

EXTRACTS

FRANCE is the home of 'Enquiries'. *Enquetes* of every description are turned out on mimeographed sheets and spread throughout the country in an attempt to arouse even greater analytic fervour. The latest to reach the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT is sent out in preparation for what promises to be a very interesting Conference to be held at San Sebastian at the end of August on the subject of Private Prayer. The questionnaire is printed here not necessarily to encourage replies but to lead to reflection:

As regards prayer and spiritual exercises, what have you been taught to consider necessary in order to be a good christian? Daily meditation, prayer, particular 'examen', visits to the Blessed Sacrament, rosary, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, ejaculatory prayers, recollection, retreats. . . ?

What do you do about all this?

What do those around you do: Your family, your mother, your friends, employees, fellow workers, tradesmen whom you know?

What do *you* regard to be necessary?

What do you find possible?

Do you relate it to your ordinary life? How?

How do you pray? Formulae, made-up prayers, prayers of adoration, of petition, of thanksgiving? Do you use prayer books, and if so, which? Where and how do you pray? On your knees, working, walking, sitting, in church. . . ? What help do you find in 'places of prayer' such as churches and chapels?

Then the questions go on to ask about the extent to which such private prayers are practised by others and their effect. It would be interesting to know what the average or 'normal' Catholic would make of such questions.

PRIVATE PRAYER, of course, must be closely linked with the common prayer of the Church; and so often there seems to be little real prayer, for example, in the use of the Missal at Mass. A reviewer in *Liturgy*—the quarterly of the Society of St Gregory, April, 1952—makes some important observations on this:

One of the consequences of Missal-using is that some people have developed a sort of old-fashioned Protestant word-worship. They think they must say every word the priest says and at the same time, even if the prayers apply rather to the priest than to the people. They become marker-manipulators and commemoration-chasers and the prayers are not prayed but merely read. . . . In another way the

problem goes deeper. People's attitude to vocal prayer seems to be defective. They seem to think 'the more the merrier', and there is a widespread and deplorable habit among both clergy and laity of saying prayers at high speed and in an inaudible voice. Vocal prayer is really 'uttered thought'; it may be someone else's thought, it may be highly patterned, as the collects are, for instance, but it is always thought combined with a loving regard . . . and it demands thoughtfulness on the part of the one who prays.

The question is taken to the theological level in the March issue of *Evangeliser* (Liège), which is concerned with 'Spirituality Today'. In an article on 'Spirituality and the Liturgy' Dom Gaillard writes:

However personal one's prayer may be, it is always made in the Church and with the Church. A christian can never abstract from his quality as member of the body of Christ; he cannot set himself apart from the community in order to speak with God: that would be the sin of schism, a sin against charity. There is therefore no 'private' prayer in the strict sense of the word. . . . An isolated prayer would not be christian.

Nevertheless, Dom Gaillard goes on to insist on the necessity of *personal* prayer for every christian. The dialogue of the soul with God has to be able to follow freely and spontaneously the movements of the Holy Spirit. Liturgical prayer and personal prayer are inspired by the same Spirit in the Temple of God, which is at once the whole Church and every individual member; and so they are in effect one prayer.

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AN INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY has been started by the Dominican Fathers just outside Chicago, and it will hold its first summer Extension School in July of this year. The Director of this inspiring venture is Father J. L. Callahan, O.P., the Editor of *Cross and Crown* and the Secretary is the energetic Fr Jordan Aumann, O.P., who has saturated himself in the works of the great Spanish spiritual writers and in particular of the late Fr Arintero. In such capable hands this Institute, which has practically no parallel outside Rome itself, will certainly flourish. May it prosper and bring a deepening of Christian life not only to American Catholics but especially to all English-speaking Catholics.

The spring issue of *CROSS & CROWN* devotes half its pages to the memory of Fr Walter Farrell, O.P., the one man who by his devotion to St Thomas's theology must have done more than any other to prepare the ground for this Institute. Indeed, in a memorial note by the Father Provincial of the St Albert Province we read that 'he was a trail blazer in the cause of Catholic truth. He was the founder of *The Thomist*, a learned quarterly given to the exposition of philosophical and theologi-

cal principles. He was a co-founder of *Cross and Crown*, a quarterly which unfolds the thomistic ascetico-mystical teaching.'

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SCRUPLES, Père Barbarte maintains in a useful article in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* (Toulouse: January-March 1952), are partly psychological and partly physiological or rather neurological in their cause; so that their treatment demands 'a psychotherapy and an associated physiotherapy'. Shock treatment which can cure melancholia cannot get rid of obsessions, so that the intellectualised scruple or phobia is likely to remain. It does not therefore seem to make the cure of this unhappy disease any the easier.

THE FAMILY is a new Irish newspaper costing threepence and appearing every month from 27 Cook Street, Cork. It offers a great variety of reading matter for so small a price and aims at assisting the Christian family in every possible way—and peace is its first policy. A courageous enterprise which deserves to prosper, especially if the first issue (March 1952) is to be the norm.

DOCTRINE AND LIFE (April-May) is given over almost entirely to considerations of the Easter liturgy. Its first attempt at a specialised number is most successful.

BENEDICTINE HERITAGE is a charming little publication introducing readers to Minster Abbey, near Ramsgate, Kent—a monastery that should be more widely known, as much of the building goes back to the very earliest monastic period in England.

PRAYING WHILE YOU WORK. By Hubert van Zeller, o.s.B. (Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

Subtitled 'Devotions for the use of Martha rather than Mary' this book is written to help women, in particular, to pray while washing the baby, to meditate while darning. It hints, suggests and urges piquantly. It catches the mood of today and ties it to prayer in homely phrases. An encouragement to men and women to pray-work.

M.H.

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Contributors are encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers. *Literary Communications* should be addressed to The Editor, Life of the Spirit, Blackfriars, Oxford (Tel. 47221). The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted; and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. *Subscriptions, Orders and Communications regarding Advertisements* should be addressed to The Manager, Blackfriars Publications, 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1 (Museum 5728). Annual Subscription 17s. 6d. post free (U.S.A. \$2.50). *Binding: Orders and Enquiries* for binding volumes of the review may be sent to the Kemp Hall Bindery, 33 St Aldate's, Oxford.