Forum Comment

Inarticulate: But Why?

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

Away back in 1870 an anonymous writer in The Catholic World declared that thousands of Catholics were graduating from colleges every year, but that the publishers of a magazine addressed primarily to the educated laity seemed to wonder whether these college graduates could be filling themselves. Recently years later, as Editor of that same magazine, I still wonder.

But that shall not be my theme today.

What I have in mind to ask now is not why educated Catholics do not subscribe to a magazine prepared especially for them, but why educated Catholics do not leap to the defense of their Church when she is attacked in the daily press. Where are the educated Catholics? In what mental corner do they conceal themselves? What are they doing with their knowledge of the faith accumulated in Catholic schools, colleges, universities? Why do they remain dumb when ignorant or malevolent persons attack our religion?

"Your Catholic people are inarticulate," said the moderator of a non-sectarian forum. True, but why? Is it a hang-over from penal days when we were not permitted to open our mouths? In certain spots in the United States I have met Catholics who were ashamed or afraid to be known as such lest their business suffer. "Here in my diocese," said a Bishop, "we are the under-dog and we are never allowed to forget it." But are we the underdog in New York and Chicago and San Francisco and everywhere?

St. Thomas says that whatever is good has a tendency and a power to diffuse itself. A Catholic education is good. Why doesn't it diffuse itself? In the Gospel the Lord condemned the man who had a talent but wrapped it up in a napkin. The "talent" to which He made reference was a piece of money. But isn't knowledge a "talent" more valuable than many pieces of money? Why then wrap up knowledge in a napkin? "Let your light shine before men," said our Saviour. That is to say, tell the world what you know, especially if what you know is something that the world doesn't know and should know.

Now what am I driving at? Or as the practitioners of a more up-to-date slang put it, "What's eating me?, What's burning my up?"

Plenty. Almost every day I find in the newspapers statements about the church and the Faith that are either stupid or wicked. But seldom—almost never—do I find prompt and adequate answers from educated Catholics to misrepresentations and calumny. To be charitable, let us presume that the authors of those wrong statements don't know any better; though to tell the truth authors should make it their business to know better. I could give a thousand examples. One will suffice.

In a Sunday paper that claims over three million circulation there appeared a special article pretending to explain Catholicism. It was written by a well-known, though ignorant, Protestant, under the title, "The Bible Is Still the Best Seller." A very subtle digest of the book, alleged by the writer, will show how all sound criticism are under the ban of the Church.

In that article appears this paragraph: "There has always been argument over the beginnings of the Bible—whether it be a collection of separate manuscripts and writings by men of native imagination and pen, whether it is a piece of supernatural work; whether, as most of the Christian world believes, God Himself inspired the writers . . . Whether it was and these tales were inspired men to recorded only in the heart of each man."

Obviously there is a challenge to Catholics who believe that the question of inspiration versus "human imagination" is not to be answered either by the heart or the mind of the individual. Not by that guide.

Further on comes this slap in the face to the Catholic Hierarchy: "When the princes of the Church and the realm learned what the indefatigable priest (John Wycliffe) was doing by way ordained to women. His 'letters' feared that lowly men might rise to assert his right to the justice, mercy and charity which the Book assured him were his by right of God. They didn't like people to learn to read for the same reason."

This is no place to go into the question in that detail. Every educated Catholic knows the answer. It is taught in all our schools and colleges. But how many Catholics wrote to the editor to protest the libel? I followed the correspondence columns in that paper for a week or so after the article appeared. I saw not one protest. On the following Monday I had some faint hope of finding a similar article written from the Catholic viewpoint. There was none. The author of the calumny—of course—didn't know how mistaken she was. She could hardly have realized how violent a statement she had made. But why was there no Catholic layman or woman to set her right? Perhaps it would be too much to expect that she should have gone to the actual sources of historical knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, but she could have found the elementary truth in the Catholic Encyclopedia, or the most competent book of Catholic teaching (Father Conway's popular but admirably "question box" is a brief but excellent summary). She also resurrects the old, old accusation that the Church didn't want the people to learn the Word of God. And—now here is my grievance—she gets away with it.

The question is not why didn't some priest answer her. Almost every day I find in my mail a newspaper or magazine clipping from some part of the United States, with the peremptory command "answer this!" What do these correspondents think a priest does all day, especially if he happens to be an editor? Have they a picture of him sitting twiddling his thumbs and sighing: "I wish some one would send in a challenge that I might answer?" The priest editor is always up to his eyes in work. He wants to know what has happened to all the educated laity. What are they doing with the knowledge acquired in school and college? They are, as the churchman of the forum said "inarticulate." Why? I am anxious to know.

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Library Signpost

Lenten Plays

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

Catholic singers are thinking now of their Lenten play. They, even more than their audiences, gain much from a reverent portrayal of a worthwhile Passion Play. The whole point of Gheon's famous play, The Comedian, is an illustration of how a serious actor is influenced by the role he portrays: its leading character is a pagan actor whom the Roman Emperor compels to delineate the role of a Christian martyr, but who started out in the spirit of mockery ended in faith and love, and the actor's own condemnation to death.

