

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday

6:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

6:00 A.M. Daily

Holy Days:

6:00 A.M.; 8:00 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel
Montgomery, Alabama
10:45 A.M.
Only on first Sunday
of each month

St Pius V Chapel
Birmingham, Alabama
9:30 A.M.
Every Sunday except
first Sunday of each month

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Weekly Bulletin #785

July 13, 2003 -- Green

Mass of Sunday; Gl; Cr; Pref. Trinity

OF EXTREME UNCTION

Part I

Concerned Care for the Dying

What is the Sacrament of Extreme Unction?

(From the Baltimore Catechism) Extreme Unction is the Sacrament, which through the anointing and prayer of the Priest, gives health and strength to the soul, and sometimes to the body, when we are in danger of death from sickness or some serious accident or wound.

(The following instruction is taken from the book entitled, "Of Sacrament and Sacrifice," by Father Clifford Howell, S.J., 1952).

"What always happens in a man who receives the sacrament (of extreme unction) in good dispositions is the primary effect. His soul is freed from the after-effects of sin, given full spiritual health and strength, made into a perfect soul fit for its share in the glory of Christ our Lord. So that if the soul then leaves the body, there is nothing standing in the way of its entrance into the glory of heaven.

To many readers this will be a very surprising statement. For it cuts right across the notions which most people seem to entertain about those who die. Yet it is not contrary to any explicit teaching of the Church, and is in accordance with the explicit teaching of some of the Church's most authoritative theologians. Though indeed the Church has never defined the doctrine I have just stated - namely, that the souls of those who die after receiving extreme unction with proper disposition go straight to heaven - yet we have very sound reasons for believing it.

There is no warrant for the pessimism wherewith so many Catholics seem to regard death. Many speak and behave as if they thought that nobody but a great saint has any chance of going to heaven except through purgatory.

Any ordinary person who dies will be lucky, they think, if he manages to escape hell by scraping into purgatory. There, as a result of suffering for ages in the "cleansing flames," he will gradually attain that state of soul which will permit of his being at last transferred to heaven. This process can be assisted according to the number of Masses offered for him, and the indulgences applied to him, by his sorrowing relatives and friends here below. And if he has not got any relatives or friends, or if they should forget him and have no Masses said, then he will be dependent on the "Holy Souls Box." But anyhow, provided he gets into purgatory, he will ultimately get to heaven. But that is the best that can reasonably be hoped for in the case of most of us. * *(See footnote below)*

Now this doctrine is sound enough except for the basic assumption which underlies it all and for which there is no proof - namely, that he goes to purgatory at all. I am not in any way denying the doctrine of purgatory - God forbid! Undoubtedly there is a purgatory, and undoubtedly there must be souls who go through it. What I am doubting is the assumption (for it is no more) that there are the souls of Catholics who, before dying, received the sacrament of extreme unction in really proper dispositions. It seems to me that we have ample reason for disbelieving that such Catholics (and they are a goodly proportion of practicing Catholics) ever go to purgatory at all. It seems much more probable that they leap, so to speak, out of their death-beds straight into their thrones in heaven."

* **Footnote:** *Jansenism is a 17th Century heresy which denies, among other things, that Christ died for all men, making heaven only for a select few. It teaches that man has no free will and that sin is at times unavoidable. Jansenism makes of God a monster, unloving and unlovable. Many, while renouncing its false doctrines, cling to the bitter, harsh, and unhappy rigorism that Jansenism inspires. Nothing could be more opposed to the goodness and love shown us by our Divine Savior.*

(Part two in next week's Bulletin. Please save this Bulletin and the ones for the next two weeks, to maintain continuity.)