

APOSTOLATE



*of The Little Flower*



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No. 1

# **APOSTOLATE**

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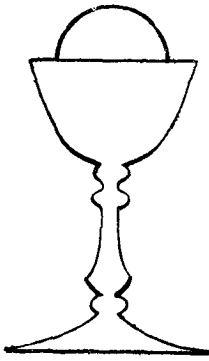
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***Three***



# The Living And The Dead

By Frater John Michael, C. C. D.

IT was just this morning that the Novice Master gave us novices permission to see the exhumation of one of our departed Religious. This man's remains were being transferred from our old cemetery at the monastery to the new one for the entire Carmelite province. I had never seen the bones of a dead person before, so it was with overly anxious eyes that I went to the cemetery. Expecting to see something repulsive or morbid, I thought at least I'd experience those frightful feelings instilled in us by spook shows.

What a surprise I was in for. . . contrary to what I had expected, those bones looked serenely peaceful. Lying there in the earth, they were just waiting to be covered again by that earth from which they came. The bones seemed to belong there, as indeed they did, and seemed just as natural there as a rock would be on a hillside. It just so happened that the miracle of procreation united these bones for a few years with a life. The body housed a life and developed a personality.

## The Living Personality

The life of this Religious was the expression of his personality. While he lived his personality was expressed through his body. Now that he's dead the expression is over, yet the personality still lives — incomplete without the body, yet still very much alive. He has life just as I have life. He has no expression of his self whereas I do. Actually there is a great deal we share, that man and I; we both have life. The biggest difference is that we both don't have expression of our personalities. And actually what a small difference it is; for what is the importance of expression as compared to the importance of life?

The pagan bases his whole way of looking at things on outward expressions and impressions. To him the dead body is a dead personality. Thank God I see things as a Christian, for to me, when death finally takes away the activity of a person, that person can only then possess the fruition

of his life in full. Christianity is not limited by death. Christ's resurrection broke assunder that wall of separation between the living and the dead by showing us that death is not an end, but a passage: the only true Exodus.

### Our Relationship

After seeing this man's remains lying before me, and thinking of what he and I have in common, I wonder just what our relationship is. How close am I to him? I am in the Church; is he? I am in the Church Militant (on earth), naturally he couldn't be in this division of the Church. But he could well be in one of the other two divisions of the Church: the Church Suffering in purgatory or the Church Triumphant in heaven. If he is in the Church, we're closely related; for the three divisions of the Church are closely united: as close as wheat is to bread. Yet I must first find out if he's in the Church or out of it.

He was baptized; he was born into it. If he is now out of the Church, he chose to love himself more than Christ to Whom he was committed. He daily received communion and thus daily committed himself to Christ. Had he totally rejected that Divine Body to which he had been incorporated, his eternal life would be firmly fixed in hell, the place of total rejection of Christ. Were this the case, we would be greatly separated. God Himself, Christ, the Church, and all its members, would stand between us. Had he accepted his incorporation into the Mystical Body, he would be a living member of Christ's Body. . . a living member of the Church though his body be dead. Were this the case, we would be united as close as food is to life.

### Our Union

Taking for granted that this Religious is still in the Church, he is either in purgatory or heaven. And I am in the Church on earth. How close are the divisions of the Church united to one another? Intimately close! For all members of the Church meet in one concrete object. The sinners, the suffering, and the saints are all united in Christ. This Religious is as closely united to me as I am to the Sacred Host I receive in communion. Communion is the great sign of union: it unites the Church. For we are all one family. . . more than that, one body: the Mystical Body of Christ.

### Poor Souls

Now, about the relationship between the Church Militant and the Church Suffering: I am intimately united with souls who are suffering so much more than could ever be imagined here on earth. And truly am I in the Church Militant. I am fighting for the kingdom of heaven, fighting

to evacuate purgatory, and to establish my brethren as well as myself in our chosen place in heaven.

I am entrusted with the weapons for this battle. I can fight for those in purgatory who can do nothing for themselves; they can only suffer. I can take the kingdom of heaven by storm and fill those empty ranks of heaven with those poor souls for whom the ranks are reserved. By using weapons — the Mass and its Communion (our most powerful ones), liturgical and private prayer, suffering — by using these this temporary battle will be won. The Church will be daily closer to being one, until eventually there will be no divisions. And as time reaches its fullness all of us and all of the poor souls will be with the saints in heaven.

### Our Duty

Yet here we are, living in the present. What can we do seeing objective reality as it is here and now? The battle is being fought and more often than not, we became mere spectators instead of throwing ourselves wholeheartedly into our vocation in the Church Militant. Do we lack courage? Are we too lazy to fight? Yet how proud we are to be a member of the Church on earth.

One could use the frequency of receiving communion as an indication of the progress and advancement we are making in our fight for heaven. For the winning of the battle means the ultimate oneness of the Church. Whenever we receive communion we are uniting ourselves to all our fellow sinners and saints. We all meet in our common object of love, Christ. So by bringing the Church to a oneness, we bring the militant battle for heaven to its victory: its "oneness." If we only fully realized the intensity of this eucharistic intimacy, this realization would give us courage and combat our laziness. Our secret weapon, the eucharist, is at our disposal. Christ is our key to heaven, for ourselves and our suffering brethren. Christ is our sign, our promise of victory and unity. "Jonas was the sign given to the men of Nineve; the sign given to this generation will be the Son of Man." (Lk. XI 30)

