



A  
DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JAMES VINCENT CLEARY, S. T. D.

BISHOP OF KINGSTON

ON THE

INDULGENCES AND MASSES FOR THE DEAD

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Decreed by His Holiness Pope LEO XIII, for Sunday,  
30th September 1888.

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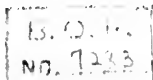
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# JAMES VINCENT CLEARY, S.T.D.

BY THE

GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE,  
BISHOP OF KINGSTON.

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*To the Reverend Clergy, Religious Communities and  
faithful Laity of the Diocese.*

By an Encyclical Letter, dated Easter Sunday, 1888, Our Holy Father, Pope LEO XIII, has decreed that Sunday, 30th of next September, shall be a day of solemn and universal commemoration of the Souls in Purgatory.

1. The Pope will celebrate Mass on that day for the souls of the faithful departed; and he enjoins on all Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops to do likewise in their Cathedral Churches, observing the rite prescribed in the missal for All Souls' Day, and surrounding the Mass with fullest solemnity.

2. His Holiness wishes the same to be done by all priests in their respective churches: and to all who shall celebrate Mass for the dead on that Sunday he grants the indulgence of the Privileged Altar

3. The Holy Father earnestly exhorts the laity to receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed

Eucharist devoutly in suffrage for the dead ; and to all who comply with this condition, he gives, by Apostolic authority, a Plenary Indulgence for those suffering souls.

The Holy Catholic Church is declared in the 9th article of the Apostles' Creed to be the " Communion of Saints." This is a sweet and most consoling doctrine of our holy religion. By it we who pursue our pilgrimage through the desert of this sinful and weary world, contending with the passions of corrupt nature, the evil influences of manifold vicious example, and the snares and assaults of the devil, are united in charity and active sympathy with " the spirits of the just made perfect " (Heb. xii), among whom are many of our own dear relatives and friends. We rejoice with them for their having attained the " unfading crown of glory ;" whilst they, from their high place in heaven, look down encouragingly upon us and, as a " great cloud of witnesses over us " (Heb. xii, 1), watch with eagerness our successes and failures amid the trials of life, interceding for us all the while before the throne of grace. On the other hand, we are moved with compassion for those unglorified spirits, who, though they passed away from this earthly scene in the charity of God, are still indebted to His justice for venial faults unabsolved or penance unfulfilled, and consequently are detained in that prison beyond the portals of death, of which the Saviour said with solemn adjuration, " Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing " (Matt. v, 26). It is the Church Militant, the Church Triumphant and the Church Suffering ; all three constituting by unity of life in the mystic body of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic Church, considered in relation to the warfare of her children in the flesh, the glories of her victorious heroes in heaven, and the purgatorial pains through which many of her faithful warriors are passing, who fell beside the standard of

the Cross, breathing loyalty to God and His Church in their death-struggle, but are not yet sufficiently purified for admission to the Holy of Holies, of which it is written, "There shall not enter into it anything defiled." (Apoc. XII, 27.)

#### THE SAVIOUR'S COMPASSION FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

When Our Blessed Lord had consummated the work of Redemption in the last agonies of His crucifixion, whereby He made atonement superabundantly to His Father for the "sins, offences and negligences" of all men, both the living and the dead, His first thoughts were directed towards the suffering souls in Purgatory. To them He hastened instantly to announce the accomplishment of long-expected Redemption and impart to them, as the Fathers and Doctors of the Church teach us, the first-fruits of His purchased grace by a Plenary Indulgence, with a promise of participation in His triumph, when He would "lead captivity captive" (Eph. iv, 8), on the day of His Ascension into the glory of the heavens. So it had been predicted by the prophet Zachary, apostrophizing the Messiah many ages before: "Thou also, by the Blood of thy Testament, wilt send forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zach. ix, 11). His dead body was hanging yet warm upon the cross, when His human soul, subsisting indissolubly in the Divine Person, "descended into hell," the abode of the dead, declared by St. Paul to be in "the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. iv, 9). "He came," says St. Peter, "and preached to those spirits who were in prison; who in times past had been incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe" (1 Pet, III). What an awful idea of the rigours of divine justice and of the grave penalties that wait upon sin, even after

