

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

By Fr. Frederick Faber

PROLOGUE: TRIUMPH

I

Jesus veiled, in His own great mystery of love, offered by our priests, dwelling on our altars, feeding our souls,—this is the sacred and venerable truth which we are now about to consider. The wisdom of the Cherubim cannot fathom the depths of this adorable Sacrament, neither can the burning love of the Seraphim adequately praise the inventions of compassion which are contained therein. Nevertheless it is our duty as well as our privilege to look into this mystery. It is our daily Sacrifice, and our perpetual Food, and our constant adoration: and the more we know of it the greater will be our love of that most dear Lord whose veiled Presence we possess therein; and to know Jesus a little more and then to love Him a little more, let the little be ever *so* little,—is it not worth a long life of sadness and of care? Mother Church will give us her hand in traversing these mysterious regions of Divine Truth. She will set holy doctors round about our path, like so many guardian angels, to keep us from going astray, and to tell us the right thoughts to think and the right words to use; while she herself, by many a touching ceremony, and many a deep wise rubric, will fill us full of sacred fear and of that awe-stricken reverence which befits the enquiry into so deep a mystery. The voice of her great son St. Thomas Aquinas still lives in her office, now with a single antiphon unlocking whole abysses of Scripture, and now in almost supernatural hymns uniting the strictness of dogma with a sweetness and a melody more like echoes of heaven than mere poetry of earth. Jesus Veiled! let us kneel down before Him in adoring awe, while our Mother teaches us His beauty, and His sweetness, and His goodness, and His nearness. When we think we know Him we shall not know the half, and when we speak of Him we shall stammer as children do, and when our hearts are hot with love of Him, they will be cold in comparison of the love which is His due.

Let us suppose it to be the Feast of Corpus Christi. We have risen with one glad thought uppermost in our minds. It gives a color to everything round about us. It is health to us even if we are not well, and sunshine though the skies be dull. At first there is something of disappointment to us, when we see our dear country wearing the same toilsome look of common-place labor and of ordinary traffic. We feel there is something wrong, something out of harmony in this. Poor London! if it knew God, and could keep holy-days for God, how it might rejoice on such a day, letting the chains of work fall from off its countless slaves of Mammon, and giving one whole sun to the deep childlike joy in a mystery which is the triumph of faith over sight, of spirit over matter, of grace over nature, and of the Church over the world. But somehow our very disappointment causes us to feel more touchingly the gift of faith, and the sense of our own unworthiness which makes it such a wonder that God should have elected us to so great a gift. O sweet Sacrament of Love! we belong to Thee, for Thou art our Living Love Himself. Thou art our well of life, for in Thee is the Divine Life Himself, immeasurable, compassionate, eternal. Today is Thy day, and on it there shall not be a single thought, a single hope, a single wish, which shall not be all for Thee!

Now the first thing we have to do is to get the spirit of the Feast into us. When this is once accomplished we shall be better able to sound some of the depths of this salutary mystery. Nay, the whole theology of the grand dogma of the Eucharist is nothing less than angelic music made audible to mortal ears; and when our souls are attuned to it we shall the better understand the sweet secrets which it reveals to our delighted minds. But we must go far away in order to catch the spirit of the Feast. We must put before ourselves, as on a map, the aspect which the whole Church is presenting to the Eye of God today. Our great city is deafened with her noise; she cannot hear. She is blinded with her own

dazzle; she cannot see. We must not mind her: we must put the thought of her away, with sadness if it were any other day than this, but today, because it is today, with complete indifference.

