

Mary's Shrines

Heaven

By REV. HENRY ATWELL

Through the many centuries since Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth and told her, "All generations shall call me blessed," every nation and state and parish has built an altar to her honor. And Mary has stepped from heaven to dedicate these shrines on numerous occasions...

There are the splendid churches like St. Mary Major, Maria Laach, Loreto, which stir the devotion of all who visit them. Now most of us, these shrines are something we can only read or hear about. We can only dream about visiting them. And content ourselves with some simple shrine we erect in our home or in our parish church.

And yet, Mary came to earth in her various appearances, not just for the few who happened to see her or are fortunate enough to travel the long journey to such holy places. Mary came for you and me, we are all of us her children. And that is why Mary has kept her best shrine open for each one of us.

The famous shrines we read about have a picture on a statue or a story for those who come there, but Mary herself is in Heaven. That is the shrine we can all visit, even now by our prayers, and someday, we hope, in body and soul as the reward of a devout life.

THAT IS THE reason for this being Mary's Year, to remind us that God invites all of us to make this pilgrimage to Heaven. The journey is difficult, it is costly. We purchase our entrance only by a sincere integrity of life, so that in joys or trials, we never depart from Mary's words, "Do whatever He tells you."

Mary's role in the world today is the same as on the first Christmas. That is the shrine we can all visit, even now by our prayers, and someday, we hope, in body and soul as the reward of a devout life.

Minister Rebukes Colleagues Attacking Catholic Church

Washington (NC) - Citing attacks some ministers have recently made upon the Catholic Church, an Episcopalian theologian warned here against spreading "blatancy" at a time when Communism seeks to destroy all religion.

The Rev. Dr. Charles W. Lowry, the theologian, mentioned the Rev. Dr. Robert J. McCracken, minister of Riverdale Church, New York, and the Very Rev. James A. Pike, Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York.

"Last Sunday," Dr. Lowry told a congregation at the National Presbyterian Church, here, "I chanced to be a worshipper at the Washington (Episcopal) Cathedral. The preacher was Dean Pike, a friend of mine and, it happens, a former pupil. To my consternation he took up the precise refrain of Dr. McCracken in a gratuitous attack upon the Roman Catholic Church."

Dr. Lowry then quoted Dean Pike as repeating a charge made by Dr. McCracken in a recent attack upon McCarthyism that the Catholic Church "has never disavowed the Inquisition, makes a policy of censorship, insists on conformity."

Analysts Assert: Protestant Convert Claim 'Unconvincing'

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figures about Catholics received into their churches were excluded. Moreover, it is misleading to note that 1.25 per cent of the Protestant ministers responded and to place such heavy stress upon this as a high percentage. Sampling is more a matter of quality than quantity.

THERE IS ALSO the question of "response error" that is, inaccuracy of replies. Scientific studies of the validity of mail questionnaires have shown them to be notoriously untrustworthy even in reporting simple objective facts such as age, reading habits, home circumstances. When the questionnaire concerns emotionally-charged material, the response error is naturally larger. It seems not unfair to suppose that some of the ministers were a bit optimistic in estimating the number of their "converts" over a 10-year period. Memories of what happened a few years ago can be quite fallacious.

It is interesting to note that although the survey, if taken at face value, would show 4,144,366 converts, the Christian Herald optimistically estimates that the total figure "in all probability runs closer to 5,000,000." If the ministers made their 10-year estimates in a similar free-and-easy spirit, the response error could be quite alarming.

Protestant Convert Claim 'Unconvincing'

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thousand converts annually. Protestants would need such a ratio to get the "two to five" million. Of course, the survey offers no adequate national sampling for establishing such ratios. Clearly the results of the survey are reported in a misleading fashion.

One wonders how convinced were these "converts" from Catholicism. Some of them would have been "converted" to several Protestant denominations before settling on a particular one. It is a bit surprising to note that only two-thirds of the pastors claimed that any part of instruction was given their "converts." At least there is no evidence at all that the responding ministers have the word "conversion" the clear and definite meaning that it had for Catholics.

An interesting insight is the Christian Herald's statement that "mixed marriages" was the "chief reason for conversion to Protestantism."

Speculation, then, about such "projections" and ratios is idle. Rather, we should note that recently there has been a notable increase in the number of converts to Catholicism.

Advertising Woman Recalls Rough Road To Faith

Notre Dame, Ind. (NC) - Reporting queasy moments in her route to conversion in the Catholic Church, advertising woman Marjorie Hoagland listed:

"The time she worried about papal power: 'Who knows when the Pope might dash off a piece of dogma, proclaiming the moon made of green cheese? Then I'd be in a mess!'"

"The time she boldly told a nun, 'Look, why should I do penance...? As a matter of fact, I think the Almighty owes me an apology, and I expect to get it some day.' (The nun laughed.)"

"The time she entered a dark confessional for the first time: 'I promptly fell down and said 'Damn!' in a voice ringing from one end of the church to the other.' (The priest said, 'Now, just be silent.')"

"The time, after her conversion, when her old aunt stoutly informed a sister: 'I'm a good Methodist. It takes a good Methodist to bring up a good Catholic.'"

MISS HOAGLAND, a writer for a large New York advertising agency, became interested in the Catholic Church through a book of convert stories, "The Road to Damascus," and later became a friend of the late Gretta Palmer, convert writer and columnist.

"The story of her conversion, 'The Foothills of Heaven,' is being published in pamphlet form by the Ave Maria Press which has already ordered a first printing of 25,000 copies.

Faith Inquiries Show Steady Rise, K. of C. Reports

New Haven, Conn. (NC) - A total of 1,222,212 inquiries have been made and 14,822 converts have resulted from instructions at the result of the Knights of Columbus advertising campaign regarding the teachings of the Catholic Faith, according to latest statistics compiled at K. of C. headquarters here.

Supreme Knight Luke J. Hart said that during the week ending March 13, a total of 2,244 inquiries were received and 1,181 persons enrolled for instruction, while for the week ending March 13, 10,423 inquiries were received and 1,122 persons were enrolled. The K. of C. campaign is carried on through advertisements explaining the teachings of the Catholic Church in the nation's leading secular magazines and newspapers.

"Beyond any question this is the greatest apostolic endeavor ever undertaken both in its magnitude and its results," commented Supreme Knight Hart.

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