

Excerpt: If St. Philip Neri was satisfied with a book when the name of its author began with S, it will be surely unnecessary to recommend this treatise, which bears the name of the heroic missionary, B. Leonard of Port Maurice. (Note: He is now St Leonard) To those who have read his life it must appear strange how he found time, in the course of his apostolic wanderings, to compose his various works. Reviewing his efforts to gain souls, his retreats, his sermons, his journeys, they will conclude that his support under such labors must have been in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and they will not wonder that he has spoken with so much unction of its efficacy and graces. Where could he, after hours spent in the confessional, hours short for his zeal, but long for his bodily strength, find vigor, save in the refreshing waters for which, as he said in his daily preparation, he thirsted as the stag thirsts after the fountains of water? To him Our Lord was truly the strong and the living God, and from Him he received each day power to begin anew the fight which ended only when he went to receive his crown. While the holy missionary was collecting the faithful to the Stations of the Cross in the Coliseum, he may, perhaps, have looked to the building on the neighboring hill where his earthly remains were to await the resurrection, and felt in ardent faith that the Sacrifice which those Stations commemorated was really and truly offered on the altars of that humble church. And then his heart would bum with the desire to make all Christians love the Lamb Whom his faith beheld standing as if slain, stantem tanquam occisum (Apoc. 5:6), and he would wish to make men understand how certainly this blessed Victim offers for our sake, day after day, the Sacrifice of Mount Calvary. We think that if we had lived with Mary and the Apostles, we should have loved Him really. If so, when the Fathers tell us that in the Blessed Sacrament He perpetuates and continues the Incarnation for us, we ought to show this love; and where is it? When we have to bear the reproach of our many sins, we persuade ourselves that we should not have committed them if we had knelt with John under the Cross; and yet in the Mass the very same Sacrifice is before our eyes, while we too often remain as hardened as ever. But Saint Leonard saw that it would be at least difficult for men to remain in their sins if they were drawn often to this Sacrifice, by the offering whereof, as the Council of Trent teaches, the Lord being appeased, sends grace and the gift of repentance, and forgives crimes and even grievous sins. Therefore, he sought to draw them to the altar, and bade them pray for the grace that cannot fail. More than once it has happened that those who were not Catholics have been converted by being present during Mass: and can we wonder at it when He, Whose look converted Peter, looks upon them from the altar? Some there are, favored souls and fervent in prayer, who cannot hear Mass without tears. No one ever saw the holy Pontiff Gregory XVI in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament without witnessing the tenderness to which he was moved.

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