

EXTRACTS

A GREAT deal is written now about the need for maturity, not only in religious life, but also among the laity in their spiritual life. An outspoken and challenging article appeared in *Integrity's* May issue (New York, \$4.00 per annum), by E. Willcock on the need for maturity in the lay apostolate. The machine age, he argues, has made us impatient of the learner, because the machine turns out everything at the same standard of perfection. It does not have to learn.

Who, in such an age, will put up with the awkwardness, the mess, the disorder, the noise, the non-conformity which is the usual preliminary to human maturation? The world we are evolving and the characters we are forming are products of short-cut techniques designed to by-pass the initial stages of growth. A pseudo-maturity forever trembling on the verge of childish tantrum is, of course, the result. . . . The availability of the ready-made is discouraging something we cannot afford to be without. It is discouraging people from trying. It is discouraging that exercise of continuous effort which makes people mature.

The lay apostolate being such a new development as an organized effort in the Church is bound to suffer from the initial stages of growth towards maturity. This means 'awkwardness, failures, and imprudent zeal'.

They are precisely what we should expect. Yet they are precisely the things which are considered most damning in modern eyes. The most subtle and yet the most compelling pressure put on the Church by the modern world is that she meet the up-to-date standards of pseudo-maturity, that is, she must be weighty, professional, affluent, pompous, efficient (mechanically perfect), decorous and successful. An immature laity can't possibly put up such a front. At the same time, if the laymen assume the airs of this pseudo-maturity, their mission will be subverted and they will become mere 'professional' Catholics as ineffective in the social area as are the clergy and the hierarchy. . . .

We have almost reached the point where we are convinced we have answered the papal call, when we actually have hardly heard it. This failure to respond effectively is in great part due to our impatience with noviceship. We retard maturity because we will not permit the layman to 'make a fool of himself.'

All this may be specially true in the highly mechanized society of the U.S.A., but it applies in large measure to most places now dominated by the machine, and may indeed account for the lack of maturity in the spiritual life of so many. To be ready to make fools of ourselves requires humility—a virtue which does not find easy access into the mechanical world.

ST BERNARD sometimes appears as rather hard and austere, especially when dealing with his spiritual children as well as people like Abelard whom he regarded as a menace. But when he came to speak of the love and desire for God we find him always full of tender life and joy. A French Cistercian has written on St Bernard's feelings on the desire for God in *Cross and Crown* for June (St Louis; \$7.00 per annum). This desire includes the whole man, and the ascetic Doctor of the Church does not exclude the emotions.

Still, there comes the point where a man's emotions reach such a pitch as to break all bounds; words and gestures no longer suffice for expression, and he is forced to tears. Yes, St Bernard expects us to 'weep for desire'; and he even tells us that it is fitting that our desire for heaven should bring us to tears, for 'if ever we fail in daily—tearfully—soliciting this grace, it is simply because we do not sufficiently desire it'.

And the measure of this desire is beyond measure. 'It must be marked with ardour, vehemence, eagerness, avidity, even with impatience and audacity.'

THE Roman College of Sacred Science for Nuns, called *Regina Mundi*, has now been functioning for two years. *Revue des Communautés Religieuses* (May-June; Louvain) gives the satisfactory details of this work. In the first year the courses were attended by 132 student sisters from 22 countries, and of 58 different congregations. The second year showed an increase to 168 student sisters of 69 different congregations. The courses are given in four languages: English, French, Spanish and Italian. Those responsible for this Institute will be gratified at the response from the sisters.