General Business News

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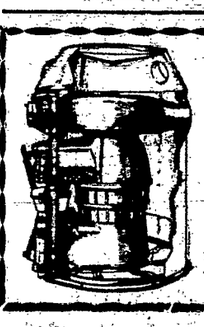

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St. Patrick's Cathedral Radio Hour

(Continued from Page Two)

the domain of nature into the kingdom of grace and thereby become the special property of God. How reverently they should be treated and guarded. You know, Father, I heard once of some soldiers, who had ransacked and pillaged churches taking the Chalices away and sporting them later as loving-cups presented by their admirers. All I can think of in regard to such is the scene in the banquet-hall of Nabachodonser, when sacred vessels robbed from the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem were turned into profane use. But it was not long ere an invisible and wrote visible words on the wall where this debauchery was in progress—"Mene—Phares—Thecal," his doom was sealed and so will the doom of anyone who dares to defile the sanctuary of the Lord."

"Speaking of the sanctuary, Tom," I interrupted, "did you notice the exquisiteness of the altars in "La Mercede," and the Cathedral. Beautiful workmanship in gold and marble. Of course the altar should be the unique feature of every church, because there upon takes place the celebration of the adorable mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ. Then again, we do hear from time to time of cases where a consecrated portable altar-stone is used for Mass, as far instance, during the time of the late war, but this is unusual."

"Yes, Father," replied Tom, "I remember from my instructions given by Father Cantwell, what you say about the altar. In fact the first sacred object which greets one's eyes upon entrance into any Catholic Church is the altar. I imagine that undoubtedly the Church must have sound reasons for the establishment of the altar, has she not?"

"Surely, Tom," I answered quickly, "without the altar the Catholic Church means nothing. Jesus Christ, who said the first Mass mystically the night before He died, performed this sacred act upon a wooden table, which is preserved to this day in the Cathedral of Rome, St. John Lateran. Indeed, I saw it with my own eyes, did you not view it on that famous visit you made to Rome?"

"Father, don't rub it in. You know the frame of mind that I was in when I visited the Holy City, just plainly to speak, a mess. No, unfortunately I did not see it, but your reminiscence is interesting history. Did St. Peter, the successor to Our Lord, use an altar?"

"Tom," I replied, "when Peter had won over the Roman Senator Pudeus and his family to Christianity, the Apostle took up his permanent residence in this house. He offered the Eucharistic sacrifice there, and again one of his successors Pope Sylvester I, who reigned between 314-335 removed this altar of St. Peter from the Church of St. Pudenziala to the Basilica of St. John Lateran, where it was enclosed in marble and can be seen to-day. The only person who reads Mass over this altar now is the Holy Father. A special reserved privilege, you understand, Tom?"

"Very interesting history, Father," said Tom, "but may I ask you, did they always have marble or composition altars in the Church as we do to-day? Do you recollect the main altar in the Columbus Cathedral at Havana was hand carved marble with a replica of the Last Supper, just below the center? If my memory serves me correctly, I think that your own Cathedral altar is marble, is it not, Father?"

"Yes, Tom," I answered, warming up to the subject, "our Cathedral altar and the one at Havana are marble. This transition from wooden to stone altars brings up some forgotten history. Wooden altars, whilst used up to the 6th century, were never formally prescribed. Back as far as the year 105, Pope Evaristus, who established the first parishes in Rome, ordered the erection and dedication of altars of stone. In the Catacombs whence the Christians took flight during the persecutions of the first three centuries, Mass was read over a martyr's grave. The grave was covered with a stone slab, projected from the side, which formed the table of the altar. Here the Holy Sacrifice was offered. This reminds us of the slab upon which the Saviour's Body rested when in the Sepulcher and consequently of Christ's death. When Constantine issued his famous edict of toleration in the third century the Christians came forth from the depths of the earth and erected to God, glorious and magnificent Churches and in the sanctuary they placed artistic altars of the most precious materials. Naturally, you understand Tom, that the principal part, the altar-stone, is directly in front of the tabernacle and upon this rests the chalice and the host; the remainder is artistic and varies in form and embellishment down throughout the ages. There, Tom, tuck that away also in your storehouse of knowledge."

"Well, Father, tucked away it is. Some day I shall use this information to enlighten others," smiled Tom. "But, Father I remember you saying a moment ago, that during the late war, Mass was said outside a Church, for instance, I would take it even in a field, or out of trench, how was such possible?"

"A keen observation, Tom," I continued, "altars in the Catholic Church are of two types, either movable or immovable. An immovable altar consists of three parts: the altar-slab or table, the lower part and the relic-holder, or as we call it the sepulcher. These parts are solid, never touched, reminding us of the solidity of Christ and His faith. Five crosses are cut into the altar-stone—two at each of the ends and one in the center. The table is then connected with stone-pillars, consecrated and retains its consecration as long as there is no disjunction. But the movable altar is a four-cornered stone-slab, in the upper front of which is a sepulcher, wherein the relics of two martyrs are enclosed and sealed by placing a small slab of stone over them. And then there is always a ceremony of consecration which sets these movable and immovable altars aside solely for sacrificial purposes."

"I have observed," interrupted Tom, "that an altar is always elevated; is this necessary?"

"Yes, Tom," I replied, "an altar is always elevated. It represents Calvary. Several steps—uneven in number—should ascend the altar. Moreover, the elevated altar should face the East, symbolical of Jesus Christ as the Orient from on High and the Sun of Justice."

"But you stated, Father," quized Tom, "that relics of the martyrs were enclosed in a little opening to the upper front of the altar slab, why is this done?"

