

Plain Sermons by Contributors to 'Tracts for the Times'
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SERMON LXXX.
HOLY COMMUNION.—PRIVILEGES.

ST. JOHN vi. 53—56.

“Then JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto yon, except ye eat the flesh of the Son OF MAN, and drink His Wood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in ME, and I in him.”

It is well, from time to time, to retrace in our minds the things which we already know; for the things of GOD are, like HIMSELF, infinite, and we, at best, know them “in part” only; and if we imagine we know them, we are apt to let them slip. Yea, GOD has appointed that, unless continually refreshed, they should become more and more dull, and HE takes from men that which they seem to have; on the other hand, HE opens more and more their depths to such as, confessing their ignorance, pray GOD to impart to them of His knowledge, and strive to deepen and keep it by thinking and acting thereon. And more especially the gifts of GOD in His Sacraments are so surpassing, and yet all which appears outwardly to the senses is so slight; they are so exceeding spiritual, and must be received and believed spiritually, and man is by nature so inclined to dwell on the things of sense; they must be searched deeply, and man of himself returns for ever to the surface, that it is of the more moment continually to fix our minds upon them, and for Ministers to go over things which seem to be well known. For GOD gives us not even our knowledge of HIM once for all; HE teaches us not once for all, in youth for instance; hut, that we may the more entirely depend upon HIM, HE supplies us, according to our use of what HE has given us, and our desires: all our lives we are learners; and at the end, His saints confess that they “see through a glass darkly,” although they do see what would be to ordinary Christians exceeding light. And, in truth, were this gift of GOD in His Sacrament better loved, and so better understood, instead of thinking monthly communions a great thing, people would desire weekly; and they who had weekly, would, as our Church once had, desire daily—their daily spiritual bread, as they daily receive that of the body.

I would then, although you have been often truly taught this, again call your minds to these holy mysteries, to stir up the remembrance of some who know, and to instruct such as know not; although in truth none can really know, save those who have tasted the heavenly Supper; yea, who have cleansed and consecrated their souls diligently, that the KING OF GLORY may come in under their roof; who have habitually been faithful and earnest communicants: they only can know it, to whom “not flesh and

blood, hut our FATHER which is in heaven hath revealed" it.

And in this teaching, I am not giving you my way of understanding Holy Scripture, but that which the whole Church, throughout all the world, learnt from the Apostles, and so from GOD. The two Sacraments, then, I would premise, are unlike every thing else even in the intense fulness of the Christian life. Other gifts of GOD are means of grace; prayer, fasting, almsgiving, reading of GOD'S Word, the rehearsal of our Belief, Confirmation at the hands of the Bishop, contrition for wrong committed, the absolution or the blessing given by the Priest in the name of GOD, meditation upon GOD, are in their several ways means of grace; i. e. they are acts appointed by GOD, in which HE looks favourably upon us, and which, when done aright, HE makes the means and channels of increased refreshment and strength to the Christian's soul. But the Sacraments are more: Jews, nay Heathen, might pray, fast, and give alms; and of Cornelius we know that his "prayers were heard," and his "alms had in remembrance before God;" the Jews had many and great favours of GOD, many and great means whereby they might be in favour with GOD, so that "God had not dealt so with any other nation;" but they had not, could not of course have, the Christian Sacraments; they had "images and shadows" of them, as of the other "good things" under the Gospel, but the substance they had not. These are part of the glories of the Incarnation of the SON OF GOD; part of the attendant train of blessings, which, when HE descended from the bosom of the FATHER, "for us men and our salvation," dawned upon man. They are gifts of "GOD manifest in the flesh." To name no other excellencies, they, lie as the foundation of all our other blessings, the means by which every thing else which is a blessing or a means of grace becomes such: for, 2. which is saying the same in another way, they are the means whereby we are originally united with CHRIST, or kept cemented to HIM. And hence our Church says that there are "two Sacraments generally necessary to salvation;" i. e. necessary to all alike: and whereas other holy rites are means of grace to particular persons, (as Ordination to the Priests,) or to particular states of life, these are necessary to all, as forming the bond which unites them with their REDEEMER. Other means of grace are indispensable; as without prayer there would be no life in any, yet prayer makes not a man a Christian, nor a member of CHRIST, but is accepted by GOD, especially from those who, having been made members of CHRIST, pray to GOD in CHRIST, are entitled to pray in the name of CHRIST, and have their prayers offered to the FATHER through the intercession of the great HIGH PRIEST, and sprinkled with His blood. Baptism then engrafts us into CHRIST, makes us members of the True Vine, members of the SON OF GOD, and so ourselves sons of God: the Holy Eucharist keeps up the life thus imparted to us, by communicating to us the life of CHRIST, yea CHRIST HIMSELF. The first imparts, the other sustains, life; hence the one is spoken of as a birth, "of water and the SPIRIT," the other is conveyed by bread the chief staff and stay of life. Without the birth, there can be no room for sustenance, and so, without Baptism, can there be no Communion; but neither will the birth support life without after-nourishment; so neither will it avail to have been born even of GOD, unless the life, which is of GOD, be supported by the means appointed by GOD. It will not profit

