

Life of the Spirit

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WELCOME TO LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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(Editor, *La Vie Spirituelle*)

It is not only out of affection for our English brethren that we have so willingly agreed to write the editorial of this first number of *The Life of the Spirit*. It is also an opportunity to put into practice a dogma which is dear to us and which we strive constantly to bring home to our readers in *La Vie Spirituelle*: the dogma of the Communion of Saints. As Fr Congar pointed out recently (*Vie Intellectuelle*, April, 1946), the fact that we belong to one Church, to a Communion of Saints, not only means that we have one head, or that we live, each on his own, by one faith expressed in the same acts of worship; it also means that between the parts of this whole which we make up, there exist relations of exchange, intercommunication, mutual help, etc. . . . Can we imagine a body in which the members, although linked to the same head, have no vital connexion with one another? Such a thing is unthinkable. Yet is not this the spectacle which we who belong to one body offer to the world? How little we Catholics of different countries know about one another! Does not this lead sometimes to our shutting ourselves up within a Christianity which is no longer Catholic because it no longer embraces the whole world, because it is too much identified with a particular country or culture? This is surely particularly serious at a time when all mankind is tending towards a culture and an attitude of mind which are in a sense œcumenical; when, as a result, men of goodwill are in danger of not recognizing the Light in the stunted form of Christianity which we present to them? Let us therefore be attentive to all that the Spirit of God suggests and build up the Church each day in every part of the Mystical Body. We, on our part, shall look forward with eagerness to every issue of the *Life of the Spirit*, that we may fill our lungs with the fresh breath of Catholicism which comes from across the Channel.

Nevertheless we must be on our guard against anything which might distract us from our main purpose under the pretext of getting in touch with everything that is said or done. The aim of a spiritual review is not to give the latest news, but to seek for truth. It is precisely because truth is neither French, English, nor Chinese, that we must exchange and compare the results of

our search. Let us seek for truth together, so that we may escape the temptation of looking upon it as our own special property, of narrowing it down to our own culture or nationality, or, what is even worse, to our own individual outlook. There is a certain spiritual sensuality which seeks truth merely to derive pleasure from it and to flatter that intellectual pride which pounces upon it in order to tear it to pieces and analyse its various parts. The truth which we seek is not patient of such possession, for it yields its joys only to those who allow themselves to be possessed by it. We are not owners, but witnesses of the truth until the end of the world. It is greater than us, and we cannot have any comprehensive knowledge of it. We defend it and propagate it because we believe in it, because it has assumed that face at once human and divine which we love above all: the face of Christ. We should, then, be completely open to the search for truth, not in order to make use of it, or to be moved by it however deeply, or even delight in it, but simply to contemplate it. This is enough; divine truth will tolerate nothing else.

This common desire for truth, far from bringing us down into the flux of events and opinions, will preserve us from the prevailing excesses and spiritual infatuations. It will protect us from the excess of a humanism which pursues all that develops man even at the expense of contemplative life; from the excess of purely temporal action which tries to improve social and political conditions while forgetting that Christianity is eschatological of its very nature and that the Church is only a pilgrim on this earth. Finally, it will preserve us from the excess of caring for the development of our instincts and natural powers while forgetting that our nature is wounded and that we cannot reach perfection except through sacrifice—and the Cross. Many modern tendencies are indeed excellent and it is to the credit of our generation that it has produced Christian Humanism, Catholic Action and a Christian belief in the goodness of nature as a gift of God. We must not reject these tendencies, but we must remember their partial nature; above all, we must remember that the quest for God is of greater importance than the quest for Man, and that the final and decisive victory of the Church in this world will only be manifested on the Last Day, even though the Resurrection of Christ already gives us an absolute guarantee of this victory. Lastly, it is important not to forget that, before we can perfect ourselves, we have to be redeemed and saved.

The complete, the catholic truth, which is the true life of the spirit, will guard us from these excesses. But how shall we know the truth? How shall we keep in harmony the contrary tendencies which make it up? *There, where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst.* Our Lord, who is Truth, asks us to gather together in order to find it. That is why we are so glad to make this first fraternal gesture.