Sursum Corda

"Why Does Pope Remain Silent?" (II)

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

Last week in this column, after presenting a partial catalogue of Papal utterances made just before the war in the attempt to preserve peace, I quoted the Pope's own words: "We ourselves, from the first day of Our Pontificate, have attempted and done everything in Our power to remove the danger of war and to co-operate in the attainment of a solid peace, based on justice, such as should safeguard the freedom and honor of the peoples." That was written on Aug. 10, 1939. The Holy Father's protestation that he had done all he could do was abundantly justified. His words were verified (if verification be necessary) by the calendar of events, (by March 4th of that year) on April 9th; on April 20th; on June 3rd; on July 15th; on July 21st; on July 28th; on Aug. 9th and (after the day on which he had written) on Aug. 25th and Aug. 31st, the Holy Father issued messages to the world at large, or to the College of Cardinals, or to a group of pilgrims, or to a Social Study Congress or to a King, or to a group of Ambassadors, repeatedly, insistently and with a constant crescendo of concern, in the attempt to avert the war that turned out to be inevitable.

When the war broke out, the Holy Father commenced a period of fasting. He did not, however, go into retreat. He dared not isolate himself from the rush of events. On Sept. 30th, the day after the partition of Poland (that phrase sounds like an echo out of the past. Poland has been partitioned again and again) the Pope gave audience to the Polish colony headed by the Primate, Cardinal Hlond and sent to Berlin a protest about the persecution of religion in the conquered country.

On Oct. 15th he made the statement: "The Holy See will take a neutral attitude towards the territorial problems of the nations and will not interfere unless all interested parties make an appeal to the Pope to negotiate for peace, in his capacity of a moral and spiritual power." In this space a week ago we reminded our leaders that such was the principle upon which all action by the Holy See has been based.

On Oct. 18th the Holy Father repeated that same statement but added to it, "While conscious of his duties as supreme pastor," the Pope said, "he would never, unless asked to do so, take part in purely temporal controversies or in territorial competitions between the States. But his spiritual duties could not allow him to close his eyes when new and incommensurable dangers to men's souls arose. In such circumstances the prosecution, even and if necessary the defense of the Christian heritage became of decisive importance for the future destinies of Europe and the prosperity of each of its peoples, great and small."

Some European newspapers attempted to read into those words a call for a crusade, but the London Tablet with better understanding, explained: "The Holy Father's peace action is no political action. This it neither can nor may be . . . Pope Pius XII strives to produce the greatest possible balance between means and ends; between the material tools, which the Church must necessarily use, and her spiritual mission, in order amongst other things to thwart her enemies' favourite weapon of political Catholicism."

On Oct. 20th appeared the First Encyclical of Pope Pius XII. Of that document we made brief mention last week.

On Christmas Eve the Holy Father made the allocution in which were included the famous Five Peace Points. A. C. F. Beals in "The Catholic Church and International Order" says that these Five Points "make the farthest limit to which the Papacy has yet gone in suggesting international covenants." A year later (Christmas, 1940) the Christian leaders of Great Britain, Catholic, Anglican and non-conformists, formally adopted the Five Points.

In the middle of January, 1940, the Holy See issued a "Golden Book" of diplomatic documents giving the text of what the Pope had written and spoken in behalf of peace from Dec. 1, 1938, to Dec. 15, 1939.

On Jan. 22nd the Russian paper, Isvestia, complained of outspoken comments on atrocities in Poland made by the Pope's semi-official organ, Osservatore Romano, and scolded Italy for permitting the Vatican paper such liberty. (Russia had made a neutrality pact with Germany.)

We need not continue the catalogue. We could if we would. There is much more material. But these instances taken with those cited last week should be sufficient reply to the ill-advised question "Why Doesn't the Pope Speak?"

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'Those Worn-out Dogmas!'

Via pulpit, platform and loud-speaker, we hear it. In newspapers, magazines and books, we read it. "Those worn-out religious dogmas no longer fit the modern mind—no longer fill the needs of humanity. Away with them!"

Well, let's see about it. There is an all-creative God. Nothing that is can be sensibly explained without that Dogma. Better hold on to that one anyhow.

The Bible. Do not all Christians believe it to be a collection of inspired writings? Hasn't it proved itself by withstanding the most venomous attacks for sixteen hundred years and by remaining today the keystone of most Christian beliefs? That let's hold fast to the Bible, despite all its dogmatic teachings.

In the Scriptures the prophets foretold the coming of the Savior and the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Divine Son of God, Who lived to teach, Who died to explain the sins of man. Old, old dogmas, but can they ever wear out?

The Catholic Church, because it believes that Christ commissioned it to "teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you," and because it believes that God bestowed upon it the guardianship and interpretation of all His revealed truths, is richer in dogmatic teachings than all other churches.

But after all, Mr. non-Catholic neighbor, if you are a Christian, you too believe in many of the Catholic Dogmas. If you are an Individualist, you believe in some of the Catholic Dogmas. If you are just a Deist, you believe in one of the Catholic Dogmas.