the remission of its mortal guilt, is here suggested to Christian minds by this brief sentence of the Prince of the Apostles! Those myriad spirits, throughout their life-time upon earth, had sinned freely by indulgence in the evil practices of an evil age. They "had been incredulous," the Scripture says, insomuch as they had refused credence to Noe's denunciations of the vengeance of heaven, on pretence that God was too merciful to inflict the terrible punishment of universal destruction upon the human race. But, being true believers in the faith and hopes of the Patriarchs, many of them turned their hearts penitently to God and cried for mercy in the name of the promised Messiah when they saw themselves perishing between the unlocked "fountains of the great deep and the cataracts of heaven." Their cry of contrition reached the ears of the God of mercy, and they were saved from eternal damnation. Nevertheless, when the Redeemer visited them on that First Good Friday, two thousand and four hundred years after their death, they were still prisoners of justice. For, although the mortal guilt of their criminal excesses had been expiated by their penitential agony in the waters of the Deluge, and the corresponding debt of eternal chastisement had been forgiven, they had not "filled up the things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ in their flesh" (Col. 1, 24), by voluntary personal atonement in union with that of the Saviour. Hence their penance was incomplete; and the satisfaction they had failed to make to God on earth was exacted from them in the other life by those long ages of incarceration in the dark caverns of the subterranean "prison," — "the pit wherein is no water." But now the day of redemption had come for them: "For this cause was the Gospel preached to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but may live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter iv, 6v). The Gospel, or glad

tidings, preached by the Lord Jesus in Purgatory to those who had been condemned and punished before men in the flesh, but had repented of their sins at the hour of death, was the grace of full pardon and admission to the liberty and tranquil repose of the blessed, who were to ascend with the triumphant Saviour into heaven, to "live according to God in the spirit," for an endless eternity. Let us imitate the charity of Christ by daily remembrance of the poor prisoners of Purgatory in our prayers and masses, that we may have a share in the work of hastening the day of their liberation. Let us strive, by doing frequent acts of piety and charity in their name, and by gaining the Church's Indulgences as copiously as possible in their favour, to mitigate the chastisement that presses upon them, and which it may be our own lot to undergo when we shall have departed this life.

#### GOD'S JUSTICE IS MOST RIGOROUS.

Let no Christian make light of the rigour of divine justice in demanding personal satisfaction from sinners, even from the absolved, either in this life or in the next. The sanctity of God is too holy, the majesty of God is too exalted, the omnipotence of God is too mighty and His judgments are too just, to allow the released criminal to hold himself free of all debt of reparation for his grievous offences. King David repented of his sins and confessed them to the prophet Nathan, and received an absolute assurance in God's name that they were from that moment and forever forgiven. But in the very sentence of pardon a grave temporal punishment was reserved against him: "The sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me; the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (II Kings XII). Therefore, did this penitent and pardoned



king spend all the remaining days of his life in compunction of heart : he "did eat ashes like bread, and mingled his drink with weeping," and he cried to God continually, "If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand it?" "Wash me yet more and more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. CI, CXXIX, L.) Commenting on which example, St. Augustine gives this admonition to all Christians : — "Implore mercy, but lose not sight of justice. In His mercy God pardons sin ; He punishes it in His justice. What? dost thou seek for mercy, and shall sin remain unpunished? Let David, let other sinners answer : let them answer with David and say : "Lord, my sin shall not remain unpunished ; but that Thou mayest not punish it, I myself will'" (In Psalm L.)

Men may contrive to forget their sinful past, relying over-much on the rectitude of their renewed life. But it is written "there are just men, and wise men, and their works are in the hand of God : and yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred." (Ecli. ix, 1). The attribute of justice in God is comprehended in all its relations by Himself alone. The examples above cited, and others recorded in Holy Writ, terrible though they are, give us but an inadequate idea of it. Let us, therefore, "in fear and trembling work out our salvation" (Phil. II), that whensoever death shall seize us (and it may come unexpectedly) we may be prepared to meet the Sovereign Judge, who, "will judge justices" and "search the reins and hearts" of men ; and who has announced beforehand the extreme severity of His scrutiny into our lives : "I say to you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the Day of Judgment" (Ps. LXXIV ; Apoc. II, 23 ; Matt. XII, 36). An idle word, a petty vanity, a passing emotion

of impatience, may appear to some minds undeserving of chastisement ; but in reference to these and like venial faults, which St. Paul compares to "wood, hay and stubble" mixed with "gold, silver and precious stones" in the building up of our lives, he declares the Christian, in whose life-work such unsolid, worthless matter shall be found at the tribunal of God, must pass through fire in order to be saved : "The day of the Lord shall be revealed in fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss ; but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. III). Oh ! How few they are who shall pass unscathed through this ordeal of fire !

