



ONE



THIS WAR IS THE PASSION

For us, the war is the passion of Christ. There is no need now to dwell on its cruelty. We shall not be able to forget that. To the natural eye it seems that out of this war nothing could possibly result but bitterness, hatred and ruin; and indeed, nothing else could result from it were it not for one person—Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Because he has made us “other Christs,” because his life continues in each one of us, there is nothing that any one of us can suffer which is not the passion he suffered. Our redemption, although it was achieved completely by our Lord, does, by a special loving mercy of his, go on in us. It is one unbroken act which goes on in the mystical body of Christ on earth, which we are.

These things are mysterious, we can't understand them with our brains, but now everyone is going to learn to

understand them in sorrow, in courage, and in sacrifice. Now the time has come for each of us to prove our Christhood.

Not one of us is alone. All are one in Christ, and we can be strong in the realization that we are together and that we share in all and every grace of one another. We are one, not only with each other, but with all the Church, the saints in heaven, the faithful on earth and the souls in purgatory, and we have, all of us, the strength of our adored King, Christ, as our sword: his strength and his meekness, his love and his forgiveness.

Some of us, perhaps all of us, will feel sometimes hopelessly alone; certain griefs that we shall know make one utterly alone even in the midst of real friends; certain circumstances which will become fairly general give us the loneliness of homesickness, and events may cut us off from one another physically. But there is not a single thing that any one of us can do which does not affect every other Catholic, which is not, in a mysterious way, his deed too.

The martyrs of Siberia, often without sacraments or Catholic contact for years, have told others of the joy they derived from awareness of their oneness with all other Christians. A certain priest said, in Siberia, before his long martyrdom was consummated in death, "On Saturdays, I was always happy, as so many Catholic children made my confession."

WE MUST MAKE COMPLETE SACRIFICE

We have realized on the natural plane that we can win the war only if we are united; we must be united with one another and with our Allies, and every single one of us must go all out for our single purpose. We must put by all else and be ready to give all we have, to the very last drop of our blood, to bring about our one single purpose. That purpose is to gain and keep freedom.

If such an extreme is our duty to one another as human creatures, how much more is it our duty and our honour to give all we have and are, united in our Christhood, for the kingdom of God. This is not a special war, a sideline, a mere analogy for Catholics; no, freedom *is* the possession of the inward kingdom; and to keep it, and keep it as Christ would keep it, is the heart of the whole war. We are doing the same as all the rest, but because of the unmerited grace of faith, our responsibility is greater, we have to do it with a deeper understanding.

LOVE

I do not hesitate to speak as if it were the last time, and to echo Christ's own final words to his apostles, his last commandment: "Little children, love one another." he said it to his apostles when they were going to be scattered about the world, and each in turn to suffer for him.

This is the first and last vocation of every Christian, to love, and all other vocations are only a shell in which

this vocation, to love, is protected. So whatever part each of you plays in the war, it must be done only as a channel through which love is poured. Love alone, love only, can save us from being swamped and swept away by the evil passions that war must let loose—hate, fear, despair.

And love can and will save the world, because this war is Christ's passion in us, and if we dare now to act by faith and to pledge ourselves to let his love be as strong in us as his pain is, then it will bear fruit, in proportion to its magnitude of grief.

Love, and love alone, can make life welcome to us; we can help one another by love, as never before, and nothing else can comfort, encourage, be patient, and heal, as love can do now.

Therefore, we are now at the beginning of the Way of the Cross, with Our Lord leading us; we have to walk in his steps; in this "dry wood" foretold by him, we must have our eyes on the "green wood," on the Christ-Passion in which all things already are new, our first springtide, for which we are again sowing seed, and in this he is our great example of love.

IMITATE CHRIST IN HIS LOVE

We can imitate him literally. He was mocked and crowned with thorns: He remained silent. If our determination to love our enemy, to include the enemy in our prayer and sacrifice, is at moments beyond us, we can

imitate his gentle silence, and go on, go on wearing a crown of thorns in our mind. He welcomed his cross and took it up himself and put it on his shoulder to carry it. We can face the war in his spirit, not glad of suffering for suffering's sake, but glad that, since suffer we must, we can carry our share of the cross as a loving work for each other to help our common redemption. We can think, too, that the load the soldiers carry is the cross, and the same applies to the weight of stretchers, and to all the heavy material loads; they, too, are part of the weight of the one great cross laid on us. We can imitate him by welcoming it, and if it seems too heavy at times we can still turn to him and say: "We praise Thee and bless Thee, O Jesus Christ, because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

He was stripped naked. We also can be stripped of all we have, and not only of our material goods, but of our ambitions, the closeness of friends, our hope of human joy; in this we can, like Our Lord, prepare for sacrifice.

He was sacrificed on the cross. Some will literally imitate him in his death, and all of us know that when a Christian dies it is Christ Who is dying, and his love has overcome death.

All of us can literally imitate him in the wholeness of sacrifice, in offering all that we are—and that, stripped of our selfishness—to God, as an act of adoration to God and of love for one another.

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THE KINGDOM WITHIN

Very soon the shortage of paper will become acute and all the means that we have relied upon, consciously and unconsciously, for so many years to state our faith and offer it to the world, will end—all material means, anyway, telephones, wireless, cars and aeroplanes, printing and so on; all things which Christ never had the use of when he lived on earth and faced the whole world with his tidings of great joy.

