

conscience, merely as such, is more universal at the cost of being utterly unilluminated. The man of law is the man of fear to whom the sanctions of society and of ethics are only the defences of an anxious ego. It is the man of law who would use one half of the universe to destroy the other—rather than admit that nothing, not even his own self, is absolutely his own.

All is stewardship: the rest is the malice of the unwise. We have no right to 'do as we like' with anything: we are stewards of all. But our stewardship has this motif: the praise of God through our understanding of the natures he has created. In us, through our work and our praise: through the work and praise of the whole human family, God perfects his work of creation by human collaborators; creating thus a radiance visible to men of that supernatural Image of himself visible to himself alone in the hearts of the children of grace.

BERNARD KELLY.

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## STRAY THOUGHTS ON THE LAY APOSTOLATE

'If we pass in review the long and sorrowful sequence of woes, that, as a sad heritage of sin, mark the stages of fallen man's earthly pilgrimage, from the flood on, it would be hard to find spiritual and material distress so deep, so universal, as that which we are now experiencing.' Those are words of Pope Pius XI, written in the Encyclical *Caritate Christi Compulsi* some twelve and a half years ago. If they were true then, they are more true than ever of to-day when the bloody shroud of war has enveloped nearly all mankind.

But one feels sometimes that too much ink is devoted to the description of what is obvious. Having, therefore, recalled these striking words of Christ's Vicar, let us not dwell here upon the depressing thought of the plight of modern humanity; rather we will turn to the remedy for such an unhappy state of affairs.

'As these evils crowd in upon us, what hope of remedy is left to us' asked Pope Pius XII in his Easter Homily in 1940, 'except that which comes from Christ, from his inspirations, and from his teaching, a healing stream flowing through every vein of our society? Only Christ's law, only Christ's grace, can renew and restore private and public life, redressing the true balance of rights and duties, check-

ing unbridled self-interest, controlling passion, implementing and perfecting the course of strict justice with his overflowing charity. He who could once give his commands to wind and storm, who could allay the waves of an angry sea and reduce them to calm, he it is who alone can turn men's hearts to peace and brotherly love; he alone can bid the nations settle their disputes, freely and successfully, not by violence but by the law of truth, of justice and of charity . . . ' Yes—Christ, and Christ *alone*.

In other words, the restoration of society can come only from a return to Christ, from a renewal of the Christian spirit. But where is the Christian spirit to be found? Again it is a Pope who tells us, the saintly Pius X, who insisted that the first and indispensable source of the Christian spirit is the sacred Liturgy of the Church. Or, as Pius XI wrote in his letter on the persecution of the Church in Germany, ' In the final analysis every true and lasting reform has proceeded from the sanctuary.' Again ' There must begin a real and true regeneration which consists in the return of society to Jesus Christ and in the return of Jesus Christ to society; . . . The Sacrament of the Eucharist, solemn recognition, solemn adoration of this the most holy among all holy Sacraments, most divine among divine things, that is the remedy.' So said the Holy Father at the opening of the great Eucharistic Congress in Rome in 1922. ' The Eucharist is the remedy.' And the Eucharist is the centre of the sacred Liturgy.

Quotations could very easily be multiplied but to little purpose. Those we have given establish beyond doubt the truths—

- (a) that only by a return to Christ can suffering humanity be restored to lasting and real peace, and
- (b) that the principal source of the spirit of Christ is the Liturgy of the Church.

Unfortunately the meaning of that word ' Liturgy ' has been taken up falsely in certain quarters, and as the Pope himself has pointed out in the Encyclical on the Mystical Body, a doubtful liturgical movement has grown up in some places. The great fault appears to have been an over-emphasis on externals—on the rubrics, the vestments, the chant and so on. The principal thing—a real appreciation of the whole sublime meaning of the great liturgical system of the Church—has thus been obscured. A true liturgical revival should aim at fostering a much wider understanding of the inner meaning of the Mass and of all the Sacraments, and consequent upon that, of the full significance of the life of grace in the soul. The true source of the Christian spirit is not primarily the *words* of the Liturgy but the life of grace imparted to the soul by assistance at Holy Mass and the reception of the Sacraments.