#### THE POWER OF THE CHURCH TO GRANT INDULGENCES.

The spirits visited by Christ in prison were but a type of the many millions of believers who die in every age without having fully satisfied God's justice for their sins by works of penance. The Saviour compassionates them all. But He has gone, body and soul, to heaven, to enjoy His eternal triumph at the right hand of His Father, and has left the administration of His Church and the agencies of salvation unto men in the hands of His representatives on earth. The power to exercise clemency towards penitent sinners in the flesh and the suffering saints in Purgatory by means of Indulgence, or remission of their debt of temporary punishment, is one of those manifold spiritual agencies intrusted by Our Divine Lord to the Bishops of His Church, more particularly to St. Peter and his successors. Every prerogative of the Man-God, as head and ruler of His kingdom on this earth, is vested in the Apostolic hierarchy, to whom he delivered the supreme and unlimited commission, "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever ye shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven:

and whatsoever ye shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xvi). "As the Father hath send me, I also send you" (John, xx, 21). "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore . . . . . Behold I am with you all days." (Matt. xxiii.) All whatsoever "binds" the souls of men, and prevents their entrance into heaven, is consequently in the power of the hierarchy to "loose" by virtue of the plenitude of Christ's spiritual authority communicated to them. They may therefore remit, wholly or in part, the spiritual debts of the living, and may effect the release of souls from Purgatory by application of the superabundant and inexhaustible merits and satisfactions of Jesus Christ, our sole Atoner, and of His Blessed Mother and the martyrs and confessors, whose superabounding patience and charity derived all their merit and satisfactive value from His grace.

A striking example of the exercise of the power to grant Indulgences is recorded in Holy Writ. St. Paul "in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ" inflicted grave punishment on a certain incestuous man in Corinth. The punishment was medicinal, that the man's "spirit may be saved in the day of Our Lord Jesus Christ." It was not merely an ecclesiastical penalty, directed to the preservation of external discipline; it was to have its effect in the sight of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and was to weigh favorably in the balance for the sinner's account on the day of judgment, as the text declares. It was therefore a truly satisfactive penance imposed by ecclesiastical authority for reparation to God. Before the completion of the prescribed term of chastisement, the Apostle, having heard of the man's sincere and heartfelt contrition, remitted to him what remained of the imposed penalty, thus tempering justice with clemency; and this he did, as he says, "in the person

of Christ." The abridgment of the measure of satisfaction for sin was therefore valid in the sight of Christ, and must have been no less available to the penitent sinner for his soul's welfare than would have been the fulfilment of the remainder of the prescribed course of penance, whereby his "spirit would be saved in the day of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. c. v, II Cor. c. II). This was exactly an Indulgence, that is a relaxation of the penance ordered by the Church to be performed in satisfaction of God's justice. It pre-supposes the sinner's true conversion to God, followed by self-chastisement in some degree, by way of personal atonement for guilty deeds. It is granted "in the person of Christ," by those whom He has invested with the power of "binding" and "loosing" the shackles of the soul, and in whom it resides as a permanent and ordinary hierarchical prerogative, which St. Paul allowed to belong also to those who ruled the Church in Corinth, and the Bishops in every age have regarded as an inherent right of their office.

It is in a special degree the prerogative of the Pope, the Vicar of Christ. For to him, in the person of blessed Peter, was given singularly, and apart from all others, the supreme commission to bind and loose all spiritual bonds, in the self-same form of words in which it was given to the whole Apostolic College with Peter at their head (Matt. xvi). It belongs to the hierarchy with Peter: it belongs to Peter preeminently. To emphasize more distinctly the individual sovereignty of St. Peter and his successors in the exercise of this prerogative, Our Lord was pleased to bestow it on Simon Peter by the significant symbol of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, delivered to him solely and exclusively. "*Thou* art Peter," said He to Simon in presence of the other Apostles; "I will give to *thee* the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatsoever

*thou shalt bind,*" etc. Thus the power to dispense indulgences, and all whatsoever else of jurisdiction, authority, or prerogative belongs to the corporate hierarchy, belong singularly and preeminently to him who for the time being is Christ's Vicar, that is, to Peter or his legitimate successor in the chair of supreme government.