us to have been baptized, unless we continually seek renewal and strengthening of that life by the Supper of our LORD. Other things again are necessary to prevent life being lost; GOD'S medicinal hand by sorrows to remove the diseases which by sin we are contracting; His cleansing hand in absolving us from our guilt; love, or charity, without which life is extinct; fasting, without which the flesh might get the mastery over us and destroy our life; prayer to GOD, without Whom neither our earthly bread could nourish our bodies, nor our spiritual bread our souls; prayer for our daily bread; yet is not prayer our daily bread, but CHRIST is the true Bread, given to us for our life through His ordinances. These remain the chief, however necessary other things may be; Baptism, our birth; the LORD'S Supper, our sustenance: nor should we doubt that our birth and our food were the chief causes of our bodily life, although without bodily exercise or clothing, or when we are sick, medicine, our bodily food would not nourish or might injure us; even so, Baptism and the LORD'S Supper remain the well-springs of the Christian life, although spiritual cold, or want of love and charity, might yet destroy our life; yea even the LORD'S Supper might, in some cases, be hurtful to men; whence the Ancient Church, out of charity to men's souls, kept back some from it. And these two Sacraments being the middle-point of the Christian life, it may be one reason why that life is so sickly among us, that they are in these days often so little regarded; *Baptism* is performed once, in infancy, when people know nothing of it, and then perhaps thought no more of, or thought of as something which is necessary to be done, and has been done for us; it has been *done*, and so people think it is *done with*; they will recollect perhaps the day of their marriage, or of the birth or loss of their relations or wives or children, or some great thing which happened to them; but the day whereon the greatest thing which could happen to any created being, the being made members of the ever-blessed SON OF GOD, Who is GOD, this is passed over unthankfully; yea, what GOD then did for them is scarcely thought of, further than that they are somehow Christians, and without Baptism should not have been such. *The Holy Communion* men cannot so pass over, because it does not, like Baptism, take place once for all, but is oftentimes repeated, oftentimes offered; yet it too people show by their acts how little they appreciate; they receive it on certain days or times, as a duty to be done, but they are too often not careful to purify themselves for it, or treasure it in their souls afterwards; they go thither, not expecting any great thing, and they return to be the same men they were before; and so they continue the same, and make very little and meagre progress towards heaven, so that it can scarcely be told whether they are going on, or standing still, or falling back.

I would then now, by the blessing of ALMIGHTY GOD, set forth, in connection with our LORD'S Discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, something of the blessedness of the Communion, as HE has spoken of it; and in taking as a certain truth, that in this passage HE was speaking of the Holy Communion, which HE purposed to institute, I am not following my own judgment, or that of any man, but that of the Ancient Church, and, after her, of our own. For our Church, in applying to the comfort of communicants words taken out of this chapter, "as the benefit is great, if with a true

penitent heart, and lively faith, we receive that Holy Sacrament, for then we spiritually eat the flesh of CHRIST, and drink His blood; then *we dwell in* CHRIST, and CHRIST in us, we are one with CHRIST, and CHRIST with us,” shows that she understands our LORD’S words to apply to His Supper.

