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NOVEMBER 22 -- A DAY TO REMEMBER

Be favorable, Lord, to our humble prayers for the soul of your servant, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, whose anniversary is remembered this day, and for whom we offer you the sacrifice of praise. May you be pleased to grant him fellowship with your saints: through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who with you lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

"Prayer over the gifts"
Requiem Mass for Anniversaries



Now the trumpet summons us again -- not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need -- not as a call to battle, though embattled we are -- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" -- a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself . . .

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility -- I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it -- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world . . .

With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

President John F. Kennedy
from his Inaugural Address

SACRAMENTS OF HEALING: PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK

At one stage of the Council's debates on the use of the vernacular in the Sacraments, some wanted to keep Latin for the actual form, "I baptize you... I absolve you, etc." An African bishop begged that this restriction be not imposed. "If we change to a strange language at the very heart of the Sacrament, our people will think we are using magic.

Has this idea of magic poisoned contemporary Catholics in our Western society? Do we consider Confession in a mechanical way -- tell our sins, get our 'penance' say the act of contrition, get forgiven? Quid pro quo? Has the push-button mentality of today invaded even our use of the Sacraments? It is to restore the idea of reconciliation that the Church is now designing new words and actions for this Sacrament. Our sorrow and honesty were presumably heartfelt; the priest's devotion to his role of judge and father was unquestioned. What is aimed at now is a better expression of what is going on.

Our confession of sins, our sorrow of heart, and our will to be converted to a life grace -- all are brought together in this Sacrament to be formed by Our Lord's healing power. The priest's words are: "May Our Lord Jesus Christ forgive you... and by His authority insofar as I am able and you require it, I forgive you..." remember them only as causes, with the Church guaranteeing the result -- this looks like sheer mechanism. As Father Diekmann puts it, "despite our protestations to the contrary, it sounds like magic." This was one of the chief causes of the Protestant revolt in the sixteenth century.

But the sacraments are really signs of Christ's presence. They cause grace because they are His actions. When our sins are forgiven, it is Christ who forgives them. When the sick man is anointed, it is Christ who heals. In the new prayers and rites, Christ's actions will be made more apparent.

It is difficult to see how the term "Extreme Unction" was ever understood. The two words are heavily Latinized, and "Extreme" surely sounds ominous. Now the sacrament is "more fittingly called Anointing of the Sick." And these points are noted:

1. It is not only for those at the point of death.
2. It should be administered as soon as the person begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age.
3. A continuous rite will be provided when the three sacraments are given together: first, confession, then anointing, then viaticum.

4. The number of sense-organs anointed will vary with the convenience of the occasion; the prayers will vary with the different conditions of the sick.

Every sanctification of man is at once a worship of God. But, as Diekmann observes, to how many of our faithful would it nowadays occur that receiving the sacrament of penance is worship? We all need a review of our theology.

Each sacrament is social in nature, yet it is a part of our excessive individualism that we ask first, "What do I get out of it?" Here too we need to brush the dust off our thinking. The sacraments are signs of salvation, but that salvation is in and through the Church. Even in the secrecy of the confessional or on the lonely sickbed, we are sanctified as members of Christ's Mystical Body. Not by ourselves.

This series is taken from the pamphlet How To Understand the Liturgy by Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta. It is available in single copies or bulk rate from GB Publications, P. O. Box 11667, Northside Station, Atlanta, Georgia, 30305.

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PRIDE -- THE HONOR CODE -- NOTRE DAME SPIRIT

The most recent letter to the students on the Honor Code speaks of a "sense of pride."

"...The honesty and responsibility which are the aims of the Honor Code are taken directly from the strong sense of pride and equally strong sense of individual integrity in each student. Such honesty and responsibility in turn increase the mutual trust and respect among students and benefits everyone concerned by giving each of us something more to be proud of than the average college student. This is the same pride which students now take in the reputation of Notre Dame both for its academic standing and for its status of once again having the Number One Football Team in the country."

To this we say "Amen." But we would like to add another dimension, the Christian dimension. Pride as it is used here is not one of the Capital sins, but it is Christian self-respect, respect for oneself as a son of God through Baptism, as a member of God's household, respect for oneself because of what God has made each one of us.

This awareness of one's Christian dignity -- pride, if you will, rightly understood -- will not only make the Honor Code work and give spirit to the football team, but it will be reflected in a Notre Dame man's conduct at all times. School spirit with pride, Christian self-respect, becomes a true Notre Dame spirit, with an awareness that Notre Dame, whether spelled out in the stadium or whispered at the Grotto, means Our Lady. The conduct of the Notre Dame man -- in the classroom, at a pep rally, in the stadium, or at Guisepe's -- reflects this pride, this Christian self-respect.

DE ECCLESIA or CHRIST AT A COFFEE-BAR

Ever since the opening days of the Council the phrase that has begun many a conversation in the coffee-bar has been:

"FRIEND, WHY COMEST THOU HERE WITHOUT THY WEDDING GARMENT?"

'Midst the color and fascinating (and triumphal??) swirl of purple, water-stained red, and lace, there appear at odd intervals colorless and drab blotches of black. The persons who give form to these black blotches, however, are anything but colorless or drab. These are the official "experts" for the Council, the Superiors General of religious congregations, lay participants, both men and woman (real skirts, not cassocks!), and observers from more than twenty-five different religious groups.

That these persons would be present at such a great ecclesial event such as the Council is an occurrence and sign not to be underestimated, a sign of the Church's fuller consciousness of herself in ALL the members of Christ's Body; a sign of the indispensability of each vocation and way of life in the vitality of the whole Christian people; a sign of the ONENESS of our call in Christ -- theologian and pastor, priest and people, active and contemplative. It is interesting to see how this sign itself took shape only slowly and stage by stage. With the gradual diffusion of sound and deep theological reflection and meditation on Scripture, sacrament, liturgy and Christian life, have come the very rich and concrete results of this renewed inner self-awareness.

Among those without their wedding garments who answer to that unfortunate and forbidding title of "expert" (official or private) are counted Fathers Rahner, Congar, Murray, DeVaux, DeLubac, Küng, Schillebeeckx, and many others. We might look for just a moment at FATHER BERNARD HARING, CSSR to see what sort of men these experts be and what sacrifice it takes to be in the service of Christ. Father Häring (of Law of Christ fame) has been the silent dynamic force behind much of the bishops' thinking and voting. With the Council in the morning, discussions in the afternoon, and meetings with different national conferences of bishops in the evening, he was happy to speak to us CSC seminarians in Rome before and after supper in both formal conference and informal discussion. He preached the Curia retreat last year (before which the Holy Father told him, "Don't be afraid! Give us everything you have; we need it too!"). Then it was off to Belgium for a two-week series of moral courses for missionaries and teachers, priests and sisters at an international catechetical center. On to the University of Louvain for work there with Cardinal Suenens' family-planning group and then to preach a Holy Week retreat to the American seminarians there. All the while (!) two books in the making and constant work on Schema 13, "The Church in the World."

"Without a wedding garment" did I say? The wedding garment is charity, love in the dedication of Truth, to Christ, the whole Christ -- the Son of God and His brothers.

--Father Langdon, C.S.C.