In the fulness of compassionate charity for those dear children of the Church who died the death of the just, but are undergoing painful purgation preparatory to their entrance into eternal rest, Our Holy Father, the Pope, has decreed to use this unlimited power of the "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" and unlock the treasury of spiritual graces in their behalf. The year of his sacerdotal Jubilee has not yet expired. In every nation under the sun there has been rejoicing among the faithful; solemn acts of homage have been rendered in all tongues to the common father of all; and exquisite gifts, exceeding in value thirty millions of dollars, have been laid at his feet by pilgrims from the various nationalities. In return he has dispensed paternal blessings lavishly, and prayed fervently for his children at the altar, and has bestowed Plenary Indulgence and manifold favors on the faithful everywhere. The blessed citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem beyond the skies have been made participants in the festivities of his golden Jubilee by those surpassingly grand and majestic rites of canonization and beatification in St. Peter's Roman Basilica, whereby ten Christian heroes were duly awarded the honors proper to God's saints in the public worship of the Church, and others were declared "Blessed" before God and men, and entitled to public religious honours, by reason of the transcendent virtues and heavenly favors illustrated in their lives. And now, to crown the work of Jubilee celebration and give the sphere of festivity its fullest Catholic

extension, Pope Leo XIII has ordained that Sunday, 30th inst., shall be a universal holiday on Earth, in Purgatory and in Heaven. On that day the Church Militant shall gather around her altars in every diocese and every parish all over the globe, and offer the "clean oblation" of the Lamb of God in suffrage for the souls of the faithful departed: the Church Suffering shall be visited by angels from before the throne of the Most High bearing the glad message of amnesty and immediate deliverance from captivity, in response to the supplications sent up from the earth: and the Church Triumphant shall exult and rejoice at the sight of millions of their exiled brethren received up into the new Jerusalem with songs of jubilation, and conducted by their Angels Guardian to the throne of the Great King, to receive the crown of everlasting glory and be the companions of their bliss for ever and ever. It will indeed be a day of Jubilee. Let us prepare to celebrate it worthily and with profit to as many as possible of the suffering souls by devout reception of the Sacraments, in fulfilment of the conditions requisite for gaining the Plenary Indulgence in their favor.

#### INDULGENCES FOR THE DEAD.

An indulgence granted to the *living* is an act of jurisdiction, whereby the penitent sinner is absolved from the debt of temporary punishment lying against him in God's account, the merits and satisfactions of Christ being offered to God by the Church in lieu of the personal satisfactions thus remitted to the sinner. Being a juridical absolution, its effect is always assured, unless the penitent be indisposed for such grace by attachment to sin. The souls of the faithful departed, although they are members of the Church, bound to her in charity by the communion of saints, are outside

the sphere of her jurisdiction. They are "in the hands of God" (Wisdom III), for execution of the sentence, all-just and all-holy, pronounced upon them at the particular judgment in the moment of death; and consequently are not subject directly to the "binding and loosing" authority of the Church's tribunals for plenary or partial remission of their sentence. But though she cannot impart Indulgences to the dead, as to the living, by a judicial sentence of *absolution*, she can effectually relieve them through her interposition with God in their favor by way of *suffrage*, or impetration. Our prayers, fasts, alms-deeds, the oblation of holy mass and other pious works, when offered to God in satisfaction for their venial faults or unperformed penances, are so many forms of suffrage for the dead, and are declared by the Church to be, in general, salutary to them. So also Indulgences are applicable in their favor, as *suffrages*, according to the traditional teaching and practice of the Catholic Church. They are, however, applied to the dead indirectly only, that is, through the living, who, being in the state of grace, fulfil the prescribed works of piety and other requisite conditions for gaining the promised indulgence, and offer this to God, by way of suffrage, for the souls of the deceased holy ones. An indulgence, applied thus to the souls in Purgatory, differs in two important respects from the private suffrages of the faithful in their behalf. First, it is a formal petition of Holy Church herself to God for mercy to those individual souls whom she recommends to the divine favor through our special intentions; and we are confident that her pleadings for her suffering children will always find acceptance at the throne of mercy. Second, her indulgences are not merely prayers and pleadings for them, but are, moreover, her rightful and authorized offering of the superabundant satisfactions of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, in solution of the debt lying

against the suffering souls. For this purpose she employs the keys of the spiritual treasury delivered to her by our Divine Lord, and acts with divine authority in distributing its riches according to her discretion. God, who bestowed this power upon her, will not despise her suffrage presented to Him in this form. When she grants her indulgences in connection with the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we must regard them as the surest of all forms of suffrage for the relief of the faithful departed, not only in general, but in regard of the individual souls to whom she allows us to apply them by our special intentions.

