

Library Signal

When Shall We Begin?

By Rev. Benedict Egan

Next Sunday the Church begins a New Year. Her calendar takes its start from the preparation for the Birthday of Jesus which marks the anniversary of the greatest turning-point in history.

There was a day, not so long ago, when the Church Year stood for much in the lives of our Catholic people. But it looks today as if that is no longer so. One of two of the great sacred dates perhaps stand out with a certain holy solemnity: Christmas and Easter. But as for a pervasive, day-in and day-out consciousness of the whole progression of hallowed days from the beginning of Advent to the end of the Pentecost season, we must say, regretfully, that it is only rarely to be found.

It is not my purpose to analyze how this has come about. That would take careful study and more space than this column can command. But I do mean to insist that the effort to bring our people back into the gracious influence of the Church Year is not a hopeless or a futile task, or only an accessory phase of Catholic living. There are some things of the past whose passing we may regret, but whose revival we may admit would be an anachronism.

The living of our people in the Church Year is not one of those things, apart from a vital contact with the seasons and festivals of the Church, there can be no sturdy all-out Catholic life among our people—the kind of life which would set us Catholics as a community apart, bearing witness in word and life to the fire which Jesus came on the earth to enkindle.

Pope Pius XI said: "The foremost and indispensable fount of the true Christian spirit is the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church."

Pope Pius XI said: "The people are better instructed in the truths of faith by the annual celebration of our sacred Mysteries, than by even the weightiest pronouncements of the teaching Church." There is no doubt at all that our modern Catholic system of catechetical education is as highly organized as ever in the history of the Church. But the results are very disturbing. Even conceding the most generous estimate of the good that has been accomplished, there is still an immense area of failure, out of all proportion with the effort and the headaches endured in the work. When you consider the means and the energy spent in our Catholic schools, you might legitimately forecast a valuable harvest of results. But something intervenes to sterilize the bear-

ing of faith. Making due allowance for the factor of our excessive "know-testing" in secular standards of education as one great reason for our high average of failures, might we not confess that another great reason is to be found in our neglect of the truth expressed by Pius XI and Pius XII in the above quotation? If, every year, we entered joyfully into the Mysteries of Christ and the festivals of Our Lady and the Saints, we would all, children and grown-ups, comprehend our holy religion far better than by the present almost exclusive routine of catechetical training, often times so dry and boring. This is no wild statement; it is only another way of saying what Pius XI said above.

After his conversion, as Eric Gill states in his autobiography, "For a year or more, I was able to probe deeper and deeper into the faith itself, without making the usual discovery that that same faith had for most of my fellow Catholics no bearings at all on the life and work of our times."

Royce C. Matt, former rector of an Episcopalian church in Lakewood, Ohio, and now a convert to Catholicism, is convinced that most converts really get into the Church "only by the skin of their teeth" because they must look beyond "the shiny rags of career, nominal or worldly adherents of the Faith to the devotion and zeal which adorns her living body. He explains that the un-Catholic living of many Catholics has a disorienting effect on prospective converts, and that this disorientation exists "not because of the Church's faith and life, but rather of the presence within the Church of the same faithlessness and un-Catholic living that exists outside."

And a one-time convert to the Catholic Church, who has since returned to whence he came, told me, when I was trying to persuade him concerning the ideal life of the Church, that I believed in a Church which didn't exist.

How awful all of this is! Of course, we have our dynamic clusters of prayer, our devoted communities of service, and thousands of faithful who lead exemplary lives of devotion and zeal. But this isn't true of all our millions. Are we to say, Well, you can't expect everybody to be so religious; we're not in Heaven yet? People are doing a big job if they keep out of mortal sin; it takes all kinds, etc., etc., ad nauseam? Such counsel of inferiority, at a time of history when Pope Pius said no Christian can be content to be mediocre.

The major brunt of this re-orientation of our people into the full scope of the Church Year is on us priests, of course, who are the appointed leaders of the flock of Christ. But the layman can begin, too; and many of them, far and wide, are doing so. I suggest that all who read this column, such as it is, take on themselves for the new Church Year the project of studying and mastering the contents of the St. Andrew Missal, which is perhaps the best of its type, with its fine instructions and explanations on all the phases of the Church Year. He will you be preparing an advance-guard action for that more vigorous Catholic life which we pray will emerge out of the agony of our present time.

Sursum Corda

'Wise Words About War'

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

There are half a dozen reasons—perhaps half a hundred—why I have seldom mentioned the war in this column. The first is that the subjects which naturally come under "Sursum Corda" do not include so depressing a subject as war. To mention war is horrible whether we are winning or losing. The Popes have said so again and again, and the Fathers and the classic theologians have said so.