O the joy of the immense glory the Church is sending up to God this hour: verily! as if the world was all unfallen still! We think, and as we think, the thoughts are like so many successive tide-waves filling our whole souls with the fulness of delight, of all the thousands of masses which are being said or sung the whole world over, and all rising with one note of blissful acclamation from grateful creatures to the Majesty of our merciful Creator. How many glorious processions, with the sun upon their banners, are now winding their way round the squares of mighty cities, through the flower-strewn streets of Christian villages, through the antique cloisters of the glorious cathedral or through the grounds of the devout seminary, where the various colors of the faces and the different languages of the people are only so many fresh tokens of the unity of that faith, which they are all exultingly professing in the single voice of the magnificent ritual of Rome! Upon how many altars of various architecture, amid sweet flowers and starry lights, amid clouds of humble incense and the tumult of thrilling song, before thousands of prostrate worshippers, is the Blessed Sacrament raised for exposition, or taken down for benediction! And how many blessed acts of faith, and love, of triumph and of reparation, do not each of these things surely represent! The world over, the summer air is filled with the voice of song. The gardens are shown of their fairest blossoms to be flung beneath the feet of the Sacramental God. The steeples are reeling with the clang of bells; the cannon are booming in the gorges of the Andes and the Apennines; the ships of the harbours are painting the bays of the sea with their show of gaudy flags; the pomp of royal or republican armies salutes the King of kings. The Pope on his throne and the school-girl in her village, cloistered nuns and sequestered hermits, bishops and dignitaries and preachers, emperors and kings and princes, all are engrossed today with the Blessed Sacrament. Cities are illuminated; the dwellings of men are alive with exultation. Joy so abounds that men rejoice they know not why, and their joy overflows on sad hearts, and on the poor and the imprisoned and the wandering and the orphaned, and the homesick exiles. ALL the millions of souls that belong to the royal family and spiritual lineage of St. Peter are today engaged more or less with the Blessed Sacrament: so that the whole Church Militant is thrilling with glad emotion, like the tremulous rocking of the mighty sea. Sin seems forgotten; tears even are of rapture rather than of penance. It is like the soul's first day in heaven; or as if earth itself were passing into heaven, as it well might do, for sheer joy of the Blessed Sacrament.

But all this represents and reveals an interior world of deep worship and of countless supernatural operations of the Holy Ghost, and of the exuberant activity and inexhaustible energy of the Precious blood. A single supernatural act—how much dearer is it to God than a thousand sins are hateful; for the odor of Christ and the unction of His grace and the ornament of His Blood and the seal of His merits are on that single act. Grace grows active as great feasts grow nigh; and its preludes bring many souls to the feet of their spiritual physicians. Crowds that were in sin yesterday now for the love of Jesus have made today's sun to rise upon their penance; and over each one all heaven's angels rejoiced, more than over a newly-created world. Millions have made their preparation for Communion, and the least fervent of them all did something for God he would not else have done. The same millions communicated; and think of all that Jesus did in them, and with them, and for them, while the sacramental union lasted! The same millions made their thanksgiving, and what a choir of praise was there. How many aged men will the evening find less worldly than the morning saw them. In how many souls of children has not faith started and grown, strong, supple, juicy shoots, more than a whole year's growth in one brief day: and what a glorious thing is each growth of faith in a childish soul, seeing there comes along with it such a glorious promise for eternity! And what shall I say of those deeper depths, the souls of mortified interior men? I suppose that the mere exercise of faith, to say nothing of love, in a saint is something so deep and high, so far-reaching and full of union with Christ, that we common Christians can know nothing of it. And how many real saints, how many hereafter to be raised on the altars of the Church, have been in rapture, in extasy, in transcendent communion with

God this day, through the stirring of the life-giving mystery in their souls. The silent cloister has sent up thousands of sweet perfumes from espoused souls throughout the day; acts of faith enough to win grace for unconverted tribes, acts of love sufficient to expiate a sea of blasphemies and a world of sacrilege, acts of union which have strengthened and invigorated the whole Church and quickened all its pulses in places far remote from the cells, where the acts were perfected in solitude and prayer and austere concealment. Who can tell the vocations begun or achieved today, the conversions suggested or effected, the first blows given to a sinful habit or the crowning virtue to a devout resolve, the sins remitted or the sinful purposes abandoned, the death-beds illuminated or the souls liberated from purgatory through the quickened charity of earth? There has been a vast and busy and populous empire of interior acts open to the eye of God today, so beautiful, so glorious, so religious, so acceptable, that the feast of the outer world has been the poorest possible expression of the inner feast of the world of spirit. And what is it all but triumph, the triumph of our hidden Lord?

