sentimental prayer is strikingly evident in Thomas Merton's "After the Night Office: Gethsemani Abbey", as he describes the morning hours, namely, Matins and Lauds. The main objective of the Office is praising God, which is the theme of the poem.

Praises and canticles anticipate
Each day the singing bells that wake the sun,
But now our psalmody is done ...
The Truth that transubstantiates the body's night.
Open the secret eye of faith
And drink these deeps of invisible light.

Returning to the windows of our deep abode of peace ...
We find our souls all soaked in grace, like Gedeon's fleece.

This poem is an indication of what contemplation can be achieved through the chanting of the corporate, dogmatic prayer which might seem to be wholly unemotional. The real aim of the

prayer as intended by the Church is to direct a soul away from self and center it on God. The poet has achieved the end successfully for on returning to rest at about three in the morning, his thoughts are not on weariness, but on peace.

Another poem on the Office, Sister Maura's "On Recitation of the Evening Office," emphasizes another aspect of liturgical prayer, the idea that even though one person chant the Office, he is an ambassador of the Church praying to God. The dignity inherent in the poem implies this representative nature of the prayer. One senses here too the objective and universal qualities of the prayer as the nun chants it.

> Across the dusk of day
> we walk with medieval tread
> the word of God within our hands
> the Compline to be read.
>
> This is the essence of the day,
> which unaware we sought
> till now at vesper time we hold
> this ageless gift of thought.

Perhaps this last poem on the Office, "Between the Printed Psalms," is a fine example of how welcome a disciplined prayer can be for one who is apt to be quite distracted. The emotion is ever under strictest control and the last lines show this to the best advantage.

> _Te Lucis Ante Terminum_,
> I thank for the intangibles
> this dry florescence stirs, linking
> logic of youth's sundial
>
> to the sre or live corollas
> of today. I know that I am
> in arrears, though breviary
> praying is predestinate.

Poems on liturgical prayer display the characteristics of the prayer which never pressures any of the poets to expose their innermost feelings but on the contrary aids each to adopt his plan of spiritual life suitable to his needs.

Several poems dealing with the liturgical seasons will show what the discussion already clarified, that is, the influence which the seasons exert on the prayers of both Mass and Office. It will be evident in "Advent", by Brother Antoninus that the same yearning and expectancy mentioned earlier will also be found in this poem. The two-fold coming of the Redeemer is expressed in the last stanza.

> And all Creation will gather its glory up
> Out of the clouded winter-frigid tomb
> And the sudden Eye will swell with the gift of sight
> And split the tomb.

Figuratively speaking, Catholics through penance and prayer can split the tomb of sin and receive Him with the graces equal to those of His first coming; or on the other hand in a literal sense, a Catholic, through a lifetime of penance and prayer, can split the tomb of eternal death and with all Creation gather up eternal glory at His second coming.

In preparing for Christmas, Catholics remember Mary's role in the redemption. Advent, in fact, is often called the Marian season because if people awaited the coming of the Redeemer so eagerly, what can be said of her from whom He would be born? Thoughts of the Mother are the theme in Sister Mary Francis' "Advent Song."

Lady, what songs are bending
The tall grasses of your mind,
What secret music whispers down your veins,
What waxleaf ponderings, O Virgin Mary
Waken our little shouts of expectation?

Sister Mary Francis' inclusion of Mary in the preparatory period of Christmas is typical of Catholic Christmas poetry as well; in both seasons the Mother is with her Child. In "Christmas Song," Sister Madeleva demonstrates this Madonna-Child theme.

The world is blind; the world is Bethlehem
But over it Your stars are very bright.
With weak and wise, with Mary here I am,
Young child, tonight.

"Christmas Song" is but one instance of a poem paying homage to Mother and Child; some others are "Nativity," by John Brunini, and "Christmas 1941," by Sister Madeleva. They all echo the joy of the Christmas liturgy, a joy which continues up to and through the feast of Epiphany, January 6, and thereafter into the Epiphany season.

Catholics regard the feast of Epipiphany with the deepest gratitude toward the Magi, for had these men not remained staunch in their great undertaking, the gentile world might have had a different culture today. The journey of the Wisemen, then, is of interest to Catholics as Daniel Berrigan re-presents it in "Magi."

So the great came, great only in need
to the roof of thatch, the child at knee awaiting.

This poem, while depicting the scene as a quite humble, unpretentious occasion, underscores the sublime Faith granted

to the great which permitted them to see in this Child, their God.

This period of rejoicing varies in length from year to year, between three and six weeks and then begins to wane into a pre-penitential season of Septuagesima, Sexigesima and Quinquagesima respectively. The real note of penance and sorrow arrives with Ash Wednesday, which opens the season of Lent.

Eithne Tabor's "Ash Wednesday," reminds us that the self-imposed penance which most Catholics undertake is as nothing compared to the very real suffering which a mentally ill person endures. The poem describes and amplifies the meaning of the placing of ashes on the forehead so well that it will be reproduced here in entirety. The opening lines are taken from the words of the priest as he places ashes on each one's brow: "Remember, man, that you are but dust."

"Memento homo, quia pulvis es . . ."
But for the signed, the sealed, the set-apart,
No symbol-ash is needed. On their brows
Is written, clearer far, their frailty.
Torn by eroding waves and blasting winds
Little by little, crumbles the strongest rock
Into a pile of dust; and thus the spirit
Crumbles beneath too much adversity.
Yet from the burned-out clinkers of these lives
Warmth has not wholly vanished after Lent
The Resurrection brings the sun again.
O pyre of consummation! Cleansing flame!
Out of the ashes of this seeming ruin
Let us rise phoenix-like, reborn in pain!

The symbol of penance and death for a Catholic is concretized in the very lives of these mentally ill people whose

of broken spirits, the ravages of the battle, the wage for reality.

Although not all souls are asked to endure the suffering which was demanded of Miss Tabor, nevertheless the obligation to do penance remains by virtue of Christ's admonition, "Do penance or ye shall all likewise perish." The spirit with which one should impose voluntary penance is described by Sister Mary Francis in "Lenten Invitatory".

> Come, fling open the sashes of the spirit
> And let the broad gusts of remorse
> Scatter your careful defenses ...
> bring in sorrow
> Brutal as nails, real as weighted whips ...

It takes as great a courage to do hard things voluntarily as it takes to face the trials which are fashioned by God. All smugness and complancency of careful defenses must be torn down to face the reality of sorrow and remorse. Only in this wise can a soul display loyalty to Christ in His battle with sin and Satan.

The spirit of penance must continue through Lent and as the season closes each Catholic intensifies his sense of and desire for remorse and atonement, for on Good Friday the liturgy dwells on His bitter Passion and Death. In recalling the scenes of the redemption, the Church's liturgy includes the veneration of the Cross. Catholics come to the front of the Church, kneel before the crucifix, and kiss the five wounds. This rite is the theme of John Logan's "A Monologue for

the Good Friday Christ."

> The Good Friday crowd went
> In queues to kiss the crux
> Fidelis; soon shall each
> Have back the least
> Joy and the red cent
> What he gave up for Lent.
> Our holy master has died;
> We kneel and touch lips to pride.

Specific penances required of Catholics are to refrain from worldly amusements, to give alms, and to pray. Within two days, even the least joy and the red cent denied to the Catholic will be amply rewarded by a joyous Easter, and, ultimately, in eternal joy.

Any Catholic, then, who spends forty days in self-abnegation finds the Alleluias of Easter a welcome refrain. His joy is augumented by the amount of penance he has assumed, in how much of the old man he has put off in such efforts in order to put on the new man of whom St. Paul speaks. Christ's Resurrection gives this hope of resurrection to all men, and this is the hope expressed in Father Berrigan's "Resurrexit."

> He must grow his own flesh
> bright again, sweet again, a tree from its own root.
>
> They run and run, but the news
> is all on wing, is as far as the tremendous drowning
> world of trees, that first drank from his
> infinite roots; and now runs far ahead, as far as
> years
> arriving on my morning, with my unhurried tree.

Although Easter is the greatest feast in the Church calendar, other joyous feasts are included in this season

one of which is the Ascension, the day on which Christ entered heaven. Pentecost is the transition feast for it closes the Easter and opens the Pentecostal season. It celebrates the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles and disciples, the description of which is reproduced in Daniel Berrigan's "Pentecost."

> All their lives rounded in a backcountry brogue
> now to see, at crowd's edge, the fine Athenian profiles
> agape as bumpkins, scenting their delicate language like
> odor of muscatel or honey:
>
> Peter and John, it is Babel crashing about your ears.
> The Spirit, impatient of gross and exquisite tongues, of known
> and unknown gods, has riven the abominable tower
> with His descent. Now the undivided tongues
>
> are abroad, are a wildfire, from the twelve winds from these
>
> transfigured faces. Never again to be constrained
> by scarecrow gestures, by hem or haw, Forever to see
> agonized at the crowd's edge, the profiles emptied of guile
> their human wisdom consumed in a stench of straw.

The role of sanctifying souls began for the Holy Ghost in a spectacular manner on Pentecost, thereafter, He continued His work in a quiet, unassuming way. His presence is as effective in souls now as it was in the Apostles, for the soul who responds to His grace will never be unduly dismayed, or defeated, but, like the Apostles, meet the vicissitudes of life courageously supported by a firm Faith, childlike Trust and ardent Love.

The Pentecostal season terminates the liturgical season which begins again with Advent. One feast, however, belonging

to the sanctoral-liturgical cycle deserves mention, and it is one called Candlemas Day, February 2. Its name derives from the Presentation of Christ in the temple. Both Mother and Child are honored by the blessing of candles which are then carried in a procession. Thomas Merton refers to this in "The Candlemas Procession".

> Look kindly, Jesus, where we come
> New Simeons, to kindle
> Each at Your infant sacrifice his own life's candle
> Nor burn we now with brown and smoky flames,
> but bright
> Until our sacrifice is done ...

All the Faithful are to be Christlike, letting their light shine before men. Their lives must, like the candle, be burnt out in service of God and man. The candle in the poem has a deeper significance for it symbolizes the specific sacrifice which the poet has offered in terms of his own life.

B. NON-LITURGICAL PRACTICES

Non-liturgical prayer is the private prayer of individuals which, having derived from specific events and customs, has been developed and employed throughout the centuries with the approval of the Church. The Church is always mindful of the unique disposition of each soul in its search for God and therefore allows it to find the best way to achieve success, of course, within the limits of Faith and reason. That the Church at present stresses lay participation in the Mass is not to say that it minimizes or disregards private prayer, for the Church heartily endorses these devotions:[22] particularly, meditation, the Sign of the Cross, Angelus, Rosary, and the Stations of the Cross.

Meditation is one of the essential types of prayer for it is by means of this prayer that a person acquires a conscious realization of the union which exists between the soul and God through grace; of the soul's complete dependence on Him, and of His constant loving presence in the depths of the soul.[23]

The origin of the Sign of the Cross is not definitely known, but the practice is thought to have been developed in the time of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who recommended it to the Faithful and advised them "not to be ashamed to profess the Crucified. Be the Cross our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our brow and in everything; over the bread we eat

and the cups we drink; when we lie down and when we arise".[24]

The words and actions form a summary of Faith, namely, unity of God, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity and the redemption for the words, "In the name," -- expresses the unity of God; "of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," -- expresses the trinity of God; and the cross itself demonstrates Faith in the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God Who became Man.[25]

A familiar devotion which is recited morning, noon, and night at the sound of the bell in honor of the Incarnation of Our Lord is called the Angelus. It developed about 1318 in Parma, Italy when three _Paters_ and _Aves_ were recited for peace. Versicles replaced the _Paters_ and by 1456, Pope Calixtus II ordered the Angelus to be prayed three times daily. The versicles which introduce each _Ave_ are:

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
And she conceived of the Holy Ghost. (Hail Mary)

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it done unto me according to Thy Word. (Hail Mary)

And the Word was made Flesh.
And dwelt among us. (Hail Mary)

Still later, a short prayer was added, which need not be introduced here. At present, the Angelus is rung three times daily in all the free countries of the world.

Another devotion common to Catholics is the recitation of the Rosary. The word, "rosary", (meaning a garland or wreath of roses) is applied to the beads themselves which being blessed

are a sacramental. There are fifty-nine beads in all, six large representing the _Paters_, and fifty-three small ones for the Aves, with another _Pater_ and three _Aves_ appended to the cross.[26]

Usage of beads to count the prescribed number of prayers derives from the old custom of keeping account of the psalms recited by means of pebbles. One hundred and fifty psalms composed a psalter; therefore, when the pebble-counting system was transferred to counting _Aves_, one hundred and fifty _Aves_ were called a psalter, or the equivalent of three rosaries.[27]

Much of the spiritual benefit of this exercise depends on the meditations on a particular phase of the live of Our Lord and Our Lady at the beginning of each decade. These meditations or mysteries are divided into sections: Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious. In the Joyful, the reflections are based the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, and the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. In the Sorrowful, the themes are the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. In the Glorious, the themes are the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption, and the Coronation.

Approximately when the recitation of _Aves_ replaced the psalter of psalms is not known, but gradually, the difficult Latin prayers were discarded for the familiar, simpler _Aves_.

Still another practice among Catholics is the Way of the Cross or the Stations. The Stations are the crosses, which must be made of wood, and which are usually placed over the pictures or tableaus representing fourteen different scenes from the Passion of Our Lord. While the scenes are not essential for gaining the indulgence,[28] they aid the faithful in making the spiritual pilgrimage to the chief scenes of Our Lord's sufferings and death. The fourteen scenes are as follows: 1. Jesus is condemned to death. 2. Jesus accepts His Cross. 3. Jesus falls the first time. 4. Jesus meets His Mother. 5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His Cross. 6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. 7. Jesus falls the second time. 8. Jesus meets and comforts the women of Jerusalem. 9. Jesus falls the third time. 10. Jesus is stripped of His garments. 11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross. 12. Jesus dies on the Cross. 13. Jesus is placed in the arms of His Mother. 14. Jesus is laid in the sepulchre. Having reflected on each station, the Catholic makes a practical application of his meditation by making some atonement for sin, both personal and general.

The analysis of the poems dealing with these non-liturgical prayers will follow the same order as that in discussing them and will open with Jessica Powers' "The Place of Splendor" and "Where the Spirit Dwells," continue with Daniel Berrigan's "The Crucifixion," Thomas Merton's "Evening: Zero Weather," Jessica Powers' "Seventh Station," and Raymond Roseliep's

"Thirteenth Station."

Meditation is awakening in the soul of the presence of God in the soul. The realization of this fact must be made with conscious effort as Jessica Powers indicates in her first poem, "Where the Spirit Dwells."

> This is the Spirit's place
> Into whose peace few paths of wisdom wend
> Where art thou, man, with anguish on thy face
> Out on a search forever without end?
> O piteous and unprotected one!
> I am seeking a lover, he says, seeking a friend.
>
> But earth has none of these.
> Each soul was made divergent and alone
> And of itself forever without kin
> Save to a Blessed Guest Who waits within
> Made to find God and marked to be His own,
> It bears the brand of a divine decree
> In shifting now and through eternity.
> O Love, where dwellest thou, it cries, not seeing
> Itself a covert from the wind and rain,
> A tabernacle and divine domain,
> Bride and abode of the Most Holy Being,
> The Love whom Love would give its life to gain.

This awareness of the Guest within is possible for the soul only by shutting out distractions, all things earthly. This deeper form of meditation is called contemplation. The mental steps one must take to obtain the grace of contemplation are described in "The Place of Splendor."

> Its single gate
> Lies in your soul, and you must rise and go
> By inward passage from what earth you know
>
> The steps lead down
> Through valley after valley, far and far
> Past the five countries where the pleasures are.

And past all known
Maps of the mind and every colored chart
And past the final outcry of the heart . . .

Walk till you hear
Light told in music that was never heard
And softness spoken that was not a word . . .

That light swept shore
Will shame the data of grief upon your scroll.
Child, have none told you? God is in your soul.

These poems can be the story of everyone's search for God and in this respect, they are universal. The specific method by which the poet seeks God within the soul makes it peculiarly Catholic since she disciplines her mind and will to exclude from thought all which is not God. Concentrating on the thought of His presence within, she becomes aware of this and only this.