First then, our LORD declares, as I said, that ‘HE is the true Bread,” and that the true real Bread is HIM. This HE says in contrast not only to the worldly wishes of the Jews, but to all which GOD had before done for them. HE had lately, by a miracle, fed them in a desert place, and they sought to be fed in like way again; the FATHER had fed their fathers in the wilderness with manna, “bread from heaven,” “angels’ food,” and they sought to be fed by food which should come from heaven, as that whereon their fathers were fed. Our LORD says that HE has such food to give, but more heavenly; *that* food was but a likeness of the food which HE had to give: the food which HE *had* given them was “meat which perisheth;” the food which their fathers ate, although it came down from heaven, had no power to give life; “their fathers did eat manna, and were dead;” but “this is the Bread Which came down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.” It is then of two great miracles that our LORD is speaking; forty years was all Israel fed with manna in the wilderness, five thousand had HE fed with five barley loaves and two small fishes; yet the gift whereof HE spake was a greater miracle than these, as though HE would say, “Thou shalt see greater things than these.”

2. Our LORD is speaking of actual food, food given directly by GOD, and received by man, and nourishing him; HE is not speaking of spiritual communion with GOD simply, of lifting up the heart to GOD, of meditating on HIM, or any spiritual exercises which the Jews might perform; not of what man might *do*, but of what he might *receive*; of food, which GOD had, which CHRIST would, give him. “Open thy mouth wide,” HE would say, “and I will fill it.” Man herein has no part but to receive; he makes not the food for himself; it is the “true Bread from heaven,” which the ‘FATHER giveth;” “this is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.”

3. This miracle whereof our LORD speaks, this “living Bread,” is a fruit of His holy Incarnation and Nativity; “My FATHER giveth you the *true* Bread from heaven,” *for* the Bread of GOD is HE Which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world;” i. e. since HE was *the* life of the world, what was before HIM could have in it no true nourishment, since HE was not in it; “in HIM we live and move and have our being;” what was before HIM taught man about HIM, promised HIM, gave some traces of HIM, but was not HIMSELF; now that by His unutterable love and goodness towards us, HE hath come down to dwell among us, the “true Bread of life” is “come down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”

4. That true Bread is not only *among* us, but is *received in* us; “this is that Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof.” The Holy Supper is not a gazing up into heaven after CHRIST. No thoughts of CHRIST, however holy; no longings after HIM, however sanctified; no wish to be with HIM, however purified; no thoughts on His Cross and Passion, and Precious Death, however devout; no devotion of self to HIM;

no acknowledgment of HIM as our Priest, Prophet, King, and GOD; no setting HIM up in our hearts as (with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST) the One Object of our love; no reliance upon HIM as the only Anchor of our soul, however real, comes up to the truth. We ought to meditate on HIM, long for HIM, desire to be with HIM, rely on HIM, devote ourselves to HIM, pledge ourselves to obey HIM, and do what we have pledged: look for His coming, avow HIM, be ready in all things, in suffering as in joy, to be partakers with HIM, partakers of His Cross, and Death, and Burial; all this we should be at all times, but all this does not make us yet partakers of HIM, for man cannot make himself a partaker of HIM; HE must give HIMSELF. As HE gave HIMSELF to the Death upon the Cross for our sins, so in the Holy Eucharist must HE, if we are to be partakers of HIM, give HIMSELF to us; we have of HIM only what His giveth. All Christian graces, although His work, are but messengers to prepare the way before HIM; Hope but putteth us in that expectant, longing state which HE rewardeth; Faith but openeth the door to receive HIM; Love or Charity but cleanseth the chamber of our hearts, which HE is to inhabit; Repentance but breaketh the heart, and maketh it that contrite or broken spirit, wherein it pleaseth HIM to dwell; but all this is not yet HIM. HE, “the Bread of life, which came down from heaven,” must come down also into our hearts, if we are to be partakers of HIM. The Communion is not a mere going up of our hearts to CHRIST, but a coming down of HIM to us. Well indeed may the ancient service bid us, “lift up your hearts;” and well may we answer, “we lift them up unto the LORD;” well may we lift them up to meet the LORD, but it is to receive HIM that we lift them up, not to embrace HIM for ourselves. The outward emblems, bread and wine, which we see, would in themselves not lift us up to CHRIST, but depress us, except so far as we know them to be emblems and pledges, channels of HIM and His Presence to our souls, so far as they are made to us His Heavenly Body and Blood: of themselves they are plainly slight and insufficient to convey any spiritual benefit; they are emblems of nothing hut His humiliation, forms of earth, such as HE took; they tell us that HE, being Very GOD, took upon HIM a form of earth, and that that form was broken; their very breaking speaks His greater humiliation, and that to receive a humble SAVIOUR, we must also be humbled; that we must not look to gain HIM for ourselves, but bow ourselves to the earth, and pray HIM to have pity upon and give life to our dust.