SACRIFICE IS ESSENTIAL TO TRUE RELIGION IN THE PRESENT  
AS IN ALL AGES.

Sacrifice is "the first and most necessary act of religion," as we are taught in our Catechism. From the beginning of the world it has been practised. Even among the scattered races, who gradually forgot the true God and his primitive revelation in regard of most other truths, the Patriarchal tradition concerning sacrifice, as a divinely ordained means of appeasing God's anger and propitiating His mercy, was preserved generally, although mixed up with various national and racial superstitions. The People of God in every Dispensation, from Abel to Noe, from Noe to Abraham, from Abraham to Aaron and from Aaron to Christ, offered their sacrifices through faith in the promised Redeemer. It was only as types and figures foreshadowing the future sacrifice of the Messiah, and in virtue solely of His merits and power with God in heaven, that those multiform typical sacrifices possessed their propitiatory efficacy. To correct the contrary error, which in later times possessed the Jewish vulgar mind, St. Paul put forth this fundamental dogma. "It is impossible that



with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away" (Heb. xxxi). Obviously there is no natural relation between the spilling of animal blood and the spiritual effect of purgation of the soul from the stain of sin. Wherefore the annual sacrifice of expiation offered by the High Priest of the Old Law in the temple of Jerusalem, and the other sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus for the remission of sin; likewise the sacrifices of the blessed Patriarchs of the Hebrew race, and of Job and Melchisedech and other faithful priests among the Gentiles, availed to insure divine mercy towards sinners, not by any intrinsic virtue of their own, but solely through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, whose immolation of himself on Mt. Calvary was prefigured and accepted in faith by means of those divers sacrifices. Of this also did St. Paul deem it necessary to remind the Jews of his day in these words: "Christ is the mediator of the New Testament; that by means of His death, for the Redemption of those transgressions which were under the *Former Testament*, they who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. ix, 15). Whence Jesus Christ is represented in the Apocalypse (xiii. 8) "as the Lamb which was slain (typically) from the beginning of the world."

Sacrifice is as necessary in the nineteenth century as in any former age for the application of the merits of Calvary to men's souls. The belief in the Messiah's universal atonement did not suffice unto salvation for men throughout the four thousand years that preceded that great central event of the history of God's dealings with the human race. Sacrifice and Sacraments were needed to bring the Blood of the Saviour's wounds to individual souls for their healing in faith. God so ordained, and men so believed and practised. The same rule holds good for mankind in the ages posterior to the consummation of the central sacrifice of atonement, common to

the past and the future. Without individual application through channels prescribed by faith, the soul-saving merits of Christ's passion would be now, as formerly, of no avail to men in the ordinary course of God's Providence. The blood of Redemption would be a sealed fountain, a locked treasure. The Gospel would be a noble poem, rich in wisdom and sweet lessons of charity, but fruitless of grace unto salvation for us.

It is a primary dogma of Catholic belief that the bloody sacrifice offered by the Man-God, the true "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world (John 1, 21), is the one and sole and all-sufficient source of grace for mankind in every generation, past, present and future. "By one oblation he had perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x, 14). We want no other sacrifice of atonement. We can have no other redeemer. "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12). His blood is the full and perennial fountain of grace and mercy that flowed down from Calvary's heights on true believers, Jew and Gentile, in the pre-Christian era of the world's existence, through divers channels, but chiefly through the channel of sacrifice offered in faith. Similarly in the Christian Dispensation, wherein the typical ordinances of the Old Law must be verified in the fulness of reality the same blood of Calvary shall flow down, and shall continue forever to flow, upon the souls of men, and shall be applied to individuals through faith illuminating their minds and directing them to the proper channels ordained by the Saviour Himself for distribution of His graces according to each one's requirements. It shall flow more copiously; and its conduits shall be more readily discernible, and more easy of access, and more simple in character, and more sure and effective in agency than under the former Testament—"When the way into the sanctuary was not yet made manifest" (Heb. ix, 8). Through

