

**THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:
PREPARATION, ATTENDANCE,
GIVING OF THANKS, SPIRITUAL
COMMUNION DRAWS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF THE SAINTS**

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The Blessed Sacrament: Preparation, Attendance, Giving of Thanks, Spiritual Communion
Draws from the Writings of the Saints by Frederick William Faber (A Parish Priest)

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FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER (A PARISH PRIEST)

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I.

GOD'S PRESENCE.

Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul
after Thee, O God.—Psalm xlii. 1.

WE have about us, or, to speak more truly, we are ourselves, immortal souls. We are beings who have once been born, but who now can never die. We came out of nothing, but we cannot go into nothing again;—O God forbid, the merciful great God forbid, we should pass into nothing! When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, of self-willed sin—when such, I say, come to lie upon their death-beds, they may perhaps feel that awful, impossible wish that they could pass into nothing: for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong gripe of Satan, amid the intolerable heats of hell. Dying sinners may feel that their immortality is to be an unendingness of pain, of remorse, of despair; and the deadness and the dumbness of passing into nothing, though it surely would make even a dying sinner shudder, would be more bearable to think of than the life in hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire—above,

beneath, on this side, and on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire. Fearful is the thought! fearful enough to quench lust, to cool anger, to make us out of love with money, to spoil our appetites for worldly pleasures! To be nothing is indeed better than to become a dweller in that godless country of intolerable fire; but to those who love God in earnest—that is, who are trying diligently in their poor way to live strict lives, to keep the commandments, and to carry a cross—to such the thought of passing into nothing would be disheartening—it would be quite a punishment. Thus it is when we come to church that we are not contented with thanking God for our preservation, but first of all we return Him solemn thanks for our creation; and why? Because surely a wonderful and endearing mercy it is to have been created even into this sinful world; for otherwise we could not have been redeemed, we could not have carried a cross, we could not have had any interest in our blessed Saviour's Blood. Persons who have not set their minds and hearts on heaven and heavenly things, may think this a strange, unreal way of talking. They may say that the chances are so much against us, the Gospel is so strict, the Church so severe, the commandments so hard to keep, prayer so irksome, lust so strong, money so precious, pleasure so dear, that really common-sense would teach us, what Scripture expressly says—that few would be saved. Then, if the chances be so much against our getting to heaven, and so strongly in favour of our going to hell, would it not be better never to have been born, than to run such an awful risk with the chances against us? I dare say this may have come across some of you who are not religious; it may have come across you at

those times when your conscience speaks sharply to you, and you tremble to think of death and God. But let us turn the question into Bible language, and then see how it sounds. You fancy it would have been better never to have been born than to run the risk of going to hell with the chances against you, and therefore you cannot from your heart thank God for your creation. You will remember that our blessed Lord said of the man who should betray Him, "It had been better for that man if he had never been born." Now, brethren, how will your sinful and most wicked wish sound if I put it in this way?—You wish to be like Judas Iscariot: you say of your ownelves what our Lord so awfully said of him, that "it would be better for you if you had never been born." O brethren! this is a frightening way of putting it; yet how true, how very true an one! You are Judases: you have betrayed and are betraying, perhaps have made up your minds to go on betraying, the self-same Lord whom Judas betrayed. He made a miserable end of it; so will you. He made such an end of it that his own merciful Creator said of him, that "it would have been better for him if he had never been born;" and you, you already, before you come to your end, say the very same thing of yourselves. O would it not be well if this plain, straightforward way of putting the matter should startle you, make you think, make you pause, make you calculate whether it would not be better to turn off the road whereon you are now walking, and throw yourselves at God's feet, and make your peace with the Saviour you are now betraying? I leave you to think of this, my careless brethren; at present it seems to you a forced, unnatural sort of feeling to rejoice in our creation,