Therefore, we are sure, you can smile or weep with us at the ignorance of the "no-dogma" orator who probably knows not the meaning of the word "dogma"—who obviously has created "the modern mind" in the image and likeness of his own, who certainly has no conception of the needs of humanity, else he would plainly see that back to Christ and His dogmatic teachings, is the sole hope of the world today. Catholic Information Society of Nutley, Pa.

'Quix' Corner

Is suicide a mortal sin?

In itself, the action of taking one's own life is mortally sinful. God is the Author of life and of death, and He has never delegated to each individual the right to take his own life. The Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" extends to one's own life as well as that of others; and to take one's own life is to usurp an authority which belongs to God alone. Though suicide is a mortally sinful action in itself, it does not follow that every man who commits suicide is guilty of mortal sin. To be guilty of mortal sin a man must not only do what is seriously forbidden by God; he must also know clearly that it is so forbidden, and be in possession of his reason, that the choice of his will is made with full freedom and deliberation. If we consider, not the action, but the man, charity demands that we give him the benefit of any doubt, and believe that he was not quite himself at the time.

Feast Days

Sunday, Nov. 8—ST. GERTRUDE.

Monday, Nov. 9—ST. EDMUND OF CANTERBURY.

Tuesday, Nov. 10—ST. GREGORY THAUMATURGUS.

Wednesday, Nov. 11—ST. ODO OF CLUNY.

Thursday, Nov. 12—ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY.

Friday, Nov. 13—ST. FELIX OF VALOIS.

Saturday, Nov. 14—THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Library Signpost

Judgment On Certain Magazines

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

Charles A. Brady, professor of English at Canisius College, had a very judicious article in the Oct. 24th issue of AMERICA, entitled **Yard-Stick Set to Our Magazines.** Witty and to-the-point, his observations deserve a wide hearing. I pass some of them on to you.

On LIFE and TIME: "... for better or for worse, they represent together the paramount contemporary influence upon American opinion in general. And, to make this part of the dossier complete include the READER'S DIGEST. The exact secret of the Luce formula (Note: Luce is the editor of Life and Time) is, perhaps, hard to state; one might suggest somewhat inadequately, that the reader genuflects in mind before a disarming blend of shrewdly suggested objectivity and brisk, laconic, military drum-beat of authority of utterance . . . Astonishing if at times disquieting, journalism".

On THE NATION and THE NEW REPUBLIC: "... layer-cake pattern of fine prose, distinguished literary criticism in the form of firstrate book reviews, and discreetly violent geo-political Billingsgate. Far more effective in their impact upon the liberal mind than the companion Catholic weeklies, America and the Commonweal are upon the collective mind of American Catholicism."

On the SATURDAY EVENING POST: After mentioning the recent editorial shake-up in what a certain columnist calls the Saturepost, Mr. Brady says: "Whatever the merits of this tempest within Ben Franklin's teapot, the net result of the recent Philadelphia scrapple has been to confront several cool millions of weekly subscribers with an appalling change: the venerable Post has turned into a pallid carbon-copy of Collier's, without that weekly's verve, plus some of the more mawkish features of a fellow Curtis publication, the Ladies' Home Journal."

On the "ladies' magazines": "... glossy packaged cartons for pre-digested pap . . . little more than a running patter of superficiality broken at intervals by the softly modulated competition of rival cosmetic advertisements . . . The old connotation of powder in regard to magazine fits them like an Elizabeth Arden beauty-mask or a clay-pack gauntlet."

On the "home and garden magazines": "... these burn a grateful incense before the somewhat neglected shrine of hearth and child and kitchen-garden. Although their editors are most likely oblivious of this particular social creed, they manage to do practically for the Chesterton-Belloc ideal of Distributism what the late lamented **American Review** used to advocate in more theoretical terms. They are a heartening portent in the face of the mass-advertising blandishments of the national weeklies."

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Next Tuesday, Nov. 17, is the second anniversary of Eric Gill's death. Let us pray for his soul. Eric Gill was a convert of whom all Catholics may be proud: the kind of man who gives a lift to the soul, just knowing that there is such a man. He was an Englishman who puzzled most, almost all, of his countrymen. He was too advanced for their way of thinking. He was a radical who fumed and chafed because "polite" Catholics discreetly hushed up how revolutionary their Church is. He was an artist—not the "arty" type, which he detested—but the craftsman type, who pounded and chiseled away, not only at stone, but also at the stony conservatism which looked at the machine age as a phase of man's progress, instead of what it more nearly has been and is, a pandering and prostitution of human rights and dignity. He was a Catholic and a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic, whose greatest love was the Church, that City of God which he apprehended as St. John saw it, "the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, like a bride adorned for her husband." His ardent spirit is now in God's embrace, after the fret and fever of this life; and his mouldering body, which he tried so hard to understand according to God's light, is resting in an English graveyard, awaiting the Resurrection. May he rest in peace!

