

POINTS OF VIEW

The Mass and the Laity

To the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

I CAN sympathize with Denis Forbes on the Mass becoming so 'little' to us. As one who is in town all day, it is certainly hard to become 'detached' from the world, but may I give your contributor a little suggestion, I am assuming, of course, that he, like myself, goes 'up' and 'down'. If so, he should go into a Catholic church, say, in the lunch-hour for about fifteen minutes, and just 'give himself' to God. He need not strive to *say* anything, but he can kneel or sit in perfect silence, or perhaps mutter our Lord's name if he feels distracted. He should do this as regularly as possible. It is surprising what this simple little exercise can do. By this means, one *can* get into contact with our Lord daily; and, on the Sunday, Mass does not appear so hard an act on which to concentrate. In these changing, noisy days, the simpler our approach to the Divine Wisdom, the better. And is there any necessity to read newspapers up and down in the train? Why not a good book on theology?

N. Harrow.

AUGUSTINE, T.O.S.D.

Angelic Ministry

To the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

RECENTLY our newspapers were full of letterpress and pictures of a temple of Mithras and some of its statues discovered during building operations. Thousands flocked to see this evidence of the Roman occupation of England, and the suggestion was actually made that four hundred thousand pounds of public money should be expended in preserving these remains in their original site. But there has been another uncovering of things hidden, and in this land, too, which has excited no comment; indeed, so far as my reading goes it has not been mentioned at all in any Catholic publication. For long years all unacquainted with Hebrew have read in Daniel 10, 12 these words: 'And he said to me: Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, to afflict thyself in the sight of thy God, thy words

have been heard: and I am come for thy words.' But if we turn to the Knox version of the same verse this is what we read: 'Take heart, Daniel, said he; thy prayers did not go unheard. Prayer of thine it was beckoned me to thy side, from the very moment when thou didst set about thy search for knowledge, by fasting in the presence of God . . .'

Here we have a new and beautiful revelation of the angelic ministry, one allied to Raphael's words to Tobias: 'When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead . . . I offered thy prayers to the Lord.' We have all been familiar with St John's vision of the heavenly liturgy, and how the angels offer our prayers as incense in their censers; but Mgr Knox has presented the angelic co-operation in a new light: he shows how the act of prayer immediately sets up a union between the praying person and his angel. 'Prayer of thine it was beckoned me to thy side.' So, the one praying becomes a spiritual magnet attracting the presence of angelic help. This fact immediately draws our attention to those two incidents in the prayer-life of our Lord, the coming of the angels at the end of the Temptation, and the coming of the Angel to strengthen our Lord in his agony of prayer in the Garden; and we have the immense consolation of knowing that to us also, the members of Christ, come the angels to refresh and strengthen us. Surely this should make prayer all the more precious to us and deepen our sense of reverence as we pray. Then, too, our personal prayers become as those of the Mass, at which, as constant tradition tells us, the angels assist. To me, for one, this Knox translation is something far more thrilling and wonderful than the discovery of a hundred temples of Mithras! A pearl of great price has been unearthed, and how lovely it is! Gratitude is due to the discoverer. I wonder what further treasure may be found in his great translation! Nearly fifty years ago I was privileged to know a lady and her husband whose home in Derbyshire was the leading social centre of the district. Often parties and balls would keep her up late, but never once did this deeply spiritual woman ever rise late and shorten her morning prayers, for all through her married life she begged her guardian angel to awaken her at the usual hour, no matter how short her sleep, so that her prayer life might not suffer. 'Prayer of thine it was that beckoned me to thy side.'

Kiln Green.

ARTHUR VALENTIN