

REVIEWS

THE SUNDAY INTROITS AND GRADUALS; THE SUNDAY COLLECTS; THE SUNDAY EPISTLES, simply explained by the Rev. E. C. Messenger, Ph.D. (Sands; each volume, 8s. 6d.)

Dr Messenger has had the excellent idea of collecting the articles he has contributed to the *Universe* over a number of years on the Proper of the Sunday Masses. The first three volumes of a series called *The Apostolate of the Sunday Mass* have now appeared, and they should do much to help the faithful to realise what depths lie hidden under the familiar words they hear from Sunday to Sunday. As Dr Messenger truly remarks, 'If the faithful could only make themselves acquainted with the riches of the Sunday liturgy, presence at Mass would never be regarded as a burden but rather, as it is in truth, as a wonderful privilege and opportunity for renewing and nourishing our spiritual life'.

The Liturgy, 'the most important organ of the ordinary *magisterium* of the Church' (as Pope Pius XI described it), has too long been neglected as a means of instruction. 'Liturgical movements' have been too often deflected into campaigns for plainchant, dignity of worship, primitive vestments and so on, and the one thing necessary has been obscured by secondary—though in themselves excellent—considerations. Such a movement as the French *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique*, aiming at the integration of the Catholic community through an active, and hence an informed, participation in the Church's worship goes back to essentials. The operative word is 'pastoral', echoing as it does our Lord's prayer that there may be one fold and one shepherd: unity of faith demands unity of worship, the Christian family at one about the common altar.

It is in the sacrifice of the Mass that worship begins and ends, and it is here therefore that intelligent participation will find its fullest reward. The Mass is not just 'prayers': it is *the* prayer of the one High Priest, the life of the mystical body fully shared by its members. And the instruments of this prayer, the words of sacred Scripture and the hallowed formulae of Catholic tradition, deserve to be understood. It is idle to ignore the difficulties; the use of Latin, the gulf that separates liturgical worship from the secular world of the rest of the week, the loss of the sense of communal religious life. Even the use of a missal does not always help: its details are mysterious and the language of its prayer cannot be grasped in a rapid scanning.

Dr Messenger's books provide admirably for the preliminary work of understanding. Anyone who prepares for Mass by reading his 'simple explanations' of the introits, collects and epistles (and later, one hopes, the gospels, offertories, secrets and post communion prayers) will not fail to be helped. For instance, Dr Messenger relates the introit verse to the psalm from which it comes, and thus makes plain its meaning, which was clearer when the psalm was

sung—as it originally was—in its entirety. Again, we are given parallels which link up the themes of the collects. Each explanation is preceded by the Latin and English texts of the passages considered.

It seems a pity that holidays of obligation have not been included in Dr Messenger's scheme. They would not have added greatly to the size of his books, and we may hope that a future edition may find room for them. A more serious criticism is suggested by the arrangement of these volumes. One admits that Dr Messenger's purpose is not to provide a commentary on the liturgical year such as those of Gueranger or Parsch; yet a treatment *pari passu*, including under the one Sunday all the various elements of the Proper, might have been simpler and more practical than the restriction of each volume to a particular stage in the Mass. This would avoid such repetition as inevitably occurs, for instance, in his treatment of the introit and the epistle for the fourth Sunday in Lent. The meaning of *Latare Jerusalem* is to be seen in the Mass as a whole, and details of the stationary church, and of the idea of the new Jerusalem, have to be repeated to make this plain.

But it would be ungenerous to criticise details when so much is excellent. Dr Messenger's books should be especially useful for teachers, who may find in the commentary on the Sunday Masses a valuable supplement to the catechism. In the liturgy the truths of faith have their proper setting, and children who have learned to pray the Mass will have bridged the gap between 'Christian Doctrine' and 'Prayers'.

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MARGERY KEMPE: GENIUS AND MYSTIC. By Katherine Cholmeley. (Longmans; 6s.)

It is surprising that this book has not been written before. Well over ten years ago the full story of Margery Kempe was discovered after centuries of obscurity. The event was hailed by a scholarly edition of the 14th century MS. by Miss Emily Hope Allen, the expert on medieval mystical writings, and by a modernised version for the general public. But no one has so far dared to assess Margery Kempe's real value as a spiritual writer nor to judge the validity of her revelations and mystical phenomena. A few articles have appeared in learned periodicals but an understandable hesitancy seems to have prevented the students of mystical writings from pronouncing for or against this strange medieval woman. As an historical document the book of Margery Kempe contains many priceless treasures of information on daily life in the 14th century, but the difficulty is to determine whether Margery's spiritual treasures are real or merely the painted glass of hysteria. Miss Cholmeley began by condemning the wife of King's Lynne, but on the word of two Dominicans, Fr Vincent McNabb and Fr Walter Gumbley, she reconsidered the book, and concluded that it contained the story of a true lover of Jesus Christ, so she comes here to