The Sign of the Cross, like meditation, is a part of every prayer for a Catholic. The Cross which is traced on the Catholic reminds him of the price paid for his redemption. This is the _raison d'etre_ of the wayside shrines of the crucifix as Daniel Berrigan's poem, "The Crucifix," can testify.

I remember today a Quebec roadside, the crucifix,

So old, so scored by their winters, it had been staked out
perhaps by a band of ruffians on first Good Friday
The way it endured, time would have bruised his fist in
striding it . . .

He was irremovably there, nailing down the landscape,
more permanent than any mountain time could bring down
or frost alter face of. He could not be turned aside
from his profound millennial prayer.

still his body took punishment like a mainsail
bearing the heaving world onward to the Father.

And men knew nightlong: in the clear lovely morning he will
be there,
not to be pulled down from the landscape, never from his
people's hearts.

The crucifix is a vivid reminder of Christ's love for men: it is the means through which He continues to bear the "heaving world" to the Father. It is through the Cross that He will attract people. "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all things to Myself."[29]

Unlike the two previous poems which deal with meditation and the Cross directly, both the Angelus and Rosary are merely alluded to in the next poem, Thomas Merton's "Evening: Zero Weather."

Amd we will never see the copper sunset
Linger a moment, like an echo, on the frozen hill
Then suddenly die an hour before the Angelus
When all the monks come in with eyes as clean as the cold
sky
And axes under their arms,
Still paying out Ave Marias
With rosaries between their bleeding fingers.

The Angelus and Rosary do three things for the poem: a) define the hour of the day--five o'clock since the Angelus rings at six, b) emphasize the bitterly cold weather--still paying out Ave Marias with rosaries between their bleeding fingers, c) establish a monastic atmosphere as well as a descriptive one of how the monks spend their spare moments.

The monks came in "with eyes as clean as the cold sky," and no doubt with a spirit of recollection produced by the

private prayer of the rosary. Alike meditative spirit prevails in the poem of the stations. Notice this in Jessica Powers' poem on Jesus's second fall, "Seventh Station."

> I think that it must have been true in ancient Judea
> As it is true on this shaded chapel wall
> That He Whose love had rooted itself in suffering
> Would find the most uncomforting place to fall.

A spirit of reflection so essential to both good poetry and prayer is in evidence here, and in this instance, the poem could serve as a prayer. Another poem on the stations, Father Roseliep's "Thirteenth Station," does not give this same impression. The scene is that of the Pieta, Mary holding the Crucified Body of her Son in her arms. She is the priest offering up the Sacrifice of the Mass.

> You are the priest tonight
> The paten of your lap holds sacrifice
> You are the priest tonight,
> Offering Peace and its price
> Star candles burn palely bright;
> John is your faithful acolyte
> You are the priest tonight.

Mary offered in a blood manner the Sacrifice which priests offer in an unbloody manner. The poet makes hers as liturgical as that mystical offering which is the Mass. This poem concludes the poetry on non-liturgical prayer.

Summarizing Catholic practices in poetry confirms Maritain's statement, i.e. that a worthwhile theme strengthens a work of art and such themes as the liturgy and private prayer in the hands of craftsmen like Thomas Merton, Daniel Berrigan, Jessica Powers, John Logan, Brother Antoninus, and Sister Mary Francis are sources of both inspiration and aspiration.

While poetry can never enhance the value of prayer or detract therefrom, the art of exposing the intrinsic beauty of these devotions is a challenging feat, since it requires a deep insight into such beauty and the necessary skill to communicate it. Such poems as "Advent," "Advent Song," "Christmas," "The Magi," "Lenten Invitatory," "Monologue for the Good Friday Christ," "Resurrexit," and "Pentecost," are examples of what has been done with liturgical prayer poetically, while "Evening; Zero Weather," "Thirteenth Station," "The Place of Splendor," "Where the Spirit Dwells," and "Crucifixion," are instances of how successful contemporary Catholic poets have been in the realm of non-liturgical devotions; of how capably poets can merge the things of God with the things of men.

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Footnotes

[1]Dom Columba Marmion, Christ the Life of the Soul (St. Louis, 1925), p. 246.

[2]Sister Mary Gabriel, "Challenge to Religious," Sponsa Regis (May, 1958), 228.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Dom Gasper Lefebvre, St. Andrew's Daily Missal (St. Paul, 1957), p. vi.

[5]Father Charles Magsam, "How the Prayer of the Church Unites Us to God," Spiritual Life (March, 1957), 19.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Very Rev. Evil Neubert, Mary in Doctrine (Milwaukee, 1954), p. 246.

[11]Magsam, p. 19.

[12]Lebvre, p. 449.

[13]Matthew 26: 40.

[14]Marmion, p. 246.

[15]Patrick Temple, Pattern Divine (St. Louis, 1950), p. 120.

[16] Lebvre, p. 1169.

[17] Temple, p. 121.

[18] Lebvre, p. xx.

[19] I Peter 11: 9.

[20] Thomas Merton, The Living Bread (New York, 1956), p. 21.

[21] Maisie Ward, "Elements and Office of the Rosary," The Mary Book (New York, 1951), p. 316.

[22] John Murphy, The Mass and the Liturgical Reform (Milwaukee, 1956), p. 28.

[23] Thomas Merton, "Meditation Action and Union," Sponsa Regis (March, 1960), 198.

[24] Herbert Thurston, "Sign of the Cross," Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, 786.

[25] John Sullivan, The Visible Church (New York, 1922), pp. 119-120.

[26] Ibid., p. 164.

[27] Ibid., p. 143.

[28] Ward, p. 320.

[29] Sullivan, p. 139.

CHAPTER VI

SUFFERING

Of all living creatures of God, man has the greatest capacity for change. This tendency in him is perhaps more discernible in suffering than in some other activities, for he can respond to it in many different ways, i.e., as a hedonist in evading it, a Buddhist in surrendering fatalistically to it, a Stoic in competing doggedly with it, or as a Catholic in submitting supernaturally to it.[1]

While it is both possible and probable that a Catholic's initial response to suffering can be in any one of the other ways, if he is to benefit from this pain, he must accept it as God's expressed or permitted will for him. In this way, suffering can be and is meaningful; it becomes so only by way of analogy, however, for it is in this manner alone that the doctrine of suffering can be approached, there being no other way of linking the Infinite and the finite. Actually, the problem of suffering will be solved only at the end of time; but the Church, by adhering to the examples and teaching of Our Lord, has made pronouncements on the subject which give it both meaning and merit. A view of the teaching of the Church on suffering will include a discussion of the nature of suffering, resignation and purpose and types of suffering.

Primarily, suffering is a punishment for sin; but since Our Lord Himself chose it of all possible ways to redeem mankind, it has come to be regarded as a necessity -- no cross, no crown. Our Lord chose the Cross, and anyone who wishes to follow Him must do the same as Our Lord, or he cannot be Christ's disciple.[3]

Christ through His sufferings and death earned the merits necessary to obtain heaven. This means that He earned the graces which give eternal value to the activities of men.[4] It is the responsibility of each man therefore, to apply these merits to his own sufferings and activities to give them eternal value.

By submitting cheerfully to God's expressed or permitted will for him, a Catholic applies these merits of Christ's to his own situation. It takes grace to submit. Now, such resignation does not imply or include a passive acceptance of evil involved; on the contrary, a Catholic must do all in his power to eliminate such evil through constant vigilance and struggle. "The Cross is a battle".[6]

The ultimate purpose of suffering is for the greater glory of God. Our Lord established this when He refuted the Judaic relationship between personal guilt and punishment instigated by the discussion of the man born blind. The Apostles had asked Him whether the parents or the child was guilty of sin. Christ answered that neither the parents nor the child involved were guilty but the affliction had been permitted for the glory of

God. In one sweeping statement, He upset the traditional teaching of personal guilt and proportionate punishment.[7]

The disproportion between guilt and punishment is still a bone of contention in the world. The wicked apparently prosper while the virtuous often suffer the greatest afflictions. Theologians maintain that the wicked are being rewarded temporally for the slight good they may have done, while the genuinely good people are being purged here of the faults which they retain and thus are preparing themselves for an eternal recompense; the suffering is testing their true worth and giving glory to Him.[8]

Suffering, then, is understandable in the light of Christ's teaching; whereas, the types of suffering are observable in the light of His example. He suffered physically, morally, and spiritually, as His followers do, for He would not ask of them that which He would not do first.

Physical suffering began for Christ at the moment of His birth in a crude, cold stable and continued throughout His earthly existence as He experienced the exile of a refugee, the fatigue and poverty of a workman, and the homesickness and hunger of a stranger. All of these were climaxed, however, by the bitter sufferings involved in His Passion and Death in which He reached a new depth of physical torture in the scourging, crowning with thorns, carrying of the Cross and the crucifixion. This was but one phase of suffering,

for He likewise knew moral and spiritual suffering as well.

The moral suffering of Christ occurred in the Garden of Gethsemani when He, like the sin-laden goat of old, voluntarily shouldered the sins of the world. The heinousness of the evil imposed on His innocent soul created such an agony that He broke out into a bloody sweat. No one deserved to suffer less than He.

Christ's physical and moral sufferings can be comprehended, at least to some degree; His spiritual suffering, however, is beyond human comprehension. Because of the hypostatic union in Christ, His humanity suffered abandoment by His Father in a very real sense, known as the pain of loss, while His divinity continued to enjoy the Beatific Vision. It is difficult to understand how He could suffer so intensely on one hand and be happy simultaneously on the other, but it is a matter of Faith that He experienced such dual sensations.[9]

These types of suffering endured by Christ are common to all people. In the physical order, sufferings arise from sickness, inclement weather, death, poverty, and fatigue. The cross, of whatever nature, is intended to drive the soul inward so as to unite the sufferer with another Sufferer and thus to gain eternal value from the present pain.[10]

Moral sufferings are unlike those of the sinless Christ, since man is only too well aware of his sinfulness, guilt, and frailty of nature. The sufferings consist in realizing one

has a responsibility to Someone he loves and that he likewise has failed in this responsibility. It is an awareness of the disproportion between one's guilt and adequate atonement which produces the sufferings. Bishop Sheen says that the depth of one's moral suffering depends on the depth of one's love. Such a soul finds more peace in suffering than in sinning. Knowing, too, of his proneness to evil, such a soul is less disturbed at the sins of others; he condones the sinner, while he detests the sin.[11]

Sufferings in the spiritual order are occasioned by a soul who yearns to realize some of its potentialities which have not been exercised or for a deeper spiritual life which will make more demands on it.[12] The soul is like a plant having roots needing spiritual depth and branches which yearn for communion with heaven. The depth of the desire corresponds to the capacity one has to love.

A great master of the spiritual life, St. John of the Cross, describes the different levels of spiritual suffering. He says the strong souls experience two types of trial, one the dark night of the senses, and the other the dark night of the spirit. The former consists in dryness in prayer, a fear of being spiritually ruined, and even forsaken by God, along with a sense of abiding peace; the latter consists in trials similar to the former except that they are of a more intense nature. The soul considers itself a source of contempt, and

despite all the earthly attainments it achieves, it regards itself as a stranger and a pilgrim on earth; nevertheless, this soul experiences at all times a serene peace.[13]

These deeper spiritual sufferings may never come to many people, but everyone does have an innate yearning for God. The capacity for loving God varies with each person. St. Therese of Liseaux compares this capacity to liquid measure containers. Some have the capacity to suffer and love in the equivalent of a thimbleful; others have that of a glass; others again of a jarful. Regardless of the capacity, the important item is to fill one's container. When one is satiated, one is content. Those with the smallest containers will be expected to suffer less; those with larger containers can endure more and their reward will correspond to the container.[14] Our Lord put it this way: "In My Father's house, there are many mansions."[15]

These are the phases of suffering which will be analyzed in a group of poems by Catholic poets. Since suffering derives meaning and merit from the sufferings of Christ, the first poem, Daniel Berrigan's "The Crucifixion," will deal with the crucifixion. The next three will be based on physical suffering, namely, Jessica Powers' "To One Killed in War," and Eithne Tabor's "Underscoring," and "My Wish." Moral suffering is exemplified in Allen Tate's "Sonnet at Christmas," Sister Mary Francis' "The Penitent," and Thomas Merton's "The Bio-

graphy." Finally, various degrees of spiritual suffering are the theme of Robert Lowell's "Colloquy in Black Rock," Jessica Powers' "Homelessness," and Thomas Merton's "St. Alberic." Jessica Powers' "The Cedar Tree," is the concluding poem on the analysis of suffering, and will be concerned with the allotted share of suffering of each soul.

Suffering can never be endured meaningfully without first meditation on the Passion. The introductory poem draws a graphic picture of Christ's redemptive act. The poem is based on a wayside crucifix in Quebec. Christ's determination to suffer for all men to the end is depicted in the lines, "still his body took punishment like a mainsail, bearing the heaving world on to the Father."

Catholics derive their love for the Cross from the words of Christ Himself, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."[16] He can die no more, but the crucifix is a reminder to Catholics of His great love for mankind. His fidelity to His mission is thus expressed by the poet.

> He can never be pulled down from the landscape
> never from his people's hearts.

The crucifix, too, is an example to suffering mankind. Christ, by His death on the Cross completed the work which He was sent to do; Catholics are taught to keep Him in mind in all their sufferings, and like Him, to continue bravely to the end.

Now of all the sufferings which men endure, death is one of the greatest, and a violent death such as that experienced in war is the very epitome of horror. It is to such a death that Jessica Powers refers in "To One Killed in War."

> This was a tortured road . . . it will bend
> again to the chariot of fire, to the wheels of pain. . .
>
> My brother your road was black but it had an ending
> Through the terrible hills beyond my comprehending
> through the flaming wound and the choked breath
> and the opened scar.

There is only one way, she continues, to accept this pain--for love, since "the road of suffering runs farther than any other Toward God His Chariot of fire His horses of love that ran this way."

Physical suffering has the tendency to strip things of non-essentials. The soul, in grasping essentials only, will be led gradually to the essential One, that is, God. This is particularly true when the physical suffering happens to be as great an agony as that which accompanies mental illness, for the mind is then constantly battling between illusion and reality. By stripping the mind of all distracting illusions and detaching the heart from all trivia, such souls may find God sooner than healthy-minded individuals. Both the following poems describe this aspect of physical suffering. The first description is from the poem, "Underscoring," by Eithne Tabor.

> Crab like scratchings that a man
> Makes when his mind, his body, and his heart

Are racked and racked again in agony . . .
Remorse, despair and fear and loneliness
And oh! the final cruel cut of loss . . .
Reader, the cry I write has echoed down
From Christ Himself dictating from the Cross . . .

The poem not only describes the mental anguish of a sick mind, it also depicts the use which a Catholic makes of the crucifix. How effective such a meditation can become for the mentally ill is further exemplified in "My Wish," another poem by Eithne Tabor.

My wish is not for my freedom
Nor for sanity
Not to be once more
Whole and clean again;
Free from that which lurks
Far, deep inside my brain--
My wish is for His love
Even in insanity.

Eithne Tabor's sufferings could never be born as bravely as this if her Faith did not prepare her to unite her sufferings with those of Christ. She can purge herself of all desires, even that for sanity, rather than risk losing His love. She has learned well the lesson of the Cross.

While mental illness produces one kind of suffering, moral suffering produces another type of mental suffering, that of remorse. Allen Tate's moral suffering differs from Eithne Tabor's in kind though not in degree. In "Sonnet at Christmas," he experiences a mind fettered to its own agony without hope of release.

Ah Christ, I love you rings to the wild sky
And I must think a little of the past:
When I was ten I told a stinking lie
And got a black boy whipped; but now at last

The going years caught in an accurate glow,
Reverse like balls englished upon a green baize--
Let them return, let the round trumpets blow
The ancient crackle of Christ's deep gaze.
Deafened and blind, with senses yet unfound,
Am I untutored to the after-wit
Of knowledge, knowing a nightmare has no sound;
Therefore with idle hands and head I sit
In late December before the fire's daze
Punished by crimes of which I would be quit.

