

## WORKS ON OUR LADY

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This<sup>1</sup> is a devout thesis, 'in sensu composito', and is well worth reading and acting upon. Briefly, the author believes that he has hit upon a great truth in St John's gospel which hardly anyone seems to have adverted to, viz., that on Calvary the Beloved Disciple was entrusted to the care and guardianship of Mary not merely as the representative of the human race but as a priest: it was because he was a priest that he could adequately and properly be chosen to represent all mankind at the foot of the cross.

There is much more to say for this thesis than might appear at first glance. The author has marshalled many persuasive reasons and presented them forcefully. His style is rather alarming, with capitals and thick type and broken sentences strewn all over the pages, and one fears he would defend it as 'the psychology of the printed word' (he does go so far as to speak of the 'psychology of our Lord on the cross') but one soon gets used to this, and it has its advantages.

The authorities quoted in support are not very numerous and not very convincing, but that is in the nature of the case. At least one ends the book with a conviction that the abbé has made some good points, well worth developing.

The last quarter of the book is an attempt to show that the holy women who stood with our Lady and St John on Calvary are also, in their way, partakers of the Motherhood of Priests which is given to Mary, a thought less far-fetched than unexpected. Muted a little and adapted a little, this book might go very well in English and be very useful to priests.

In the preface to this handsome (though paper-covered) eighty-four-page help to meditation upon the rosary<sup>2</sup> (it is really sixty-four reproductions of Old Masters plus the meditative commentary) we have François Mauriac's idea of the rosary. He considers it a spiritually healthy, vaguely reflective pattern (even patter) of prayerful meditation, primarily helpful to the non-intellectual but extremely useful, perhaps even necessary, for the intellectual who is humble enough to use it. Compare this with Père Garrigou-Lagrange's firmer, more historical description. He maintains that St Dominic's inspired invention, or discovery, was the long sermon on the mysteries, relieved, punctuated, by many *Paters* and *Aves* recited while the great truths were consciously present to the mind: and that this became the rosary (cf. *Doctrine and Life*, Oct.-Nov., 1952, pp. 227-233). This suggests that the meditation should come first, and that the thought, realisa-

<sup>1</sup> *Le Prêtre confié à Marie et à ses filles*. By the abbé J.-M. Galley. (Editions du Leman; 260 fr.)

<sup>2</sup> *Le Rosaire*. By Père H.-D. Laval, O.P. (Editions d'Histoire et d'Art. Librairie Plon, Paris; 480 fr.)

tion, gleaned from it should be merely the background for straightforward *Paters, Aves, Glorias*. This way of looking at it helps us to cope with the objection that in the rosary we are saying one thing and thinking another. It is a question of fusing the two, meditation and vocal prayer, and the trouble is, too often, that we fail to supply the first element and the second becomes mechanical.

Père Laval's method is to supply the meditation with the help of pictures which cannot fail to hold the mind—at least the visual memory—and to suggest, with an imaginative, modern-phrased causerie, many word-pictures, impressions, glimpses of fresh meanings and applications. It is an excellent approach to what is called the modern mind, from which we all suffer.

Whoever chose Van der Goes for the illustrations of the joyful mysteries, and Barna for the sorrowful, and Tintoretto for the glorious, was inspired. But though they dominate the book Père Laval makes them serve his purpose; they do not degenerate into a picture gallery.

The text appears to me somewhat miracle-shy and faintly humanistic, but perhaps I have not thoroughly grasped Père Laval's method of approaching modern readers.

'How our Lady can form the daily lives of priests' is the general theme of this book.<sup>3</sup> It has nothing to do with the 'priesthood' of Mary. The author is one of those too-rare writers who can be absolutely relied upon to say something interesting and illuminating. The translation does him less than justice.

Our Lady's rôle in the work and in the sanctification of priests is of primary importance. It deserves the serious consideration of all priests. Its theological foundation deserves close study. But one may question the wisdom of mixing theological terms and axioms with ordinary everyday phrases in an attempt to write devotional theology. In translation the result of such an attempt is apt to be, to put it mildly, surprising. For instance: '(Jesus) places in our hearts—but according to the degree of our love, so often alas! a mere flicker—all the feelings of his Heart on the Cross for his Father, for his Blessed Lady, for all men and also all the feelings he has, in Heaven, towards the souls for whose intentions the Mass is being celebrated'. (p. 40. My italics.) 'She (Mary) became his (St John's) Mother as she was until then the Mother of Jesus.' (p. 13.)

In spite of the inadequacy of the translation, Père Phillippe's ideas on Mary's mothering of a priest, as a priest, shine through; the intimate connection between Mary's motherhood and the priesthood of our Lord is well brought out, with the consequent consoling certainty of the special love which our Lady has for all priests.

<sup>3</sup> *The Blessed Virgin and the Priesthood*. By Paul Philippe, O.P. (Mercier Press; 6s.)