Actually therefore, sacred drama can be a religious boon to those who act in it, especially if they are prepared under good and wise leadership. Not only do they stand to gain from a sympathetic rehearsal of the sacred subject, but they will bring a blessing of God upon themselves for being dramatic chroniclers of the divine truth and beauty to their audiences.

There is a very good repertory of Lenten and Easter plays. Some of them are listed here for your information.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED . . . 4-act drama by **William Mathias Lamers**, using a cast of 30 men and 4 women, 9 sets (simulated by use of cyclorama), lasting 2½ hours, obtainable from Catholic Dramatic Movement, 1511 West Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wis., at 50 cents a copy; permission for production granted on purchase of 15 copies (at 50) and payment of royalty fee ($10 each performance).

PILATE THE GOVERNOR . . . 4-act drama by **Fr. Daniel A. Lord, S.J.**, with a cast of 20 men and 2 women, and 3 sets; requiring 2 hours playing time, obtainable from The Queen's Work Press, 3742 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, Mo., at $1 a copy; $25 royalty for each amateur performance, and written permission must be secured from the author.

BARTER . . . 4-act drama by **Fr. Urban Nagle, O.F.**, with a cast of 5 men, 6 women, and 1 child, using 3 sets, and taking 2 hours playing time; obtainable from Longmans, Green & Co., 114 Fifth Ave., N. Y. C., at 75 cents a copy; $15 royalty for each performance.

THE BETRAYAL . . . 3-act drama by **G. K. Dowsett**, described as "one of the best Passion Plays written in recent years" (the fact that the script has a preface by G. K. Chesterton confirms this verdict). Cast of 30 men, 3 women, 1 boy, 3 sets; 2 hours playing time; needs expert direction, skilled acting and ample equipment; obtainable from the author at St. Patrick's College, Ottawa, Canada; consult author for terms.

THE DARK HOURS . . . drama in 3 scenes by **Dan Sheppeck**, which ranks high in present amateur modern Passion Plays. Cast of 8 men and 2 women; 4 sets; 2 hours playing time; needs competent direction, but simple equipment; obtainable from Doubleday, Doran & Co., 14 West 49th St., N. Y. C., at $1 a copy; the publishers are to be consulted for production rights and royalties.

THE LORD OF DEATH . . . 3-act drama by **Rev. Joseph Mueller the Pope**, mostly in blank verse; cast of 7 men; 12 women; 2 sets; 2½ hours playing time; needs expert direction and ample equipment; obtainable from Longmans, Green & Co. (address above) at 40 cents a copy; royalty fee quoted on application.

HELL ALL THOU HAST . . . drama in 3 scenes by **C. J. Muehlhaus**; for advanced amateurs who want a play dealing with events of the Passion in terms of modern theatre; it bridges the time between 33 A. D. and the present by a simple device. The Himalaya; This is a story of the love of Judas and Veronica, and the lives of Judas, Barrabbas, Zacchaeus, Levi and Judas. In simple and touching scenes, the author analyzes the effect of Jesus' words "Sell all thou hast," both before and after the Crucifixion. This is one of the few dramas which adequately motivate the character of Judas. It never verges on the platistic. The dignity and beauty command attention . . . It uses 8 men, 2 women; 1 set; takes full evening's playing time; its direction is simple. It is obtainable from Portsmouth Priory, Portsmouth, Rhode Island, c/o Father Prior, who should be consulted about terms.

THY WILL BE DONE . . . 3-act drama by **Robert Murphy and Cecilia Lenz**. Synopsis: Gallus, a Roman soldier, follows Judas to the Garden of Olives where, after Judas' betrayal, he seizes Christ and turns Him over to the rabble. Assigned to the bitter task of assisting at the Crucifixion, Gallus, though not a Christian, believes that he is putting to death an innocent man. Moreover his wife, Constantia, is a devoted follower of Christ. With a sense of guilt, and with the blood of Christ upon his arms, Gallus returns to his wife and crippled child. Trying to excuse himself for the deed he has committed, he points to the fact that if there were a just God, his child Claudius would not be a cripple. He takes the child in his arms, and as he holds him a miracle is performed before his eyes. The child suddenly straightens his crippled limbs, and leaving himself from his father's arms walks across the room. Gallus realizes that his son has been healed with the blood of Christ. He is converted to Christ, together with Elias, son of Caiphas, who is a witness.

The play uses 12 men, 5 women, 1 child; 4 sets; 1½ hours playing time; expert direction, ample equipment, musical accompaniment; obtainable from Samuel French, 25 West 45th St., N. Y. C., at 25 cents a copy; royalty; $25 each performance.

(I was indebted for this information to the Missouri Service Bureau of the Summer WPA Federal Theatre Project, which was under the direction of Kenneth Lavery.)

However brilliant an action, it should not be esteemed great unless the result of a great motive.—La Rochefoucauld, 1665.

God has placed the Heart of Jesus in the hands of Mary, that she may take care to make it loved by men.—St. Alphonsus Liguori.

EDITORIALS

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restored through laborious waking of a livelihood from the soil, was a life of true Catholic faith. His love for the Church, his interest in all that concerned Catholic doctrine and Catholic parish life, had proper expression in his acceptance for so long a period of the office and responsibility of Lay Trustee.