The poet definitely feels a sense of responsibility to Someone he loves and a sense of having failed in the responsibility. He, however, lacks the hope of release from this dilemma which is specifically Catholic, that is, the release offered in the Sacrament of Penance. Since the poet later became a convert, the moral suffering described in this poem might well have instigated his conversion.

This is not to imply that a Catholic cannot and does not experience suffering in the moral order. On the contrary, he never loses the consciousness of having sinned, of being prone to sin, of making atonement inadequately, and of having hurt a Friend. The deeper one loves, the greater the sorrow; and for a Catholic, the knowledge of graces received and wasted creates a shame as intense on one hand, as Allen Tate's hopelessness is on the other. An example of such shame is contained in Sister Mary Francis' poem, "The Penitent."

If I could drink your justice down like gall
Flushing the gnawing sorrow out of my soul
And dash my bones against Your equity
Here was solace!

Away to some nest of understandable justice
Revere the Heart of Jesus, this shall be worthy
reparation of your sins . . .

The Catholic knows that any attempt to measure up to the things of God is impossible since there is nothing which He desires or needs but the love of His creature. The only adequate atonement a Catholic attempts then is to develop a sincere, deeper love of the God Who is Love. This can grow if the Catholic develops it from his sense of gratitude to God, as Thomas Merton demonstrates in "The Biography":

> And yet with every wound You robbed me of a crime
> And as each blow was pained with Blood,
> You pained me also with each great sin with greater graces
> For even as I killed You
> You made Yourself a greater thief than any in Your company,
> Stealing my sins into Your dying life
> Robbing me even of my death.

The only suitable atonement for sin is love and gratitude. For if these are sincere and intense enough, offenses against Him will be fewer and smaller. St. Augustine says, "Love God and do as you please,"[17] knowing that loving God correctly, one will never want to do anything contrary to His wishes.

Spiritual suffering begins with a distaste for mundane things and a yearning for eternal ones. Sometimes the soul in a half-hearted fashion yearns for the happiness which only God can give and then unsure of itself pretends to forget such matters until God, knowing the capacity such a soul has for love, will with a lightning-like thrust capture His prey. St. Paul was treated thus; and Francis Thompson speaks of being "hunted." This is the spiritual suffering of which Robert Lowell writes in "Colloquy in Black Rock."

Christ walks on the black water. In Black Mud
Darts the kingfisher. On Corpus Christi heart,
Over the drum beat of St. Stephen's choir
I hear him stupor mundi, and the mud
Flies from his hunching wings and beak, my heart,
The blue kingfisher dives on you in fire.

The boredom of the world, the activities of daily life seem inane and useless. At this point grace steals into the heart and awakens the soul to an awareness of a deeper, richer life lived for and in God. The soul strikes deeper roots, and the first stages of spiritual regeneration have begun. The aimless indecisions are gone, and the soul enjoys a new peace.

In the spiritual life there is no standing still. Spiritual writers say that one either moves forward or backward. In moving forward, the soul finds less and less enjoyment in worldly amusements and affairs in themselves and participates in them only for a higher good. It experiences, too, at frequent intervals, a homesickness for heaven. This homeless feeling is aptly described in Jessica Powers's "Homelessness."

It is the homelessness of soul in the body sown
It is the homelessness of mystery;
Of seeing oneself a leaf, inexplicable and unknown
Cast from an unimaginary tree;
Of knowing one's life to be a brief wind blown
Down a fissure of time, in the rock of eternity
It is the pain of the mystic suddenly thrown
Back from the noon of God to the night of his own humanity . .
It is this grief, it is the grief of all men praying .
In finite words to an Infinity
Whom if they saw, they could not comprehend
Whom they cannot see.

This then is a description of the suffering endured in the dark night of the senses mentioned by St. John of the Cross.

Few people can readily appreciate the mental suffering involved, since so few experience this themselves as intensely as the poet does. The mood of the whole poem is far more revealing than the lines cited. This is also true of Thomas Merton's "St. Alberic," which describes briefly the state of a person suffering the dark night of the soul.

> But when the stones and clean-hewn beams
> Heard no more sounds but of bees, your thoughtful eyes
> Were always full of exile
> Though peaceful with the peace of pilgrims and with
> happiness
> That shamed in the deepwoods, the sentimental doves . . .
> But when, in the high noon of contemplation reason died
> by blindness
> Your faith excaped and found the flowering Cross . . .
> Loving, in Christ, the agony of Adam
> Body and spirit tilled and gardened . . .

The capacity and privilege of undergoing such mental duress is accorded to the select few who have deep enough faith to withstand all the anguish and cpmplete abandonment to divine providence which such suffering experiences. Why some souls are destined for one type or degree of suffering or for another is a mystery which God in His all-wise plan destines for each soul. Since no one knows just how much is expected of him, he must work to the best of his ability, and he knows that regardless of the size of his capacity, his duty is to fill that one wherein he finds contentment.

Fitting the cross to the shoulder of the bearer is the theme of the final poem on suffering. It is Jessica Powers' "The Cedar Tree."

In the beginning, in the beginning
Of endlessness and of eternity
God saw this tree.
He saw those branches bending low
Under the full exhaustion of the snow
Whether the wood breaks or the branches hood
Must be of His devising . . .
God Who is Good looked down upon this tree
White in the weighted air
And of another cedar reckoned well
He knew how much each tree, each twig can bear
He counted every snowflake as it fell . . .

God, who knows every soul as a subject knows how much it can bear, knows, too, if it will utilize what has been offered to it to the best advantage. Thus the Church stresses the necessity of praying as Christ did: "Not my will, but Thine be done."[18]

The poem concludes the discussion of and poetry on suffering. The only suitable explanation of suffering derives from Christ's suffering on the Cross because there lies the wherewithal to obtain merit and meaning from all human misery. The Passion of Christ must be an essential doctrine in the life of every Catholic. This Daniel Berrigan demonstrated in "The Crucifix." Jessica Powers' "To One Killed in War," Eithne Tabor's "Underscoring," and "My Wish," described what merits can be obtained from physical sufferings if they are endured for the love of God. Allen Tate's "Sonnet at Christmas," Sister Mary Francis' "The Penitent," Thomas Merton's "The Biography," depicted various types of remorse, love, and contrition for sin which produced the moral suffering, while

spiritual suffering was the keynote of Jessica Powers' "Homelessness," Thomas Merton's "St. Alberic," and Robert Lowell's "Colloquy in Black Rock." The indefinable yearning which is characteristic of this type of anguish was sensed rather than described in these poems. Jessica Powers' poem, "The Cedar Tree" concluded the discussion of the poems of suffering with the idea that the wisdom of Divine Providence which fashioned each soul also plans the unique destiny which that soul can fulfill capably.

To these poets, the important item is how to suffer. In emphasizing the beauty of suffering, all without exception echo their Master Who chose it as the system of bartering for souls.

Footnotes

[1]Pius Raymond Regamey, The Cross and the Christian (St.Louis, 1955), p. 6.

[2]Ibid., p. 12.

[3]Ibid., p. 35.

[4]Ibid., p. 42.

[5]Ibid., p. 60.

[6]Ibid., p. 78.

[7]Ibid., p.65.

[8]Ibid., p. 84.

[9]Ibid., p. 25.

[10]Most Rev. Fulton Sheen, Peace of Soul, p. 243.

[11]Ibid., p. 238.

[12]Ibid., p. 239.

[13]St. John of the Cross, The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross, I (Westminister, 1952), p. 68.

[14]St. Therese of Liseaux, Autobiography of the Little Flower (New York, 1957), p. 70.

[15]John 14: 2.

[16]John 13: 32.

[17]Rudolf Flesch, The Book of Unusual Quotations (New York, 1957), p. 156.

[18]Luke 22: 41.

CHAPTER VII

DEATH--AND THE AFTERLIFE

By His life on earth, Christ showed men how they ought to live. By His death, in lessening the fear of it and confirming the hope of immortality, He showed men how they ought to die. Men, by conforming their wills to God's in all things and particularly in dying, express their love for and confidence in Him. This harmony of wills constitutes a happy death for a Catholic and is the most fundamental concept of death for a Catholic.

While most men, Catholic and otherwise, believe in the four last things--death, judgment, heaven, and hell--the Church has specific doctrines concerning each event. As a point of departure, it might be well to explain that all Catholic beliefs can be grouped into any one of three different categories: either truths which are transcendental and which are known by revelation only, such as the mystery of the Trinity or the Eucharist; or truths which are known both by reason and revelation, such as the four last things; or again, an intermediate group of things which are known partly by revelation and partly by reason, such as the doctrine on purgatory.[1] The truths of the two latter groups will be the topic of our discussions, beginning with death.

Because death is a punishment for sin, it belongs in all three realms--biological, moral, and spiritual. In the biolo-

gical order, death occurs when the soul leaves the body, which returns to dust and remains so until the end of the world, when it will rise again and be reunited with the soul to enjoy happiness, or to suffer misery forever.[2] In the moral and spiritual order, death occurs when grace leaves the soul because of mortal sin, which to a Catholic, is the greatest of all evils, consisting as it does in the loss of God's friendship. When physical and spiritual death occur simultaneously, the soul loses God's friendship eternally.[3]

A Catholic, then, is taught to fear moral and spiritual death rather than biological death. In this respect, he learns to love the latter rather than to fear it, for death is really a birth of eternity for him. Therefore, death and the particular judgment are matters to meditate upon and prepare for adequately during this life.[4]

Death, moreover, has two main advantages: the first is the ending of present evils which without death would go on forever; the second is the balancing of the scales of God's justice, for He executes His justice privately at each person's death in a particular judgment, which judgment will be repeated publicly at the end of the world in a general judgment.

Regarding the former, theologians hold that it occurs in the instant that a soul leaves the body, then: "the soul is internally illuminated as to its own guilt and of its own initiation takes its course either to heaven, hell, or purga-

tory."[5] Bishop Sheen describes this judgment in greater detail:

> At the moment of death, the self is confronted with self in its great moment of mental awakening in the morning of the afterlife. In that tearing away of all illusionment, the soul will see itself as it really is. It still drags a train of experiences behind it; it has a memory, that storehouse of habits good and bad, of prayers said, of kindnesses to the poor, as well as the refusal of graces, the sins of avarice, of lust, and of pride.[6]

After the particular judgment, the soul will suffer or enjoy, as the case may be, the consequences of its labors, while the body will remain in the grave until the general judgment.

The uncertainty of the time and place of the general judgment has occasioned much speculation and difference of opinion among theologians. They all agree, however, that Christ will be the Judge in His Second Coming. The judgment, they maintain, will consist of a divine illumination in which each soul will see its own state and the state of every other living creature as well. The judgment will include "all works, good and bad, forgiven as well as unforgiven sin, every idle word, and every secret thought."[7] The revelation will be for the greater glory of God, the honor of the blessed, and the shame of the wicked. Furthermore, the body will have arisen from the grave, and united, with the soul, will share the soul's punishment or reward.

While the Apocalypse and St. Thomas describe both the last judgment and the subsequent recreation of a new world thereafter, the foregoing statement contains the major tenets

of the Church regarding the particular and general judgment when the body will join the condition of the soul. This condition will depend on where the soul resides, either in heaven, hell, or purgatory. Since a Catholic's attitude toward death is determined by his belief in these states or places of eternal abode, a brief resume must be made of each.

Now, every Catholic is taught two fundamental concepts. The first is "that God made us to show forth His goodness and to share with us His everlasting happiness in heaven": the second is that "we must know, love, and serve God in this world to gain this happiness of heaven." The happiness of heaven, moreover, consists in the direct vision, love, and enjoyment of God attained by a special light of glory given to the blessed by God in order to see Him face to face. This reward, the Beatific Vision, depends on both the soul's capacity for happiness and the virtuous life it led; therefore, the degree of happiness in heaven varies with the merits of each individual soul.[8]

The soul, in order to be rewarded with the Beatific Vision, must be free of all sin and have done enough penance to atone sufficiently for sins previously committed. The soul will then be admitted into this state of perfect happiness, perfect since it fulfilled its reason for being. Heaven is a place, too, but only in the wide sense of the term since spirits cannot be localized. It is a place where Christ and His Mother live

bodily with the saints.[9]

St. Paul in describing heaven said:

Eye has not seen nor ear heard,
Nor has it entered into the heart of man,
What things God has prepared for those who love him.[10]

On the other hand, the soul that is guilty of unrepented mortal sin at death is an immutably fixed enemy of God; and as such, is plunged into the state of damnation known as hell. The punishment in hell after the particular judgment is called the pain of loss, for the greatest torment consists in the loss of God, its Reason for being. The punishment which will be felt after the general judgment, when the body is reunited with the soul, is known as the pain of sense.[11]

The Church teaches, then, that hell is a place of real though inextinguishable fire; but it has never localized the place.[12] That the punishment in hell is eternal is derived from the words of Our Lord, Who referred to it as "everlasting fire": "Then he will say to those on his left hand, 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."[13]

Finally, there is an intermediate state between beatitude and damnation known as purgatory, for the soul who is a friend of God an yet unworthy to appear in His sight. In this state, the soul enjoys happiness, a happiness of hope in the future sight of the Beatific Vision; yet withall, it endures sufferings similar to the sufferings of the damned to expiate, either

for venial sins, or for sins insufficiently atoned for. It, too, is a place of penance which has never been localized. It is, however, a temporal punishment which will end with the world. Those who die on this day will suffer enough to be purified immediately.

The Church bases its teaching with regard to purgatory on Scripture, tradition, and reason. In the Old Testament, Judas Machabeus, in referring to the dead, said, "It is a holy and wholesome thing to pray for the dead, that they might be loosed from their sins."[14] Later, St. Paul spoke of purgatory, saying, "The fire will assay the quality of everyone's work: if his work abides which he has built thereon, he will receive reward; if his work burns he will lose his reward, but himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."[15]

Traditionally, the Holy Fathers of the Church, among them Gregory of Nyssa and St. Thomas, have maintained that God's justice would require a place of temporal punishment for those souls not completely perfect, and yet, not wholly bad. St. Thomas ends by saying that anyone who does not believe in the existence of purgatory is a heretic,[16] for this is a matter of Faith.

A logical consequence of the belief in purgatory is the doctrine of praying for the souls in purgatory. Now, it must be properly understood that such prayers do not merit glory for the dead--that is, they do not obtain a greater degree of

happiness in heaven for them, for such meriting must be done by each individual soul for itself, and the opportunity to do so ends with death. However, prayers offered by the living for the dead will help the soul atone sufficiently for transgressions so that it can enter heaven in a shorter time than it would if it were left to its own devices. In urging the faithful to pray for the souls in purgatory, St. Thomas says, "charity, which is the bond uniting the members of the Church, extends not only to the living but also to the dead who die in charity. For charity, which is the life of the soul, even as the soul is the life of the body, has no end. . ."[17]

The prayers offered by the living can be four different types. They may be the offering of a Mass, or short ejaculations, such as "My Jesus Mercy"; or small acts of self-denial, for instance, denying oneself a drink of water on a hot day; or again, the simple offering of one's daily duties. All these are prayers which can aid a soul to gain heaven more quickly.

Catholics pray not only for the poor souls, they pray to these souls as well. This has never been defined as Catholic doctrine, but the Church has traditionally approved of it. The early Christians inscribed prayers to the dead on the tombs, asking the deceased to intercede with God for them. Even though St. Thomas did not uphold this practice, other theologians do. One of these is Suarez, who says, "These souls are holy, are dear to God, love us with a true love and are mindful of our

wants," since in a general way they know our needs, necessities, dangers, and reliance on God's grace and help.[18]

A final point to be discussed in regard to the dead is concerned with the Christian burial places or cemeteries. The Christian belief in burial varied greatly from the Hebraic attitude, which held that the body and all that was connected with it was unclean. The Christian, on the other hand, held the body to be the "temple of the Holy Ghost," and a sign of immortality--a belief in the resurrection of the body: and therefore, the burial was to be conducted and the grounds maintained as befitting a holy thing. The place itself came to be regarded as a locus religiosus, a sacred place of the deceased. The Church retains this attitude in regard to both the cemetery and the body; for which reason, too, cremation is forbidden by the Church.

