



Prophetic Words Another Gift Avoid All Hazards The Central Figures

By MONSIGNOR HART The First Prophecy

The First Prophecy was spoken by God Himself to Adam and Eve. They had just broken His law by eating the forbidden fruit. He was driving them out of Paradise. Hereafter they were to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow. But He promised them a Redeemer who was to come to earth to take away their sin and reinstate them as children of God and heirs of heaven.

The Poor At Christmas

All men come in for a share of Christmas joy and the poor are numbered among them. Individuals, churches, societies, all do their share in helping their less fortunate brethren prepare a Christmas celebration.

Vacation Perils

The Christmas vacation will soon be with us and will offer the young and old one of the happiest times of all the year. One thing we would have our people observe is a degree of caution. Be careful at all times and seek to avoid anything that might bring disaster to you or to your friends.

The Christmas Tree

Brighter colors at Christmas find their background in the greenness of the wreaths and the Christmas trees with which we decorate our homes. There is a cherished symbolism about the Christmas tree that makes it dear to all of us.

Sunday Sermon

WHY ARE YOU? The Jews of John the Baptist had gone forth to all parts of the Holy Land. Men were wondering about him, men put their questions to him: Who art thou? John was baptizing. John was baptizing in the people and they were coming to him, they were coming to him, they were coming to him.

JOSEPH BREIG How To Insult Christ

I see where one greeting card company has reported that the percentage of its Christmas cards which are religious in tone has risen from 14 per cent last year to 18 per cent this year. In other words, almost one-fifth of the customers now are observing the birthday of Christ by sending out cards which make some kind of reference to religion.

SO I WILL simply say that I am glad that little by little, people are gradually getting around to being courteous, instead of discourteous, to Our Lord Jesus Christ on the occasion of His birthday.

My Russian Yesterdays consists of "simple pages offered to Our Lady of Fatima," who asks us for prayers for the land that made Mary "the warp and woof of its whole life."

THE BOOK reminds us to love the true Mary-loving Christian in Russia, both Catholic and Orthodox. All its words have spiritual value, and I hesitate to handle it with ordinary ones.

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THE CARDINAL, in an Advent pastoral letter, in which he paid high tribute to the Catholic press, stressed that there should be no justification for publishing material which, if not directly immoral, is calculated to provoke an occasion of sin to the vast majority of readers.

He said that a number of Catholic writers appear to have fallen into this error. Indeed, novels which purport to be the vehicle for Catholic doctrine frequently contain passages which by their uncontrolled portrayal of immoral conduct prove a source of temptation to many of their readers.

He said that such literature can be read in safety by the vast few, so great is the danger to the vast majority that the general publication is most undesirable.

He said that the presentation of the Catholic way of life within the framework of fiction may be an admirable object, but it can never justify as a means to that end the inclusion of indecent and harmful material.

Books For This Season

By SISTER MARGARET TERESA (Professor of Literature, Nazareth College, Rochester, N. Y.)

WITH THE BIBLE THROUGH THE CHURCH YEARS, Bible Stories Retold by Richard Serra, O.S.B. Prefaces on the Liturgy by Mary Perkins. Illustrations by the Benedictine Brothers. Fantasy Books, 1953.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE, by Joseph de Guibert, S.J. Sheed and Ward, 1953. (Available at Tucker's Inc., 390 Main St. E., Rochester)

MY RUSSIAN YESTERDAYS, by Catherine de Hueck Bruce, 1951.

LIFE OF SAINT TERESA, by Padre Silverio. Newman Press, Me.

Books for this season should be rich and spice-laden, full of wonder and heart and gaiety and reverence. It is a good time to remedy fatigue by reading Maisie Ward's Christiana or her Return to Christiana, or Peguy's radical and uplifting poetry, or Gheon's Catholic Theatre of Rochester is again this year presenting where ever it is called to do so, Christmas On the Village Square, or Faber's Secrets of the Saints, or Roche's Beside Book of Saints, or Faber's Bethlehem.

Over eighty modern colored drawings, big and little, decorate the pages of that book any house would ask for if it could talk, WITH THE BIBLE THROUGH THE CHURCH YEARS.

A perfect every-one-and-there-for-everybody in the family and every guest, it spreads out two feet wide on your table but is easy to hold—it's invitingly long the short way and comfortably short the long way, if you know what I mean.