II

Triumph then is the character of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. Its spirit is a spirit of triumph. Let us get a clear idea of this; for triumph is not a common spirit in devotion, and we should know exactly what it means; for it has much to do both with the freshness and vigor of our faith, and also with that liberty of spirit without which there is no evangelical perfection

There is a great and edifying variety in the liturgical and ritual expressions of the Church, as we might expect from the fulness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within her. Yet most of them have to do either with a sense of sin, or with a sense of forgiveness, or with a sense of exile: and this fact reveals to us very much of the peculiar character of Catholic devotion. When the Church assembles her children on Ash-Wednesday and marks them on the brow with the memento of their mortality, which is the punishment of sin, or when she suspends her Gloria in Advent and in Lent, or when she extinguishes one by one her mystic candles amid the grave chants of her doleful *Tenebrae*, or when she strips her altars, as if the end of the world or the persecution of Antichrist were come and there was to be no more daily Sacrifice, all these are so many expressions of the sense of sin and of the mournfulness of our estrangement from God. How deeply by this show of grief does she instil into our minds a hatred of sin and a sense of its tremendous guilt, exciting in us in the mysterious ceremonies of Holy Week almost more of humbling shame than of happy love! But when she uncovers the Crucifix to the faithful and invites them to prostrate themselves and kiss the feet of their Savior's image, or when she celebrates the Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer, or the reparatory Feast of the Sacred Heart, that day of reparation which our Lord Himself revealed, then it is rather the sense of forgiveness which is expressed than a sense of sin, and yet still in the humble spirit of consciously unworthy penitents.

Again, when she calls us to celebrate the Feasts of the Angels and of the Saints, especially that abundant Feast of strong and unusual and redoubled graces, All Saints' Day, or to join in the Candlemas procession, it seems as if the sense of exile rather than anything else weighed heavy on her spirit. It is but another form of that beautiful cry of hers from out the deep places of her banishment, whether fresh for the day's work at cockcrow when lauds are sung, or weary with so much bootless toil as the last soul-soothing notes of vespers are dying away, when for so great a portion of the year she turns from her Spouse to His Mother, almost in envy or in reproach, "To thee we cry, poor banished children of Eve, weeping and mourning in this vale of tears." So too how touching is that word "patria" at the end of the O Salutaris, as if the very nearness of Jesus, the very privilege of the passing moment, only deepened the sense of exile, and rendered it the more intolerable, and as if the echo of our hearts to the sight of Him in His Sacramental veils could only be that word, "country," *patria*, so sweet to an exile's ear, so sad in an exile's mouth.

This threefold sense of sin, of sin's forgiveness, and of exile, gives us a clear insight into the spirit of

Catholic devotion. It is not exactly a spirit of sadness, but of pathos, mournful, humble, graceful, pining; if it murmurs, it is in songs and hymns unto the Lord, or if it seem impatient, it is because its holy desires are for the moment beyond control. It is not forward, but it is firm. It is not loudly confident, but it is in secret peace and tranquil surety. It is the gentle bravery of continued suffering, not the defiant valor of momentary martyrdom. It is all this, because it is made up of hope and charity more *sensibly* than of faith; whereas it is chiefly the element of faith in devotion which is represented to us by the worship of the Blessed Sacrament: and hence the spirit of Corpus Christi is not a sense of sin, of forgiveness of sin, or of exile, but of triumph, though ending in the soul at last, as we shall see, in a devotion of the most plaintive and pensive description. But true it is, that whatsoever in devotion is of a joyous sort, brave, persisting, trying great things and accomplishing them, quick-sighted, instantaneous, venturesome, and trustful, is of faith, and is chiefly introduced and maintained by the worship of the Blessed Sacrament. This is the secret of the fortitude of the saints.

Then again there are feasts and ceremonies expressing the past mysteries of Jesus and Mary, the gracious acts, joyful, sorrowful or glorious, which belong to the mystery of the Incarnation. These feasts are commemorative, historical, monumental, while they also keep reviving in the Church the peculiar graces and exercises of virtue, and the heroisms of the spiritual life which they recall. They all belong to one class, because they express past events, and those events mysteries of the Incarnation; yet each one of them has a peculiar and separate spirit of its own; each has a specialty to further some particular grace in the soul and to give some cognizable shape to its interior life, or to become the dominant genius of some religious congregation. One star differs from another star in glory; and every action of our Blessed Lord is so fertile and exuberant, so powerful to produce its like in others, so full of divine energy and signification, that it is in itself a creative word, and calls forth in our souls a perfect little world of mystical and spiritual beauty and consistency. The same may be said of each of those several and successive adornments of grace and power, with which the munificence of the Most Holy Trinity arrayed the elect Mother of God. Thus a knowledge of the mysteries to which they are specially devoted will often reveal the whole spiritual history of a pious soul, and will enable us to discern the purposes of God upon it. Corpus Christi does not fall under this class of feasts, while Holy Thursday evidently does; and who is there who does not perceive at once the great difference between these two processions of the Blessed Sacrament. While the one is simple triumph and holy jubilation, the other is pensive and pathetic. The Sepulchre is there, a visible monument of what we are commemorating, and the *Vexilla Regis* is the key-note of the whole, and our last effort to be joyful has passed away with the closing music of the *Gloria*. If we compare Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi we shall see what very distinctive spirits two similar feasts can have; and these different spirits represent realities and actual operations of grace in the soul.

