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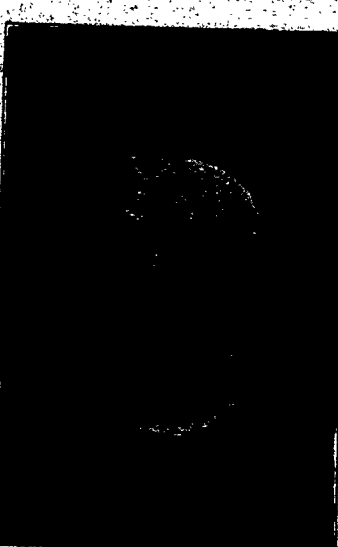
by William I. Lonergan, S. J.

It is always dangerous to judge cohorts of Catholic Action polished in superlatives. However, it may be stated with little fear of contradiction that in the forefront of contemporary Catholic activities is the lay retreat movement. It gets its significance not only from the fact that it is the mind of the Holy Father. It is the basis of all that genuine and effective Catholic Action around which today the energies of the Church are being centered. In His Divine mission of spreading the kingdom of Christ, Time and again the present Sovereign Pontiff has made clear what he thinks of the movement. Apart from an entire Encyclical letter (Mens Nostra) devoted to encouraging the retreats, he issued at the very outset of his pontificate an Apostolic Constitution proclaiming St. Ignatius as a heavenly patron of retreat work. On that occasion he said: "We earnestly wish that the making of these Spiritual Exercises should daily spread wider and wider abroad; and that those houses of devotion into which men withdraw for a month or for eight days or for fewer days to put themselves under training for the perfect Christian life, may come into being and flourish everywhere more and more numerous."

In the Encyclical already referred to (and it might be noted that Encyclicals are confined to matters of supreme and universal importance), the Pope, discussing modern world problems and their remedy, writes: "The most grave disease by which our age is oppressed and at the same time the fruitful source of all the evils deplored by every man of good heart, is that levity and thoughtlessness which every man inherits and thence through serious ways. Hence comes the constant and passionate absorption in external things; hence, the insatiable thirst for riches and pleasures that gradually extinguishes and weakens in the minds of men the desire for more excellent goods, and so entangles them in outward and fleeting things that it forbids them to think of eternal truths. . . . Now if we would cure this sickness from which human society suffers so sorely, what healing remedy could we devise more appropriate for our purpose than that of calling these enervated souls so neglectful of eternal things, to the recollection of spiritual exercises!"

"With no less care, Venerable Brethren, would we have manifold

Retreat Master



WILLIAM IGNATIUS LONERGAN, S. J., well known by many of our readers as the Retreat Master of the Holy Spirit Retreat held at St. Vincent's University, Father Lonergan is the author of the article "The Laymen's Retreat Master" published in the country. The article is reprinted in the country.

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