What means did Christ have, and what means did he use? He had only himself: his soul and body, his joy and suffering, the infinitesimal amount of work he could get into one limited lifetime, the words he spoke, the hands he used, the prayers he said. He had himself, his life and death, and that is all.

And what means did Christ leave to his apostles when it seemed, as it most certainly did seem, that he was defeated, the cause lost? Did he say: "Clearly this thing can't be done by love, by individuals with only themselves, so I will give them machinery and power, and tremendous success!" No, he gave them just his own divine Spirit, the "Comforter" as he called it. He came, through his spirit, to live in them, and that his presence in them might be ever renewed he gave them his body in the Host and his grace through the sacraments.

He did not choose to live a new, different and more successful kind of life in his apostles, or to avoid a repetition of his violent death; no, all but one were martyred, all

were poor and generally alone and persecuted, and none had as much success as a popular preacher on a modern wireless.

Yet, these kept the kingdom; and after them, in age after age, the saints who have walked in their footsteps have done so, and they have done so in only one way, because there is only one way, the way of Christ. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

To-day, we may despair of practically everything, of all the world's traditions, of all material things, of success of any sort as we know it, but there is one thing which is not now endangered, but is on the eve—no, the very morning—of resurrection. That one thing is the only thing that matters: Christ, the life of Christ, in the soul of man.

The fact that we are being put back into the position of the apostles is a safeguard to our faith, because the enemies that assail Christianity are not only the evil forces that are apparent to all, but the subtle temptations that a prosperous world never ceases to propose to individual Christians, the gradual loss of the sharp edge of the uncompromising simplicity of the love of Christ. Now it is clear, our faith will be kept alive as it was kept alive in the days when our forefathers shed their blood on this dear English soil, to hand it on, bright and burning, to us.

They will keep our faith and defend Christ's kingdom who, in the midst of the dangers and in the endurance of the war, keep their own souls alight with the love of Christ. What does it mean? It does not mean preaching

and boasting about religion. It certainly does not mean withdrawing from the relentless hard work of everyday life in order to pray. The daily life of one V.A.D. is enough to put to shame the Christian who thinks that way will do.¹

What it does mean is being one of the many thousands who are actually doing the work, nursing the wounded, working in the factories, digging and sowing the land, working hours and hours of overtime in offices. But doing these things in the name of Christ and with the love of Christ; and while we are at them we will call on him present in us for wisdom, courage and humour to keep us going.

If a chance occurs, we shall explain our faith; at all events we shall be able to. We shall have to know it so well that it is in our blood, and to adhere to it so well that we can in a certain way give it, just by being what we are. Thus we must be the book of the gospels ourselves, with the words and teachings of Christ in our minds, but also in our hearts, and whenever the occasion demands, upon our lips. That is something that the daily Mass reminds us of constantly, when we make the triple Sign of the Cross before the gospel.

We shall have also to be the flowering of Christ, the continuing of his love, and in this way we are like the bread for the Host, sacramental. It may be hard to go to confession, it may be difficult to hear Mass, to receive communion; all those mysteries may be as they were during the Reformation. Then will be the time when we, who

have long used the sacrament of penance, taking God's forgiveness over and over again, will ourselves give continual life in the world to this expression of Christ, forgiveness. We will do it by forgiving, by forgiving whatever needs forgiveness, day after day.

We have again and again received him in communion. He has come to us and given us himself in this supreme expression of his love, and now and in the future, if it should become difficult to receive him in the Host, we will ourselves keep this expression of love, communion, alive by giving the Christ in us to whomever we come in contact with by repeated acts of love; by being with them in their fears and reassuring them, by helping them in their poverty by every means we can, by tending their wounds and by nursing them in their sickness.

Thus we return to the primitive Christianity of the apostles, and having, as Christ had, only ourselves, we require no more. All that was false or doubtful will drop off like a dead branch, the wheat will be made white in the fire. It is Christ's passion, and his resurrection is just as certain as it was when he went up to the cross. But his resurrection, like his passion, will not vary from what it was like in his own life. He will not rise in us through force; whichever way the war goes, Christ's rising will not depend on that. He will not rise through legislation, or powerful movements, or brilliant organization, and his rising will not be delayed until there is peace in Europe. He will rise in the humility, the courage and love of

those few Christians who will keep his kingdom in their individual souls.

This is our apostolate now, and persisting, clearer than the noise of battle, Christ's words should be heard in each heart: "Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father, who is in heaven, to give you a kingdom."

THE FLOWERING OF CHRIST

If Christ is growing in you, you are growing towards sacrifice. If the spirit of sacrifice is not growing in you, Christ is not growing in you, no matter how ardently you may think of him or how eloquently you may speak of him. But if day after day your life gathers to a culmination of sacrifice, then it is certain that Christ waxes strong in you.

A sacrifice is not, as so many people imagine, a mortification; it is not something that is meritorious according to its degree of unpleasantness; on the contrary, in real sacrifice, there is joy which surpasses all other joys, it is the crescendo and culmination of love.

What is a sacrifice?

A girl of eleven, asked to teach a child of four to "make a sacrifice," taught him to make the Sign of the Cross. Asked why this should be a sacrifice, she answered with supreme wisdom, "Because for a little minute he gives all of himself to God."