I seem to be wasting a great many words on a very simple truth. But if it is true, as St. Philip tells us, that it is a bad sign if we do not experience a notable fervor and sweetness at great feasts, is it not also true that in order to draw the fire and to suck the sweetness out of each feast, it is important to apprehend its real and peculiar spirit? I say then that Corpus Christi is essentially a feast of triumph. It is a day of triumph rather even than of joy, a day of power, of fearlessness, of public profession of faith, of the heavenly insult of truth over doubt, heresy, falsehood, sacrilege, and blasphemy. Its position immediately following upon Trinity Sunday is a sort of Type of this. It does not come after the Ascension in unbroken order, as one feast of our Lord following another, nor even at once after Pentecost, when the descent of the Holy Ghost had been as it were the fruit of the Ascension and the sweet token of the strange truth that it could ever be expedient for us that our Lord should go away. But it waits until the Church has led up all her mysteries into the secret fountain, the mother mystery, of the Most Holy Trinity, as if the whole collective devotion of the year rose up into the unapproachable light, and fell back again in showers of glory and in streams of celestial power and beauty upon men in the grand and consummating mystery of Transubstantiation. Hence its character of triumph. The Church Militant is blended for a moment with the Church Triumphant, and forgets her exile and her militant

condition; and the worship of the Holy Trinity, which is a sort of antepast of Heaven, finds its adequate expression in the joyous adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It is a day when we cannot be still, and hence a day of processions. It is a feast of shout and song, one while against the earth, as if the walls of the great city of the world were miraculously falling down before our faith, while we encompass it, marching, angels and men, to the martial strains of our Lauda Sion; another while, in praise of the Church, while the whole world resounds with the acclamations of the redeemed bearing their Redeemer round the ramparts of his own impregnable Sion.

III

But it is not enough to settle that the spirit of Corpus Christi is one of triumph; there rises the farther question of the character of this triumph, which is of course wholly supernatural, and not the mere fine feelings of patriotism or the earthly glow of some national victory. Nay, it is not so much a triumph because by the grace of God we are on God's side, as because God in this mystery is triumphing Himself over those things which are the undoubted enemies of His kingdom and sovereignty. It is His triumph as well as ours, His rather than ours.

I said that Corpus Christi was naturally a day of processions. Now the whole history of the Church may be viewed as in itself a vast and various procession, seen under all the vicissitudes of war, as a caravan of pilgrim soldiers fighting their way from east to west. Now it is in little straggling bands with the apostles on the Roman Roads, or now encamped with the obscure Proselytes of the Gate round the Jewish Synagogues in the Roman Provinces. Here we behold it, an army of martyrs, with the pontiff at its head in the dim chambers of the Catacombs; there it is out before the world's eyes, all gleaming and glancing with the ensigns of imperial favor and command. One while it is pushing its way across the desert to reach the unevangelized nations; another while it is curbing the inundations of the barbarian north. Now it has absorbed the whole civilized world into itself and in its medieval splendors; and again it is mingled with the unbelieving multitude, cleaving for itself a passage through the crowd of base literatures, of wicked philosophies, of corrupted civilizations, and of debased diplomacies, never lost to the eye, always cognizable, always suffering, always royal, always unlike anything else in the world, like the children of Israel in the Red Sea when the solid waters stood up as a wall on their right hand and on their left.