And Mary Perkins is a name already famous for cheerful instruction into right Catholic manners; she did At Year Ease in The Catholic Church.

NEW YORK'S Diocesan Director of vocations, Monsignor Coogan, writes thirty warm, easy, reasonable talks, beginning now (So hurry!) and extending to the Epiphany, abounding in stories, hints on reading, interpretations of current events—each ending in a prayer or poem, and each aimed at making a Catholic home a good place for those who come to it.

Some like to give or get jewelry at Christmas, something small, perfect, and lasting. For a pearl or sapphire forever gleaming, try Padre Silverio's St. Teresa.

All its words have spiritual value, and I hesitate to handle it with ordinary ones. O.G.K.C.'s Queens of the Seven Swords, poems on Our Lady, or Caryll House's "The Song of Mary in prose, The Road of God."

Cardinal Griffin Rebukes Catholic Novelists' Use Of 'Indecent' Material

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You Can Win Converts

Where God Takes Over

By Rev. John A. O'Brien, Ph.D.

"Say did you know that my brother is becoming a Catholic?" asked Mrs. Nettie Stuka.

"No," replied Mrs. Lucy Mezera. "But I am delighted to hear it. Indeed I'd like to see you and your husband. John follows your brother's example. You'd find it would bring you great peace and happiness."

"I was baptized a Lutheran," said Mrs. Stuka, "but since John doesn't go to any church, we've all fallen away. It's easy to get into that rut, you know, and stick in it."

Such was the conversation which took place at the farm home of the Charles Mezera family near Bridgeport, Wisconsin, in September, 1946. It alerted Lucy Mezera to the need of helping this family get out of that rut.

When the announcement was made that a Mission was to be conducted at her parish church, St. John's, in Prairie du Chien, she at once thought of the Stukas. So when Nettie called the next time, she told her about it.

"This she said, 'would be a fine opportunity for you and John to learn about our holy religion and how much it has to offer you.'"

"I'D BE WILLING to go," replied Nettie. "But I am sure John wouldn't be interested. He hasn't allowed the children even to be baptized."

Some time later John stopped at the Mezera home. "John," said Lucy, "we're having a Mission at our church in October. We'd be glad to have you and Nettie come with us. The sermons of the missionaries are always interesting and you'd learn a lot about the Catholic religion."

"I went a couple of nights," said John to her surprise, "to a Mission with a Catholic I once worked for. That missionary had a lot on the ball. I wouldn't mind going again."

"Fine!" exclaimed Lucy. "Charlie and I will call for you and Nettie in our car. You both will feel at ease with us."

"THEY CAME three nights with us," staid Lucy Mezera. "and they learned a lot. It was good to see them on their knees in prayer. I felt certain something would come of it when I saw them get down on their knees. That's where God takes over."

"Before Mass the next Sunday, John stopped at our house and gave Charlie an envelope, with an offering in it and asked him to put it in the collection box."

"I hope you won't let your interest die," I said. "A Mission is a time of special grace and it would be a pity to lose that grace."

"In the world as it is today the Catholic press has become a necessity for every Catholic rather than a luxury or a good work worthy of our dutiful support. Every Catholic by reading the Catholic press regularly is kept in constant touch with the Holy Father and the Bishops and is adequately informed about events in their direct relevance to himself as an apostle. The Catholic press helps to enable the Catholic Church and to fulfill his part in her teaching mission."

"I CALLED ON the Stuka's in May and reminded them that now it would be possible for them to continue their instructions. Father Monarski said it would be easier for them to reach our place and told me to instruct them."

"I took them through the Catechism and explained everything clearly and simply. They came regularly and enjoyed the instructions. When I finished, Father Monarski checked on the thoroughness of their instruction and received John and Nettie Stuka and their three daughters, Charlotte Ann, Elaine and Helen Kay, into the Church."

"Charlie and I were sponsors at their baptism. It was one of the happiest days in the lives of the Stuka family and in our lives as well. As we knelt at their side when they made their first Holy Communion we felt that we hadn't lived entirely in vain. It's wonderful to feel that you've helped to bring someone to God."

