

Mass Tues., 7:20 Dillon
for John Cushing; request
of Engineers' Club.

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
October 14, 1935.

Ill, Bob Callahan; Frank
Quinlan's uncle; mother of
Al Ryan '20; mother of Bob
Heaser '34.

To Help You At Mass--I.

When you offer Mass--get that "offer" and not "assist at" or "hear"--you take part in an historic service. Early Christians, unlike you in your snug security, gathered for Mass under danger of death.

In those first days Masses were offered up on sheltered hill tops hidden in the fields, or in the clammy catacombs close to the bones of the dead.

Early Christians, with fresh knowledge of Christ's crucifixion, had deep regard for the exalted nature of the Mass. They followed a long ritual of preparation--throughout the night previous to Mass they read the scriptures, sang hymns, and prayed.

a. At the Foot of the Altar.

As Mass begins the priest stands for a short while in prayer at the foot of the altar. Those or similar prayers priests of bygone days said in their own homes or on their way to church. Now the prayers are fixed in the liturgy as an integral part of the Mass.

The priest begins, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!" We say "In the name" often thoughtlessly and then with little or no meaning. Originally, "name" implied the personality and power of what was named. Here at the beginning of Mass it means that the priest starts the Supreme Christian Act, not in his own power or wisdom or holiness, but on the power of the Father who created and preserves him, in the wisdom of the Son who redeemed him, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost who sanctifies him and urges him onward.

Immediately afterwards the priest recites Psalm 42. In the old, old days, long before Christ, the author of the psalm sees himself surrounded by enemies who keep him out of God's temple. His enemies mock him and say that God has abandoned him. He almost despairs, but he keeps recovering himself, remembering God's power and goodness, and then he rebukes himself for his shaky confidence.

The priest adapts that psalm to his own condition and sentiments. The priest is surrounded by the temptations of the world. He realizes, too, the enemies within himself. He hardly dares approach the God to Whom in the innocence of youth he could easily draw near. But he throws himself upon the mercies of God and then finds new confidence to proceed with the Mass.

"I will go unto God's altar, to the God who was the happiness of my youth. Why then, so say, my soul? Why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, for I shall sing thanks to Him Who is both my hope and my God."

Then he bows down under the awful weight of his sins and confesses them to God and to the Heavenly Court surrounding Him. The server does likewise on behalf of all the congregation present. Then, confident of God's forgiveness, the priest straightens himself, unshoulders the load, and goes up the altar steps. As he does so he diffidently continues to pray "Take from us, Lord, our sins, that we may be enabled to enter with pure minds into the holiest of places." On reaching the altar he kisses it saying, "Through the merits of the Saints whose relics are here and of all the saints, deign to remit our sins."

Mass, you remember, was sometimes said in the catacombs, often upon the very stone coffin which contained the bones of a martyr. Ever since, embedded in our altars, is a stone with a tiny hollow scooped in it, containing relics of a martyr.

PRAYERS: (deceased) father of Tim Sepe '35; friend of John McLaughlin '34; brother of Brother Tom, C.S.C.; father of Al Ryan '20; brother of Frank Matavov'sy.