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OUR SACRAMENTALS

Every Catholic knows the meaning and use of sacramentals. So close to nature is the prompting to have about us things that remind us of God and of His saints, that the use of them is most natural. It takes on the guise of the supernatural when the blessing of the Church is added to the item, together with the granting of indulgences to the user or wearing of it. Sacramentals are numerous, and go back to the very beginning of the Church. The sign of the cross heads the list, with holy water, incense, candles, images, medals, crucifixes, occupying important places. The Rosary and the Stations of the Way of the Cross are in universal use among Catholics.

No Catholic will harbor any superstitious attitude toward any sacramental. All the sacramentals in the world can not bring us to salvation, can not in themselves bring us God's blessing. Sacramentals do not of themselves give grace to the soul. But they do remind us of God and of His Saints, of holy persons and events, and thereby stir up in our souls religious thoughts and desires, which can become the means of bringing us new gifts of God's sanctifying and actual grace. Moreover, the blessing of the Church on certain sacramentals enable us to gain indulgences, remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. The sacramentals of the heart prompted by use of sacramentals can secure us remission of venial sins; can prompt us to acts of perfect sorrow based on the consciousness that we have offended God Who is all good, and thus to secure pardon of even mortal sin. Our act of perfect sorrow will include the intention of confessing such mortal sins in our next confession.

What a comfort to our Catholic soldiers and sailors and airmen to wear a medal of the Blessed Mother, bearing her image, honoring her dignity, giving constant testimony to faith in her intercession! What a joy in time of danger, of suffering, of hardship, to have at hand a small crucifix to remind one to offer all his pain up in union with the sufferings of the Redeemer! What a daily reminder of the power of prayer to have a rosary near to prompt us to say the noblest prayers man can ever send up to God, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the while we review in fifteen decades the life of Christ and His Holy Mother in their principal mysteries!

It takes intelligence to appreciate all that the sacramentals mean to us. Natural helps to a supernatural manner of life, they appeal to the deepest instincts of our hearts, satisfy the deepest convictions of our minds. God bring to our men in service many a daily blessing through the respectful and reverent use they make of their rosaries and crucifixes and medals!

WITHOUT EQUIVOCATIONS

A most important phrase in the Bishops' Program for Peace is the one that refers to the acceptance by the nations of the Atlantic Charter without equivocations. This most solemn declaration of Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt on the purposes of the war and the high ideals of the peace, was given to the people of the world as the ideal they were fighting to attain. With victory now within sight it is important to re-emphasize that the Charter contains, to restate its every provision, as an intention that we will hold high the ideals proposed to us when victory did not seem so sure.

A peace that comes without strict compliance with all that the Charter promises, can not be a real peace. Our Bishops surely speak for all true Americans when they say: "We have no confidence in a peace which does not carry into effect, without reservations or equivocations, the principles of the Atlantic Charter." Any compromise with justice, any unreasonable concession made to a strong nation over a weak one, means an unjust peace: means sowing the seeds for a new war.

Americans in stressing their deep convictions in this matter are following the lead of President Roosevelt, are strengthening his hand as he deals with our Allies on the essential conditions of a just and lasting peace.

OUR LADY OF THE ADVENT

Special devotion to Mary is most natural to the season of Advent. The liturgy makes daily references to her, the Divine Office speaks in its principal hours of the great mystery of her divine maternity. Prophecies of old are quoted in her praise, while she takes her place in the history of the years of hope for the fulfillment of the promise of the Redeemer and likewise travels the ninety miles from Nazareth in anticipatory anticipation of the realization of that hope.

We can think of Mary as she travels the rough mountain roads to Bethlehem, or as she goes with her and Joseph in the two or three days of travel to Bethlehem before the birth of Christ. Busy days, days of weariness and frustration. Days that ended in the reluctant acceptance of the stable on the edge of the town as the only shelter that could be found for them.

It is to think of Mary as she makes this journey that we are reminded that God's will in finding in the stable her place of rest after a hard journey. We can think of the love of God for man revealed in His readiness to become man for man's Saviour. Trying to think of the preparation for a better order.

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

DEADLY PERFECTIONISTS?