The second reason is that I have seen few comments on the war in the press and heard still fewer on the radio that have done for me anything like a cry of exultation. But recently I did come across a brief article in which it was a sermon in an A. M. E. Church, and I were a member I think I should have cried out "Amen Brother!" and perhaps even "Hallelujah!" If it were not a sermon in church but a speech in the British House of Commons I am sure I would have thumped my cane on the floor and cried "Hear, Hear!"

It was as a matter of fact, an article in the New York Times Magazine. The author is the celebrated English novelist and essayist J. B. Priestley. The title was "Vision, Not Hate, Will Win the War." He does speak in one or two paragraphs about hate. We shall come to that in a moment. But his theme is not hate. He has some fine things to say about what I suppose may be called the psychology of morale. Take for instance this shrewd observation: "Making people conscious of the war is no bad thing, but it is not the terrific morale builder that it is often imagined to be. Indeed, in my view, this business of slamming war into the public mind can easily be overdone and so defeat itself. To fill newspapers and magazines with war stories, to deafen radio listeners and motion-picture audiences with the roar of planes and battle of machine guns—that is all very well and may even be vitally necessary in the early days, but I fancy that the saturation point is soon reached. And in any event propaganda of this kind can never become the solid foundation of morale."

I have had that same thought and scarcely dared express it for fear of seeming to be unpatriotic. I think Mr. Priestley is right. This incessant whipping up of the people may produce the same effect as playing the whip too soon, too hard and too often to a thoroughbred race-horse. Not that I know much about the technique of jockeys on the track, but I rather think that if a jockey belabors his mount mercilessly from the moment the barrier is sprung, the poor nag may drop dead before he comes into the stretch. We have in all probability a long race to run in this war. It would seem wise of those who are driving us not to whip us too hard at the beginning.

If someone objects that the public is not a thoroughbred, but rather a mule or an ass that has to be coddled from first to last, shouted at and sworn at (there are certain war-orators who have taken to swearing) I can only say that I am enough of a democrat (small d please) to believe that the people is no ass and no mule. The people—most of

whip us too hard will break our spirit. Priestley is right.

And now the matter of hate. There is a sentence of the celebrated Bishop of Lancaster Spalding (an excellent epigrammatist superior to Ralph Waldo Emerson) which with a good many others from his pen has remained in my mind since I first read him. He said indignation is a parasite of which we very quickly tire. Indignation unrelied of humor, indignation at white heat that never cools off, indignation and "nothing else but," defeats its own purpose. It is supposed to stir us up but it only beats us down.

So of anger, so of hatred. I make no plea for unbroken placidity. John the Baptist was good and angry on occasion. So was St. Paul. So was Our Saviour Himself. The prophets of old occasionally burst out with magnificent wrath. But that as unbroken serenity falls on us, so a constant habit of anger makes us rebellious. Especially when anger is compounded with hatred it produces a violent reaction. Mr. Priestley says that he happens to dislike the Nazis intensely and that he dislikes them "when some of our loudest haters were still running across to Nuremberg and accepting the hospitality of those murderers." Perhaps I may be permitted to remark at this point, even though it bears digression, that I have not only disliked the Nazis and Fascism but have repeatedly expressed that dislike before it became popular to do so. But, says Mr. Priestley—now here is the wisest and most sensible sentence in his article: "Hate seems to me to make an uneasy and treacherous foundation for public morale." I commend that philosophical reservation to some orators and debaters and agitators.

Mr. Priestley goes further. He thinks that hatred is not only for civilians but for soldiers. The minds of people who hate, he says "are not cool and unclouded," and fightingmen especially should not be turned into screaming, staving fanatics for they will need their wits about them.

There is much more common sense in that newspaper magazine article. I cannot quote it all. Suffice it to say now that he goes on to make some alternative and constructive observations about the spirit that will win the war. He stays in the realm of natural reason. He makes no appeal to religion or revelation. But his argument goes far to show that reason and revelation, common sense and religion are closely allied. I for one am thankful to have so sane a statement from Mr. Priestley. He has a hundred times convinced us of his talent. Now we know that he has wisdom as well. (Copyright, 1942, N. C. W. C.)

FIVE and TEN Years Ago--

From Nov. 23, 1932, Edition Ceremony of opening and inspection of the new Holy Sepulchre Cemetery gate on Downey Ave. took place with His Excellency, Bishop O'Hara, and the Board of Trustees, officiating.

