

Lauds Fr. Lord's Youth Plea

MONTREAL. — The appeal to the youth of Canada made by the Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S. J., to realize how inseparable are patriotism and Christianity should be broadcast and made public in this country from end to end. The Montreal Star, secular newspaper, states in an editorial.

Father Lord, National Director of the Sodality of Our Lady in the United States and Canada, has

been making a tour of leading Canadian cities addressing youth groups.

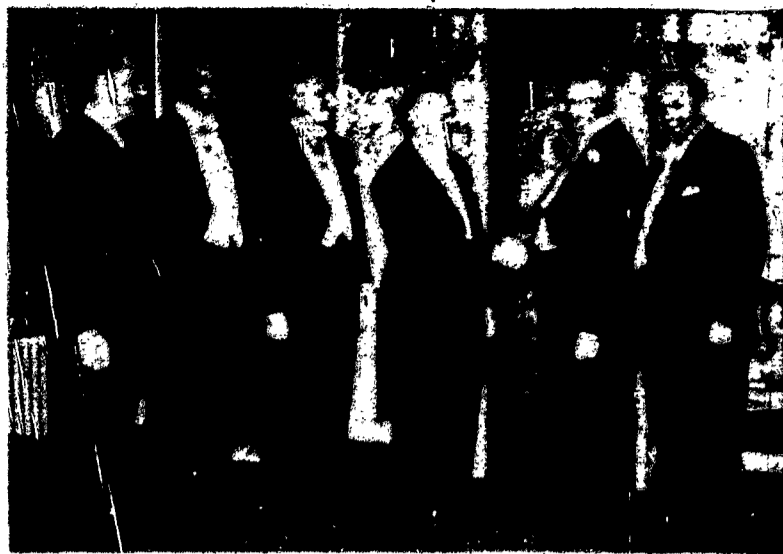
Speaking here Father Lord told the young people they must become 24-hour a day Christians, as the Nazis are 24-hour a day Nazis, or the cause of Christianity would be doomed.

Father Lord's simple and inspiring appeal for the return of religious faith is a message and a

direction not only to the youth of this war-disturbed country but to all their sages as well, the Star editorial said.

Navy Chaplain

Buffalo, N. Y. The Rev. Thomas M. Conway, Assistant Pastor of St. Brigid's Church here has been commissioned a chaplain in the United States Navy with the rank of lieutenant, junior grade. He has left for the Chaplains School at the Naval Training School, Norfolk, Va.



CATHOLIC COURIER Staff Photo

HIGH K. OF C. OFFICERS who attended Fourth Degree ceremony in Elmira, Sept. 27. From left, they are: Vice Supreme Master Alfred A. McGarraghly; Supreme Secretary Joseph F. Lamb; State Deputy Hugh A. Doyle; Supreme Master Timothy P. Galvin; Master of Fifth District Cyril J. Seatt in charge of degree and Master Andrew McCarthy, Second District.

Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire

The Little Flower and Sainthood

I write my column for the COURIER on Saturday, the day we celebrate the Feast of the Child Jesus. So what I promised last week to write about Esauque and the language spoken at Lourdes can wait for another occasion.

But this just reminds me that there is in one respect a striking resemblance between "The Song of Bernadette" and some "Lives" in fact, nearly all the "Lives" that have been written of the Little Flower. Franz Werfel is very severe on all who in any way were opposed to Bernadette. The Bishop, the parish priest of Lourdes, many others but especially the nun who was the Saint's teacher at Lourdes and became her Mistress of Novices at Nevers. Of course this exaggeration of the opposition brings out all the more dramatically the character of the Saint, her truthfulness, her simplicity, her conviction of the reality of the visions, which no opposition of the great and little at Lourdes could shake, and her fidelity to all the "Lady's" commands. In a dramatic work (and that is what Werfel's book really is) such, if not all, of this can be excused, or even defended.

HAD ALL DOCUMENTS

But those "Lives" of Saint Therese cannot be defended on that principle. The "Life" by Monsignor Laville is the best and most complete and serious. The Monsignor wrote it at Lisieux, where he had all the documents at hand and was in daily contact with the Carmelite Nuns especially with the Saint's three Sisters. To give one example of what I mean by exaggeration of the opposition: He is unduly severe with Mother Gonzaga who was Prioress (this is the title given all the Mother Superiors of Carmelite Convents on the Continent) when Therese Martin entered and again when she died. She is described as a rather severe and heartless woman, incapable of understanding or sympathizing with such a character as was Therese Martin.