These then, are the chief doctrines regarding the four last things. The entire gamut of doctrine of death and the afterlife had to be surveyed in order to obtain a comprehensive view of these truths which can be found in the poems, even though some phases of the included doctrines are not exemplified by a poem. For example, there is no poem dealing with the subject of hell, the fear of it is implied in the fear which poets have of death; conversely, the joy of heavenly bliss makes death a lover. The poems to be analyzed will begin with one treating of the death of Christ, "Pieta," by Jessica Powers, then continue with the general survey of the four last things

by Sister Madeleva, "Ballade on Eschatology." A universal attitude toward death, though nonetheless Catholic, is contained in John F. Nims' "Email Death in Summer," which is followed by two with more specifically Catholic attitudes, namely "Knights Errant," and "Autumn," both by Sister Madeleva; Daniel Berrigan's "In Memoriam," and Jessica Powers' "To One Killed in War." The resurrection of the body is the theme of Sister Madeleva's "Of Dust," and Frederick Nims' "Last Judgment," concludes the poems on death and the afterlife.

The specifically Catholic doctrine of purgatory is the theme of Thomas Merton's "To My Brother Missing in Action," and Robert Lowell's "A Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady." Praying to the Poor Souls and respect for cemeteries are the themes in Thomas Merton's "Trappist Cemetery: Gethsemani," and Daniel Berrigan's "In Grave Lenten Time," completes the analysis of the poems on death.

Since Christ by His death showed men his love for them, the opening poem on death, Jessica Powers' "Pieta," will describe this aspect of the death of Christ.

> This is the book of the slain Christ, the utter Gospel.
> Lying in His Mother's lap He is God still, as she lays
>   on His torn flesh her long caress,
> On His Blood-soaked curls, on His naked and desecrated Body
> Where evil has written in wound and welt and bruise its
>   script of savagery
> And where my outrageous pen once dared to press.
> But He translated it to His own tongue.
> This is the very literature of love . . .

The thought of spending a heaven loving a God with such magnanimous forgiveness and love makes eternity worth my

preparation. During a lifetime, one constantly weighs the things of time on the scales of eternity, deciding what is essential for the eternal good of the soul, and what is of transitory value. A general survey of the four last things evokes in Sister Madeleva a series of reflections which she summarizes in "Ballade on Eschatology," by concluding that in the last analysis, detachment must be practiced now.

> Detachment is a virtue, teachers say
> Then let me practice it, without regret.
>
> Detachment is the stuff of sunderings.
> Time, so they tell me, is a brave asset.
> And I shall not forget the four last things.
>
> I'll not advert to clay or crowns or wings.
> I have no thing to lose, all things to get.
> For I shall not forget the four last things.

Renunciation, constant breaking off, a severance of earthly ties are involved in the virtue of detachment. Time is a great healer in causing one to lose the desire for things of clay, or crowns, or wings. Dying daily to self is the best preparation for the final detachment, the severance of the soul from the body in death. This detachment is achieved best in thinking seriously, as the poet does, on the four last things.

Sister Madeleva in "Ballade on Eschatology," made general observations on the four last things. A Catholic is urged to remember the transitoriness of earthly goods as opposed to the intransitoriness of the eternal values. To recall such meditations to mind, he has but to reflect that another's death is a grim reminder of his own. This general outlook on death

is expressed by John Nims in "Email Death in Summer".

> Two faces, sea-light quick with rush and vary of soul --
> Propped by the wan embalmer
> Freeze, paraffin--grey.
> Soon the hire psalmer
> Routes us in to look
> At a face's wax contour shrinking to hollow and hook ...
>
> Black limousine, returning, tear. The driver's smoke.
> We see a fireblue season
> Flare on the awning beach.
> But we choke on the treason,
> Would give half our breath
> To fit in this round heaven the peg of personal death.

The fact that this attitude is so generally Christian does not on that account make it the less Catholic. The poet is implying that if each death impressed one more subjectively, the ultimate result would be greater striving for perfection in each individual, for this poem echoes the words of Ecclesiasticus, "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecc. 7; 40)

A more specifically Catholic attidtude toward death is expressed by Sister Madeleva in "Knights Errant". The habit of thinking often of death and preparing for it by mortification[20] has accustomed the poet to accept the thought and submit cheerfully to the inevitable knowing that this is the door to eternal bliss.

> Death is no foeman, we were born together
> He dwells between the places of my breath
> Night vigil at my heart he keeps and whether
> I sleep or no, He never slumbereth
> Though I do fear thee Knight of the Sable Feather
> Thou wilt not slay me death!

> But one rides forth, accoutered all in wonder;
> Who comest to make of me celestial plunder
> To wound me with Love's immortal smart . . .
> Love, thou wilt break my heart!'

A Catholic is taught that he comes from God, and, in death, will return to Him. Life is to prepare him for this meeting. For the poet, the yearning to meet God will be great enough to break her heart with love. It will be love which will accomplish death's purpose.

Knowing what a blessing in disguise death is, Sister prepares for it and the meeting with God in "Autumn," by adorning herself with symbolic colors, since they are the language of the soul made articulate. The colors are actually virtues which she will practice, for example, gold is charity; red, love; purple, mortification or penance; and white, chastity. Dressed in virtues which beautify her soul, she welcomes death.

There is beauty in shaping one's life in terms of death; there is an added beauty in watching the soul of a loved one slipping peacefully away. Such a peace is possible to one who has conformed his will to God's both in living and in dying. This resignation is apparent in Daniel Berrigan's "In Memoriam," in which he describes the death of a priest.

> It was no abstract death had its way with him . . .
> Death that had worn so many masks, tragic and cunning,
> And called himself thief, enemy, came to this place
> Quiet as the winter's snow no violence no voice.

Sometimes the will of the dying to hold on to life produces a death struggle. For the priest, his complete abandon-

ment into the hands of God made death a peaceful transition period. However, despite resignation not all dying is so peaceful, but it can always be brave when viewed in the light of immortality.

Easter gives the greatest blow to the fearfulness of death. A Catholic knows that Christ in fulfilling His promise of His own Resurrection confirmed that of all men. Daniel Berrigan describes Christ's resurrection in his poem, "Resurrexit."

> But this:
> not even inland trees, in a whole lifetime thrust
> could match that easy angelic afterthought:
> Approachable God
> had been reduced to friend, so mild poured
> over days and years: there were no words left
> to meet this hard exchange, this other side of death . . .
>
> Christ: because your soul sought its body again
> chance tree reminds me of you: root to top
> shaken with its own will . . .

Christ by showing men the other side of death has taken the sting out of it, has replaced the fear with confidence. This hope of immortality gives the optimistic ring to Jessica Powers' "To One Killed in War."

> My brother, your road was black, but it had an ending
> Through the terrible hills beyond my comprehending
> Through the flaming wound and the choked breath and
> the opened scar.
> Yet I covet your wisdom as bees desire a hive
> Toward your dark death I yearn . . .
>
> And I know as I know earth is not my mother
> And my dust will leave her someday . . .

In spite of the horrors which surround a death in war,

the poet is thinking of the resurrection which follows death. It is this hope which gives her courage to "covet" death. A similar mood of optimism and courage is contained in Sister Madeleva's "Of Dust."

> And this clay will pass from me, and life, aye, and death
> like a vapor!
> I shall rise at His word, light as light, quick as thought
> swift as wing;
> For though dust, soul of mine, even dust in the hands of
> its Shaper
> It is a glorified thing,

The sacredness of the body with the implication that what God has made is good, is quite prevalent in the poem. After the resurrection, the body will be glorified. This event will only occur at the end of the world, on general judgment day, a description of which is contained in John Nims' "Last Judgment".

> When we are ranged on the great plain of flabbergasting
> death,
> Feeding (for our lungs hang slack) on air not drawn
> with breath,
> And see, for many miles around, our Easter Island lie,
> The gaping dumbshow of our shame, in footlights from
> the sky:
> How many scene long out of mind in rooms we barely knew,
> Punch amok or Judy lewd, lit fuchsia-red or blue,
> And see our working face in each and sway a moment numb --
> Then save us from our rage Yourself; let lightning cry
> our doom!
> Having such motive for their hate, each knowing what it
> knows --
> We know our terrible hearts too well to trust our luck
> with those.

Although the general judgment will fulfill the promise of eternal union of soul and body, the sobering fact remains that the event will be both terrible and awe-inspiring. A

meditation on the account every one must render on this day for every thought, word, deed, and omission of any consequence is calculated to reform many a soul. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and this fear must be pondered well and deep along with the other doctrine on the four last things.

The verities hitherto examined have been generally Christian as well as specifically Catholic. The following poems will contain specifically Catholic doctrine, for they deal with the Poor Souls and Purgatory. The first of these is Robert Lowell's "Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady." He is offering up the most potent prayer, the Mass, for his grandfather.

> Hell is burned out, heaven's harp-strings are slack.
> Mother, run to the chalice, and bring back
> Blood on your finger-tips for Lazarus who was poor.

The poet calls his grandfather "Lazarus," to indicate that as a Protestant, his grandfather lacked the many means so available to a Catholic of atoning for sin.

An example of other opportunities of aiding the Poor Souls is found in Thomas Merton's "To My Brother Missing in Action," in which he describes the acts of self-denial he offers for his brother.

> Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
> My eyes are flowers for your tomb;
> And if I do not eat my bread,
> My fasts shall lie like willows where you died.
> If in the heat I find no water for my thirst,
> My thirst shall turn to springs for you, poor traveler.

The penances which the poet enumerates are a loss of sleep deriving from the recitation of the night office at one or two o'clock in the morning, fasting which consists of partaking of one full meal daily with two lighter collations in the morning and evening, and abstaining from a refreshing drink between meals. The discomforts accruing from such mortifications are offered to alleviate the pain which the soul is suffering in purgatory.

In the foregoing poem, Thomas Merton prayed for a soul. In the following poem, he will pray to the souls in purgatory, as he addresses himself to the deceased monks of the Trappists in "The Trappist Cemetery--Gethsemani."

> Teach us, Cistercian Fathers how to wear
> Silence, our humble armor
> Pray us a torrent of the seven spirits
> That are our wine and stamina.

His belief that the deceased are completely happy makes the cemetery a cheerful abode; an attitude which is rarely adopted for this place.

> But oh, how like the swallows and the chimney swifts
> Do your free souls in glory play . . .
>
> How like these children of the summer evening
> Do your rejoicing spirits
> Deride the dry earth with their aviation!
>
> Your graves all smile like little children,
> And your wise crosses trust the mothering night
> That folds them in the Sanctuary's wings.

The respect and tender regard for the departed in evidence here is typically Catholic. For them, the cemetery is a "locus

religious."

Throughout the poem his absolute trust in the recreation of the earth gives the poem an added optimistic ring.

> Then will creation rise again like old
> Clean, from the furnace of your litanies:
> The beasts and trees shall share your resurrection,
> And a new world be born from these green tombs.

The final word on death is perhaps best expressed by Daniel Berrigan in "In the Grave Lenten Time."

> when snow wept the lime
> my Love spoke me a little rhyme:
>
> 'you whose haste doth weave
> a coat of proof against the grave:
>
> 'whose love is all a care
> for strength of what to wear
> on the young breast of fear:
>
> 'be not solicitous, love,
> for whom to have and have:
> I am nailed fast to you: I cannot move.
>
> 'nor covet what to wear:
> naked as winds O tremble here
> till I shall dress you fair.
>
> 'love, do not shudder at death
> he stopped My word and sewed My breath.
> Yet give him gladly: on his day
> Love has the final say.

In summary, then, it is quite obvious that while all Christians believe basically in death and the afterlife, Catholics have particular beliefs in this respect. They regard death with a fear which is the beginning of wisdom, for in this fear they face this austere event and prepare for it throughout life. Sister Madeleva demonstrates this in "Ballade on Eschatology." Dwelling on it, and reminding oneself of it

on the death of another, as Frederick Nims does in "Email: Death in Summer," Catholics learn to view it with love and to prepare for it. Sister Madeleva's "Knights Errant" and "Autumn" show how one can make the necessary preparations.

The optimistic attitude toward death is not overplayed by the poets. Christ's Resurrection is the truth on which they rely for their own immortality. One sees this in Daniel Berrigan's "Resurrexit," in which he speaks of Christ's resurrection, then his own as well as a renewal of the whole world. These ideas are echoed in his "In Memoriam," Sister Madeleva's "Of Dust," and Thomas Merton's "Trappist Cemetery--Gethsemani."

The happy thought of the resurrection of the body is counterbalanced by the somber thought of the last judgment. Frederick Nims' "Last Judgment" is not a pleasant aspect of this event, but without being an alarmist, he is viewing it in the light of a sinner who still has time to mend his ways, for he can be sure that a day of reckoning is coming.

Prayers for the dead claim the attention of the poets, too, and Thomas Merton's "To My Brother Missing in Action," and Robert Lowell's "A Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady" show how the poems themselves are a form of prayer. Praying to the Poor Souls finds expression in Thomas Merton's "Trappist Cemetery--Gethsemani," and Daniel Berrigan's concluding poem ends the discussion on an optimistic note--love in the last analysis will have the answer.

Footnotes

[1]Martin Jugie, Purgatory (New York, 1949), p. 18.

[2]Most Rev. Sheen, Peace of Soul (New York, 1949), p. 220.

[3]Ibid., p. 220.

[4]Ibid., p. 221.

[5]A. J. McHugh, "Judgment," Catholic Encyclopedia, VIII (New York, 1909), p. 551.

[6]Sheen, p. 225.

[7]McHugh, p. 551.

[8]Rev. Francis Connell, Baltimore Catechism (New York, 1949), No. 3, pp. 5-6.

[9]Jugie, pp. 1-2.

[10]I Cor. 2: 9.

[11]Connell, p. 106.

[12]Jugie, p. 2.

[13]Connell, p. 106.

[14]II Machabees 12: 46.

[15]I Cor. 3: 13-15.

[16]St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York, 1948) Supplement, Appendix II, Q. 1, A. 1, p. 3022.

[17]Aquinas, Q. 71, A. 2, p. 2845.

[18]Edward Hanna, "Purgatory," Catholic Encyclopedia, XII, 579.

[19]Herbert Thurston, "Cemeteries," Catholic Encyclopedia, III, 508.

[20]Sheen, p. 227.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Catholic doctrine in poetry is effective insofar as that doctrine enters into the life of the poet. This concept is made clearer by the fundamental distinction which Newman makes between what he called "real" assent and "notional" assent. Both ways of accepting truth give absolute unswerving conviction to the believer.

> The one, however (the real), is looked on as being the stronger, more vivid idea, involving the entire man. There are times in our life when suddenly something clicks, and a truth that we thought of in the past only in a casual matter-of-fact way, brightens our whole mind and warms our spirit. It becomes alive, real, pulsating. We are said to realize that truth; it would then have changed from a "notional" to a "real" assent.[1]

We must first know the truths of Faith and must rely on the grace of God to have a notional assent by which we accept these same truths of Faith. Then when these truths affect our lives by enkindlimg love and devotion, again with the help of grace, we make a real assent to the truths of our religion. The truths of Revelation become a part of our being and have a special meaning for us.[2]

The poet who has made the real assent of Faith is also a seer. He sees with the light of Faith. He must likewise be a maker; for, since poetry is an art, the poet needs skillful craftsmanship with language to express in an excellent manner the inner vitality which he possesses. All other things being equal, it is the nature of this inner vitality which

differentiates the Protestant from the Catholic poet. The difference can readily be perceived by comparing John Donne and Richard Crashaw, Vassar Miller and Jessica Powers.

This example of John Donne's poetry is called the "Nativity."

Immensitie cloystered in thy dear wombe,
Now leaves his welbelov'd imprisonment,
There he hath made himselfe to his intent
Weak ennough, now into our world to come,
But oh, for thee, for him hath the Inn no roome? . . .
Kisse him, and with him into Egypt goe,
With his kinde mother, who partakes thy woe.[3]

The following excerpt is derived from Richard Crashaw's "Hymn of the Nativity."

