

CHAPTER 4

THE PRIEST AND THE MASS

AT the close of our last chapter we dwelt on the connection between mental prayer and the general tone of a priest's spiritual life. To one with any experience of the spiritual life, this connection soon becomes quite obvious. Without mental prayer in some form or other the spiritual life will not flourish; but, on the other hand, unless the spiritual life is healthy, mental prayer soon becomes difficult. It becomes clear, then, that mental prayer is not merely one particular exercise of the spiritual life, tucked away in its own comer of the day, for it is, in fact, both a source and a summary of our relations with God. If we are not sincere in our service of God, we cannot be sincere in our prayer, we cannot talk to him or even meet him without constraint and uneasiness. In actual fact the whole spiritual life is a unity; all our actions should, in a wide sense of the word, be a prayer, an expression of our devotion to God. Consider but one example given by our Lord's life. Entering into the world he said to the Father: 'Behold I come to do thy will.' And we know that he never ceased to do that will and to fulfil that prayer of consecration, for he was obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross. In fact, the very sacrifice of Calvary which ended our Lord's life in the eyes of the Jews was but a summing-up and a perfect expression of the whole of his life.

Now, we priests offer that very same sacrifice every time we say Mass. If we want to follow him, if we want to live a spiritual life, we must endeavour to *mean* the Mass, to be sincere in what we say when we offer sacrifice to God. And we must also endeavour to see that our day's work and actions are in harmony with our daily sacrifice. It is true that the theology of the Mass is very deep and complicated. The immensity of the sacrifice of Christ,

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