Therefore, when we push our line of reasoning a little further, we are forced to the conclusion that the only way by which real peace can be restored to men is through a genuine return to the very centre and core of Catholicism—Holy Mass, the Sacraments and the other means of grace. Hence the very first object of the apostolate should be the re-establishment of the reign of the Eucharist in the hearts of all men. There is only one remedy for the present social disorder, and that is the patient application of the religious system of the Catholic Church.

It follows, then, that the first concern of the Catholic Actionist should be to consider how the religious system for which he stands can best be presented to those about him. Maybe we tread on slippery ground when we suggest that sufficient thought has not so far been given to this all-important point. As a matter of fact, it seems to have been taken for granted that the presentation of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church is the way most-ready-to-hand of bringing the Church before the minds of men.

In favour of this opinion it is usually said that the lead the Holy Fathers have given must be followed. Practically all their Encyclicals have dealt with social questions: therefore . . . Here there is danger of a misinterpretation of the mind and the writings of the Popes. A careful study of all Papal utterances of the last sixty years or so will, it is true, reveal very great emphasis on the social question, but it is on the social question as connected most closely with Catholic doctrine as a whole. Even a book like the magnificent 'Principles for Peace,' edited for the Committee of the American Bishops, has in the index no less than 114 references to Christ, 57 to Our Blessed Lady, 108 to Charity and 29 to the Blessed Eucharist, to quote only a few examples. And this is a book which is professedly devoted to the social question! It is not being suggested for one moment that our social propaganda is being overdone; the more we have of it the better. What is being pointed out is that practically all our energy is being devoted to the spread of the knowledge of Catholic social principles, too often divorced from the general body of Catholic teaching, and not enough emphasis is being placed upon that return to Christ which must take place before our social principles can be applied on any large scale. Is it not highly significant that in *Quadragesimo Anno*—the Encyclical entitled *The Reconstruction of the Social Order*—special emphasis should be laid on the matter of retreats for lay apostles. After mentioning Christian organisations and study groups, the Pope goes on: 'But *above all*, let them hold in high esteem and assiduously employ for the good of their disciples that most valuable means of both personal and social restoration

which is to be found in the spiritual exercises.' The purpose of these retreats must be, not to produce glib orators who will compete with the Communist tub-thumper, but 'true apostles . . . enkindled with the fire of the Heart of Christ . . . strong in faith, endowed with an invincible steadfastness in persecution, burning with zeal, interested solely in spreading everywhere the Kingdom of Christ.'

There is a positive danger in Catholic Action taken in its widest significance becoming identified with the social apostolate or the study group. These things are only part of Catholic Action, and not by any means the most important part at that. If ways and means can be devised by which Christ—the real, authentic, whole Christ—can be presented to men, the Christ of Nazareth and Calvary, the Christ of the Eucharist, the Christ of the Church, social principles will take care of themselves.

Another very real danger in this matter is that the Church might possibly come to be regarded as just another competitor in the struggle to set up a 'New Order.' Even now a well-known, and very excellent Catholic book is called 'The Pope's *New Order*.' By excessive concentration upon social propaganda separated from its proper religious background we offer men some excuse for regarding us as competitors with the Communists, the Nazis, Commonwealth, the political parties and all the rest for the reformation of mankind. Thus the true nature of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ and the only true reformer is obscured.

Fundamentally, the world to-day is very conscious of its lack of religion. Men and women of this country are living in an unnatural condition. We are told that even the most primitive peoples worship God in some way. Not so the great majority of our fellow-countrymen. (Yet at a recent Chester Diocesan Conference a Canon of the Established Church claimed that this is England's grandest hour!). It is not that the man-in-the-street has of set purpose turned away from God; it is that the national and other 'churches' have failed to supply him with what he yearns for in his inmost soul. It is not *his* failure but his 'church's' failure. If all the warmth of Catholicism, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Blessed Eucharist, of Our Lady, of all our beliefs and devotional practices, could only be set before him he would surely realise that here at last he will find satisfaction.

Closely connected with this dangerous identification of Catholic Action with the spread of Catholic social principles, is the tendency to regard study as a prerequisite for the apostolate. Here again, we wish to make it plain that we are not decrying study; the more learned Catholics we have the better. But is it not at least possible

that this continual insistence upon study has so limited the numbers of our apostles that they are not sufficient to constitute a force at all? If that is so one would be justified in seeing the devil here at work.