The procession of the Blessed Sacrament is a compendium of Church History. It is a disclosure of the mind of the Church in all the vicissitudes of her warlike pilgrimage. It makes us feel as past ages have felt and as generations will feel in times to come. It gives us a taste of her supernatural disposition, and helps powerfully to form the same disposition within ourselves. It is not the triumph of the Church because she has finally destroyed her enemies and is victorious. Every day is only bringing new enmities to view, and unmasking false friends. The whole of the extraordinary versatility of human wickedness is simply at work to harass and exhaust the Church by the multiplicity and unexpectedness of its attacks. The empire of the demons abounds in fearful intelligence, backed by no less fearful power, and the Church has to prove it all. There is not a change in the world's destinies which is not a fresh trial for the Church. There is not a new philosophy or a freshly-named science, but what deems, in the ignorance of its raw beginnings, that it will either explode the Church as false, or set her aside as doting. There is no new luxury of our modern capitals, but the devil or the world enter into it with a mysterious possession, in order to make a charm of it against the Church and her mission to the souls of men. Heresy can be pious, reverent, philanthropic, a zealot for public morals, patriotic, liberal, conceding, if so only the Church can be wounded by the stratagem. No! it would be premature indeed if at this day the Church should sing her paeon because she has finally destroyed her enemies and is victorious.

Neither is the feast of the Blessed Sacrament a triumph because she is at peace. She never gets beyond

a truce, and it is seldom enough that she ever has so much as that. She can never be at peace until the day of doom, nor while there is yet a soul, that is not already reprobate, left unsaved. Her very alliances must needs be full of suspicions from long experience, and in reality they are rather fresh anxieties than permissions for repose. She has often been in alliance with the governments of the world, and thereby has many a soul been saved that would have else been lost. But such alliances cost her the blood of martyrs and the toilsome sweat of popes, and at the best she can live in them only as the timid deer in the forest whose every echo is ringing with the hunter's horn. She is less at her ease in a Concordat than in a Catacomb. So with educational and reformatory movements; so with legal efforts for political liberties; so with philosophical and scientific leagues; so even with the graceful enervations of beautiful and refining art. She has her place in all these things, because she has a mission to them all; but she does not, may not, dwell with them in peace.

Neither does she triumph because heresy is stifled all over the earth. For new heresies wax while old ones wane: and each schism as it decays is the fruitful parent of many more. In truth heresies are a condition of her life, and the unwitting cause of nearly all the intellectual magnificence of her dogmatic teaching. Nevertheless it is doubtless a pleasure and a triumph to her children to see how year after year various heresies seem to shed their Christian elements, and to work their way with a blind fatality outside the ring of revealed truth altogether. There is not perhaps a single year in England which does not see some section of protestant opinion repudiate its own starting point and anathematize its own first principles, and so either lose its hold on earnest minds, or drop with indifferent minds into the growing gulf of simple weary unbelief. An Englishman should be the last person in the world to deem the Church was triumphing because heresy is extinct.

Neither again is she triumphing because she has outlived so many foes who at one time seemed to be actual conquerors: though this phenomenon must be a daily subject for her devout thanksgiving and renewed confidence in God. The turbid flood of protestantism, daily subsiding and leaving waste tracks of dismal mud behind, never covered the earth so dreadfully as Arianism in the early centuries; and as the one passed, so will the other. Protestant prophecies are coming untrue, and making their rash authors a laughing-stock year after year. Date after date of the infallible destruction of the Papacy passes on with the harmless course of the four grateful seasons, and the calendar of heretical prophecy is left disdainfully, cruelly unfulfilled; and they will figure in the half antiquarian novels of our posterity as the vagaries of the Rosicrucians, and the sabbaths of the Lancashire witches do in ours, emblems and monuments of the undignified weaknesses of the human mind. Still souls are lost meanwhile, and the Christian's eye is fixed far more on that lamentable fact than on the successive extinction of her foes, which it is as natural and common-place a thing for her to expect as that the sun shall rise, or the harvest, plentiful or scarce, shall come in its appointed season.

Neither does she triumph because the Blessed Sacrament is to her a foretaste of the joys of heaven and of its eternal satisfactions. Men do not triumph in anticipations, and the feast of victory must be something more than the pleasant ardor of desire. Nay, truly, if I shall not seem to be uttering a conceit, I will say that this one day is the only day in the year in which she does not seem to think of heaven; rather, she acts as if it had come to her, and she needed not to go to it. And this brings me at once to the real cause of her spiritual triumph. It is because she has Jesus Himself with her, the Living God, in the Blessed Sacrament. It is no commemoration of Him; it is Himself. It is no part of the mystery of the Incarnation; it is the whole mystery, and the Incarnate One Himself. It is not simply a means of grace; it is the Divine Fountain of Grace Himself. It is not merely a help to glory; it is the glorified Redeemer Himself, the owner and the source of all glory. The Blessed Sacrament is God in His mysterious, miraculous veils. It is this real presence of God which makes Catholicism a religion quite distinct from any of the so-called forms of Christianity. It is this possession of her God which is of necessity the lifelong triumph of the Church. Nothing short of this could be a real or sufficient triumph to the Bride of Christ.

