
To Help You at Mass--V.
(e. Canon, to the Words of Consecration.)

In Greek the word, "Canon," means "rule" or "standard" and therefore signifies something inflexible. From the beginning of the Canon until after Communion the Mass is almost inflexible--changes from day to day are few and minute. The very heart of the Canon is, of course, the Offering of Christ to God and the account of the Last Supper, at which Mass was first instituted.

In the august Sacrifice we again go to God through Jesus Christ. "Thee, therefore," the priest prays at the center of the altar, "Father most merciful, through Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord, we suppliantly beseech and beg that Thou wouldst take, and accept, and bless these Gifts." Then the priest asks that the whole Church be preserved in peace and unity, he prays for the Pope, for the bishop of his diocese, on behalf of those for whom the Mass is being offered, as well as "for all who are here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee and for all those who are offering, or for whom we are offering, this Sacrifice of Praise, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of salvation and of security, for all those who now pay to Thee their vows, O God, everlasting, living and true!"

Then the priest reaches up in his prayer and associates himself with the saintly citizens of Heaven and with their merits and prayers: with the Queen-Mother in Christ's glorious court, then with the brave martyrs and apostles, with certain saints belonging to Rome or especially dear to it: with Popes Linus, Cletus, and Clement, who followed closely after Peter; with kind and peaceable Pope Xystus II, who was seized by Roman soldiery as he spoke from his pontifical chair; with the Africans, Cornelius and Cyprian, who suffered persecution; with Lawrence, famed Roman martyr, with Chryso-gonus, with John and Paul, two laymen' martyrs, and with the twins and Arabian doctors, Cosmas and Damian.

In the full company of the faithful on earth, of the souls in Purgatory, and of the saints in Heaven, we draw near to the Consecration. In the two brief prayers remaining before the actual Narrative of the Last Supper, the priest asks that we be saved from eternal damnation, to be numbered among the flock of God's elect; and that God should deign to "bless, ratify, approve, and make this Offering worthy and acceptable, that it may become for us the Body and Blood of Thy most beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ."

Why should we pray thus as if the Mass-Sacrifice, Jesus Christ Himself, were not perfectly acceptable by nature? It is because we sinners are involved as co-victims and co-offerers in the Sacrifice with Christ. How many chances are there that we may be imperfect! Mass is the continuous offering of Christ to God and it is, at the same time the application of the fruits of that offering to ourselves. We may not be worthily disposed to assimilate the fruits of the Mass. We may even go through the Mass without realizing what it is all about! For these reasons we pray to become more perfect.

Now comes the Narrative of the Upper Room: "Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands; and with eyes lifted up towards Heaven, giving thanks to Thee Almighty God, His Father, He blessed it, brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this, for this is My Body. In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, giving Thee also thanks, He blessed, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and drink ye all of this; for this is the chalice of My Blood of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith; which shall be shed for you, and for many, to the remission of sins. As often as you do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me."

PRAYERS: Ill, James E. Gray ('28). 4 special intentions.