From Nov. 25, 1937, Edition Catholic persecutions in two countries brought action at the U. S. Bishops' General Meeting in Washington: a message to the Bishops of Germany declaring an attempt is being made there to destroy the fruits of the Redemption and a letter to the Bishops of Spain expressing horror because of tragic conditions in that nation and praying them

THE CHURCH THAT IS NEVER EMPTY

If you had seen the face of a certain man, who was walking hurriedly down the street, you probably would have said: "That fellow, he is in some great trouble!"

If you had seen that same man a few minutes later at the door of a Catholic church, you would have said: "That fellow, he is in some great trouble!"

And if, while later, you had seen that same man leaving the church with vigorous step and with soft, grateful eyes, you would have said: "That fellow, he is in some great trouble!"

Catholic churches are often crowded. They may at times contain no human beings. But at all times in a Catholic church, especially in that little altar chapel, called the tabernacle, there is always the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ under the form of bread.

This is the Personal Presence, the Real Presence of His Word, who died to redeem the world. This is

the Bread of Life, consecrated which Christ said: "He that eateth this bread shall live forever." This is the Bread of the Last Supper, which, directly changed to the Body of the Son of God and offered daily to every Catholic in Holy Communion.

This is that Blessed Sacrament which the Catholic Church has kept sacred the altar and table set before the church door. This is the Holy Eucharist which brings from all quarters of the globe thousands of thousands of pilgrims, for people's health, consolation and supplication, at those great Eucharistic Assemblies.

These three things make a Catholic church a living organism. They are the things which give it its life, its power, its strength. He who has not these things present, you will find that such is individually present, but as one part of a whole, not as the whole itself.

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'Quiz' Corner

Does a person tell a lie when he sends word to certain visitors that he is not at home when in reality he is in the house?

Lies are to be distinguished from conventional ways of speaking. A lie is a deliberate statement, an untruth, as when some one asks you whether or not you are a Catholic and you reply that you are not. There are conventional expressions which do not answer the question asked, or are vague, and these may be used without sin, to give our reaction to an intruder or a person who has no business to ask the question.

If anybody can baptize a child and the baptism counts, why is it that you have to go to church for the christening of a child? Why not have all baptisms that way?

The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Baptism is a priest and the Church requires that this Sacrament be given by a priest with the added ceremonies and prayers. Baptism of a child by a lay person is an exception and allowed only under extraordinary circumstances. Baptism by a

priest means proper administration of this most important Sacrament. In addition, priests are the proper persons to administer the Sacraments, and that is one of the reasons why Christ instituted the priesthood. Only a priest can perform the exorcisms and offer the prayers prescribed by the Church for solemn Baptism.

When we say that a person died in the state of grace, does that mean that we believe that the person has gone straight to Heaven?

No. The state of grace simply means freedom from mortal sin. There are countless numbers who die in this happy condition and yet have some great sin for which to atone, or must still suffer for the temporal punishment due to their sins. In these cases they do not go immediately to Heaven, but must go first through the cleansing fire of Purgatory.

If a person is married in the secular and later it does he have to be married again?

A person once married in the secular does not have to be married again. If you lose your secular wife and do not wear them for some time you can be restored to all the privileges and indulgences by securing a new secular which does have to be blessed.

EDITORIALS

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devout attendance on the Pontifical Mass that was the culmination of the birthday observance of the parish.

The COURIER congratulates Father John Ball and his flock on the happy occasion. Lima has made religious history in the past, particularly in the scholarly pastorate of Father Simon Fitzsimons whose struggle for recognition of the right of Catholic Sisters to teach in public schools made the village known throughout the country. With the other astors, he imparted Catholic culture in his patient teaching of the parishioners, and left an example for his successors in the pastorate. May the blessings of the past years be repeated abundantly in the years ahead. God's blessing on the Church and Parish of St. Rose of Lima.

FOR THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

The First Sunday in Advent is by tradition and precept reserved in all the churches of the United States for the Annual Collection for the support of the Catholic University. All American Catholics take pride in this great national school of Catholic learning, which was founded by their common effort, has progressed through their latest, and depends always on their loyal support. Catholic schools, institutions, organizations, in every city and village of the United States profit by the work of the Catholic University. Leaders in fields of education, social service, diocesan administration, come forth annually from its doors, to carry on the glorious Catholic tradition in the generation now with us and for those that are to come. Your annual contribution to the Catholic University will be made in your parish church Sunday, Nov. 29. It may be one dollar, it may be something more; but, large or small, it will be your token of that true Catholic spirit that makes you want to have a part in all that