IV

I said before that the Blessed Sacrament was the triumph of the Church over the world, of spirit over matter, of grace over nature, of faith over sight. Now I will say more. The Blessed Sacrament is everything to us. If we wish to be all for Jesus, there is our way, there is Himself. If we desire to see how Jesus is all for us, or which is another thing, how He is all in all to us, the Blessed Sacrament is at once that double revelation. All the doctrines of the Church, creation, incarnation, grace, sacraments, run up into the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, and are magnificently developed there. All the art and ceremonial, the liturgical wisdom and the rubrical majesty of the Church are grouped around the Blessed Sacrament. All devotions are united and satisfied in this one. All mysteries gravitate to this, touch upon it and are crowned by it. Nowhere are the marvelous perfections of the Invisible God so copied to the life and displayed to His creatures. All the mysteries of the Incarnation are gathered into one in the Blessed Sacrament. All the lives and actions of Jesus are found therein. All the other sacraments subserviently minister to this, and it is the one only Sacrament which Jesus Himself received. It does His work better than anything else does, and answers as nothing else does all the ends He had in view. With the Body and the Blood and the Soul of Jesus it brings with it His Divine Person, and the Persons of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, in a way so real and sublime as to be beyond expression, but which we signify by the theological word “concomitance,” as if the Holy Trinity came in the train of our Savior’s Body, as its equipage and company. It is the greatest work of God, and the sabbath of all His works; for therein the Creator’s love and power and wisdom find their rest. The Church can never triumph except in what crowns, completes, and satisfies the vast nature of an immortal soul; but was ever triumph like to this? It is the triumph of Creation, the triumph of Redemption, the triumph of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the triumph of the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

What I have to do is to prove all this, not in a controversial way, but by the authority of the Church, to loving souls. O what unfathomable sweetness there is in Jesus! Everything that leads to Him, that stands in sight of Him, that in any way belongs to Him, or after the most indirect fashion can be coupled with Him, how sweet it is, how soul-soothing and soul-satisfying, even though it be not Himself! Earth has nothing like to it, and withers away and gives out no scent when it comes near it. The very odor of His Name is as ointment poured forth. The very sign of His Cross is stronger than hell. The very fringe of His garment can undo curses. Formalities become all life and spirit, if they so much as catch His eye, or point a finger at Him. What then must those things be which are near and dear to Him, on which the golden light of His love and choice is ever resting like a diadem, His blessed Mother, His foster-father, His great precursor, His glorious apostles, the little Innocents that died instead of Him? Has the world a love or a devotion which is enough for the least of these things? What a world of heavenly beauty there is all around Jesus; and simple souls, how happy, how intensely happy they are made by it! But when we get beyond this, when we press through the rings of saints and angels and apostles, through the calm majesty and divine magnificence of that vast city of God, which is none other than Mary herself, when we reach the very Jesus, what can we do but weep for sheer excess of joy at the height and depth and length and breadth of His incomparable sweetness; and what is this but the Blessed Sacrament itself? Ah! then the Blessed Sacrament is not one thing out of many; but it is all things, and all in one, and all better than they are in themselves, and all ours and for us, and—it is Jesus!

How sweetly beneath the shadow of this overwhelming mystery may the soul grow in the grace of humility! It is a humbling thing to feel how much we might have done for God that we have not done, how many opportunities have been wasted, how many graces not corresponded to, how poor and languid and ungenerous has all been that we have actually had the heart to do. It is humbling also to feel how little we have done for God in return for the greatness of what He has done for us, and how little we can do for Him at the best, even if we were saints, considering His Majesty and our

nothingness; and it is painfully humbling to think how much we have positively done against Him by deliberate preference of ourselves to Him. But it seems to me that humility grows far more rapidly and blossoms more abundantly in the mere thought of the immensity of God's love of us, and the unintelligible prodigality of His fatherly affection for us, where there is no thought of self at all, even in the way of merited self-reproach. This vision, for it is nothing but a beautiful celestial vision, overshadows our souls. The fires of our selfish passions go out in it. The glare of the world comes softened through it. There is nothing to distract us in the absorbing simplicity of this one sight which we are beholding. There is nothing to awaken self-love and to aim it against the nobler or better thoughts of self-forgetfulness. Humility is never more intense than when it is thus simply overwhelmed by love; and never can our souls be more completely overwhelmed by love than when they rest, silent and wonder-stricken, beneath the shadow of the Blessed Sacrament.

