

'ORATE FRATRES'

AN ARTICLE FOR THE LAITY

(By THE REV. J. GOLDEN, KAIKOURA.)

In last May's issue of the 'American Ecclesiastical Review' there is a thoughtful and appropriate article on the 'Orate Fratres' of holy Mass. It is a valuable contribution by 'Layman,' who has studied the question closely and brought into prominence many fresh ideas on the subject.

That in New Zealand the 'Review' in question circulates only among the clergy may be taken for granted: therefore, the laity have no opportunity of reading the contribution under notice. The object of this paper is to reproduce in substance the most salient points advanced by 'Layman,' adding thereto other matter of a cognate nature. With the view to throw some light on a theme of deep interest to a wide circle of lay readers, I venture to send for publication the following remarks, based chiefly on 'Layman's' edifying article.

Before the secret prayers and the Canon of holy Mass, the officiating priest, turning towards the people, addresses them as follows: 'Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.' To this humble and earnest request the people respond with the prayer: 'May the Lord receive the Sacrifice from thy hands, to the praise and glory of His Name, to our benefit also, and to that of all His holy Church.'

In the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass Christ is at once the

Priest and Victim,

as He was at the Last Supper, when He graciously instituted the venerable Sacrifice of the New Law. To Him belongs the supreme action of the Sacrifice. The priest at the altar is His minister, who is divinely appointed for this exalted function. Christ Our Lord remains the High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. The priest standing on the altar discharges his sacred office in the name of Christ Jesus, and as His visible and authorised minister. At the Last Supper Our Blessed Lord ordained the Apostles His first priests in the New Dispensation, and empowered them to consecrate the elements of bread and wine, as He had done. 'This do for a commemoration of Me.' The Apostles ordained others for the same divine functions. Their successors in the episcopate have ever since done the same. Thus the sacred priesthood of the New Law, which is the priesthood of Christ the Redeemer, has been perpetuated from generation to generation, and is to be coeval with time itself.

Accordingly, the offering of holy Mass belongs to an ordained priest. Yet in the 'Orate Fratres' there are words of deep significance touching the congregation. 'Pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.' The words of the celebrant, 'My sacrifice and yours,' clearly indicate that the people are united with the priest in the great offering, which is made in behalf of both by the invisible and eternal High Priest and Victim, Christ Jesus Himself. Very great, then, is the dignity conferred on the congregation by giving them a share in the offering of the Adorable Sacrifice. There is a spiritual priesthood, realising the promise made by God to His people in the long-ago: 'And you shall be to me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation' (Exod. xix., 6). And St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the rock-foundation of the Church, expresses the same idea in words at once forceful and significant: 'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people.' (I Peter, ii., 9).

Such is, then, the exalted dignity of a Catholic congregation during the offering of holy Mass. But here arises the obvious and important question: Have the laity in general sufficient knowledge to appreciate their own dignity in being united with the priest in the offering of the Adorable Sacrifice? The writer in the 'Ecclesiastical Review' points to 'the condition of darkened intellect prevailing more than is suspected with regard to the Sacrifice of the Mass.' This darkness regarding the grand centre of Catholic worship may be removed by instruction from the altar and by strictly exact terms. 'The modes of speech employed' in speaking of Mass should be select and precise. In this connection there are

Three Phrases

which 'Layman' forcibly condemns:—

First, 'Mass will be read.' Second, 'Mass will be said.' Third, 'Mass must be heard.'

'Read,' 'said,' and 'heard,' are far from being choice or correct words. Against these terms 'an earnest protest is entered.' They are out of harmony with the idea of Sacrifice and the theology of Mass. They are calculated to mislead the people. The expression 'read' is improper. It has no warrant in theology, and it savors of heresy. There is question here of the venerable Sacrifice of the New Law, the Mass. Now, this Sacrifice is not 'read' to Almighty God, but offered. To 'read' a sacrifice is a bald expression, meaningless, void of dignity. 'Mass will be offered' is the correct and meaningful expression. Better still, the Adorable Sacrifice will be offered.

The word 'offer' is most intimately connected with sacrifice. We use it respecting the various sacrifices of the Old Dispensation. The theology of the Mass abounds with it. It is consecrated by constant and frequent use in the celebration of the sacred mysteries. The priest finds it in devotional prayers before and after holy Mass. It is found by the people in their prayer-books as they follow the celebrant through the different parts of Mass. And the word 'offer,' frequently occurs in the prayer which the priest reads in public for the congregation before he begins Mass,—a most excellent prayer and instruction which forcibly reminds the people of the different ends for which the holy Sacrifice is offered. Behold how the Church puts the correct words into the mouths of all. Ears are constantly hearing it, and lips pronouncing the same. Yet an inappropriate word is picked up and too often used to the detriment of the Adorable Sacrifice.

Neither can the word 'said' be correctly used. For, the Sacrifice of the Mass is essentially an action. We 'offer' to God all our thoughts, words, and actions. We don't 'say' them to our Heavenly Father. Neither is the Adorable Sacrifice 'said' to God. Behold how awkward and meaningless the phrase is. There is a part of the Mass known as the 'Offer-tory,' and this alone supplies the key to the proper word, 'offer,' which is distinctive, appropriate, meaningful, and instructive.

'Mass Will be Celebrated'

is a commendable expression. It is logical also, and sanctioned by long usage. Hence we have the word celebrant as applied to the officiating priest. 'He celebrated Mass' is a correct and laudable phrase. 'I want you to celebrate Mass' follows the same rule. But 'offer,' 'offered,' 'offerer,' and 'offering,' are the strongest, most meaningful, and appropriate expressions respecting the venerable Sacrifice of the Mass.

The third objectionable phrase which 'Layman' rules out of court is 'hearing Mass.' This is undignified and misleading. It is illogical, as nobody can hear the priest during the greater and most solemn part of the holy Sacrifice. It becomes necessary to repeat once more that the offering of Mass is an action on the part of the celebrant. It is an action also on the part of the congregation, as they have the privilege of uniting with the priest in the offering of the holy Sacrifice. If the people only 'hear' the celebrant during a portion of the service and do nothing more, they surely fail in their solemn obligation. No matter how often used, the expression 'hearing Mass' is illogical and misleading.

(To be continued.)

Success of Catholic Colleges

The Honors lists of the Royal University Arts Examinations, which were recently held, have been published (writes a Dublin correspondent), and they prove more conclusively than ever the great superiority of the unendowed Catholic colleges of Ireland over the Queen's colleges that receive £34,000 a year from the State. University College, Stephen's Green, as usual, heads the list with seventy-one distinctions; while the Queen's colleges of Belfast, Cork, and Galway combined only muster forty-one. Blackrock College, County Dublin, conducted by the Fathers of the Holy Ghost, won twenty-one exhibitions or four more than the Cork and Galway Queen's colleges together obtained. Seeing that Blackrock does not get one penny endowment either directly or indirectly, this is a most creditable performance, and speaks volumes for the excellent education imparted in this old-established and widely-known college. Maynooth College and Loreto College for girls, Stephen's Green, won each thirty honors. Owing to the quality of the distinctions won by the latter it is placed second in the Honors list. Both obtained six distinctions more than the Queen's College, Belfast. Among the successes may be mentioned St. Mary's College, Eccles street, and Mungret College, Limerick; they received twenty-one and ten honors respectively.

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