The Bishops' Statement on International Order issued at Washington on November 19 had, as the English say, "a good press." In fact a remarkably good press in view of the fact that it is packed with highly controversial matter, and that its tone, while urbane, is uncompromising. The Bishops hit straight from the shoulder on the most hotly debated question of the day - how shall we rebuild our shattered civilization. It might have been expected, therefore, that the secular newspapers would be critical if not hostile.

It is usually expected that an ecclesiastical document shall consist of "pious platitudes" which will arouse neither assent nor dissent. But here is a document which "picks a punch." I think it surprising, therefore, that it was received with all but universal approbation.

There is no need of recalling here the comment of the daily press. But one or two samples may be welcome. David Lawrence in his syndicated article said: "The declaration is of world wide importance and one that must inevitably play a part in the discussions leading to the establishment of an international organization to preserve peace." The New York World-Telegram said editorially, "Of the many official and unofficial statements on the conditions of a just and lasting peace we have seen none better than that recently issued by the Catholic Bishops of the United States." So said all the papers - almost all.

But the New York Herald Tribune carried an editorial under the heading "The Deadly Perfectionists." It spoke of those advocates of a world order who see anything less than complete and immediate perfection as an act of treachery to their ideal. . . and continued, "The Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church took their stand upon sound and unanswerable principles which however cannot possibly be applied in their purity to the practical human issues of the present." The writer of the editorial went on to speak of "other perfectionists" and "uncompromising idealists," and expressed the opinion that they can do more harm to the peace plans than the robot bombs did to England. Apparently the Herald Tribune includes the Bishops among the starry eyed idealists who with the best and holiest intentions are more of a menace than a help.

I cannot agree. To me it seems that it is the realists who have made a sorry mess of the world. Idealists should now be given a chance, if only for a change. They couldn't do worse and they might conceivably do better. At Versailles for example, the idealists were crowded out, and the realists took over. We see the consequences.

But let that pass. Let's come to cases, and ask questions. Which one of the principles advocated by the Bishops was "uncompromisingly idealistic?"

Was it this: "The war came from bad education; it was not brought on by primitive or unlettered peoples; the contemporary philosophy which asserts the right of aggression is the creation of scholars." That doesn't sound to me like idealistic dreaming. It is cold fact; sheer realism.

Along The Way By Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

ONE BORN EVERY MINUTE

She has been teaching mathematics in one of my favorite colleges, this wise and gracious nun, for many a brief and happy year. Sometimes we sit and reminisce; and often her stories are minor mines from which I gather a choice bit of wit or lore.

For instance: She was talking recently of the Get Rich Quick Schemes of the days of her youth. The instinct to Get Rich Quick perdured; the method is somewhat more subtle these days.

"I was a teacher in the public schools at the time," she said, "and the word began to float among us that the town had just opened a gusher. Yes, indeed. All you needed to do was place fifty dollars in the hands of these financial magicians, and instantly you started to receive two dollars each and every week. And, you were assured, that from that moment on, each fifty dollars would produce a weekly dividend of two dollars on and on and on into your ripe old age.

"For a week I resisted bravely. The other teachers told of the checks that came rolling in. As I figured it, they were getting a little better than 200% a year on their investment. And it did seem like monetary manna from heaven. But I fought the temptation until . . .

"Well, on a Monday morning on my way to school, I handed my first fifty dollars to the smiling man across the counter in the banklike building. And on Tuesday morning the whole enterprise blew up in all our faces.

"Not unreasonably I figured that no firm could have lost my money between Monday morning and Tuesday morning before dawn. But when I appeared at the banklike structure, now guarded by soldiers, I found my fifty dollars in line, the

Or was it perhaps this: "We have no confidence in a peace which does not carry into effect without reservations or equivocations the principles of the Atlantic Charter." That is to say we must be honest with our selves, and with the world; we must not enunciate high moral sentiments and later abandon them. Is that what the editor of the Herald-Tribune calls excessive and impossible idealism?