But let us just take a look at the record. According to the Carmelite Rule the Prioress is elected for a period of three years. The election is a free election. All the professed nuns have a vote. Now Mother Gonzaga was Prioress four times. Long before Therese entered she had been prioress for one term of three years. She was succeeded by another for one term. Then she was again elected, and when that term had expired, she was re-elected. At the end of this third term she had to be retired, because the Rule does not allow three terms in succession. So Sister Agnes, a sister of the Saint, was elected to succeed her. When Mother Agnes' term of three years had expired, Mother Gonzaga was again elected, and was Prioress for a fourth term during the last illness and death of the Saint.

Now, as I have just said, the election is a free election. According to the Rule, the electors are bound in conscience (I think by oath, or at least by solemn declaration) to give their suffrage to the one whom they consider most fit for the office of Prioress. When they elected her for the fourth term they had already had experience of her fitness as prioress for nine years. They had been her subjects. Surely they knew her. Yet they preferred her as Prioress to any other in the Convent. It is perfectly clear, then, that her character was not such as that which emerges from the "Life" by Mon-

signor Laville and other biographers of the Saint.

TRAINED AT CARMEL

All this exaggeration is due to what Belloz calls "writing history backwards." Therese Martin is now a canonized Saint. We have all been fascinated and edified by her autobiography, or, as she herself more appropriately called it, "The History of a Soul." But when she entered Carmel she was a girl of 15. Mother Gonzaga could not be expected to see a halo above her little head marking her out as a child of special graces, predestined to become a great Saint and patroness of the Catholic Missions throughout the entire world. She had to be trained to Sainthood; and her Mother Superior was responsible for her training. She had not escaped her heritage from the old Adam. She had been, in fact, a proud self-willed, stubborn young one, even in her infancy. This is admirably noted by Henri Gheon in his "Life of the Saint" ("Saint of the Little Flower"), the most readable of all the books written about her. Had Mother Gonzaga made her a favorite and a pet, these pronounced features of her natural character might have well grown in the wrong direction. But under the Carmelite Rule and training they were hammered into heroic Christian virtues. Stubbornness became Christian fortitude, pride a persistent determination to reach the highest grade of sanctity possible by the grace of God, trampling down on the way all petty obstacles. The Saint herself saw both the meaning and the necessity of such training and testing. In fact, she was more severe with the novices than Mother Gonzaga had been with herself. And both in her autobiography and on her death bed she has spoken of the debt she owed Mother Gonzaga and expressed her gratitude for the training which she received under her.

A SERIOUS MATTER

This is really a serious question. It is noticeable that the enthusiasm of former years for the Little Flower has greatly subsided. That enthusiasm had reached its highest peak when all that the Catholic public knew of the Saint was derived from her own account of herself. Then followed a plethora of sentimental writing, "sugary sentimentality" as what Henri Gheon calls it which distorted the real portrait of the Saint and obscured the real meaning of the message which God had sent us through the Saint. It began to be suspected that the purpose of the overworked advertising of these writings was just to make money while the going was good.

This motive was openly charged by correspondents in such publications as the Ecclesiastic Review and the Fortnightly Review. The Catholic public began to feel that they were being humbugged at so much a pamphlet. Sales dwindled.

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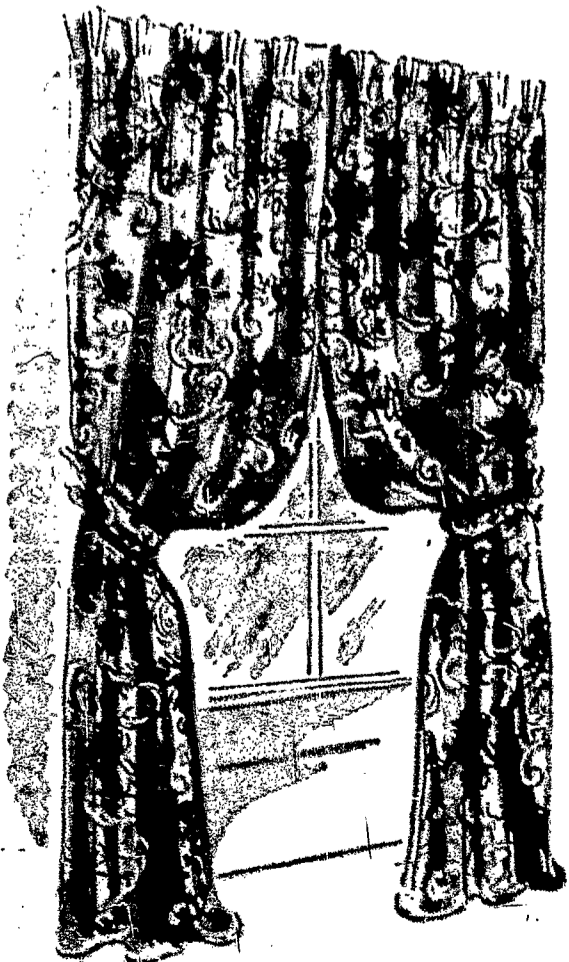
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