Bishop and Pastor owe much to the continued help given them by our loyal Catholic laymen. Their place for the spiritual part of parish life enjoys the needed cooperation of the laity; their plans for the material comfort of each parish would have no success without lay assistance. Worthy of especial honor from Bishop and parishioners at large, are the two Lay Trustees who in each parish share with the Clerical Trustees the office and the obligations of membership on the Parish Corporation. God has called to his eternal reward the soul of a worthy Catholic, a faithful parishioner, a zealous Trustee of St. Leo's Church, John Conroy. The COURIER extends to his relatives sincere sympathy. May his soul rest in peace!

BASED ON LAW

A juridical order is worthy to be one that is based on law, divine law, natural law. The constitution appeals to divine law, to natural law, before its expresses positive principles that shall govern the more perfect union it brings into being. There is a decided contrast here to the new types of alleged government, in which the State or those in control is above all law. No man, no government, can ever change the eternal norms of right and wrong; might can never make right; crimes that all old called to heaven for vengeance still make that same cry.

The intervention of human agency cannot prejudice the precise, bedrock, rules that govern society. It can violate them, ignore them, neglect and despise them, but can never supplant them. "Heaven and earth shall pass away". Conditions of life change, principles of right and wrong never change. Old powers disappear, old constitutions give way to a new order, but the law of yesterday remains to be the law of today in all its essentials. Men who had, sometimes to have, shall always have a right to order in society based on law, a juridical order.

God, man, law—all are essential to right order in society. God as the recognized Author and Master of all; man in all the dignity in which God has created him; law as expressed in nature itself or as declared by God in answer obedience to God, respect for man, protection of man in what God has given to him. Note how carefully and thoroughly all these have been erased from the page of totalitarian philosophy of government. God is out, man is out, law is out. The devil is in, his earthly dwelt is in, all the nonsense of pagan mythology is in! Things are bad in the world of totalitarianism.

It seems so simple a thing that governments to rule men must be in accord with man's nature, must recognize that he comes from God, must return to God; must view man as a creature of earth for a time, but a potential citizen of heaven for eternity. Man must be changed to something inhuman, unnatural, before he can be governed and directed by an inhuman and unnatural government. Yet how many in today's world, even among those who do not favor totalitarianism, forget this simple fact! It is well for the world to listen to the warning words of Pope Pius XII, to seek guidance from one whose wisdom and whose experience are in keeping with the high office he holds as Head of God's Church on earth.

It is well for the children of the Church to remember his words, to be ready to teach a world tainted with paganism the saving truths of Christian revelation. Our next editorial will study the three errors affecting the juridical order in society today, as exposed and condemned in the Christian Message of the Pope.

WHATEVER IS JUST

God's goodness in our salvation. We live at best unprofitable servants. No infinite merit of ours could ever measure the infinite worth of the life of grace on earth or of glory in heaven. No finite satisfaction of ours could ever attain to the infinite satisfaction due the Almighty for our sins. Christ calls all to repentance, to grace, to life. Some answer the call in early life: "All this have I done from my youth." Some get the call in middle life and answer at once: "Leaving all things, they followed Him". Some answer only toward the end of life: "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." —Today Thou Shalt be with me in Paradise."

Peter and Dismas and the Rich Young Man come before us today as we think about the Gospel of the Sunday. The Rich Young Man had followed God's way from his earliest childhood; he hoped to possess eternal life, was willing to labor in the ordinary way in the vineyard for it; Jesus loved Him for what he had done, for his use of divine grace, and proposed the perfect way for future following: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me!" He had labored in the vineyard, was asked to labor even more to win the prize of a perfect life; but left the Lord in sorrow, because he loved his earthly possessions. Was there any reward for one who abandoned the vineyard, left his work? Perhaps he came back to Christ later, but we do not know; it is never safe to turn away from the work assigned us by the Master of the Vineyard.

Peter and the other Apostles answered the call of Christ toward the middle years of life. They bore the burden of the day and the heats; they labored till the end of the day; they received their reward "exceeding great," of which the denarius or penny of the parable was the token. Dismas, the good thief, spent only the last hour in the vineyard; he had not borne the burdens of the day and the heats; but he answered the call of grace, he turned to Christ in sincere love for the dying Redeemer, he genuinely he received the reward of heaven, of paradise, even as did those who labored all through the hottest hours of the day. "They received, every man, a denarius."

Christ wants us to work for our salvation, to labor in his vineyard. He adds the infinite merits of His eternal grace to every effort of ours. He crowns our souls with his sanctifying grace, so that our acts are supernatural in origin and in merit. "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me!" I labor, I pray, —now not I, but Christ Who labors, Who prays, in me!

Christ is good! Christ desires the salvation of all, to give all the denarius of life eternal, our reward exceeding great. May we not be evil, may no trace of envy or jealousy of the mercy of Christ to some lowly brother stain the perfection of Christian charity that should be ours. We have heard the call, we have labored in the vineyard, we have agreed to the penny that is just. May our souls, with the graces of divine Christ, be worthy to answer as among the chosen!