We see thee in thy baulmy nest
Young dawn of our aeternall Day!
We saw thine eyes break from their East
And chase the trembling shades away.
We saw thee; and we blest the sight,
We saw thee by thine own sweet light.[4]

Vassar Miller is a contemporary Protestant poet. One of her finest religious poems which will now be cited, is entitled, "Faintly and From Far Away."

Father rememberer of sparrows and dullards,
Each of us cries, even as she, from some twig of the Cross;
Remember me Lord. Before it swoops me up, feather
The hawk of the world's forgetting with the down of
Your memory.[5]

Jessica Powers, a contemporary Catholic poet reveals a deeper, more personal tone in her poem, "The Soul is a Terrible Thing."

Oh at this mystery that lies within me
I walk indeed with trembling or I stand
Crying God's pities out of His right hand--
That I, so poor a creature, am so favored
With this too precious gift of soul, that I
Bear in so undependable a vessel
This terrible, terrible thing that cannot die.[6]

A comparison of these two pairs of poets, one Protestant and one Catholic in each pair, will show the difference in emotional tone. The degree of the real assent required by the Catholic, the Act of Faith it demands, leads to a more passionate religious poetry.

The Catholic doctrines themselves have much to offer. These doctrines which derive from the oral and Scriptural teachings of Christ have unity, universality, integrity, and felicity. The doctrinal unity has made a common source of inspiration and a common communication possible for poets from Caedmon, Cynewulf, Dante, Crashaw, Hopkins, up to, and including, those of the present. Universally, in all times and places, poets have utilized these themes in metaphor, simile, allegory, and symbol with freedom of expression and sureness of direction which resulted from the comman knowledge of these truths.

The universally unified doctrine on the Eucharist contained in Thomas Aquinas' "Adore Te" is equally clear now as it was in the thirteenth century, as is clearly observable in Sister Madeleva's Eucharistic poem, "The Raiment." Dante's conception of purgatory is as familiar as Merton's in "To My Brother Missing in Action" or Lowell's in "Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady." These are but a few examples that show that Catholic doctrine provides a common bond of communication between the Catholic poet and his reader which is lacking to writers not of the Faith.

This common bond of communication was lost to the modern writer at the time of the Renaissance when the humanist viewed the world with great confidence in an autonomous, natural man, and his ability both to rule and enrich the world. Subsequent years are revealing that the natural man, left to his own resources, burdened by responsibility greater than he can assume, divorced from a common heritage, faces the uncertainties of the future with empty hands, languishing spiritual energies, a sense of uneasiness, revolt and frustration because he has been bequeathed nothing worthy of transmission. He has attempted to carry on a culture without a supernatural foundation. The society which has been built on natural man is failing as a consequence.[7]

This is the society in which modern writers are attempting to build a bond of communication between themselves and their readers. To do so, some must use annotations to explain their meanings, as, for example, T.S. Eliot in "The Wasteland." Richard Wilbur turns to American folklore in "John Henry," as does E.E. Cummings in "Buffalo Bill," hoping to find symbols which he and his readers will share. Yeats built an elaborate system of private mythology. These are some of the means whereby poets strive to make allusions which will be bridge-builders between themselves and their non-Catholic audience.

The Catholic, through his doctrinal themes, has an adequate communication system. The depth of the doctrine, furthermore,

is reflected in the depth of the poetry. To the extent that the doctrine is understood, to that extent will the poems be understood and appreciated. That the living traditional teaching of the Church continues to provide inspiration for poetry indicates the guidance of the Holy Spirit over the Church, and its literature. This protection, too, is one of the promises of Christ when He said:

> But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you shall bear witness because from the beginning you are with me.[8]

Footnotes

[1]John Murphy, The Mass and the Liturgical Reform (Milwaukee, 1956), p. 82.

[2]Ibid.

[3]John Donne, "The Nativity," Seventeenth Century Verse (Oxford, 1951), p. 133.

[4]Richard Crashaw, "Hymn of the Nativity," Seventeenth Century Verse (Oxford, 1951), p. 428.

[5]Vassar Miller, "Faintly and From Far Away," Adams Footprint (New Orleans, 1956), p. 24.

[6]Jessica Powers, "The Soul is a Terrible Thing," The Place of Splendor, p. 69.

[7]Alexander Calvert, The Catholic Literary Revival (Milwaukee, 1935), pp. 5-11.

[8]John 15: 26-27.

APPENDIX

Poems by Brother Antoninus, _The New American Poetry 1945-1960_, (New York: Grove Press, 1960).

A. "Advent," p. 118.

Fertile and rank and rich the coastal rains
Walked on the stiffened weeds and made them bend;
And stunned November chokes the cottonwood
For Autumn's end

And the hour of Advent draws on the small-eyed seeds
That spilled in the penecostal drought from the fallen cup:
Swept in the riddled summer-shrunken earth;
Now the eyes look up.

Faintly they glint, they glimmer; they try to see;
They pick the crust; they touch the wasted rind.
Winter will pinch them back but now they know,
And will not stay blind.

And all Creation will gather its glory up
Out of the clouded winter-frigid womb;
And the sudden Eye will swell with the gift of sight,
And split the tomb.

Poems by Brother Antoninus, _The Crooked Lines of God_, (Detroit: Detroit University Press, 1959).

B. "A Canticle to Christ in the Holy Eucharist," p. 82

I fed on that terror as hunger is stanched on meat, the taste
    and the trembling
In the pang of my dread you smiled and swept to my heart.
As the eagle eats so I ate, as the hawk takes flesh from his
    talon
As the mountain lion clings and kills, I clung and was killed.

This kill was thy name. In the wound of my heart thy voice
    was the cling,
Like honey out of the broken rock thy name and the stroke of
    thy kiss.
The heart wound and the hovering kiss they looked to each other,
As the lovers gaze in their clasp, the grave embrace of love.

This name and the wound of my heart partook of each other.
They had no use but to feed, the grazing of love.
Thy name and the gaze of my heart they made one wound together.
This wound-made-one was their thought, the means of their
knowledge.

There is nothing known like this wound, this knowledge of love.
In what love? In which wounds, such words? In what touch?
In whose coming?
You gazed. Like the voice of the quail. Like the buck that
stamps in the thicket.
You gave. You found the gulf, the goal. On my tongue you were
meek

In my heart you were might. And thy word was the running of
rain
That rinses October. And the sweetwater spring in the rock.
And the brook in the crevice.
The word in my heart was the start of the buck that is sourced
in the doe.
Thy word was the milk that will be in her dugs, the stir of new
life in them.
You gazed, I stood barren for days, lay fallow for nights.
Thy look was the movement of life, the milk in the young breasts
of mothers.

My mouth was the babe's. You had stamped like the buck in the
manzanita.
My heart was dry as the dugs of the doe in the fall of the year
on Tamalpais.
I sucked thy wounds as the fawn sucks milk from the crowning
breast of its mother.
The flow of thy voice in my shrunken heart was the cling of
wild honey,
The honey that bled from the broken comb in the cleft of
Tamalpais

And the many days and many nights that I lay as one barren,
As the barren doe lies on in the laurel under the slope on
Mt. Tamalpais.
The fallow doe in the deep madrone, in the tall grove of the
redwoods,
Curling her knees on the moist earth where the spring died out
of the mountain.
Her udder is dry. Her dugs are dry as the fallen leaves of
the laurel,
Where she keeps her bed in the laurel clump on the slope of
Tamalpais.

Sudden as the wind that breaks out of dawn this morning you
      struck,
As wind that poured from the wound of dawn in the valley of
      my beginning.
Your look rang like the strident quail, like the buck that
      stamps in the thicket.
Your face was aflame. Your mouth was the rinse of wine.
      Your tongue, the torrent.

Poems by Alfred Barrett, S.J. Mint by Night, (New York: The America Press, 1938).

"Hands of a Priest," p. 41

I gaze in quiet wonder at each hand
As one who knows yet strives to understand
Their new-found range
Strange
That I feel no change
Who lately felt the firm anointing thumb
That sealed the palms with power, heard the Come,
Holy Ghost! intoned, and watched the linen band
Bind each to each.
Long had I feared that this my fingers clasp
Lay far beyond my grasp.
What is there now that lies beyond my reach?

Hands of a priest, my hands, you still will clutch
At evil, but to whiten not to smutch
The souls that felt your more-than Midas touch.

Hands of a priest, my hands, the God you serve,
Because He shaped you, flesh and bone and nerve,
Will nestle in the cradle of your curve.

Poems by Daniel Berrigan, S.J. Time Without Number, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957).

A. In the Grave Lenten Time," p. 16

when snow wept from the lime
my Love spoke me a little rhyme:

'you whose haste doth weave
a coat of proof against the grave:

'whose love is all a care
for strength of what to wear
on the young breast of fear:

'be not solicitous, love,
for whom to have and have:
I am nailed fast to you: I cannot move.

'nor covet what to wear:
naked as winds O tremble here
till I shall dress you fair.

'love, do not shudder death
he stopped My word and sewed My breath.

Yet give him gladly: on his day
Love has the final say.

B. "In Memoriam (E.M.)," p. 40

I

No vine on the black hillside has death harvested
cleaner than this holy body we bid farewell.
A word, even the brief apologia love, to lighten
this dolorous falling away, were aeons beyond him.

Before that glance again shall spring a season
God will stand at the sun's throne a thousand years,
and we call and call, and stars fall
in a nightlong rain.

Yet I take courage like a stone instrument in hand
while the tears start, to score his features large
on time's dumb face. It was no abstract death
had its way with him. The white Christ of the altar
broke him apart: that Wine he raised
desired and drank him to its hungry heart.

II

In deep of winter, when no one dared promise
April to his heart, and springtime lay
too many months for his poor search,
too far for his gesture ever again to dress
tired trees in a new season,--
the old priest lay dying:
and I at bedside testify-- no archangels,
no prophets ever spoke, compassionate or terrible:

Even the Host
bending to him like a lover, stood beside
at the end unrecognized. It was the last mystery
to trouble him or us. Afterward, his eyes
said in their closing: welcome Archangels: welcome, May.

III

Death that had worn so many masks, tragic and cunning,
and called himself thief, enemy,--came to this place

quiet as a winter sun no violence, no voice. All the day long
nightlong, we remembered invisible Jerusalem
and the king's temple that went up, stone on stone
with no sound of hammers breaking the holy hours.

And we praised death for singular courtesy
who had not stolen or murdered our priest at all,

but gave us at evening, when we came fearful
of his dominion, such ivory features and limbs
as weary centuries away in some dim chancel

or What on a mild twilight, by light of the first star
that holy mother received at heart, and was comforted.

C. "Magi," p. 47

They set out in bright approving summer:
flags, gold, imagination attending
down charted roads, the star like a sun of night,
and at earth's end, the unique awaiting.

Autumn too was lovely and novel: weather temperate
and the star mellowing slowly as a moon.
Then winter on them: the light snuffed out:
hearsay, frontiers, men inimical to dreamers--
and what direction in iron snow?--a hind's track
diminished in ivory, a white birch stricken to ground
and the sky tolling its grey dispassionate bell
upon age, upon infinite heart's weariness.

So the great came, great only in need
to the roof of thatch, the child at knee awaiting.

D. "Pentecost," p. 5

All their lives rounded in a backcountry brogue
now to see, at crowd's edge, the fine Athenian profiles
agape as bumpkins, scenting their delicate language like
odor of muscatel or honey:

Peter and John, it is Babel crashing about your ears.
The Spirit, impatient of gross and exquisite tongues, of known
and unknown gods, has riven the abominable tower
with His descent. Now the undivided tongues

are abroad, are a wildfire, front the twelve winds from these

transfigured faces. Never again to be constrained
by scarecrow gestures, by hem or haw. Forever to see
agonized at the crowd's edge, the profiles emptied of guile,
their human wisdom consumed in a stench of straw.

E. "Resurrexit," p. 49

III. Believe
That delicate honeycomb Christ took to mouth
that plundered nest was sweet, to lips grown grey
with Judas kiss and gall. Not since Mary's milk
had ever the earth offered in cup or lip
such word as the shifty bees, this way and that stealing
assuring: the dead flower lives: even death serves.

The dismembered fish too,
ikthus for Christ, stared up at the fearful
fishermen, They tossed unseaworthy
when the walker of waves stood there, and the floor
pitched them green. When he had eaten away all
but literal arrangement, the skeleton said
Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.
Death again: the eyes
even of a dead fish crying: believe or drown.

IV. The Unhurried Tree
Christ: because your soul sought its body again
a chance reminds me of you: root to top
shaken with its own will--to be itself a sun,
to stand among children and men, a companionable

spring. Women who came to mummy you: no tree,
they should have seen, shook bones in the dawn wind:
but on that road, every one stood in its commencing flesh
and said before the angel with a new tongue
I am risen. A hundred resurrections lined their dawn
but they thought only: we will his ghost cold comfort
and wind that body like a Pharoah in long linen.
They had nothing to offer life. Of what use in that mouth

honeycomb or fish? He must grow his own flesh
bright again, sweet again, a tree from its own root.
They stand where he cast the squared stone aside
that hindered his giant throat. They run and run, but the news

is all on wing, is far as the tremendous drowning
world of trees, that first drank from his infinite
roots: and now runs far ahead, as far as years
arriving on my morning, with my unhurried tree.

II. Never Again to be safe
Of course death was hard, hard for the poor.
Yet one's heart finally took it in stride,
closing a father's eyes, seeing the mild slumbering
seas turn monstrous.
But this:
not even the inland trees, in a whole lifetime thrust
could match that easy angelic afterthougt:
Approachable God
had been so reduced to friend, so mildly poured
over days and years: there were no words left
to meet this hard exchange, this other side of death
Whether we turned locks on us in a remote alley
or pushed off into seas and stars: the dawn
rose to him, evening breathed him.
It was always
never again to be safe, summed up our lives.

F. "The Crucifix," p. 2

I

I remember today a Quebec roadside, the crucifix
raised crude as life among farming people,
its shadow creeping, dawn and twilight, over their lives
Among wains, haycocks and men it moved like a savior.

So old, so scored by their winter, it had been staked out
perhaps by a fand of ruffians on first Good Friday.
The way it endured, time would have bruised his fist in
striking it.

What time had done, breaking the bones at knee and wrist,
washing the features blank as quarry stone,
turning legs to spindles, stealing the eyes

was only to plant forever its one great gesture
deeper in furrow, heave it high above rooftops.

Where time had done his clumsy worst, cracking its heart,
hollowing its breast inexorably,--he opened this Burning-glass
to hold the huge landscape: crops, houses and men, in Its fire.

II

He was irremovably there, nailing down the landscape
more permanent than any mountain time could bring down
or frost alter face of. He could not be turned aside
from his profound millennial prayer: not by birds
moved wonderfully to song on that cruel bough:
not by sun, standing compassionately at right hand or left.

Let weathers tighten or loosen his nails: he was vowed to stand.
North star took rise from his eyes, learned constancy of him.
Let cloudburst break like judgment, sending workmen homeward
whipping their teams from field, down the rutted road to the barn

still his body took punishment like a mainsail
bearing the heaving world onward to the Father.

And men knew nightlong: in the clear lovely morning
he will be there,
not to be pulled down from landscape, never from his people's
hearts.

Poems by John Logan, Cycle for Mother Cabrini, (New York: Gove Press, 1955).

"Monologue for the Good Friday Christ," p. 27

The Good Friday crowd went
In queues to kiss the crux
Fidelis; soon shall each
Have back to the least
Joy and red cent
What he gave up for Lent.

But Christ what do we do
That hate pain and can't
Pray and are not able
Not to sin; that stay
Contrite, until night: did you
Not die for us too?

That will not move to welcome,
Or like the Baptist, leap
And so live; or cannot feed
Upon the quick and lean
Locust, are not at home
With the eyed and austere honeycomb?

Are not the nails sweet
The wood that held thy weight
And what other tree ever put
Such leaf or flower or root
But why am I here in my seat
By my sins and your defeat--

I shall read the psalms and wait,
But why can I not kiss
The Crucifix my lips
Are dry my tongue sticks
In my jaw oh come great
God as the early and the late

Rains come bind the thorn
From my soul the raged light
Lions from my flesh my sweets
Hold from the dog's hand let
My afflictions be not torn
On the turned spear of the unicorn.