the seven sacraments of the New Law, the whole order of Christian life shall be sanctified, from the cradle to the grave, by agencies so elementary and so practically effective, that none shall fail to derive the requisite measure of grace from them, except those who wilfully and of their own malice place obstacles in the way of their salutary operation. And the mystic sacrifice of the new and eternal Testament, wherein all the purpose and virtue of the various sacrifices of former dispensations shall be concentrated, as types in their prototype, and shadows in their substance, shall so abundantly communicate the lifegiving streams of grace from Calvary to "every tribe and tongue and people and nation," to every continent of the main land and every island of the sea, to every village and hill-side, that the waters of salvation shall be plentiful in every corner of the earth; and propitiation and mercy from heaven shall be nearer to the humblest Christian in his home, even at the uttermost bounds of the world, than it was to the worshippers in the temple of Jerusalem, and the High Priest within the Holy of Holies on the annual feast of expiatory sacrifice. For this is the prophecy and the promise uttered by God — "from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 10).

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IS PROPITIATORY FOR THE  
DEAD AS WELL AS THE LIVING.

Sacrifice for the dead was acceptable to God under the ancient Dispensations. The testimony of Sacred Scripture is most explicit on this subject. It is related (II Macch. XII) in terms of praise that Judas, the brave

commander of the army of Israel, "made a collection and sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice, to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he had not hoped that they who were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." Were the writer of this passage to be regarded merely as an historical witness of the great public event here recorded, his testimony would be conclusive of the common belief of the Hebrew people in his time, respecting the efficacy of sacrifices offered in the temple of Jerusalem for the souls of the faithful departed. And this belief must have been derived from the teaching and practice of their forefathers, even in the ages antecedent to the Mosaic Law. The introduction in any later age of sacrifices ordained to any end, such as the relief of departed souls, for which there is no prescription in Leviticus, would have been met by the ready opposition of the Prophets and of all true Israelites, not to mention the Scribes and Pharisees, who boasted of more than ordinary zeal for Moses and the Law. Therefore, the oblation of sacrifice for the dead among the Jews historically implies the existence and authentic sanction of such religious usage in the patriarchal times, from which many other truths of faith and practices of piety, unrecorded by Moses and uncondemned by the Prophets, passed down likewise through the successive generations of the people of God. Now, however the narrator of this solemn public profession of Israel's belief in the efficacy of sacrifice for the dead, is the Holy Ghost Himself, the author of all Scripture. It is He who has written His approval of the action of Judas Macchabeus and his army, and of the faith and hope that prompted it; and His divine words shall be remembered and lovingly repeated by true believers to

the end of time—"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins."

If this spiritual efficacy belonged to sacrifices that have been abolished because of their imperfection, much more does it belong to the sacrifice of the "better Testament," offered daily by the Eternal Priest according to the order of Melchisedech, through his Vicarious priests, appointed to use His Name and His power at His holy Altar. To this end you, dear Reverend Fathers, have been made partakers of Christ's priesthood through the Sacramental words addressed to each of you at your ordination by the officiating Bishop on delivery of the sacred vessels into your hands, with the sacrificial elements of bread and wine, "Receive the power to offer sacrifice and to celebrate masses, both for the living and for the dead, in the name of the Lord. Amen." It is the power given by Our Divine Lord to His twelve disciples, and through them to their successors forever, when, having completed the Eucharistic sacrifice after His last supper, he constituted them priests to do ministerially the self-same sacrificial work which they had just seen him do: "Do ye *this* in commemoration of me." He had offered His own Body and Blood to His Father under the species of bread and wine, in conformity with the unbloody rite of Melchisedech (Gen. xiv, 18). He had expressly declared it to be a sacrifice, a mystic immolation of Himself by Himself, wherein His true and real Body and His true and real Blood were offered to the eternal Father by two distinct acts of oblation vividly representative of His death. He moreover had declared it to be a sacrifice remissive of sin, the liquid in the chalice being, as St. Luke distinctly relates Our Lord's affirmation, the very Blood whereby the sins of men are washed away. All which momentous declarations are contained

in the words of Eucharistic institution according to the original text: — “This is *my* body which *is* given *for* you; do ye *this* in commemoration of me. This chalice is the *new* Testament in *my* blood, which (chalice) *is* poured out *for* you” (Luke XVIII.). “This chalice is the *new* Testament in *my* blood: do ye *this*, as often as you shall drink it, for the commemoration of me” (I Cor. XI). “This is my blood of the new Testament which is poured out for *many* unto *the remission of sins*” (Matt. XXVI.).

