

FRIDAY IS FIRST FRIDAY.
Adoration from 12:30 to
5:00 in Church.

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
April 3, 1945

Missing: Lieut. Edwin P.
Schmitz, friend of Robert
P. O'Donnell.

Death At The Altar.

War atrocities in the Philippines are now coming to public notice. A recent report is about twenty-one Christian Brothers. They were put to death in their college building. Five of these were taken to the altar in the college chapel and bayoneted to death.

Does this remind you of Mass? Don't you die at every Mass you attend? You should-- in spirit. Just before the Consecration of the Mass the bell is rung once. That is a warning bell telling you to prepare yourself to die. If you were close to the altar you would observe what the priest does at this moment. He joins both hands and holds them palms down over the chalice and a little above it.

Mother Church has borrowed this action from the ancient Jewish ritual. It was rich in symbolism for the Jew who lived in pre-Christian days. At the time of sacrifice, he and members of his race, gathered in the temple around the altar. In doing so, they felt they were entering God's house and that He was there watching and listening to them. In the course of the ceremonies, an animal was brought in, sometimes it was a lamb. In the minds of the people that animal represented them, it was their substitute. The priest placed the live animal on the altar and extended his hands over it. By this movement he was showing God that each person around the altar designated or pointed to the animal as the representative of himself.

What followed was most symbolic. The priest then slew the animal. By that death-blow the Jew told God his Creator that all his life belongs to Him, so much so that he would slay everything in it that did not conform to God's desires and Commandments. God was pleased with this sacred action, and His pleasure was often shown by wonders He worked at the altar at the time of sacrifice.

Maybe you thought of death when that bell rung before the Consecration -- the death of Christ. For you that bell may have always been a warning that Christ was about to come from heaven to the altar to reoffer His death to His Father. It should mean more; that is only part of the drama. Christ does not come to offer Himself alone. He comes to die with you. That bell should always remind you that two are about to die, Christ and you.

How can you die at Mass? There is always something in your life that should die. Look into your life to see what you must slay. Perhaps it is indecent speech, filthy language or intemperance. Maybe you should put an end to certain companionships. It could be many other things: your impatience, a bitter tongue, your vanity, your laziness and dishonesty. You have missed Mass, in a sense, if you, bearing all your sins and bad habits, meet God in His temple without so much as telling Him that you will annihilate everything in your life that offends Him.

Some people wonder why they never overcome sinful habits. There is no improvement in virtue even after months of regular Mass, confession and Holy Communion. Every confession is the same grave matter; impurity, drunkenness or another vice, and the number of offences seldom varies. What's wrong? There is determination enough to make a confession good, but it's thin-edged, fluffy, the mere minimum. But the resolution has never gone the full way -- to death. Death at Mass bears fruit. The Holy Sacrifice is not all symbol, all giving. If there be death with Christ, a flow of grace enters the soul to help it administer the deathblow to bad habits. Remember the bell rung before the Consecration. Bow your head and die, with Christ.

PRAYERS: The soul of Jay J. Theisen of St. Joseph, Michigan is recommended to the prayers of the students and faculty. Mr. Theisen, the father of Clemens, '32 and Cyril, '32, was a close friend of the University and a generous benefactor.