Or was it this: "We must repudiate absolutely the tragic fallacies of power politics with its balance of power, spheres of influence in a system of puppet governments." That is a solid blow between the eyes to imperialists, British, French, Dutch, American. I can understand that they should cry "Ouch!" when it hits them. But why should the Herald-Tribune cry "Idealism?" The statement is as realistic as a brickbat.

Or was it finally this: "The Security Council must not allow any nation to sit in judgment on its own case." There is no need of adding, "and that, my dear Mr. Stalin, means you." Even the most careless and inattentive reader knows who it was at Dumbarton Oaks who refused to go on with the negotiations when his demand that the player should be his own umpire was turned down, or side tracked, or pigeon-holed.

No, the Bishops' program is not "uncompromisingly idealistic," and the Bishops themselves are not "deadly perfectionists." They merely stated plain truths in a plain way. They spoke simple common sense. They advocated elementary morality. If that sort of thing cannot be, as the Herald-Tribune says, "applied in its purity to the practical human issues of the present," the only conclusion is that another world war will come along on schedule time. But if the Bishops' plea for truthfulness and justice and right is to be as David Lawrence predicts, taken into account in the impending peace deliberations, the world may yet be saved.

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Who Art Thou? Why did the Jews send their priests and Levites to John the Baptist with the question, "Who art thou?" John had attracted much attention by his recognized holiness, by his preaching of penance, by his words concerning the imminent coming of Christ. Besides, the Jews all knew that the time was at hand for the appearance of the promised Redeemer. False Messiahs had risen up here and there, some of them exciting uprisings among the people. "Who art thou?" The question of the Pharisees gave John occasion to give testimony of Christ. John told them he was not the Christ, that he was not Elias or one of the prophets. He contrasted his baptism with that of the Christ who even then stood in the midst of them without being known by them. Christ was in all things superior to him. Christ was the Redeemer John had come to present to the people. "I am the voice of one crying in the desert. 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' " A fitting answer and a true one to the question, "Who art thou?" Back to the Jews, to the Pharisees, the priests and Levites could now go with an answer that meant great things for the chosen race and for the world. The promises of the prophets, the hopes of the people, the whole series of divine truths concerning the Messiah, were now fulfilled in the beginning of the public life of Christ. He had come into the world for His own to make the choice, to receive Him or to receive Him not. To all that received Him on their Saviour, He was to give them power to be made the sons of God. John points out the Saviour to us. It is for us to receive Him in joy and gladness of heart.

"My Mother had died not long before, so I was still wearing a black veil on my hat. It covered my face, thanks be, when the photographer pointed his camera and took the picture that appeared in the morning paper.

"I had not told my father of my investment. As we sat down at table, I set myself to break the news. But Dad spoke up first. He held aloft the paper and pointed to the picture.

"Those poor suckers," he scoffed. "What fools!" He pointed to my picture, mercifully hidden under the veil. "As usual fool widows with no man to guide them. Well, the world's full of them. I hope our family is spared.

"So we let it go at that. One might confess to losing money, but not to being a sucker and a fool." Wozzeck Gallantry

There were plenty of seats in the streetcar when I first entered it. So I found one without any trouble, and I sank - according to custom - into my breviary. But the car rapidly filled. At least when I looked up, I saw a woman with a rather small boy by the hand approaching and looking about apparently with a questioning eye.

She stopped not very far from me, clinging to the hand of the boy. It seemed a shame that they should be obliged to stand; so with a regretful sigh that I must lose the time from the saying of my Office, I started to rise.

Then I stopped. Out of the corner of my eye I saw that there was a vacant seat behind me. The woman had seen it too, for it was clearly in the line of her vision. But she had ignored it, because the other half of the seat was occupied by a colored woman.

I sat back and in relief reopened my Office. I had better not offer her a seat. You see, I happened to be sitting beside a colored man.

Each day is an opportunity to start all over again . . . to cleanse our minds and hearts anew, and to clarify our vision. And let us not slumber off today with theavings of other days. - Oliver Wendell Holmes

God does us great honor, when He is pleased that we should tread the same road which was trodden by His only Begotten Son - St. Paul of the Cross. Honor is not an obstacle to sanctity. If you can find nothing to smile at, there is always yourself. - Bishop Kelly.