

daily communicant was regarded as a kind of saint." The decrees of Pius X on frequent communion were still three years distant in the future, and some parish priests thought that the encouragement of communion on a week-day detracted from what they called the devotion of the fifty-two Sundays.<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt now that it was the very fact of the Friday devotion which made possible the decrees on daily communion and that the quasi-Jansenist opposition to such frequent communion had to be broken down gradually by familiarizing the people with the practice of communion on one ordinary day of the week before any attempt was made to urge daily communion. Between 1870, when the promise was first widely published, and 1906 when Pius X issued his decrees, the growth in numbers of week-day communions was such as to make the transition to the new practices which the Pope recommended appear quite natural. Still less would the modern liturgical movement and the present devotion to the Sacrifice of the Mass have been possible without these preliminary changes in the *sensus fidelium*. The dispute achieved some positive results,

<sup>1</sup> Catholics now take for granted many practices of devotion which have in reality been the result of great pioneering efforts by their parents or their grandparents. If one examines the *Catholic Directory* for the years when Thurston was a child, it is surprising to see in how many towns of England the Catholics of that time had to be content with one Mass, at 10 o'clock, or 10.30 or even at 11, on a Sunday. Oxford, Gloucester, Grantham, Rugby and many other towns were in this case. Few priests seem to have said two Masses for the convenience of their parishioners, some of whom might wish to communicate at a reasonable hour. Only in a few places does one find the notice that Holy Communion is given at 8 o'clock and that Mass is at 10.30. The large towns were better, but it is obvious that there was little demand on the part of the faithful for an early Mass on Sundays at which they might communicate without having to undergo a long fast. This may not be due to Jansenist views held by the faithful, but it is without doubt due to a general feeling that frequent communion was not a matter of importance, and that in turn is a legacy of the bad days of the eighteenth century, when isolation, difficulty of approaching the sacraments, and Jansenist views combined to deaden the piety of the faithful. The book of Dalgairns on the Holy Eucharist is very significant in this regard.

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