There are, namely, in the Communion, two parts: 1. a Commemoration, or “showing forth of our LORD’S death until HE come;” and 2. a Communion or receiving of CHRIST in the believer’s soul; and they who mistake these two, have been in danger of destroying both. In the whole action of the Communion, the Priest, and the people with and through him, commemorate or make mention and show forth the Death of our LORD. The Priest offers to GOD the bread and wine as memorials of the One precious Sacrifice on the Cross, and entreats HIM by these emblems of His most precious Death and Passion, to have mercy upon us and the whole Church; he breaks the bread, and pours out the wine, as he was commanded, as CHRIST’S Body was broken and His Blood shed upon the Cross; and the whole assembly joins with him, as he does it in the name of all, and

presents their faith, their alms, and their oblations before GOD. But in the actual Communion it is not so; herein we do nothing but receive; herein is no commemoration, no showing forth His death, but something far other and higher, a receiving HIM. Herein is no action of our own, save that of resignation of our whole selves to His holy will and pleasure, a wish to receive what HE will be pleased to impart, which saith, "Amen, so come LORD JESUS!" "Behold the servants of the LORD, be it unto us according to Thy word."

And what is this gift, which HE imparteth, and which we are to desire at His hands? My brethren, it is a high mystery which I am to declare, but it is HE Who saith it.—It is HIMSELF. It is bread and wine which our bodies receive; but it is not mere bread and wine, it is His Flesh, His Blood. "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever; and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in ME, and I in him. ... He that eateth *Me*, shall live by ME. ... He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." Observe how often HE repeats the words, and how HE changes them, one for the other, to impress the truth upon us the more, and to encourage us to believe it: HE calls this which HE will give us, Bread, living Bread, the true Bread from Heaven, the Meat which endureth unto everlasting life, the Bread of life, the Bread which came down from Heaven, His own Flesh, His Blood, *His Own Self*, and this HE saith, HE will give to be eaten and drunk by those who believe in HIM: "Whoso (amazing words) eateth ME." This is indeed a great mystery, and we are weak; and so not only HE repeats it so often and so solemnly, but saith yet further, "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed," i. e. not like earthly food, which can support only an earthly not a real life, not like the manna, which the Israelites ate and died, but real food, bread which shall nourish our real eternal life, "whereof he who eateth shall live for ever." For this strong saying of our LORD, Who is "the truth and the life," must needs kindle even a weak faith; yea, it seems as if in compassion to *our* misgivings, to relieve our doubts, HE graciously addressed us, "Fear not, although it is a great thing, which I say; it is I, be not afraid; *I* say unto thee, My flesh is true, real, yea the only true, imperishable, food; My Blood which I shed for your life, is your true drink; that drink, after which, you shall not again thirst."

This then is, thus far, our LORD'S teaching, that the miracle, which HE thus worketh *in* us, is greater than the greatest miracles, which His FATHER had worked hitherto or HE worked; that it was real food which HE gave and which man received; that this food was really eaten and drunk by us, the bread and wine being (as our Catechism explains it) the strengthening and refreshing of the body, the Body and Blood of CHRIST that of the soul; that in this eating and drinking we receive CHRIST Himself, imparting HIMSELF to us.