The Pope has said that the first apostles of working men ought to be themselves working men. Obviously, these working-men apostles will not need the same amount of knowledge as a barrister carrying on an apostolate amongst his friends at law. He is dealing with men of roughly the same intelligence as himself; he can talk to them about politics, about war, about sport. Then why should he not talk to them about religion? Why need he study to do so? This I think is a very important point, and failure to understand it is one reason why an immense number of potential apostles are never called upon by those officially in charge of Catholic Action. We suggest that the amount of knowledge possessed by the average Catholic working man is far more than that usually accredited to him. He has been attending Church, reading his prayer book and hearing sermons for perhaps forty or fifty years; he has been reading the Catholic press regularly; he has attended his Catholic club and joined in informal discussions with his companions—surely after all this he knows enough about religion in general and his own Faith in particular to carry on an effective apostolate amongst his fellow workmen? An even more important point is this: that man, and he is legion, has in his heart a living, vivid picture of his Faith, of something that means more to him than anything else upon earth. All he lacks is the encouragement, the organisation, the capacity to put it over.

Again and again we have read in Papal documents how the Holy Father has called upon every man to be an apostle. That important principle must be safeguarded beyond all else. Clearly, the devil will do his utmost to prevent the principle being effectively realised. But he will not directly contradict it; such a method would be too obvious for the Arch-Deceiver. He will throw grit in the machinery. He will try to convince people that they are not learned enough, not holy enough. If he succeeds the number of apostles will be so reduced that Catholic Action cannot become a real force and his kingdom will be stronger than ever. Hence, it is of absolutely vital importance that nothing whatever be allowed to obscure our principle: every Catholic an apostle. The continual aim of all those responsible for Catholic Action should be to mobilise all the vast numbers of potential apostles, encourage them, organise them, safeguard them, direct them.

Another point. What method should be applied in the work of

the lay apostolate? The first answer that springs to one's mind is that any method that works should be used provided always of course that it is legitimate. But in general, it may be said that apostolic methods are divided into two classes, those which appeal to men as a crowd, and those which appeal to them as individuals. The former include preaching, use of the radio, rallies and demonstrations, advertising and so on. The latter is practised by the apostolate of personal contact of man to man.

A little consideration will at once make it apparent that the apostolate of personal contact is far more likely to be effective than the general appeal. We are dealing with souls, with souls each different from all other souls, each with its own personal problems peculiar to itself, each with a unique history, each in its own particular circumstances. Obviously, the technique of the apostle must be to present the truth in the manner most suited to each individual soul. For this, knowledge of that soul's personal problems and circumstances is necessary, and the only way to obtain that knowledge is through friendship, sympathy, understanding, love.

No one will deny for a moment that the general appeal will not accomplish a certain amount of good, but it has such obvious disadvantages that it ought to be given only the second place. It is forced more or less to treat all souls as being alike, whereas they are different; it depends for its exercise upon comparatively few skilled workers, whereas the apostolate is the duty and responsibility of ALL. There is much more one could say on this exceedingly important point, but space is limited. We must therefore be content to refer those who are interested to our booklet 'A Blueprint for Lay Action' (Paternoster Publications, 67 Fleet Street, E.C.4), where the subject is discussed at greater length.

Let us look ahead with confidence. Let us realise that there is in the Church to-day an enormous apostolic potential, a source of power as yet practically untapped. The spirit of Christ must be brought to men; then the secret is the mobilisation of vast numbers of lay apostles who will pass on to others the treasure at present lying hidden in their souls—the treasure of the beauty, the consolation, the warmth, the appeal of the whole Catholic Faith, and especially of the liturgical mysteries. Our greatest need is not learning but a much wider diffusion of the conviction that membership of the Church carries with it the *obligation* to undertake apostolic work, that Catholicism and the apostolic spirit cannot be separated.

FRANCIS J. RIPLEY, C.F.

## HOLY POVERTY AND HER THREEFOLD HEAVEN.

by

IACOPONE DA TODI (1228—1306)

[This is *Lauda LX*, pp. 132—3 in the edition of Ferri and Caramella (*Scrittori d'Italia*, 1930). On the names and significance of the three heavens, see St. Thomas, *S.T.* I, 68, 4. The third heaven, though in a sense 'nameless' (stanza 25 here), is also of course the Empyrean, and is called so in *Lauda XCI*, l. 147.]

He that has Poverty for love  
 Has for dominion peace;  
 Stormless his paths and safe, for there  
 Robber and envier cease.