The remission of sins through the blood in the chalice is not limited by Our Lord. The promise is absolute and extends to all sin, its guilt and its punishment, wherever remission is needed. The victims offered by the Levitical priesthood were beneficial to the faithful dead; much more efficacious shall be the adorable Victim offered by the divine Priest of the New Testament to propitiate God's mercy in behalf of the suffering saints. On this subject the Holy Council of Trent defines the Catholic doctrine as follows: — “The Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the Sacred Writings and the ancient traditions of the Fathers, taught in sacred Councils that there is a Purgatory; and that the souls there detained are relieved by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar.” — “If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is not a propitiatory sacrifice, and that it ought not to be offered for the living and for the dead, for sins, penalties, satisfactions and other necessities; let him be anathema.” (Sess. XXV, XXII Canon 3).

#### SUMMARY OF APOSTOLIC TRADITION ON THIS POINT.

What the Apostles had heard from the mouth of Jesus Christ, they gave to the Church, to be preserved

by her, and devoutly practised, and transmitted to all future generations of her children. Such apostolic teachings, whether committed to paper or proclaimed by the living voice of the Church through her authorized pastors and doctors, are the word of God, of which St. Paul writes to the faithful, "Brethren, stand firm, and hold the *traditions*, which you have learned, whether by word or by our Epistle" (II Thess. 11). The dogmatic teaching of the Church determines the faith of Christians on all articles of the Creed equally, as the Saviour has ordained; and her judgments are equally infallible in the nineteenth century as in the first. At the same time our religious feeling is quickened and invigorated by the voice of antiquity ringing out clear through the centuries in consonance with Catholic belief and practice. Thus we learn that the rule of anniversary masses for deceased relatives and friends, which is religiously observed by us, was obligatory in the age immediately following that of the Apostles, as Tertullian, a renowned Christian Apologist and the oldest of the Fathers of the Latin Church, who was born about fifty years after the death of Saint John the Evangelist, testifies:—"A widow should pray for the soul of her departed husband, entreating repose for him, and making 'oblations' (Mass-offerings) for him on the anniversary day of his death; which, if she neglect, it may be truly said that she has divorced her husband" (De Monog. cap. x). Half a century later, St. Cyprian, the learned Bishop of Carthage, and glorious martyr of the faith, writes that a certain law of discipline regarding last wills had been prudently enacted by previous Bishops, for violation of which the prescribed penalty was, "that no oblation should be made for the offender, nor sacrifice offered for his repose:" and accordingly, on the death of a certain person, named *Victor*, who had contumaciously infringed this law, he (St. Cyprian) "had ordered that the name of the said Victor should not be mentioned at the altar, that no

oblation should be made for his repose, nor the customary prayers of the Church be offered in his behalf" (Ep. L). St. Ephrem, of Edessa, whose sanctity and erudition edified the Eastern world from the end of the third to near the close of the fourth century, and who was the most illustrious of all the Doctors that have adorned the Syriac Church, bears frequent witness to the same belief and practice, but most particularly in his last will, wherein he provides for the month's mind and masses for his soul: "My brethren, come to me, and prepare me for my departure, for my strength is wholly gone. Go along with me in psalms and in your prayers; and please constantly to make 'oblations' for me. When the thirtieth day shall be completed, then remember me; for the dead are helped by the offerings of the living"—If they (the Maccabees), who celebrated their feasts in figure only, could by their offerings cleanse those from guilt who fell in battle, how much more shall the priests of Christ aid the dead by their oblations and prayers?" St. Cyril of Jerusalem, writing in the middle of the fourth century, explains the passage in the Liturgy that commemorates the dead:—"Then we pray for the holy Fathers and Bishops that are dead, and, in short, for all those who have departed this life in our communion; believing that the souls of those for whom the prayers are offered receive very great relief while this holy and tremendous victim lies upon the altar" (Catech. v). Eusebius, Archbishop of Cæsaræ, known to the world of letters as the Father of Christian History, preached the funeral oration on the Emperor Constantine the Great, in the year 337, and in the following year published a biography of that Emperor. Herein he relates with what ardor "the people, together with the priests of God, offered prayers for the Emperor's soul": and how happily the deceased Emperor's most eager wish was satisfied by his being buried in the porch of the Church of the Twelve Apostles, which he had se-