Good God do not die
This afternoon, we but
Enact: but Christ rise
And before Easter light
In us new fire and spring
The cold, burned root of the old!

Our holy master has died;
We kneel and touch lips to our pride.

Poems by Robert Lowell, Readings in Modern Poetry, Paul Engle and Warren Carrier, (Chicago, Scott Foresman and Company, 1952).

A. "Colloquy in Black Rock", p. 269

Here the jack-hammer jabs into the ocean;
My heart, you race and stagger and demand
More blood-gangs for your nigger-brass percussions,
Till I, the stunned machine of your devotion,
Clanging upon this cymbal of a hand,
Am rattled screw and footloose, All discussions

End in the mud-flat detritus of death.
My heart, beat faster, faster. In black mud
Hungarian workmen give their blood
For the martyred Stephen, who was stoned to death.

Black Mud, a name to conjure with: O mud
For watermelons gutted to the crust
Mud for the mole-tide harbor, mud for mouse,
Mud for the armored Diesel fishing tubs that thud
A year and a day to wind and tide; the dust
Is on this skipping heart that shakes my house,

House of our Savior who was hanged till death.
My heart, beat faster, faster. In black mud
Stephen the martyred was broken down to blood:
Our ransome is the rubble of his death.

Christ walks on the black water. In black mud
Darts the kingfisher. On Corpus Christi, heart,
Over the drum-beat of St. Stephen's choir
I hear him, Stupor Mundi, and the mud
Flies from his hunching wings and beak--my heart,
The blood-kingfisher dives on you in fire.

Poems by Robert Lowell, Lord Weary's Castle, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946)

B. "A Prayer for My Grandfather to Our Lady," p. 22

Mother, for these three hundred years or more
Neither our clippers nor our slavers reached
The haven of your peace in this Bay State:

Neither my father nor his father. Beached
On these dry flats of fishy real estate,
O Mother, I implore
Your scorched, blue thunderbreasts of love to pour
Buckets of blessings on my burning head
Until I rise like Lazarus from the dead:
Lavabis nos et super nivem dealbabor.

"On Copley Square, I saw you hold the door
To Trinity, the costly Church, and saw
The painted Paradise of harps and lutes
Sink like Atlantis in the Devil's jaw
And knock the Devil's teeth out by the roots;
But when I strike for shore
I find no painted idols to adore:
Hell is burned out, heaven's harp-strings are slack.
Mother, run to the chalice, and bring back
Blood on your finger-tips for Lazarus who was poor."

C. "Our Lady of Walsingham," p. 262

There once the penitents took off their shoes
And then walked barefoot the remaining mile;
And the small trees, a stream and hedgerows file
Slowly along the munching English land,
Like cows to the old shrine, until you lose
Track of your dragging pain.
The stream flows down under the druid tree,
Shiloah's whirlpools gurgle and make glad
The castle of God. Sailor, you were glad
And whistled Sion by that stream. But see:

Our Lady, too small for canopy,
Sits near the altar. Ther's no comeliness
At all or charm in that expression
Face with its heavy eyelids. As before,
This face, for centuries a memory,
Non est species, neque decor,
Expressionless, expresses God: it goes
Past castled Sion. She knows what God knows,
Not Calvary's Cross nor crib at Bethlehem
Now, and the world shall come to Walsingham.

Poems by Thomas Merton, Selected Poems by Thomas Merton, (New York: New Directions, 1959).

A. "After the Night Office--Gethsemani Abbey," p. 48

It is not yet the grey and frosty time
When barns ride out of the night like ships
We do not see the Brothers, bearing lanterns
Sink in the quiet mist,
As various as the spirits who, with lamps, are sent
To search our souls's Jerusalems
Until our houses are at rest
And minds unfold the Word, our guest.

Praises and canticles anticipate
Each day the singing bells that wake the sun,
But now our psalmody is done.
Our hasting souls outstrip the day:
Now, before dawn, they have their noon.
The Truth that transubstantiates the body's night.
Open the secret eye of faith
And drink these deeps of invisible light.

The weak walls
Of the world fall
And heaven, in floods comes pouring in:
Sink from your shallows, soul, into eternity,
And slake your wonder at that deep-lake-spring.
We touch the rays we cannot see.
We feel the light that seems to sing.

Go back to bed, red sun, you are too late,
And hide behind Mount Olivet--
For like the flying moon, held prisoner,
Within the branches of a juniper,
So in the cages of our consciousness
The Dove of God is prisoner yet:
Unruly sun, go back to bed.

But now the lances of the morning
Fire all their gold against the steeple and the water tower.
Returning to the windows of our deep abode of peace,
Emerging at our conscious doors
We find our souls all soaked in grace, like Gedeon's fleece.

B. "Duns Scotus," p. 65

Striking like lightning to the quick of the real world
Scotus has mined all ranges to their deepest veins:
But where, oh, on what blazing mountain of theology
And in what Sinai's furnace
Did God refine that gold?

Who ruled those arguments in their triumphant order
And armed them with their strict celestial light?
See the lance-lightning, blade-glitter, banner-progress
As love advances, company by company
In sunlit teams his clean embattled reasons,

Until the firmament, with high heavenly marvel
Views in our crystal souls her blue embodiment,
Unfurls a thousand flags above our heads--
It is music of Our Lady's army!

For Scotus is her theologian
Nor has there ever been a braver chivalry than his precision.
His thoughts are skies of cloudless peace
Bright as the vesture of her grand aurora
Filled with the rising Christ.

But we, a weak, suspicious generation,
Loving emotion, hating prayer,
We are not worthy of his wisdom.
Creeping like beasts between the mountain's feet
We look for laws in the Arabian dust.
We have no notion of his freedom.

Whose acts despise the chains of choice and passion.
We have no love for his beatitude
Whose act renounces motion:
Whose love flies home forever
As silver as felicity,
Working and quiet in the dancelight of an everlasting arrow.

Lady, the image of whose heaven
Sings in the night of Scotus' reasoning:
There is no line of his that has not blazed your glory in the schools,
Though in dark words, without romance,
Calling us to swear you our liege.

Language was far too puny for his great theology:
But, oh! His thought strode through those words
Bright as the conquering Christ
Between the clouds His enemies:
And in the clearing storm and Sinai's dying thunder
Scotus comes out, and shakes his golden locks
And sings like the African sun.

C. "Evening: Zero Weather," p. 67

Now the lone world is streaky as a wall of marble
With veins of clear and frozen snow.
There is no bird-song there, no hare's track
No badger working in the russet grass:
All the bare fields are silent as eternity.

And the whole herd is home in the long barn.
The brothers come, with hoods about their faces,
Following their plumes of breath
Lugging the gleaming buckets one by one.

This was a day when shovels would have struck
Full flakes of fire out of the land like rock:
And ground cries out like iron beneath our boots.

When all the monks come in with eyes as clean as the cold sky
And axes under their arms,
Still paying out Ave Marias
With rosaries between their bleeding fingers.

We shake the chips out of our robes outside the door
And go to hide in cowls as deep as clouds,
Bowing our shoulders in the church's shadow, lean and whipped,
To wait upon your Vespers, Mother of God!

And we have eyes no more for the dark pillars or the freezing
windows,
Ears for the rumorous cloister or the chimes of time above our
heads:
For we are sunken in the summer of our adoration,
And plunge, down, down into the fathoms of our secret joy
That swims with indefinable fire.

And we will never see the copper sunset
Linger a moment, like an echo, on the frozen hill
Then suddenly die an hour before the Angelus.

For we have found our Christ, our August
Here in the zero days before Lent--
We are already binding up our sheaves of harvest
Beating the lazy liturgy, going up with exultation
Even on the eve of our Ash Wednesday,
And entering our blazing heaven by the doors of the Assumption!

D. "St. Alberic," p. 44

When your loud axe's echo on the ponds, at early morning,
Scared the shy mallard from the shallows grey as tin,
The glades gave back your hammers' antiphons--
The din of nails that shamed the lazy spring.
Striving, like Adam, with the barren wildwood,
And with the desolation of the brake,
You builded, in a reedy place
A cloister and a Ladychurch.

But when the stones and clean-hewn beams
Heard no more sounds but of the bees, your thoughtful eyes
Were always full of exile,
Though peaceful with the peace of pilgrims, and with happiness
That shamed, in the deep wood, the sentimental doves.

When in the church your canticles were done,
Even your silences were better than the birds, whose song
Still fell, like fountains, from the forest to your sunny
cloister.
And when, in the high-noon of contemplation, reason died by
blindness,
Your faith escaped, and found the flowering Cross--
Loving, in Christ, the agony of Adam:
Body and Spirit tilled and gardened with our penances and death.

And from the flowers of that frightful Paradise,
(The wounds that heal the loving mind)
Your diligence could draw such excellence
As shamed the bees at work in the wild rock.

Then did you fill the cloisters of your intellect,
The tabernacles in the secret churches of your will.
Slowly you built sweet counsel, like a honeycomb,
And fed your life with living Wisdom, Heaven's essence.

E. "The Candlemas Procession," p. 40

Lumen
Ad revelationem gentium.

Look kindly, Jesus, where we come,
New Simeons, to kindle,
Each at Your infant sacrifice his own life's candle.

And when Your flame turns into many tongues,
See how the One is multiplied, among us, hundreds!
And goes among the humble, and consoles our sinful kindred.

It is for this we come,
And, kneeling, each receive one flame:
Ad revelationem gentium.

Our lives, like candles, spell this simple symbol:

Weep like our bodily life, sweet work of bees,
Sweeten the world, with your slow sacrifice.
And this shall be our praise:
That by our glad expense, our Father's will
Burned and consumed us for a parable.

Nor burn we now with brown and smoky flames, but bright
Until our sacrifice is done,
(By which not we, but You are known)
And then, returning to our Father one by one,
Give back our lives like wise and waxen lights.

F. "The Trappist Cemetery--Gethsemani," p. 49

Brothers, the curving grasses and their daughters
Will never print your praises:
The trees our sisters, in their summer dresses,
Guard your fame in these green cradles:
The simple crosses are content to hide your characters.

Oh do not fear
The birds that bicker in the lonely belfry
Will ever give away your legends.
Yet when the sun, exulting like a dying martyr,
Canonizes, with his splendid fire, the sombre hills,
Your graves all smile like little children,
And your wise crosses trust the mothering night
That folds them in the Sanctuary's wings.

You need not hear the momentary rumors of the road
Where cities pass and vanish in a single car
Filling the cut beside the mill
With roar and radio,
Hurling the air into the wayside branches
Leaving the leaves alive with panic.

See, the kind universe,
Wheeling in love about the abbey steeple,
Lights up your sleepy nursery with stars.

* * *

God, in your bodily life,
Untied the snares of anger and desire,
Hid your flesh from envy by the country altars,
Beneath these holy eaves where even sparrows have their houses.
But oh, how like the swallows and the chimney swifts
Do your free souls in glory play!
And with a cleaner flight,

Keener, more graceful circles,
Rarer and finer arcs
Than all these innocent attacks that skim our steeple!
How like these children of the summer evening
Do your rejoicing spirits
Deride the dry earth with their aviation!

But now the treble harps of night begin to play in the deep wood,
To praise your holy sleep,
And all the frogs along the creek
Chant in the moony waters to the Queen of Peace.
And we, the mariners, and travellers,
The wide-eyed immigrants,
Praying and sweating in our steerage cabins,
Lie still and count with love the measured bells
That tell the deep-sea leagues until your harbor.

Already on this working earth you knew what nameless love
Adorns the heart with peace by night,
Hearing, adoring all the dark arrivals of eternity.
Oh, here on earth you knew what secret thirst
Arming the mind with instinct,
Answers the challenges of God with garrisons
Of unified desire
And facing Him in His new wars
Is slain at last in an exchange of lives.

Teach us, Cistercian Fathers, how to wear
Silence, our humble armor.
Pray us a torrent of the seven spirits
That are our wine and stamina:
Because your work is not yet done.
But look: the valleys shine with promise,
And every burning morning is a prophecy of Christ
Coming to raise and vindicate
Even our sorry flesh.

Then will your graves, Gethsemani, give up their angels,
Return them to their souls to learn
The songs and attitudes of glory.
Then will creation rise again like gold
Clean, from the furnace of your litanies:
The beasts and trees shall share your resurrection,
And a new world be born from these green tombs.

G. "The Biography," p. 45

Oh read the verses of the loaded scourges,
And what is written in their terrible remarks:
"The Blood runs down the walls of Cambridge town,
As useless as the waters of the narrow river--
While pub and alley gamble for His vesture."

Although my life is written on Christ's Body like a map,
The nails have printed in those open hands
More than the abstract names of sins,
More than the countries and the towns,
The names of streets, the numbers of the houses,
The record of the days and nights,
When I have murdered Him in every square and street.

Lance and thorn, and scourge and nail
Have more than made His Flesh my chronicle.
My journeys more than bite His bleeding feet.

Christ, from my cradle, I had known You everywhere,
And even though I sinned, I walked in You, and knew You were
my world:
You were my France and England,
My seas and my America:
You were my life and air, and yet I would not own You.

Oh, when I loved You, even while I hated You,
Loving and yet refusing You in all the glories of Your universe

It was Your living Flesh I tore and trampled, not the air and
earth:
Not that You feel us, in created things,
But knowing You, in them, made every sin a sacrilege;
And every act of greed became a desecration,
Spoiled and dishonored You as in Your Eucharist.

And yet with every wound You robbed me of a crime,
And as each blow was paid with Blood,
You paid me also each great sin with greater graces.
For even as I killed You,
You made Yourself a greater thief than any in Your company,
Stealing my sins into Your dying life,
Robbing me even of my death.

Where, on what cross my agony will come
I do not ask You:
For it is written and accomplished here,
On every Crucifix, on every altar.
It is my narrative that drowns and is forgotten

In Your five open Jordans,
Your voice that cries my: "Consummatum est."

If on Your Cross Your life and death and mine are one,
Love teaches me to read, in You, the rest of a new history.
I trace my days back to another childhood,
Exchanging, as I go,
New York and Cuba for Your Galilee,
And Cambridge for Your Nazareth,
Until I come again to my beginning,
And find a manger, star and straw,
A pair of animals, some simple men,
And thus I learn that I was born,
Now not in France, but Bethlehem.

H. "For My Brother: Reported Missing In Action, 1943," p. 12

Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
My eyes are flowers for your tomb;
And if I cannot eat my bread,
My fast shall live like willows where you died.
If in the heat I find no water for my thirst,
My thirst shall turn to springs for you, poor traveller.

Where, in what desolate and smokey country,
Lies your poor body, lost and dead?
And in what landscape of disaster
Has your unhappy spirit lost its road?

Come, in my labor find a resting place
And in my sorrows lay your head,
Or rather take my life and blood
And buy yourself a better bed--
Or take my breath and take my death
And buy yourself a better rest.

When all the men of war are shot
And flags have fallen into dust,
Your cross and mine shall tell men still
Christ died on each, for both of us.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
The money of Whose tears shall fall
Into your weak and friendless hand,
And buy you back to your own land:

The silence of Whose tears shall fall
Like bells upon your alien tomb.
Hear them and come: they call you home.

Poems by Thomas Merton, The Strange Islands, (New York, New Directions, 1957).

I. "Early Mass," p. 89

There is Bread which You and I propose.
It is Your truth. And more: it is ourselves.
There was a wickedness whose end is blessing.
Come, people, to the Cross and Wedding.

His are the mysteries which I expound
And mine the children whom His stars befriend.
Our Christ has cleanly built His sacred town.

What do the windows of His city say?
His innocence is written on your sky!
Because we think His Latin we are part of one another,
Together when I am away.

Come to ark and stone
Come to the Holies where His work is done,
Dear hasty doves, transparent in His sun!

Gather us God in honeycombs,
My Israel, in the Ohio valley!
For brightness falls upon our dark.

Death owns a wasted kingdom.
Bless and restore the blind, straighten the broken limb.
These mended stones shall build Jerusalem.

Come to the golden fence with folded hands
And see your Bird, kneel to your white Beloved.
Here is your Father at my finger's end!

