

Alter Christus

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

The Parish Priest and the Most Holy Eucharist

By Venerable Fr Joseph Frassinetti

[From the Book *The Parish Priest's Practical Manual*]

1. Of the Altar and the Sacred Vestments

The Altar on which the Sacrifice of the Cross is daily renewed ought to be an object of most profound veneration to every Christian, and especially to the priest - the Pastor of souls - who ought to make it his most particular study

to see that nothing is wanting to its suitable adornment.

All altars cannot pretend to be rich and splendid, especially if the churches be poor; nevertheless poverty is by no means irreconcilable with decency and neatness, and a poor altar, if tastefully fitted up and clean, is not unsuited to the sacrifice of Him who was pleased to die on Calvary, stripped of every worldly possession. Nay more, it inspires sentiments of humility, of devotion,

and of love. On the other hand, it is intolerable to see certain altars broken and splintered in several places, with soiled altar cloths, with candlesticks battered and blackened, with flowers drooping, covered with dust, and one might almost say with filth. Altars of this kind speak very badly for the Parish Priest, and are a certain proof that he is a man of little faith, or of extreme carelessness. On these altars one may see crucifixes broken, or with the

figure badly fastened to the wood, torn paintings, and statues coated with dust-objects which seem to be kept there for the express purpose of frightening people away from their devotions.

What has been said of the furniture of the Altar may likewise be said of the Sacred Vestments. It is not necessary that they be always rich and magnificent: in many churches this would be impossible; but it is very necessary that they be decent, and not torn or dirty, as

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Venerable Giuseppe Frassinetti was born in Genoa in December 15, 1804.

Friend of saints (Saint Antonio Maria Gianelli, Blessed Tommaso Reggio, Saint John Bosco, Blessed Rosa Gattorno, Saint Maria Domenica Mazzarello, Saint Agostino Roscelli) was a convinced supporter of the vocation to holiness of all the baptized and for this ideal he lavished all his energies as spiritual director, parish priest and writer.

Attendant to the confessional and appreciated director of souls, vigorous announcer of the Word of God, friend of the young and skilled educator, Fr. Giuseppe Frassinetti invented new ways to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ with his pen and through new initiatives.

Fr. Giuseppe Frassinetti's spirituality is Christocentric, apostolic, Eucharistic, Marian, and above all Catholic. He aims straight at the essential and defends it with courage and consistency in a spirit of freedom and loyalty.

Propagator of frequent communion and Eucharistic adoration against post-Jansenist rigors always supported the need to make the path of holiness simple and accessible to all believers. His favorite themes are devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, loyalty to the Pope and the Church, chastity as a means of sanctification and apostolate, the enhancement of the laity both male and female. Numerous pastoral workers and teachers of spirituality drew on Frassinetti's writings, particularly Blessed James Alberione.

Fr. Giuseppe Paolo Frassinetti died on January 2, 1868.

The Church recognized his heroic virtue, thus proclaiming him Venerable, on Mary 14, 1991 by St. John Paul II.

frequently happens in some places.

Poverty would be admissable in the vestments and the ornaments of the altar even on the most solemn feasts; but indecency is intolerable even on week-days, since there never can be a day on which it is lawful to disrespect the most Holy Sacrament, the House of God, and sacred things.

2. Of the Tabernacle, the Lamp and the Sacred Vessels

As the throne of Christ in Heaven (excuse the comparison) ought to be the most beautiful among the ornaments of Paradise, so the Tabernacle, where the same Christ dwells night and day, ought to be the most beautiful object among the ornaments of our Churches. Unless a Church be extremely poor, a little richness is desirable in the Tabernacle. Indeed it is so small that it will require but little to decorate it; and it is very consoling to see in many Churches the Tabernacle, in which the Most

Holy Sacrament reposes, splendid and elegant, with its little silver door, and the interior all lined with cloth of gold, richly embroidered.

Nevertheless, not even in the tabernacle is richness an essential requisite: even in the tabernacle our Lord is satisfied with simple neatness and propriety. A small door of gilt wood and a little white silk

will be enough to make it decent.

It is furthermore the duty of the Parish Priest to take care that the lamp is always kept burning before the most Holy Sacrament. Wherefore, he must see that the oil be sufficiently pure, so that the lamp may not become extinguished, especially in the long winter nights. Nor could he justify his negligence in this respect by the excuse

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that the Church Committee had supplied oil of inferior quality ; for it would be his duty to substitute good oil in its place, rather than suffer the lamp suspended before the Blessed Sacrament to remain extinguished.

The Parish Priest must also take care that the chalices, patens, ciborium, and the lunette of the Remonstrance are suitably gilded. Let him be careful, likewise, that the sacred vessels are not in any way broken, insecure in the joinings, or even simply discoloured.

3. Of the Hosts and the Wine for the Most Holy Eucharist

The Parish Priest must be careful that the hosts and particles to be consecrated are always fresh, since it is most unbecoming to use stale ones. Wherefore he ought never lay in a larger quantity than he knows will be sufficient for the requirements of a few days.

Negligence in these matters is one of the most convincing proofs of carelessness, or of little faith, on the part of the Parish Priest. When there is question of the matter and the species of the Most Holy Sacrament, there is question of something very far different from the candlesticks, the vestments,

the tabernacle, the pyxis, and the chalice; and it is easy to understand how the very least negligence becomes intolerable when it affects the Most Holy Sacrament directly.