lected for his resting place, "that he might deserve to enjoy the benefit of the mystical sacrifice, and the communion of devout prayers." Who more qualified than Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Philosopher, Statesman, Doctor and Saint, to attest the traditional belief and usage of the fourth century? This he does more clearly in his funeral orations on the emperors Valentinian the Second and Theodosius, and his brother Satyrus. In that delivered at the funeral of the Emperor Theodosius he says: "Lately we deplored together his death; and now, while Prince Honorius is present before our altars, we celebrate the fortieth day. Some observe the third and thirtieth days, others the seventh and fortieth. Give, O Lord, rest to thy servant Theodosius. I loved him, therefore will I follow him to the land of the living: I will not leave him, till, by my prayers and lamentations, he shall be admitted to the holy mountain of the Lord." St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople, in the fourth century, explaining the Apostolic traditions writes—"It was not without good reason *ordained by the Apostles* that mention should be made of the dead in the tremendous mysteries, because they knew well that these would receive good benefit from it." (In cap. 1 Phil.). One more testimony out of the countless number that might be adduced, shall be that of St. Augustine, whose name is the synonyme of orthodox learning and zeal in the cause of divine truth. In his *Enchiridion*, or *Manual of religion*, he writes—"Through the prayers and sacrifices of the Church and alms-deeds, God deals more mercifully with the departed than their sins deserve:" and again, "When we offer the sacrifice of the altar, or give alms for the faithful departed, they are acts of thanksgiving for those who are perfectly good; they are propitiations for those who are not very bad; and, though they are no benefit to the very bad, they are a consolation to the living." A most touching passage in his *Confessions* is that which records his mother's

dying request to him, "Remember me at the altar of God;" and this duty he says he performed "to obtain the pardon of her sins." Testimonies, such as these, abound more and more as the ages advanced and nations were added to the domain of the Church in the West. Who that reads them in sincerity of spirit, and weighs the character of the witnesses—their learning, their holiness of life, their prominent position and responsibility as Christian Apologists, Historians, Bishops and Doctors of the Church, authorized expositors of the faith to the world of belief and unbelief — can seriously doubt that they truly represent to us the faith of Christian society, as it was publicly professed in their times, and had come down to them with the unquestioned sanction of the one, two or three generations that connected them with the Apostolic age?

Our desire to treat the several cognate subjects of this Pastoral Instruction in a manner becoming their gravity and comprehensiveness, shall, We hope, excuse Us for writing at such length. Before concluding, however, We must add this remark—that all the Liturgies, or Mass-books, without exception, that have been in use from the beginning in the Eastern or Western Church, among which that of St. James, the "brother of Our Lord," has been most common in the East, contain forms of prayer for the dead in the celebration of Mass, similar to those we recite every day from the Roman Missal, as handed down to us from St. Peter. Moreover all the sects of professing Christians of Asia and Eastern Africa — the Copts, Armenians, Syrians, Æthiopians, Jacobites, &c.—and the Nestorians dwelling on the Malabar coast of India, although separated from Catholicism since the earliest times, pray for the dead in their sacrifice of the Mass, and profess to have derived this ordinance from the Apostles of Christ.

Let us stir up our faith on this most solemn and exceptional occasion presented to the Catholics of the whole world by Pope Leo XIII ; and let Bishop, priests and people unite, heart and soul, in preparation for the great act of charity towards the prisoners of Purgatory prescribed for Sunday, 30th inst. Let each Pastor hold a triduum of devotions in his church, and invite other priests to assist in hearing the confessions of the laity, that all may communicate worthily and devoutly in favor of the departed souls on that day, and thus make sure of the Plenary Indulgence decreed to each one by the Holy Father, for application to the holy dead.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Given from St. Mary's Cathedral, Kingston, this fourth day of September, in the year of Our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight.

† JAMES VINCENT CLEARY, S. T. D.,  
Bishop of Kingston.

By order of His Lordship,

THOMAS KELLY, Secretary.