Our LORD tells us not *how* these things can be, but HE doth tell us *wherein* His gifts consist; HE tells us the height and depth of these our mercies, although we have no

thoughts to conceive them, nor words to tell the manner thereof. It is through His indwelling in us. “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him,” and then, at once to convey to us the greatness of the gift, and to assure us that the indwelling, whereof HE speaks, is real and actual, HE subjoins, “As the living FATHER hath sent Me, and I live by the FATHER, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.” We must not “stagger through unbelief” at the greatness of this saying, although we dare scarcely repeat it to each other, except in this House, or speak of it in other words than our LORD hath used; yet since I am commissioned to declare to you the counsel of GOD herein, I must not leave it unsaid, lest I should hide from you His gifts. Our LORD saith then, that as truly and as really as the Ever-Blessed FATHER dwelt in HIM, the SON and was His Life, in that the Being of the SON was derived from the Being of the FATHER, and since the FATHER and SON are One God, the FATHER dwelleth in the SON, and the SON in the FATHER—so really and so truly does our LORD and GOD dwell in them who eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. It is not then a figure, a likeness, an image, but a reality—a reality spiritual, and therefore unseen and unfelt by our bodily senses, but more real than any thing which we see with our bodily eyes, or handle with our hands. It is a real living truth, that CHRIST dwelleth in us, and is our life. But this is not all. For CHRIST dwelleth in us, as GOD, and we in HIM; so that now as the FATHER loveth the SON, in Whom HE is, so we, being, not in a figure hut in reality, though a spiritual reality, members of CHRIST, and in CHRIST, the FATHER loveth us, as being parts of His SON, Whom as His Only-Begotten SON HE loveth with the love of GOD, i. e. Infinite, Unutterable. For His SON only and His HOLY SPIRIT can, as being GOD with HIM, receive all the fulness of His Infinite Love, and now we are parts of HIM, Whom HE loveth infinitely. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the love of GOD!

There is however one word, which our LORD here useth, to which we must take good heed; HE saith not “cometh to us,” “visiteth us;”—even this had been a great thing that HE should visit us as HE did the Patriarchs and holy men of old, yea this was the joy and gladness of Paradise, that at eventide the LORD GOD walked in the garden and spake to Adam,—but HE doth, more; HE not only cometh to us, as a friend might meet a friend, but HE entereth into us; HE not only visiteth us from time to time and “maketh HIMSELF known” to us, “by the breaking of bread,” but HE *dwelleth* in us. “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, *dwelleth* in Me and I in him.” We have, as I said, no other words to speak of this, than those which HE has given us; but this the words must signify, that as of old (probably now also) the devils actually dwelt, lived, inhabited in the bodies and souls of the unhappy men given up to them, so now HE, having bound and spoiled, and cast out the strong man, dwelleth in us, our souls and bodies and spirits, making us, as St. Peter saith, “partakers of the Divine Nature;” dwelleth in us really and truly, and, as long as we grieve HIM not away, ever-blessedly. Yea, this is our hope, our comfort, our joy, our glory, that we are not our own; but that as many as receive HIM, are through HIM, dwelling in them, sons of GOD, in that they are members of the SON of GOD; that HE dwelleth in them, imparting to them His holiness, sanctifying them, subduing what

remains of their evil nature, giving them the victory over Satan and themselves, making them meet to be with HIM in glory, purifying them as HE is pure, making them wholly His, working His works in them, that HE may crown His work in them at the Great Day.

“Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST? neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD:” yea, thus united with HIM, thus joined with HIM, can nothing separate; all things but show forth His love; things good, in that they are His blessings; things evil, in that HE makes them work to good; “all things are yours,” while “you are CHRIST’S,” for “CHRIST is GOD’S.”

And now what shall I more say? for what can. be wanting where CHRIST is? to whom CHRIST is given, all is given. For how should GOD not give all things, to whom, as for whom, HE hath given His Only-Begotten SON? Yet hath HE of His great goodness, singled out some chief things, which we should be anxious about, and which HE hath thus given us.