As regards the wine for the Holy Sacrifice, the Parish Priest ought to be even still more careful. He must not only see that the wine to be consecrated has no bad taste, or acidity, or sediment in it-defects which ought never to be tolerated in the wine which is to be changed into the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; but he must be particularly

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careful to see that it is really the juice of the grape - a matter which must not invariably be taken for granted. There are wines made from cherries, from peaches, from apples and other fruits: there are wines manufactured by blending water with spirituous liquors; and sometimes it is not easy to distinguish these from wine made

from the grape. It is evident that if these spurious and artificial wines were used in the celebration of the Mass, the

consecration would be invalid, and there would be no sacrifice. Wherefore, the Parish Priest is most strictly bound to know whence the wine is procured which is destined for altar purposes; and he ought never use any wine unless he positively knows it to be the unadulterated juice of the grape. Nor could he excuse himself by saying that he trusts the wine merchants, or that he must use the wine supplied to him by the Church-wardens.

4. Of the First Communion of the Children

Good Parish Priests ought to have three principal anxieties regarding the first Communion of the children. The first is, to admit them to it as soon as they are capable of receiving it, in compliance with the precept of the Church. It does not rest with Parish Priests to give first Communion whenever it may please them. The precept of Paschal

Another anxiety felt by good Parish Priests with regard to the children preparing for first communion is that they are well and thoroughly instructed, by having imparted to them all the religious knowledge which they are capable of receiving. This is a matter of the very utmost importance.

Communion binds every Christian as soon as he is capable of receiving the Blessed Eucharist, and the Parish Priest cannot defer the fulfilment of this obligation without sufficient reason. He is merely authorised to judge whether children have the dispositions which are required in order to be admitted to Communion; and, therefore, should he find that they do not possess the necessary

discernment or knowledge, he may and ought defer their first Communion, but otherwise he ought to admit them to it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ not only did not repel children from Him, but took pleasure in associating familiarly with them, without exhibiting any displeasure because of the defects natural to their years ; and so, too, notwithstanding these defects, he will willingly receive them at present, and admit them to share His divine banquet. As regards their intelligence, no more is required than that they be able to recognise the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed

Eucharist: and, as far as instruction is concerned, it will be enough if they know what dispositions are required to receive the Sacrament worthily.

But since intelligence and knowledge would not suffice if moral goodness were wanting in the children, let us see what the Parish Priest ought to require on this head.

When children possess the proper dispositions, they ought, ordinarily, to be admitted to first communion at the age of ten years, as St. Charles Borromeo and St. Liguori teach. St. Alphonsus in one of his instructions to Parish Priests, writes:

“Children ought to be made comply with the paschal precept, as a general rule, between the ages of nine and ten, or at most, at the age of twelve years.” Wherefore a Parish Priest ought to bring his influence to bear upon parents, to induce them to send their children, when ten years old, to the instructions for first communion. Should he then find that they have the required capacity, he will admit them to communion, otherwise he will put

them back until the following year.

Another anxiety felt by good Parish Priests with regard to the children preparing for first communion is that they are well and thoroughly instructed, by having imparted to them all the religious knowledge which they are capable of receiving. This is

a matter of the very utmost importance, not only for the actual worthy reception of the Sacrament, but also for two other reasons. The first is that if the children be well and solidly instructed at that age, the truths of faith make a profound impression on their minds, and will sink deeply into their hearts; so that it

is difficult that they be ever afterwards forgotten, and they will continue to exercise in the future a powerful influence over the entire conduct of their lives. The second reason is that if children be not well instructed when they are admitted to first communion, there is great danger to fear that they will never be well instructed. It is a disagreeable but undeniable fact, that many, after having received their first

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Communion, never afterwards attend catechetical instruction, either because of the negligence of their parents, or of their own sloth; and, consequently, these, who constitute so numerous a class, will never afterwards be able to supply the want of that early instruction which precedes first Communion.

Finally, the Parish Priest must endeavour to make the first Communion of the children a very special function both in the church and in the family circle. The day of our first Communion is an epoch in our lives; and it is well to imprint it deeply on our memories, by celebrating the auspicious day with solemnity. The function in the church, although religious, ought to wear the appearance of a brilliant and most joyous festival; and the Parish Priest ought to make the children a present of some small object of devotion, in order to remind them of that great day. Even after the lapse of many years, the sight of some object which recalls to mind our first Communion is accustomed to produce a good impression upon us.

5. Of administering Communion to the Sick

Chronic invalids who are unable to go to the church ought to have the Holy Communion administered to them in their houses at least at Easter; and indeed this custom is universally observed. However the Parish Priest ought not rest content with giving them Communion once a year, but ought to do so more frequently, especially should they express a desire to receive it. Those Parish Priests who show themselves unwilling to administer Communion to sick persons of this class except at Easter, give little edification to their flocks.

Since these Communions can be foreseen and arranged before hand, the Parish Priest will be enabled to make provision for having the Blessed Sacrament accompanied in even a more becoming manner than when it is borne to the sick *per modum Viatici*, which is ordinarily done in a hurry. By announcing to the people on the preceding Sunday, the day and hour when he would proceed

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to administer Communion to the sick, he would be sure to have a good attendance of the faithful to accompany him.

It is a matter of great importance to have the Blessed Sacrament thus becomingly accompanied when it is borne to the houses of the sick, as it is a public act of lively faith highly expressive of the piety of the people, and serves to strengthen and increase devotion towards the most august pledge of divine love. Wherefore a Parish Priest ought to exert himself to have the Blessed Sacrament respectably

accompanied each time it is borne to the sick; and this he will succeed in doing by frequently exhorting his flock to take part in this demonstration of faith, as soon as they hear the sound of the bell inviting them to it. But he will attain this object still more securely, if he take care to have in his parish a flourishing sodality of the Blessed Sacrament—a sodality which ought to exist in every parish. This sodality will supply all the material requisites for the procession, and will, moreover, furnish many associates to take part in it.