The clouds are torn. Summon the winds of fall.
On street and water, track and river, shine, November!
Open the doors and own the avenue
For see: we are the makers of the risen world
the brothers of a new
Brown universe whose liturgy
Sweetly consumes my bones.

Poems by Thomas Merton, The Tears of the Blind Lion, (New York: New Directions, 1949).

J. "The Quickening of John the Baptist," p. 8

Why do you fly from the drowned shores of Galilee,
From the sands and the lavender water?
Why do you leave the ordinary world, Virgin of Nazareth,
The yellow fishing boats, the farms,
The winesmelling yards and low cellars
Or the oilpress, and the women by the well?
Why do you fly those markets,
Those suburban gardens,
The trumpets of the jealous lilies,
Leaving them all, lovely among the lemon trees?

You have trusted no town
With the news behind your eyes.
You have drowned Gabriel's word in thoughts li[illegible],
And turned toward the stone mountain
To the treeless places.
Virgin of God, why are your clothes like sails?

The day Our Lady, full of Christ,
Entered the dooryard of her relative
Did not her steps, light steps, lay on the paving leaves like
gold.
Did not her eyes as grey as doves
Alight like the peace of a new world upon that house, upon
miraculous Elizabeth?

Her salutation
Sings in the stone valley like a Charterhouse bell:
And the unborn saint John
Wakes in his mother's body,
Bounds with the echoes of discovery.

Sing in your cell, small anchorite!
How did you see her in the eyeless dark?
What secret syllable
Woke your young faith to the mad truth
That an unborn baby could be washed in the Spirit of God?
Oh burning joy!
What seas of life were planted by that voice!
With what new sense
Did your wise heart receive her Sacrament,
And know her cloistered Christ?

You need no eloquence, wild bairn,
Exulting in your hermitage.
Your ecstasy is your apostolate,
For whom to kick is 'contemplata tradere'.
Your joy is the vocation
Of Mother Church's hidden children--
Those who by vow lie buried in the cloister or the hermitage:
The speechless Trappist, or the grey, granite Carthusian,
The quiet Carmelite, the barefoot Clare,
Planted in the night of contemplation,
Sealed in the dark and waiting to be born.

Night is our diocese and silence is our ministry
Poverty our charity and helplessness our tongue-tied sermon.
Beyond the scope of sight or sound we dwell upon the air
Seeking the world's gain in an unthinkable experience.
We are exiles in the far end of solitude, living as listeners
With hearts attending to the skies we cannot understand:
Waiting upon the first far drums of Christ the Conqueror,
Planted like sentinels upon the world's frontier.

But in the days, rare days, when our Theotocos
Flying the prosperous world
Appears upon our mountain with her clothes like sails,
Then, like the wise, wild baby,
The unborn John who could not see a thing
We wake and know the Virgin Presence
Receive her Christ into our night
With stabs of an intelligence as white as lightning.

Cooled in the flame of God's dark fire
Washed in His gladness like a vesture of new flame
We burn like eagles in His invincible awareness
And bound and bounce with happiness,
Leap in the womb, our cloud, our faith, our element,
Our contemplation, our anticipated heaven
Till Mother Church sings like an Evangelist.

Poems by John Frederick Nims, <u>Knowledge of the Evening</u>, (New York: Sloan, 1950).

A. "Email: Death in Summer," p. 29

Here with flora of towels on the informal beach
People through the morning
Ripen, autumn in June.
Start on towers of warning

(hands, whistles on their knee)
Lifeguards like boxers the irresponsible sea,

That wafted at dawn to shore and headlines height
Crushed like strawberry boxes
The sailboat Merrily We
The beachcrowd, vivid as phlox, is
Froststruck in June:
Fewer by two, since cirrhus meagered the moon.

Two faces, sea-light quick with rush and vary of soul--
Propped by a wan embalmer
Freeze, paraffin-grey.
Soon the hired psalmer
Routes us in to look
At a face's wax contour shrinking to hollow and hook.

We shift on rocker hips, cross the calm knee,
Our muscles easy as dreaming.
But summer rots in the vein:
Coffin-catches gleaming,
The preacher is not heard
We stare at velvet. Only flowers' inaudible word.

Black limousines, returning, tear. The driver's smoke.
We see a fireblue season
Flare on the awning beach.
But we choke on treason,
Would give half our breath
To fit in this round heaven the peg of personal death.

B. "Last Judgment," p. 93

When we are ranged on the great plain of flabbergasting death,
Feeding (for our lungs hang slack) on air not drawn with breath,
And see, for many miles around, our Easter Island lie,
The gaping dumbshow of our shame, in footlights from the sky:
How many a scene long out of mind in rooms we barely knew,
Punch amok or Judy lewd, lit fuchsia-redor blue,
And see our working face in each and sway a moment numb--
Then save us from our rage Yourself; let lightning cry our doom!
Having such motive for their hate, each knowing what it knows--
We know our terrible hearts too well to trust our luck with
those.

Poems by Jessica Powers, The Place of Splendor, (New York: Cosmopolitan Science and Art Service Company, Inc., 1946).

A. "Seventh Station," p.77

The corner is dark and nobody seeks this station
He falls again, and the picture has nothing new.
The air is musty, crowded under the choir loft,
And people pass with a hurried glance or two.

I think that it must have been true in ancient Juda
As it is true on this shaded chapel wall
That He Whose love had rooted itself in suffering
Would find the most uncomforting place to fall.

B. "Pieta," p. 78

This is the book of the slain Christ, the utter Godpel.
Lying in His Mother's lap He is God still, as she lays on
His torn flesh her long caress,
On His blood-soaked curls, on His naked and descrated Body
Where evil has written in wound and welt and bruise its script
of savagery
And where my own outrageous pen once dared to press.
But He translated it to His own tongue.
This is the very literature of love.
Surely none but the Word could have written such beauty
In such ugliness.

This is God's manuscript and the Mother who holds it
Is teaching my soul the secrets its phrases bear.
When One comes back to be claiming the script some unknown
Easter
He will find us (bound by no Judean Sabbath)
Waiting in the darkness, reading a Splendor there.

C. "The Cedar Tree," p. 65

In the beginning, in the unbeginning
Of endlessness and of eternity
God saw this tree.
He saw these cedar branches bending low
Under the full exhaustion of the snow.
And since He set no wind of day to rising
This burden of beauty and this burden of cold

(Whether the wood breaks or the branches hold)
Must be of His devising.

There is a cedar similarly decked
Deep in the winter of my intellect
Under the snow, the snow
The scales of light its limitations tell.

I clasp this thought: from all eternity
God Who is good looked down upon this tree
White in the weighted air
And of another cedar reckoned well.
He knew how much each tree, each twig could bear,
He counted every snowflake as it fell.

D. "The Consecrated Place," p. 71

God sets His dwelling in eternal now
And makes the now of time a meeting-place
Between Himself and man. He will endow
Only the present moment with His grace.
Who leaves this area God bends to bless
Stumbles down slopes of waste and weariness.

God utters in the soul of every man
The intimate message that is his alone.
Who runs abroad to heed what words he can
Is toward the chasm of confusion thrown.
Let him come home, betake himself to prayer
And kneel down in his soul and listen there.

E. "The Place of Splendor," p. 13

Little one, wait.
Let me assure you this is not the way
To gain the terminal of outer day.

Its single gate
Lies in your soul, and you must rise and go
By inward passage from what earth you know.

The steps lead down
Through valley after valley, far and far
Past the five countries where the pleasures are.

And past all known
Maps of the mind and every colored chart
And past the final outcry of the heart.

No soul can view
Its own geography; love does not live
In places open and informative,

Yet, being true,
It grants to each its Raphael across
The mist and night through unknown lands of loss.

Walk till you hear
Light told in music that was never heard
And softness spoken that was not a word.

The soul grows clear
When its five senses have been fused in one:
Savor and scent and sound to splendor run.

The smothered roar
Of the eternities, their vast unrest
And infinite peace are deep in your own breast.

That light-swept shore
Will shame the data of grief upon your scroll.
Child, have none told you? God is in your soul.

F. "The Soul is a Terrible Thing," p. 69

The soul is a terrible thing; it cannot die.
Though it run past the heart's beat and the lung's breath
And cry through all the valleys of endlessness
It cannot find its death.

The soul is a terrible thing, and it has only
One of two destinies:
Up steeps of light that to the eye below
Are too remote, too lonely,
Cliffs of negation where the heart's herb withers,
Solitudes chilled and barren, or a deep
Unknown where midnight wanders in her sleep.
Yet its ascensions open upon wonder,
Plateaus of midday, balconies of sun,
And the last peak can cleave the white air under
The firmament called God, the final One.

Failing to rise the soul can turn and follow
The way of its own willing and be lost,
Crossing somewhere the boundaries of love,
That safe sweet nation of the Holy Ghost.
The soul though born of God can yet be given
To ultimate evil and be one of those
In pain alone preserved
Whom the apt metaphors of Jude enclose:
Wandering stars to whom the storm of darkness
Is forever reserved.

Yet its true destiny confounds all language
Even in the mind's profound imagined word
For on the heights of grace it yet may be
The secret chamber of a Deity
Where what is spoken in God, in God is heard
And what is Love proceeds eternally,
Possessing utterly.

Oh, at this mystery that lies within me
I walk indeed with trembling or I stand
Crying God's pities out of His right hand--
That I, so poor a creature, am so favored
With this too precious gift of soul, that I
Bear in so undependable a vessel
This terrible, terrible thing that cannot die.

G. "There is a Homelessness," p. 50

There is a homelessness, never to be clearly defined.
It is more than having no place of one's own, no bed or chair.
It is more than walking alone in a waste of wind
Or gleaning the crumbs where someone else has dined
Or taking a coin for food or clothes to wear.
The loan of things and the denial of things are possible to
bear.

It is more, even, than homelessness of heart,
Of being always a stranger at love's side,
Of creeping up to a door only to start
At a shrill voice and to plunge back to the wide
Dark of one's own obscurity and hide.

It is the homelessness of soul in the body sown.
It is the loneliness of mystery:
Or seeing oneself a leaf, inexplicable and unknown,
Cast from an unimaginable tree;
Of knowing one's life to be a brief wind blown
Down a fissure of time in the rock of eternity.

The artist weeps to wrench this grief from stone,
He pushes a hand through the tangled vines of music, but he
cannot set it free.

It is the pain of the mystic suddenly thrown
Back from the noon of God to the night of his own humanity.
It is his grief, it is the grief of all men praying
In finite words to an Infinity
Whom, if they saw, they could not comprehend;
Whom they cannot see.

Poems by Jessica Powers, A Lantern Burns, (New York: Monastine Press, 1939).

H. "To One Killed in War," p. 24

This was a tortured road. But what has been t[illegible]d
May well be traveled again.
Though the grass of time has through its dust unraveled
It will bend again to the chariot of fire,
To the wheels of pain.

My brother your road was black, but it had an ending
Through the terrible hills beyond my comprehending
Through the flaming wound and the choked breath and the opened
scar.
Yet I covet your wisdom as bees desire a hive.
Toward your dark death I yearn
Though not with the horses of war but of love would I drive
For what hate has found on the roads of grief, love too could
learn;
And I know as I know earth is not my mother
And my dust will leave her someday
The road of suffering runs farther than any other
Toward God. It was His chariot of fire,
His horses of love that ran this way.

Poems of Raymond Roseliep, Spirit, May, 1954.

A. "To Mary Descending Calvary," p. 37

The preying silences with claw and beak
bury aloneness in the vein at dusk
now that you know, here on the skull-curved peak,
the golden kernel has outgrown the husk;

even the pulse's litanies are dumb
once more-than-comradship has plainly gone
and you place your docile step beside the numb
and reverential shadow that is John.

Though nightwind dare revive a cross' thud,
making the epilogue acutely heard,
there can be nothing left to daunt the blood
while love is still the work's triumphant word.
yet strange how a man's voice brings--nor could you guess--
a new dimension to a loneliness.

Poems by Raymond Roseliep, The Linen Bands, (Westminister: The Newman Press, 1960).

B. "The Linen Bands," p. 3

I did not hear the nameless angels, or
the named, attend my ordination rite,
as grade school sisters often calculate
in 2nd nocturn flights. Instead, the floor
of our cathedral sanctuary picked
a leather and a mortal sound to press
within my ear, not waiting for surprise:
a priest came up to me on heels that clicked.
He carried, as a precious cargo, bands
of linen. Though I knew the moment spelled
a symbol from our liturgy, and held
no shock, still I would notify my hands,
dozing in olive brighter than a tree.
The priest unbolted strands of white, and bound
my thumbs and fingers, like an open wound.
Thus I was tied to Christ, or Christ to me.

Today the other ceremonies dim:
the sober candle shadowing my face,
the calling of my name and how I rose,
the chanting of Augustine, Magdalen,
the Virgin, and the saints who terrify,
my body lying in a marble groove
of floor, the handing and the handling of
an awful weight of hands upon my head,
the bee drone of the Latin in our Mass,
a chasuble as heavy as a cross
my hoc est enim corpus firmly said.
But those are images for which I grope
far in the mind; and if I now recall
their point and power, I seem to feel
the pull of thread as woven as a rope.

It would be poetry to open up
my store of feelings and to play a prank
with them, by saying I was wholly drunk
as an apostle on a flowing cup
of recent grape, as James perhaps, or Paul;
or that I allivanted into the night
with stars and music and a weaving gait,
as flushed as David after harping Saul.
No, rather I was like a man struck dumb,
and doomed to listen to the fountainhead
of silence. I remember how I slipped
from church to find my people who had come
to see the miracle (my brother's word,
exaggerated as his sudden kiss),
and how my mother wept with woman ease
and how my hands, now free, were briefly stirred.

My hands are busy in a blessing way
since then, and they absolve and they unite,
and in several sacraments, anoint;
they pour a water that is life. Today
I pause to wonder why they often shake
when lifting bread so light within the Mass,
or why, when sometimes touching other flesh
they want to yield: and yet they do not break.
Priest hands--ah there's the holy rub, as Will
might pun it--and I live to comprehend
the meaning underneath the stringy bond
that holds them to an unseen Love, and hill.
Each time I watch a young man pray, then go,
my facile breath grows audible and tight,
and mind re-girds the will with strips of white
that have the burning quality of snow.

Poems by Raymond Roseliep, I Sing of a Maiden, Sister Therese (ed.)
(New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957).

C. "To Mary: At the Thirteenth Station," p, 360

You are the priest tonight:
The paten of your lap holds sacrifice.
You are the priest tonight,
Offering Peace and its price.
Star candles burn palely bright;
John is your faithful acolyte.
You are the priest tonight.

Poems by Sister Honora, Approach, Fall, 1958.

"Splendor of Imagination," p. 58

The freshmen crammed Douai and Lilly Kleist
(before semester tests) from Lucifer in apples guilt,
to promise of the Christ
They visioned Gabriel who had gifted her with compact
of the Word (the crocus and the marigold ignited the native
hill)
About her death, they did not understand detail;
how Gabriel when all was still
As August wheat, came for her garnering; and at departure bade
a John
"Go, tell the women of the cenacle to bring cassia and spices
for the burial."
One "Willie Blake" now audibly drew breath and
said he teemed with fancy of her death.

There in finality, lay Mary gowned in blue forget-me-not
with Sharon rose and larkspur at her feet; the clasp
that bound her pall, a farewell token Matthew chose.
(At penecostal agape.) And while
St. Gabriel assembled bronze-haired
Thrones and principalities, from court and aisle
A haloed army joined expectant tones.
In lapis lazuli our Mary came
past prophets, straightway to her Son.
His eyes still Bethlehem;
and Easter locks, the same as Galilee.
A wedge to their surprise from "Romeo."
And as woman would
She ran to where her husband stood.

Poems by Sister Madeleva, The Four Last Things, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953).

A. "Autumn," p. 32

For that I dreamed the night long of my lover
I must be clad today most radiantly.
Come, earth and air and sky;
Put all my outworn summer raiment by.
Gold I will wear
For all my golden dreams of him and fair;
And red,
The burning memory of one beauteous word he said.