V

This leads me to one more remark on the spirit of triumph, which I have said the Blessed Sacrament produces in our souls; and that concerns the relation between this feeling of triumph and the spiritual life.

Almost all the provinces of the spiritual life are pervaded by what, for want of a better word, I must call a holy discouragement. The word is stronger than I like and stronger than my meaning, but I do not know of any other. We are something more than dissatisfied, something less than disheartened. When we look at ourselves, at our defeats, nay, even, our victories, we cannot help but be depressed. If we consider the multitude and weight and ubiquity of our temptations, the scene is little less disheartening, especially when we add the consideration of our invisible spiritual foes. So also the world, and its effect upon us and power over us, are all discouraging facts of our Christian warfare. Indeed in all things our very safety consists in being afraid, in a sense of inferiority, in a conviction that we are no match either for our own poor selves or for evils from without. Yet for all this we must be joyous, gay, confident, secure; and as there are no fountains for these things either in self or circumstances, we can only find them in our faith; and our faith, as the apostle tells us, is our victory over the world. We must have some cause for triumph, something to supply us with boldness and with more than hope, something to buoy us up and to make our hearts strong within us, and our steps firm, and our eye up-raised and keen, and our hand quick and unfaltering. We must have "songs in the house of our pilgrimage;" and those songs can only be "the justifications" of God. And the crown of all these is the Blessed Sacrament.

We must have something in our spiritual life to answer to the causes of joy and energy and trustfulness and support with which the world sustains her votaries. We must have something to supply for all those motives of action which we consciously abandon when we enter upon a spiritual life. Otherwise we shall become cowardly, languid, and mean-spirited. This is more especially true if we are aiming at anything like perfection. St. Theresa used to say that, if humility was to be considered the first grace for ordinary souls, we must consider that for souls aiming at perfection, courage is of more account at starting even than humility. And all this we find in the perpetual spirit of triumph with which faith supplies us. If it is unworldliness that we need, where shall we find it more completely than in that faith which is our triumph over the world? If self-forgetfulness, where shall we attain it so soon as beneath the shadow of faith's tremendous mysteries? If consolation, when the world and self and sin all press upon us, where does it spring so abundantly as in the continual inward triumph of a believing mind? The love of the Blessed Sacrament is the grand and royal devotion of faith; it is faith multiplied, faith intensified, faith glorified, and yet remaining faith still, while it is glory also. And out of it there come three especial graces which are the very life and soul of an interior life, an overflowing charity to all around us, a thirst to sacrifice ourselves for God, and a generous filial love of Holy Church. The very

joyousness of having Jesus with us, of being in actual and delighted possession of Him, renders us full of love to others. Happy ourselves, and with a happiness so exquisite and abounding, we are anxious to make others happy also. To be full of love is in itself a pain, if we have no vent by which we can pour out our fullness over others. To our ignorance something of this sort seems the reason why God created the world, in order to communicate His own perfections to His creatures. Moreover, we want our love to touch Jesus Himself and to do Him good. We wish to satisfy our own love by showing our love to Him, in the ways which He Himself has ordained and honors with His acceptance. And all this points to the poor, the desolate, the afflicted, whom He has put in His own room since He ascended into Heaven. On days of joy and in moments of triumphant festivity, then it is that the skilful fathers of the poor know how to lay sweet siege to the hearts of men, and with gentle craft to win their wealth from them for the little ones of Christ; and none are such generous givers, whether it be to the adornment of the material shrines of God, or to those more beautiful living temples, the poor and sorrowing, as those who are distinguished by an especial devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Charity is the choicest as well as the most exuberant emanation from the Adorable Host.