"Easy enough to figure out, Tom. These men and women sacrificed their lives for Christ, why should they not rest at the foot of the altar, whereon is celebrated Christ's Sacrifice, that infused into them the heroism and strength of martyrdom. They closely resemble the Lamb of God, in suffering and in glory. Therefore, their entombment in the altar stone is just as solemn and sacred in ceremony as would be their actual burial after they had undergone martyrdom."

"Father, I never gave this a thought, when I have assisted at Mass," sighed Tom, "I guess that there are a good many things to learn yet."

"We are all in that class, Tom," I observed, "never too old to learn and profit by it. There are many other observations of a symbolical nature, which could be taken from our talk today, but time will not permit it. However, I wish you to remember this Tom; the altar symbolizes the God-man Himself, in whom and through whom alone we can present to God acceptable sacrifices and prayers. Christ is the foundation, the living-stone, which was "rejected" by an unbelieving and corrupt world, but now "chosen and honored of God." Since He is the chief corner-stone, then we, like the walls surrounding the altar-stone, should adhere more closely to Christ, the Holy service of sacrifice. Just as the stone is hewn and hammered into beautiful symmetric form, so we in the hands of the Master Builder should permit ourselves meekly to be molded in faith and virtue into perfection which is found in Jesus Christ, Our Lord."

"Wonderful subject," answered Tom, "never considered the extent of its importance. In the future, however, I shall maintain a higher regard for the House of God and His altar. Father, are you taking notice of the darkness that is gradually coming over us, somehow it doesn't seem natural, only 4 p. m.—listen—that weird sound of the fog horn again. Doesn't that make you feel uncanny and almost send the creeps up your back? It is impossible for one to predict the possible outcome of such a fog on the ocean. But I manage to cast aside the bulk of my fear when I refer my thoughts to the ever protecting St. Christopher medal, which I never neglect to carry with me, St. Christopher is the patron of travellers."

"There's a ship to port side, Tom," I remarked. "It is the pilot, guess we had better maneuver ourselves over to the rail and give attention to the procedure. See that boat, let down from the deck, takes him no time to reach the water and skim across to our boat. My, Tom, this fog certainly is dense. More than necessary to have a good pilot today."

"Father, there are two," Tom replied, "no doubt they will need them. Getting rather chilly now, quite a contrast, indeed, from what Cuba managed to favor us with. This is Ambrose Channel. Listen to that fog horn and those bells now. A true warning in every shriek and stroke. Look, isn't that a boat to the port-side? Sure enough—my, how close they do come—just one good ram of that ship and we would be at the bottom of Davy Jones' locker."

"Yes, Tom," only the grace of God guides us safely into port," I replied, "Only the grace of God will guide the frail barks, our souls, into the glorious haven of eternal rest. Request this each time you kneel before the altar of the living God."

"Well, Father," answered Tom, "it has been an extremely pleasant and enjoyable trip indeed. And among my requests I will always wish to have the pleasure and consolation of your accompanying me in some future journey. And now I do believe that the time has approached when we had better go below and prepare to meet the Immigration Officers."

"All right, Father," just as you say and desire—may you guide me safely as you have so graciously done during these cheerful days over the troubled sea of life."

"You are at liberty to depend on me, Tom," I replied, "I shall pray

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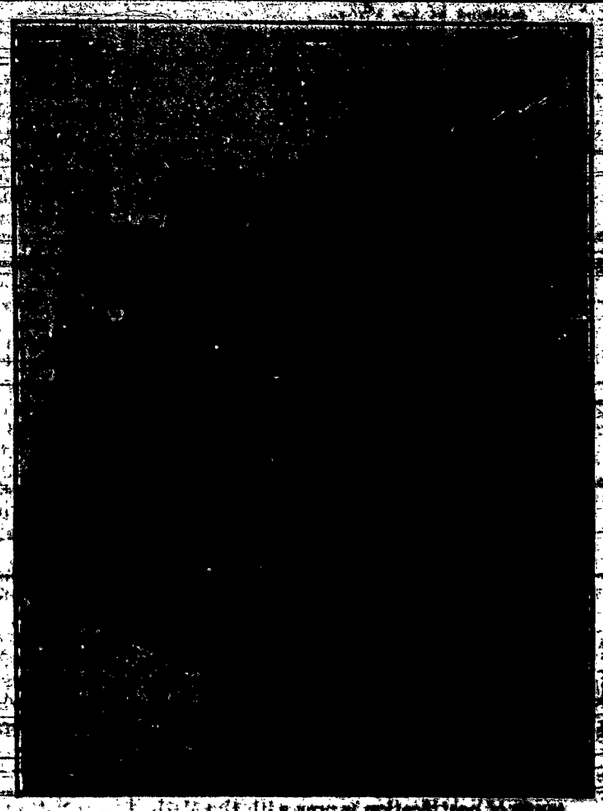
Honor Banner Is Awarded to Catholic Univ.

Washington, Feb. 13—The honor banner for the largest contribution to the Community Chest of the District of Columbia from the School Unit, comprising all the schools, colleges and universities of the district, has been awarded to The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

The Catholic University has held the distinction of making the largest contribution to the Chest from the School Unit for several years. Other prominent institutions in this unit are George Washington University, Georgetown University and American University. With an expansion program of its own on its hands, it contributed generously to the needs of the charitable institutions of the City of Washington.

According to the Rev. Charles A. Mart, in charge of Chest donations at The Catholic University, the amount contributed to the 1932 fund by the faculty and employees was $3,196.

An Inviting Funeral Home



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