

The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions (Classic Reprint)

Rev. John F. Sullivan



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Excerpt from The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions

Our Catholic Liturgy is a grand and harmonious manifestation of man's homage to God. Its words and ceremonies and devotions are the growth of centuries. The essentials of our Church's worship have been embellished with a wealth of ritual observance, of which each detail is symbolic of the purpose for which that worship is offered. The explanation of these manifold practices is the object of this work.

How little is known, even by fairly well-informed Catholics, concerning the history and meaning of the practices which have been embodied in our Church's majestic ritual! They kneel before the altar of God; they listen to the cadence of psalm and hymn and Preface and prayer; they see the ministers of the Church perform various sacred actions - and in many cases they know little of the origin of what they hear and see, or of the reasons for the ceremonial which adds so much to the beauty of Catholic worship. They receive the Sacraments of the Church, devoutly, indeed, but without ever trying to learn why these are administered with certain ceremonies. They use the sacramentals, and profit by so doing; but how few have had an opportunity of learning the history of these things which our Church sanctifies for us! And when a non-Catholic, interested in these ancient practices of the "Mother Church," asks why and wherefore - how seldom we, the children of that Church, are able to give an accurate and satisfactory answer!

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