Again, in order to be spiritual, we need a thirst to sacrifice ourselves for God and Jesus Christ. Self-sacrifice is of the very essence of holiness. Love is impatient of secrecy, at least of being concealed from its object. It longs to testify itself, and the stronger and purer it is, the more does it desire to testify itself in different and heroic ways. Nay, love needs self-sacrifice as an evidence to itself of its own earnestness and intensity. How little have we given up for our dearest Lord, and how we burn to sacrifice ourselves in some way for Him. There are times when we seem to desire nothing in life but to suffer for the sake of Jesus, times when pain and sacrifice appear, not desirable only, but absolute necessities, so vehemently does love work within us. There are saints with whom these moods are almost habitual, following far off, for the sake of Jesus and by His grace, that unbroken renunciation of self which was the characteristic of His Thirty-three Years. Now devotion to the Blessed Sacrament has a special power to communicate this divine spirit. The Eucharist is a sacrifice, as well as a sacrament: no wonder the spirit of sacrifice goes out from it, and is contagious among loving souls. But it is not out of the meekness and sweetness and gentleness and bashful humility of love that this ardent desire of sacrifice arises; but out of love's boldness, its victory, its warlike prowess, its sense of triumph. Once more; the spiritual life requires also a generous filial love of Holy Church. People in these days often try to draw a distinction between what is spiritual and what is ecclesiastical in the Christian religion; and obviously for many purposes, and from many partial points of view, such a distinction is very capable of being drawn. But the two cannot be separated the one from the other; they lie together practically inseparable. Hence there is no interior or mystic life, not even in the cloister, which is not distinguished by a vivid interest in the vicissitudes of the Church, an inveterate attachment to her external and ceremonial observances, and quite a supernatural sympathy with the fortunes of the Holy See. Love of God and love of Rome are inseparable. To obey Peter is the same thing as to serve Jesus. Now the triumph of Corpus Christi is especially a triumph of our loyalty to Holy Church. The very thing I started by remarking brings it home to us. Here is this poor land of heresy and schism dark and desolate today. It has no response to the mighty acclamations of the catholic millions of other lands. It sees nothing in today but a common unhonored week-day. So through the fair realms desolated by the Greek Schism there is the same lifeless silence. It is a Catholic feast, a monument of Rome. The very word triumph seems to express something more than an individual joy. It is a patriotic thing, a national exultation; and dear, most dear, as our native country is to us, the Church is a dearer and a truer country still, for it is more like that heavenly country for which we are sighing, and out of which we are exiles at the best. We of all men need triumph; for we are cowed all the year round by the dominance of heresy. It tarnishes our faith. It chills our love. It checks us, and galls us, and unmans us, at almost every turn of our spiritual life. No one comes quite unscathed out of the trial; least of all, those who think they do, and have no fear. O we need the triumph of today, the feast of our loyalty and patriotism to the most ancient, the most godlike of all monarchies, the Holy Apostolic Roman Church.

But see how long I am keeping you as it were outside our subject and in the vestibule of this glorious temple of Catholic doctrine. It is half because I fear to begin, because I am afraid of myself and my subject, because I almost wish I had not begun. Look now with the eye of faith at the Blessed Sacrament, and remember simply what our catechism teaches us about it. Is it not a magnificent thing to be a Catholic? Faith is such a glorious gift. Think how it makes over to us, as if they were, and they truly are, our own hereditary possessions, all the grandeurs of the universal Church, the famous Church, the martyr Church, the Church that is never old, but ever has a perpetual freshness like the Holy Trinity, ever virgin as Mary herself, ever wet with blood as the martyrs were, ever teaching like the apostles and doctors, ever witnessing like the confessors, ever suffering innocently like the Holy Innocents themselves, and sending up a perpetual song of victory even out of the fires of persecution. O how we ought to bless God, now that we know Jesus, that we were not born in the poor times of the patriarchs and prophets before the Blessed Sacrament! Ah! how they desired to see our day and saw it not! Nay, we even seem privileged in our day beyond elder Christian times; for the longer the Church battles with the world the more venerable she seems to become, and her victories of grace more brilliant, and the heavenliness of her ways more wonderful. Time “writes no wrinkles on her brow,” but adds line after line of glory and of freshness. She seems, because we know her better, to grow more beautiful, more powerful, more bright of face, more sweet of voice, more strong in arm, more motherlike in manner. Dear Church! today is her great day, the Feast of Holy Faith!