"Yes," I agreed, "and if more of our Catholics could share their Faith they too would experience that rapture. I'm glad that you weren't deterred from approaching John; when you heard of his lack of interest, it's always worth trying. I'm delighted, too, to learn that you instructed the whole family. I hope that millions of other Catholics will do the same; for we priests have no copyright on that. Then we shall really win millions for Christ each year."

U. Singing Congregations

By REV. BENEDICT EHMANN

(This series of articles commemorates the golden jubilee of the "Motu Proprio" letter on Church music issued by blessed Pope Pius X on Nov. 22, 1903. Author of these articles is the Rev. Benedict Ehmman, nationally known authority on Church Music and pastor of St. Mary of the Lake Church, Watkins Glen, N. Y.)

With a few exceptions here and there, Catholic congregations have been silent congregations during Mass, at least here in the United States. The Popes of our century have given orders repeatedly that these silent congregations must be trained to become singing congregations and to give an active vocal part in the prayers and chants of the Mass.

After generations of silence and near-apathy at Mass, how can such a right - about - face be accomplished? People are in a rut about the Mass, and it seems next to impossible to get them out of it. So it seems, at least. But there are priests - their number is not legion, but they are more than a few - who have been making the effort and discovering that it is not only possible but also not as difficult as they feared it would be. Their guiding principle has been: "It must be done (the Pope has said so), therefore it can be done."

But how? The answer I propose here has been born out of six years trial and effort in my own parish. I do not propose it as a universal solution, because no two parishes are alike. Yet there is surely a high enough common denominator here to point out some practical directions which should serve in any parish.

The parish I serve comprises about 40 families, many of them scattered over 700 and more square miles of territory. They comprise Italian, Irish, French, Poles and Bohemians - far from what the sociology books classify as a homogeneous group. Though the Italian element is far in the lead, and the Italians are famed for their love of singing, that has been absolutely no help here - absolutely none. For these Italians, as in most American parishes, are either first generation and now too old to change, or second and third generation and too sophisticated and American-wise to want to change.

THE IRISH ELEMENT, once dominant, now badly declining, are in the same condition, with the additional handicap of a temperamental shyness or distaste for choral singing.

The first step of our program was to supply the entire congregation, Sunday by Sunday, with Leaflet Missals. We left them in the pews. Like autumn leaves, and requested them to use them. I found it was necessary, first of all to get the people doing something at Mass, and there is nothing better than to follow the Mass prayers, since the Mass is a community act.

The response was amazing. Almost from the start, the people did pick up the little missals and read them during Mass. And they continued to do so; it was not just a first fire of novelty.

The cost to the church was about \$3 a week, nothing to be frightened of as we noted the increase in our plate collection, which kept steadily mounting. And as it was, one of the men volunteered after the first week to write a check for a whole year's supply, and he has been doing so ever since.

THINGS WENT ON this way for a year: nothing vocal, but simply a following of the Mass point by point, getting used to the Mass - its meaning, its structure.

The next step came after a year of this: now the people were ready to come in on the responses to the priest. Their missals printed these in the Latin along with the English, and the word "People" was always there in the margin to show them when to come in.

And they did come in, feebly at first, but more confidently as time went on and thus what is called the Dialog Mass was introduced. This is a manner of congregational participation during Low Mass, and is the best preparation for the High Mass.

After some Sundays of this, we ventured further into the Sanctus and Benedictus, and later on, into the Agnus Dei. Up to this point, that's where matters stand. There remain the Gloria and the Credo, and we are now working on the Credo with the children, all of them from public school.

In the meantime the parts already learned by the people continue to grow in assurance and firmness, the Kyrie and the Sanctus especially so.

AND THUS, by slow stages and unremitting effort and with frequent instruction on the Mass and its social character, the great program of Blessed Pius X, and his successors is becoming an actuality in this particular parish - and not alone here, but in many others as well, though not with the same methods and by the same stages.

I claim for it no more than its own reality. Much remains to be done even after six years, and perhaps the ideal will never be realized on this side of heaven.

Robert Louis Stevenson has reminded us that, if we aim at the stars, we won't hit the stars, but we'll surely hit much higher than we'll hit the stars. Some folks never hit higher than the barn door, just because they know they can never hit the stars.

(To Be Continued)

Wood Quota Manchester, N. H. — (NC) — St. Anselm's College here exceeded its quota in a recent blood donation. The bloodmobile's visit to St. Anselm's netted 148 pints, 13 more than the college's quota.

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