

LIFE IN CHRIST. RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS. Three volumes. By Fergal McGrath, S.J. (Gill & Son; 4s. 6d., 2s. 6d., 3s. 6d.) 'The teaching (of religion) should aim at training the pupils to bring their faith to bear on their lives . . . it should appeal to the imagination and to the heart as well as to the understanding. . . .'

These are some of the aims set forth by the Irish hierarchy for the programme of religious instruction in Catholic Secondary Schools, and quoted in the introduction. The first aim is undoubtedly well catered for in these volumes, which follow the pattern of the *Summa*.

The first volume deals with God, Creation, Sin, Redemption, and the Church, with an interesting section on the Liturgical Year. The second volume covers the Commandments of God and of the Church, while the third takes the Sacraments in considerable detail. The text is comprehensive and to the point, with up-to-date practical applications: e.g. the question of strikes by employees is dealt with under the fourth commandment, and many sections carry much useful information in their notes.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that the presentation of so much valuable material should be rather unattractive. Although the sections of text are subdivided, and clearly headed, yet the work has a 'solid' appearance, and in spite of the fact that each volume carries reproductions of a great many famous religious paintings, these are printed in a rather dreary monochrome, which in many cases is blurred and foggy, so that the general impression is gloomy instead of inviting.

It is perhaps inevitable that this work should be compared with the Catholic Catechism newly translated from the German. While it must be borne in mind that this latter is a far more expensive publication, yet the general layout and use of brightly-coloured line drawings makes for a better first impact. It is on this count, perhaps, that this book falls somewhat short of its aims.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

THE YEAR AND OUR CHILDREN. By Mary Reed Newland. (P. J. Kenedy & Sons, New York; \$3.95).

At the first reading this book, a description of the liturgical year as lived to the fullest possible extent by parents and children in the author's own home, may give rise to the feeling, 'How wonderful! This is how Catholic family life should really be lived', to be followed a moment later by the thought, 'It would be unbearable'. There is something of truth in both these reactions. The author warns us that the life as she has described it, 'this making of wreaths, baking of cakes, . . . cutting, pasting, sewing, planting . . .' did not spring suddenly from nothing. It grew from the necessity which she and her husband felt, that the reality of the Church's year was not something which should be confined within the walls of the parish church but which should be

able to be translated into terms of day-to-day family life, sorrowing, fasting, feasting and rejoicing in season. She is quite frank: ' . . . It began, for us, with an Advent wreath and reading the fine print in the missal: after that, we read everything we could get our hands on that would help us. One by one the seasons of the Christian year began to shape our prayer and our activity, and shed light on how we were to use the doctrine. We were a long time reaching the point where we fell naturally into the practices we now use to celebrate feasts and keep vigils. . . . It entered us slowly, this "Christening" of our life'.

For us to take over this full and rich life she describes would indeed be unbearable, artificial and unreal, and very far from the author's intention. The fruitful Catholic life must be native to its environment, springing from strong and healthy roots, not a hothouse plant, transplanted with care. Rather, this book should be an inspiration to us to start in a small way, using Mrs Newland's ideas, perhaps, but translating them into terms of our own circumstances, our own families.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

BEFORE MASS. By Romano Guardini. Translated from the German by Elinor Castendyk Briefs. (Longmans; 8s. 6d.).

Many of the books on the Mass that have appeared in English in recent years, give the reader to believe that all his difficulties would disappear if only certain changes could be made in the liturgy, certain old forms restored and other more recent accretions excluded. Or even, we are told, if the clergy would avail themselves of such legitimate practices as the dialogue Mass, and the offertory procession, participation in the Sunday Mass would become so much easier. This is no doubt very true, but we are still on the periphery of the problem; its heart lies very much deeper. For this reason we are very glad to be able to welcome the English translation of Fr Guardini's *Before Mass*. This book attempts to prepare the reader for genuine participation in holy Mass by showing him what the Mass demands of him and how these demands may be properly met. Its approach is refreshing, for the author is content to discuss the Mass as it is today in relation to the needs of the modern Christian without constantly referring to the practices of past ages. Fr Guardini has no quarrel with the efforts of the liturgical revival, but in this book he takes all that for granted and approaches the subject from a new angle.

The first part of the book is devoted to sacred bearing, and a glance at the list of contents will show the train of the author's thought: Stillness, Silence and the word, Silence and hearing, Composure, Composure and action, Composure and participation; these are some of the heads that meet the eye. At a time when so much emphasis is placed on action in the liturgy it is very salutary to be reminded that