Sky, earth, and air,
Think you my love is come, the importunate rover?
Quick, fetch me a mist of purple for my hair,
And for my hand
A single snowflake flower,
Sign of my passing hour.
See how beautiful I stand
Waiting--ah! who could guess,--waiting for death, my lover.

B. "A Word for Shepherds and Angels," p. 113

I spoke to Gabriel and was not afraid;
But to these herdsmen, hardy keepers of sheep,
And their singing midnight skies, what reply shall be made?

I may say to them--it were a gracious thing to do--
"My Son when grown to a man, my Child asleep,
He will care for flocks; He will be a shepherd, too."

Then mayhap their hearts will be opened as mine, with pain;
They may understand how my first-born, my only One
Will be our unblemished Lamb--and slain, and slain!

Angels and shepherds and I have known, have heard
Tidings to shatter the earth and amaze the sun.
Angels and shepherds, tonight I bring you the Word.

C. "The Ballade on Eschatology," p. 174

Detachment is a virtue, teachers say.
Then let me practice it without regret.
What do I hold beyond this short today?
What cherish that I shall not soon forget?
These small things upon, which my heart is set
Are matters for a heart's relinquishings.
One ultimate matter do I cleave to yet;
This, I shall not forget the four last things.

Remembrance, in a thief's unnoted way,
Filches from me with neither leave nor let
My thousand petty dieties of clay.
Perhaps my eyes are still a little wet;
Perhaps my heart may still a little fret.
Detachment is the stuff of sunderings.
Time, so they tell me, is a brave asset.
And I shall not forget the four last things.

Your voice, your eyes,--are they blue or gray?
The day we said good-bye, the day we met;
Hills we have walked, birds, flowers, our work, our play;--
Memory, how do you aid me and abet?
Time closes round me with impalpable net.
I'll not advert to clay or crowns or wings.
I have no thing to lose, all things to get,
For I shall not forget the four last things.

Envoi

Lord, though by mortal tyrannies beset,
Immortal freedom in my wild heart sings.
A pauper comes to pay a pauper's debt.
God, I shall not forget the four last things.

D. "Christmas Song," p. 123

The earth is very beautiful with stars
And there are wise men yet who love their light
Shepherds who watch their flocks and gather songs
From the still night.

And though the hostels of the world be thronged,
Its mangers wait, its stable doors swing wide.
Mary, young girl, it is their hour and yours;
Come, come inside!

Jesus, young Child, content you here to lie
Among clean kine and men bemused with awe.
Remember, darling, when You made Your world
You willed this straw.

The world is blind; the world is Bethlehem
But over it Your stars are very bright.
With weak and wise, with Mary here I am,
Young Child, tonight.

E. "Knights Errant," p. 3

Death is no foeman, we were born together;
He dwells between the places of my breath,
Night vigil at my heart he keeps and whether
I sleep or no, he never slumbereth.
Though I do fear thee, Knight of the Sable Feather,
Thou wilt not slay me, Death!

But one rides forth, accoutered all in wonder;
I know thee, Life, God's errant that thou art,
Who comest to make of me celestial plunder;
To wound me with thy Love's immortal smart!
Life, thou wilt rend this flesh and soul asunder;
Love, thou wilt break my heart!

F. "Of Dust," p. 6

I said to my body, "Be mindful thou art an offender,
Thou art dust of the dust, thou art slime, thou art clod of
      the clod."
But my body make answer, "O soul, I am blind with the splendor
Of the promise of God."

"Methinks, O my body, that thou shouldst be compassed with sadness,"
I said, "who hast tasted of life and must yet [illegible] of death;"
"But know, I have breathed," said my body, "to [illegible] gladness,
The breath of God's breath.

"And this clay will pass from me, and life, aye, and death,
      like a vapor;
I shall rise at His word, light as light, quick as thought,
      swift as wing;
For though dust, soul of mine, even dust in the hands of its
      Shaper
Is a glorified thing."

G. "Raiment," p. 26

Immaculate! When thus the Godhead thought,
Mary upon creation's threshold stood:
Mortality her still soul's whiteness caught,
And round the Word, that our redemption brought,
Wrapped the safe garment of her motherhood.

Garment of Flesh and Blood, late bread and wine,
Daily I don this raiment wrought for me.
O Christ, be Thou a wedding robe divine!
Around my soul's poor nakedness let shine
Thy white apparel of divinity.

H. "The Thirteenth Station," p. 135

There was a song of peace through all the air
The night that you were born.
How could I think of peace, my only Fair,
With that wild rapture torn?

Today the earth and sky are mute with woe
And every lip is dumb.
Holding You to my heart again I know
Peace and its price have come.

I. "The Young Priest's Mother," p. 62

Yes, he is mine if miracles of weaving
Flesh from my flesh and blood into the fine
Potencies of white manhood, every line
Perfect past mute desire or proud believing
Can make him; if the mystery of achieving
Out of a human son this son divine
Owes aught to motherhood, then he is mine
Beyond my body's gift, my soul's conceiving.

And I am his beyond the extremest guesses
Of men, bound by indissoluble bands
Forever. It is not only he who blesses
And holds me close, but Oh! he understands
Why adoration burns in my caresses,
What wounds I kiss upon his beautiful hands.

J. "Unto the End," p. 38

Thy tabernacle Thou hast set within the sun,
And figured in the moon on heaven's coast
The elevated Host--
Ah! eager haste of the Eternal One!
With joy anticipate
And power consummate,
Lacking Thy mirrored likeness in mortality
Thyself Thy Priest must be,
Raising in fingers consecrate
Thy orbed Sacrament but mystically.

Gone are the myriad years of waiting,
To Thy eternal present as a day,
Symbols have passed away;
Thy stoled priest but knocks at heaven's blue grating,
His bidding heard,
Cometh the Word
Incorporate in Bread and throbbing Cup,
That all the world may sup;
Thy Spirit's hunger-thirst is tilled and stirred
Above the banquet which Thy priest holds up.

This is Thy Son beloved, Thou art well pleased,
Filled is Thy promise--infinite suspense--
In glad omnipotence
Thy everlasting longing is appeased.
Lest Thou again shouldst thirst
Or hunger, lo, I durst
Thy life-breath breathe with lips abashed and pale;
In blessed fingers frail
And finite, rests the Infinite Who first
Raised to Thy lips this Bread, this Holy Grail.

How long wilt Thou, O God, in time's swift-fleeting
Suffer that I the Body of my Lord
With sacrificial sword
Thus slay, sweet Lamb of God, daily repeating
His and my Calvary?
Thy Spirit rests on me,
I am Thy priest forever; time's alarms
Threaten but futile harms;
Lifting the pure, white Body of thy Christ to Thee
Myself am lifted safely to thy dear arms.

Poems by Sister Mary Francis, Where Caius is and Other Poems, (New York: St. Bonaventure, 1955).

A. "Advent Song," p. 43

Lady, what songs are bending
The tall grasses of your mind,
What secret music whispers down your veins,
What waxleaf ponderings, O Virgin Mary,
Waken our little shouts of expectation?

Our thoughts have lumbered down a treeless highway,
Have sputtered their heavy loftiness, have wept
Their protest. Now we hear the distant birdcall
Oh, dimly! but the woods have heard it well:
The stars are singing in their stupefaction.
The giddy little hills are clapping hands.

But, Lady, what songs sway
The supple grasses of your thoughts,
What secret music whispers down your veins?

Glorious things are said about the city
Where the small citizen, Christ, moves in the lanes
Of so-briefed arteried comfort. But what songs
Drift through this templed alabaster town?

We see the windows lighted, Virgin Mary,
City of God, by every hymn we raise
With chipped and broken voices; and our feeb'
Vision guesses sacred silhouettes.

But when the little Seed fell in the furrow
The warm and perfect furrow of your heart,
Tell us what pure songs stirred your delicate wonder,
What secret music whispered down your veins.

B. "Lenten Invitatory," p. 54

Come, fling open the sashes of the spirit
And let the broad gusts of remorse
Scatter your careful defenses.

Fetch out the keys for the secret gates of the heart
And bring in sorrow
Cruel as nails, real as weighted whips.

Let the toads of your sins sit on your eyelids,
Batter your ears with your lies.
Go, break your hands
On all your most genteel brutalities.

Because Christ's body glows with blood,
Your own by fasts must dwindle,
And for His tattered flesh,
Your flesh must know some lash's accusation.

Press joy, a small bruised flower,
Between the rough leaves of your brown avowals
And put the book away. Let mirth go mute.
The Christ is crucified:
Oh, come and mourn Him with grey regrets
And sacks of grief like stones!

And will you never learn how your Betrayer
Sets snares of Love in all your heavy scheming?
Your stones of careful grief go limp with wonder
That it behooved the Christ to suffer all
These things. Oh! sell your somber songs, believing
How on the third day He shall rise again.

C. "The Listner," p. 63

Mary was full of listening
And the Word
Was uttered in her silence
Like a bellstroke.

In Mary was no threat
Of clangor. She was still
As summer skies
Wide-armed to wait the Sun.

Mary was full of stillness.
Thus she heard the Ghostly overshadow
Quiet as power
Fall like crescendoing thunder
On her soul.

Only a word
A brave consent low-spoken,
But every stone in hell
Went limp as rag.
The heavens shot up in flame.
There was no hindrance
In Mary, quiet as humility.

The soft-strung Word
Lost in negotiation,
Pierced Mary's bosom
Like a clarion.
In her there was no din,
There was no traffic.
Mary was full of listening,
Full of grace.

D. "Penitent," p. 26

If I could drink Your justice down like gall,
Flushing and gnawing sorrow out of my soul
And dash my bones against Your equity,
Here was a solace! I guess no sweeter comfort
Than final wreck of logic, crash of heart
On retribution bitter as salvation.

But never of me, dear pumicing of penance,
Gnarled reparation of consoling disciplines.
No chains shall sweetly bite sin's memory
Out of my heart into the fade of flesh.

Quivering, I hear my terrible sentence.
(Reason flies out of my mind, a frightened bird,
Away to some nest of understandable justice.)
That solitary criminal, the heart,
Must bear alone the inconceivable verdict:
Revere the Heart of Jesus, this shall be
The worthy reparation of your sins!

So must I go, the awful declaration
Scorching my soul with the breath of seaphim
The Love at every turn, on every corner,
The Heart of Jesus on me for a Threat.

E. "Our Lady of Guadalupe: 1952," p. 65

We have learned to laugh like cannonades
When the corners of our tears rake our faces,
Because the night lurks so broadly in our day
And the trees put up their arms like deprecations.

Can you not hear us, Mary, hear our songs
Trickle down death? We plunge our prayers like swords
Deep in the lifting bosom of your mercy,
And all the world's a lonely Tepeyac
Yearning to kiss your feet.

Come, tease our winter
With your Castilian roses! Where we dance
Wrong measures, come and balance on the moon.
Because we all grow frowsy with our fears,
Wear the blue sun again in casual folds.

All men's faces turn like pitiless mirrors
To show our terror. Take the screaming stars
Back to their happy places on your mantle.

Mary, all the world's a Tepeyac
Bleak for your coming. Paint our shabby prayer,
A rougher tilma, with your saving face.

F. "Secundum Ordinem Melchisedech," p. 81

A Young Nun to Her Brother Newly-Ordained

So much the same. . .
The old, familiar smile
And voice with timbre I have always known,
Dreams in your eyes are those I call by name!
Young Christ, you are so poignantly the same
As yesterday.

And yet, and yet I know
The sudden, splendrous difference, the strange
Rushing of wind, and in your long-loved heart
I see the new, the parted tongue of flame.

With what sweet awe and oh! what cherished grace
I watch your brown hands trace
Redemption's sign---
Swallows that fly new whitely-wondrous ways,
And on my knees before you, rapturously find
This alien place, my best beloved one!

So shall we keep brief vigil in a tryst
Soaring on sacred pinions over mists
Of any lesser camaraderie,
The three seals twinly set on our two hearts.
And who shall guess,
Hearing our words the same.
And seeing us tread the old, familiar ways,
The terrible, shining secret of your hands!
The bridal blossoms fresh upon my soul!

Poems by Sister Maura, Initiate the Heart, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946).

A. "On Reciting the Evening Office," p. 23

Across the dusk of every day
we walk with medieval tread
the word of God within our hands,
the Compline to be read.

Theresa and Scholastica
and Hildegarde and Clare,
have found upon these simple words
the darkest heights of prayer.

This is the essence of the day,
which unaware we sought,
till now at vesper time we hold
this ageless gift of thought.

B. "Our Lady of the Refugees," p. 11

Mother who knew
what hardship shakes
a woman bundling clothes
and putting by her wheaten cakes;
Mother who urged the donkey,
(making happy riot
on the straggling stones)
urged the beast to be more quiet;
Mother who heard the Child
whimper beneath the thin blue shawl,
our aching prayers cry out to thee,
Mother, pray for them all.

A thousand Bethlehems
mask dark tonight,
the eyes of friendly little homes
have lost their light;
pathetic heaps of poor, dear things
are laid aside; a small bird sang
where a latched door swings.
Mother, whose sad Egyptian flight
preceded all of these
guide them in faith beneath familiar stars,
Our Lady of the Refugees.

C. "The Old Nun," p. 29

Standing up or sitting down
it is the same.
Her back is knuckled out and hunched,
her eyes have lost the flame
Of seeing;
sound has cruched itself to murmurs,
That is all.

She sits in chapel
in the last dim stall
Like some old hunting dog
who keeps the scent,
Nose-pointed, ears set,
on the way his master went.

The hearth brushed
the hound drowsing
Is suddenly stirred
by the faintest rousing
Sound of the horn
the Hunter, the Hunter,
A golden cup
filled with Hunter's scarlet--
Up, dog, up.

Poems by Eithne Tabor, The Cliff's Edge: Songs of a Psychotic, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950).

A. "Ash Wednesday," p. 73

"Memento homo, quia pulvis es . . ."
But for the signed, the sealed, the set-apart,
No symbol ash is needed. On their brows
Is written, clearer far, their frailty.
Torn by eroding waves and blasting winds
Little by little, crumbles the strongest rock
Into a pile of dust; and thus the spirit
Crumbles beneath too much adversity.
Yet from the burned-out clinkers of these lives
Warmth has not wholly vanished-after Lent
The Resurrection brings the sun again.
O pyre of consummation! Cleansing flame!
Out of the ashes of this seeming ruin
Let us rise Phoenix-like, reborn in pain!

B. "My Wish," p. 54

My wish
Is not now for my freedom
Nor for sanity--
Not to be once more
Whole and clean again,
Free from that which lurks
Far, deep, inside my brain--

Nor wit
Nor smooth sophistication
Nor urbanity--
Nor to control bright words,
Showered like silver stars,
Singing as the birds
Even behind these bars.

My wish
Is but to tell my story
To humanity--
To let them know that God
(Yes and in spite of Freud!)
Lives closer to the minds
Whose self-shields are destroyed.

My wish
Is for His love
Even in insanity.

C. "Underscoring," p. 80

It is an old tattered and quite passe
Piece of a manuscript
The childish scrawl
Of the first chapter touches maturity
And then, the crab-like scratchings that a man
Makes when his mind, his body and his heart
Are racked and racked again in agony,
O reader, scan this last and final page,
And mark you well the crimson underscoring;
For these are written in my own heart's blood. . .
Remorse, despair, and fear, and loneliness;
And oh! the final cruel cut of loss. . .
Reader the cry I write has echoed down
From Christ Himself, dictating from the Cross!

Poems by Allen Tate, Readings in Modern Poetry, Paul Engle and Warren Carrier (ed.), (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Company, 1955).

"Sonnet at Christmas," p. 222

Ah, Christ, I love you rings to the wild sky
And I must think a little of the past:
When I was ten I told a stinking lie
That got a black boy whipped; but now at last
The going years, caught in an accurate glow,
Reverse like balls englished upon a green baize--
Let them return, let the round trumpets blow
the ancient crackle of Christ's deep gaze.
Deafened and blind, with senses yet unfound,
Am I, untutored to the after-wit
Of knowledge, knowing a nightmare has no sound;
Therefore with idle hands and head I sit
In late December before the fire's daze
Punished by crimes of which I would be quit.

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