Through this, we shall have *no wants*; “He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” They in whom CHRIST dwell, have no wants; yea, want, sickness, suffering, are to them, so far as CHRIST dwelleth in them, blessings; yea, and every creature, for all are sent by GOD, and GOD loveth them, and these are but messengers of His love. They have *protection and safety*, for ‘HE that is in them is mightier than he that is in the world;’ “the FATHER is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of the FATHER’S hand.” They have *spiritual wisdom*; for the anointing Spirit “abideth in them,” and teacheth them all things “whereof they have need. They have *holiness*, for they have been “made partakers of His holiness.” They have, as they may trust, *forgiveness of sins*; for He saith, “the Bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;” and again in the holy words in which HE consecrated for ever the sacred elements, “This is My Body, which is given *for you*.” “This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.” They have *eternal life*; for HE saith, “whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life.” These words again must well be weighed, for they are full of comfort and of warning. He saith not, ‘Whoso presseth with His teeth the holy elements,’ but “whoso eateth His flesh and drinketh His blood,” whoso really “cometh to HIM, HE will in no wise cast out,” but will admit him to His supper in His kingdom, give him “the living Bread, which came down from Heaven,” even His own “Flesh, which He gave for the life of the world;” to him who openeth the door, his LORD fulfilleth His promise, “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with ME.” Again our LORD saith, “hath eternal life;” “hath,” not “shall have.” Our LORD puts you off to no distant day (though it may be at some little time hence that it shall be *full-filled*), but HE giveth it thee now. As it was said to Adam, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die,” although the part of the sentence which was not forgiven, was not fulfilled until after many hundred years, yet he carried about with him, as it were, the earnest of his death; so HE saith to thee, “in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt live.” Thou “hast

eternal life,” although the world seeth it not, nor knoweth it; thou hast it, though it be “hid with CHRIST in GOD;” thou hast it, although as yet in the beginning only and the earnest thereof, to be fulfilled when CHRIST shall come openly in the last day, not secretly only to thee in His sacraments; thou hast it, and no one, neither man nor devil, can take it from thee, unless thou forfeit it. “He *hath* eternal life,” yea, and he shall have it; and death, which ends every thing earthly, shall not end it; herein is the victory over the grave and death and hell; for HE saith, “hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day;” yea, and since we still shrink from death, and the worm, and corruption, and foulness, and dishonour, which these our bodies must undergo before they return to their dust, four times HE repeats the words, “*I* will raise him up at the last day.” The resurrection of our bodies is no common thing, but a great miracle; they are under sentence of death, and have by sin lost their first gift of life; and so CHRIST, as a pledge of this miracle, giveth us a yet greater miracle, whereby *we* may be assured, and it may be fulfilled, His own sinless flesh, a cure of death, and full of life, whereby “though we die, yet shall we live.” With His Body HE giveth to our sinful bodies everlasting life, by being joined to and cleansed by His Body; yea, He saith not “they shall be raised,” for so they might be to condemnation, but “*I* will raise them up at the last day;” and whom CHRIST raiseth, how shall HE not raise in mercy, taking him as it were by the hand, and bidding him enter into His joy?

And now, my brethren, I have named, as I could, the chief benefits of this Holy Supper, although all which I have said is but a faint shadow of that Holy Mystery, whereby ‘GOD dwelleth in us and we in GOD.’ And as it is GOD’S greatest favour to us in this our pilgrimage, so the hope that we may not unworthily receive it, is our highest joy, and each repeated offer of it seems a pledge of salvation, in that, notwithstanding our many sins and our often infirmities, GOD hath not separated us, (as we hope) from the Communion of His SON, but still refines in us what is base, renews in us what is decayed, strengthens in us what is weak, gives life to what was dead, through our union with His SON.

The Holy Eucharist then is a great gift, greater than our weak, yea, than our highest, thoughts can reach to; but we may not think of it only as a gift, i. e. not as that which if we use, it is a blessing, and if we use not, we are none the worse for, except that we lose it; such cannot be the case with any of GOD’S gifts, for whoso despiseth the gifts of GOD, despiseth HIM, and no one can despise HIM and go unpunished. Our daily earthly bread is the gift of GOD, yet such a gift, as if we were to go without it, our bodily life would perish; even so with the life of our souls, “He that hath the SON, hath life;” but it follows, “He that hath not the SON, hath *not* life.” Whoso, in faith, receiveth the Holy Eucharist, with it receiveth HIM Who is life; and whoso receiveth it not, and by reason of his age may receive it, hath not life. Our LORD Who saith the one, saith the other also: HE saith, “whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life;” and HE saith also, “Except ye eat the Flesh of the SON of man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.” *He* HIMSELF has given this awful seal to both His Sacraments: HE said, “Except a

man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD,” and so compelled us to come in by the way which HE had appointed, Baptism “of water and the Spirit;” and now that we have been brought into that kingdom, HE hath said we cannot remain members of it, cannot have life, unless in His Sacrament we feed on HIM. It is not I, it is not a messenger or minister of GOD who tells you this; it is GOD HIMSELF; it is CHRIST Who died for you, Who telleth you, that unless you seek for the life which HE gives, in the way in which HE has appointed for you, if you seek for health, or strength, or salvation, in any ways of your own, yea, if you seek for HIM where HE is not to be found, where HE has not taught you to seek for HIM, you have no life in you; you are already dead, having separated yourselves from HIM Who is Life.