In calm he dies; is at no pains  
 To make a testament;  
 In calm he lives; lets the world lie  
 And ministers content.

He fees no lawyer, great or small;  
 No dues to court he bears;  
 He laughs to see the miser stoop  
 Under his pack of cares.

High wisdom is in Poverty,  
 For nothing holds her thrall;  
 Disdaining all things under God,  
 She can command them all.

He who disdains can best possess,  
 In wholeness can abide  
 And treading sure, with feet unsnared,  
 Labour till eventide.

He who desires cannot possess;  
 'Tis things possess their lover;  
 Self-sold to them, he rues the cheat  
 His afterthoughts discover.

Too low I gaze ever to find  
 In vassalage a goal;  
 I dare not blot with vanity  
 God's image in the soul.

God will not house in narrow breast,  
 But love's the measure here;  
 Great-hearted Poverty can close  
 The Godhead in her sphere.

A mystic heaven is Poverty,  
 To earth-dim eyes concealed.  
 In the third heaven deep things are heard  
 That may not be revealed.

The first heaven is the firmament—  
 All honour's there denied.  
 How many a pilgrim to soul's peace  
 Does honour lure aside!

If you would have it die in you,  
 Wealth you will dispossess,  
 Bid learning hush, and banish far  
 Renown for holiness.

Riches leave time all unredeemed;  
 Knowledge puffs up the heart;  
 At sainthood's name, hypocrisy  
 Crowds in from every part.

The heaven of stars I think is his  
 Who can these things resign.  
 More high, more secret is the heaven  
 Of waters crystalline.

Four winds that rise over the sea  
 The spirit's calm destroy,  
 And these are fear, and with it hope,  
 Sorrow, and with it joy.

Harder it is to banish these  
 Than all that went before.  
 Here to the wise I speak; the rest  
 Will bear my words no more.



All fear of hell, all hope of heaven  
 The soul must learn to leave,  
 At good things had must not rejoice,  
 At evil must not grieve.

Here virtue serves not; from without  
 The enabling power inflows;  
 All un-self-known it keeps the self  
 Till strength from weakness grows.

When virtues stripped to nakedness  
 With full-clad vices meet,  
 In little time the encumbered foe  
 Lies dead about their feet.

Up from the fray the virtues rise,  
 Scatheless henceforth to be;  
 There greets them now with all her train  
 Impassibility.

The third last heaven is infinite,  
 Past measure wide and high;  
 All wit's ambition here must fail,  
 All mind's conceiving die.

The spirit stripped of every good,  
 Of virtue dispossessed,  
 Reaps here the bargain's fruit, and is  
 In self-abasing blessed.

The tissue of this heaven is Naught;  
 Its ground in Naught is laid;  
 Here in the truth abides the love  
 That's pure and perfect made.

In this high realm the thing that Is  
 The thing that Seems belies;  
 Pride is in heaven; Humility  
 Down to perdition flies.

Betwixt the virtue and the act  
 Lurks many a snare and net,  
 And some that think they hold the prize  
 Are heavenless earthlings yet.

This heaven is nameless; thought of it  
 Never shall tongue express.  
 Love as in prison lies therein,  
 Shadowed in light's excess.

The light that was is lost in dark;  
 Dark into day is scattered;  
 Thus has the new philosophy  
 The ancient bottles shattered.

Where Christ our Lord engrafted is,  
 Old things being done away,  
 He and the soul are interfused,  
 More one than man shall say.

There without intellect she knows,  
 Without affection loves;  
 Her will to God's will lifted up  
 At his sole motion moves.

But if I live, and yet not I,  
 Have being, yet not mine,  
 This one-in-twain and twain-in-one  
 How shall my words define?

That man is poor who, having naught,  
 From will to have is free,  
 And who is lord of all things made  
 In the spirit's liberty.

*Translated by* WALTER SHEWRING.

### THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, 1944.

[To the Right Reverend Edward Ellis, Bishop of Nottingham, these verses are respectfully dedicated.]

1. 'Tis not for me to speak in the name of one nation only;  
 I am not myself and am not free to speak.  
 I am an exile wherever I may be and lonely  
 though filled with the love that all mankind should seek;  
 for as a Pole I may not speak for Britain,  
 nor as a Briton may I speak as a Pole;  
 for even by the blood it is most surely written  
 that I am a hybrid and therefore as neither whole.