

Killed in Italy:
Capt. John Hennessy, '41,
of Louisville, Ky.

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
August 11, 1944

Communion fast begins
at midnight (1 A.M.)
Never miss Sun. Comm.

Always Eight Kisses.

There is a photograph you should see. You will find it inside the back cover of the August issue of the Catholic Digest. It shows a Chaplain offering Mass. He is wearing only one sacred vestment, the stole about his neck. He is standing at the altar in the khaki of an Australian soldier, shirt open at the neck and sleeves rolled up. One glance at him and the tired and worried-looking boys kneeling around the altar will tell you that the outfit has just come from battle. The altar in the picture is a makeshift affair. From the photograph it looks like the priest took his Mass kit and placed it flatwise over a barrel. The altar table could not have been more than 3x3' in size. Over all a canvas cloth was thrown to conceal the rough supports. On this hurriedly set up structure Mass was being offered in a small clearing of what looks like some South Pacific jungle.

The priest did not wear vestments at Mass because of some emergency, perhaps the danger of enemy action. One part of the Mass ceremony was not omitted, in spite of the imminent danger and the unsightly altar. That was the eight kisses which are part of every Low Mass.

The kiss and the altar are never omitted in the Mass. The two have an important story to tell all who are present at the Mass. They are meant to inspire profound ideas to the spectator's heart and mind.

Symbolism of the Kiss and the Altar.

The kiss is a sign of reverence and love. It manifests externally union or closeness with the person held in affection. In every Low Mass the priest kisses the altar eight times. The first kiss is a manifestation of reverence for the saint or saints whose relics are placed in the top slab of the altar. The presence of the relic recalls to mind the early days of the Church when many Masses were offered in the catacombs over the burial place of the martyrs. The priest kisses a spot near the relics to show reverence for the holy object and for the saint. The last seven kisses are for Christ.

The altar represents Christ. When we see the altar we must think of Christ. The Church urges us to think along these lines. Christ in the expression of Holy Scripture is called the "Anointed One." Priests are known as "Other Christs." In the ceremony by which men are raised to the dignity of the priesthood the hands of the candidate are anointed with the Oil of Chrism. Every baptised person, young and old, is also "Another Christ," tho not in the same manner as the ordained priest. In the rite of baptism this fact is symbolized by the anointing of the person with the Sacred Chrism. Since the altar is to stand for Christ, it too is anointed with the Oil of Chrism. The bishop usually performs the function. Seven times the priest kisses Christ (Symbolically), and since the priest is our representative, we express union with Christ seven different times during the Holy Sacrifice.

Our Thoughts At The Kissing Of The Altar.

Every time the priest kisses the altar one should get a "lift", should become elevated in mind and action. By this ceremony discouragement should give rise to confidence. One should be inspired to think something like this: "I should not be disconsolate at this moment. Christ, my Brother, my Savior, my Mediator is here (truly so at the Consecration). I shall welcome Him with a kiss to show my reverence, my love and my joy in His coming to me. Here Christ is reoffering His sufferings to His Father and my Father. Why shouldn't I offer my crosses and burdens too along with Him? And what a moment to pray! (for protection in battle, for success in class, for help to be good, etc.) Now I am not alone in storming heaven. Christ is taking my intentions and making them His own. He is praying for me and with me. Thank God, for all this!"