So holy, so awful, so necessary is this great gift of GOD, which HE on the next Lord’s day offereth to each of us. But “wherewith shall we come before the LORD, and bow ourselves before the Most High GOD?” What is the marriage garment, wherewith we may come to this so holy feast, prepared for us, that so we may not be cast out? I can give no better answer than that which our Church gives us as the conclusion of her Catechism—and we may be the more cheerful because she gives it us—true repentance, stedfast purposes to lead a new life, a lively faith in GOD’S mercy through CHRIST, a thankful remembrance of His Death, and charity with all. Of our own, we have most of us nothing to bring but our sins; broken vows, half-formed and soon-abandoned resolves; yea, of that which GOD hath supplied, we have mostly only grace half-acted upon; weakly faith wasting itself in wishes; repentance to be repented of; an unthankful thankfulness; a charity which loveth little: bat it is not what we bring for the past, but what we wish to receive for the future; not our past poverty, but our desire of the true riches; yea, what is required of us is our acknowledgment of our poverty (for though some—and they will be found the most abased—are very much richer than others, all are infinitely poor compared to His fulness), a broken heart, a desire of the holiness that a man has not, or more than he has, a desire of fuller love, of greater thankfulness, of firmer stedfastness, and a strong purpose, with GOD’S help, to lead a holier life, more wedded to HIM, strong in that strength which HE through His INCARNATE SON supplies.

And for the next week of preparation, use and make what time you can. Our fathers used not so long since (even when daily service had declined), yet at least to assemble themselves (whosoever wished to be communicants), in GOD’S house during the week before, there to lament their sins before HIM, that so having confessed their sins, they might, on the Lord’s day, be more worthy partakers of the Holy Communion; and it would be a gladdening earnest of your sincerity (gladdening it might be to yourselves also), if such as any how could, would at some inconvenience prepare themselves by coming hither on the Wednesday and Friday in next week; more gladdening still if, having so begun, such as could would habitually come; and yet what hinders very many in this congregation, but the listless irreligious habit of these last days, to regard all their time on the week days as their own? What but the coldness, and lifelessness, and undevotionalness, which forsooth looks forward to join in the endless hallelujahs of

eternity, but meantime would almost think it a strange thing to be invited for two hours during the week to worship GOD in His temple, which is the image of Heaven? Ye can hardly mean this in earnest, my Brethren, and yet what else means the habitual thinness of the congregations during the week, when every house almost in the whole front of this town¹ might (to say the least) send forth its worshipper? The very heathen will rise up in judgment and condemn such slothfulness.

Use then what time you can; and let such as are lawfully hindered withdraw their thoughts when they can from their necessary business, seize diligently such snatches of time, as occur in all business, to see whether you do indeed wish for a holier walk with GOD, more faithfully to fulfil His holy commandments; to think on the heavenly gift which is promised them, and pray to GOD to make them, who are in themselves unworthy, worthy partakers (since we must needs be unworthy to gather up the crumbs under His table, and whom GOD makes worthy must needs be so), pray to HIM to increase your faith, to deepen your repentance, to heighten your love, to make stedfast your unstedfastness; deny yourselves, at least on the day of your SAVIOUR'S suffering, in token of your repentance and your wish to prefer GOD, your only Good, to His creatures; and then come, cast yourselves upon HIM, ask of HIM more faith, bring before HIM all your sins, all your trials, all your troubles, weaknesses, sorrows; ask HIM to take away what HE sees good; to bear for you, what HE thinks fit that you should bear, to sanctify what HE doth not take away, and HE will give you, each according to what you ask; more to them that ask more; but the poorest, weakest, that in sincerity and humility cometh unto HIM, HE hath said, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, 'I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT,' he shall live by Me, and I will raise him up at the Last Day.