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FOR CATHOLIC STAGERS:

THE CRADLE SONG: Drama in Two Acts and an Interlude, by Gregorio and Maria Martinez Sierra.

Synopsis: A basket is delivered through the gate of a cloistered Dominican convent and is found to contain a tiny BABY. The interest of the SISTERS is aroused and SISTER JOANNA OF THE CROSS is especially attracted by the infant. The Sisters beg the PRIORESS to adopt the child legally. As this is impossible they arrange matters so that the CONVENT DOCTOR adopts the infant and it is placed in the care of the convent community. Eighteen years later, the child TERESA, plans her marriage to the youth, ANTONIO. The nuns approve the young man and prepare for the wedding. At Teresa's departure, the nuns offer gifts and advice. Teresa and Antonio leave. The bell calls the nuns to prayer. They file into chapel, all but Sister Joanna, who weeps bitterly at parting from her beloved charge . . . Beautiful, inspiring drama . . . has often proved its power to interest every type of audience. Not technically difficult, but should be attempted only by advanced amateurs or semi-professionals.

Production Notes: CAST: 4M, 15F . . . SETS: 2-room adjoining cloister; parlor of convent . . . PLAYING TIME: 1½ hours . . . COSTUMES: Dominican habits of nuns and novices; modern dress for doctor, Antonio and poet . . . DIRECTION: requires great care . . . PRODUCTION: simple requirements, may be staged outdoors . . . SOURCE: Samuel French, 25 West 45th St., N. Y. C. Copyright 1934. 75 cents a copy. Royalty of $50 for each amateur performance.

(This digest is from the WPA Federal Theatre Project's list of Catholic Plays.)

FIVE and TEN Years Ago—

From Nov. 11, 1927, Edition

Redemptorist Fathers of St. Joseph's Church commemorated a double anniversary—the bicentenary of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and the one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the First Redemptorists in America.

From Nov. 11, 1937, Edition

A new era opened in the Diocese of Rochester in Sacred Heart Cathedral when the Most Rev. James E. Kearney, D.D., was enthroned as Fifth Bishop of the Diocese by the Most Rev. Stephen J. Donahue, Auxiliary Bishop of New York, in a setting of ecclesiastical splendor.

* * *

In an address at Park Church, Elmira, Mrs. Thomas N. Hepburn, No. 1 disciple of Margaret Sanger, completely sidestepped the moral issue and coupled her shopworn arguments on so-called "birth control," which she had given in a Rochester talk, with a direct attack on the Catholic Church and its clergy in Elmira.

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Adult organizations of Elmira, Elmira Heights and Horseheads met in Columbus Center following Mrs. Hepburn's talk to plan a program of Catholic Action and to arrange a Catholic answer to her false arguments on birth prevention.

Worry over the war situation steals precious energy from the national defense, says Prof. Irvin Lee, of Northwestern University.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 10)

It is no ill will that pushes religion into a corner when men of the world are striving to meet problems. It is a lack of perspective, a lack of knowledge, in many cases. George Washington stated the truth long ago when he urged the absolute necessity of religion and moral principles as a basis for democracy. But still we see earnest men discussing our crime problem, especially as it concerns the youth of the country, and suggesting every type of remedy save the one essential and foundation remedy of all, religious training, moral guidance of the young.

To all our people, but especially to our younger generation, we recommend lasting attention to Commander John Shea's advice to his son: "Be a good Catholic, and you can't help being a good American!"

LIKE LEAVEN

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which a woman took and buried in three measures of flour, until all of it was leavened." "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed." Small, indeed was the beginning of the Church of Christ; small its influence as it began its work. It was located in one of the smallest countries of the world, in a region to most men unknown. It had come to the knowledge of some few thousands of all the men that then inhabited the globe.

The world today shows what Christ meant when he likened His Church to leaven in flour. No part of the Christian world but has felt the power and the elevating influence of the Church. Even beyond the pale of the Church, all the earth has felt the influence of Christianity. Pagan abuses, barbarous cultures, slavery, abasement of woman, have all but disappeared from the earth. The spirit of Christ working through His Church, has changed the world. Even in the leavening influence of the Kingdom of God is apparent. Indeed, men fight valiantly and determinedly today to preserve for mankind the freedoms the Kingdom of God has brought them, which the enemies of God and man would take from them.

The Kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed. That seed is small, so small the eye finds it hard to see it. But it has in it possibilities of growth that become actualities in the mustard tree that soon greets the sun after the seed has been planted. Where else in the world can we see such astounding and constant growth as that of the Church of Christ? Explain it you can, the spread throughout the world of a society that consisted 1900 years ago of twelve Apostles and a few hundred followers: explain it without invoking the might of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, the abiding presence of the Son of God made man!

Every Catholic as a member of the Kingdom of God has a living part to play in the continued development of the Church. His prayers, his good works, his personal interest in the salvation of his fellowman, his zeal for the missions, his instructed grasp of Christian Doctrine, are according to the intention of Jesus Christ part of the equipment of the Living Church.