

her reasons quite simply, 'I want to serve God, and to help all the poor and unhappy people I can. That is why I must be a nun'. She becomes a nun, but is not left altogether at peace in her convent. The end of the story is charming; 'When Frideswide was dying she saw in a vision her friends St Catherine and St Cecilia, "It's quite all right, my dear", they told her, "we shall be here to meet you when you come".'

The book is full of humour. Holiness and humour often go together.
FLORENS ROCH.

A RETREAT WITH ST THERÈSE. By Père Liagre, C.S.S.P. (Sicut Parvuli Handbook I, Douglas Organ; 4s.)

This book is the first of a series whose aim is to make known the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood taught by St Thérèse of Lisieux and so much underlined by recent popes.

In so short a compass the author can do no more than consider certain aspects of the saint's life: her humility, her patience under suffering; in other words her doctrine in action. The first two of the twelve conferences give us the key to her life. Thérèse believed herself to be infinitely loved by Compassionate Love Itself (and here the operative word is 'compassionate'). She had not to look for lovable qualities in herself to know that God loved her. On the contrary, she gloried in her infirmities. For was not her littleness the greatest claim of all on God's love? From this realisation of God's love came her own thirst to repay him by all the means at her disposal.

The remaining conferences show us God and Thérèse ministering to each other's thirst. 'The cry of the dying Jesus, "I thirst", goes on echoing in the depths of my heart, kindling within it new fires of zeal. I would give my Beloved to drink. . . .

This is a valuable little book, repaying meditative reading. It is perhaps a little repetitive in parts, and there is a tendency to enumerate points which renders its style at times didactic and stilted.

ADRIAN DOWLING, O.P.

EXTRACTS

EPIHEMERIDES CARMELITICAE (Libreria Fiorentina, Florence) promises to provide studies, reviews and texts illustrative of the Carmelite tradition in theology. The first number, of over 200 excellently printed pages, has a most useful bibliography of St John of the Cross (1891-1940: editions, translations, commentaries) by P. Juan de Jesus Maria, O.C.D., an article on the 'Natural Desire of the Vision of God and its apologetic value according to St Thomas', a study of Francisco de Vitoria, and—most notably—the first part of a detailed consideration of 'The problem of unitive contemplation' based on

the writings of St John of the Cross, by P. Gabriel de Sainte Marie-Madeleine, O.C.D., from which we quote:

For Carmelite theologians, contemplation is not an idea: it is a form of life which is displayed in the soul at every level, from the humble beginnings of a loving attention to God . . . up to the splendours of the transforming union where it seems that only a thin veil separates the soul from vision and beatific joy. Contemplation is all that! To aspire to contemplation, to be called to contemplation: that means being invited to enter into the world of divine grace. Why should we stop half-way and not go on to the summits once God has placed us on the way? The question we have to answer is whether God places everyone on that way and whether all generous souls must necessarily expect to see realised in themselves the whole series of states which the great mystics have experienced.

Of course even in the mystical order there are privileged graces which it would be absurd and presumptuous to wish to attain to. But contemplation too has its development and its normal goal, which must be the ordinary fulfilment of the contemplative way. . . . It is therefore of vital importance for the theology of spirituality to recognise this goal, to discover what the soul experiences there, and to establish the principles which govern that experience. Upon the nature of these principles will depend the validity of our hope to achieve these states of contemplation.

Fr Gabriel goes on to analyse St John of the Cross's teaching in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, and promises in a future article to supplement it with a study of the interpretation of later theologians, especially those of the Carmelite school.

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THE LATEST SUPPLEMENT to *La Vie Spirituelle* (Cerf: Blackfriars, 4s.) has several articles that justify its sub-title: 'Spiritual Problems of our Times'. Canon Yves Bossière appeals for the restoration of the canonical life as an ideal for diocesan clergy.

The bonds of community are of the very essence of the *presbyterium*. If one goes on to add that the liturgical idea bears a close relationship to the idea of community and that the common life and the liturgical life in fact presuppose each other, it will be seen what an important influence can be exercised in the Church through a revival of the canonical spirit. The privileged place of the liturgy is in fact the *presbyterium*. The traditional priesthood of local churches is at once communal and liturgical. To bring back the canonical life into the diocesan framework would be to restore in one step a priesthood both communal and liturgical, the indispensable basis of any missionary priesthood.

The same number continues the discussion on 'Modification of the (active) Religious Life for Women', and has commentaries from a theologian and a psychologist on the phenomena of private revelations.

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LES QUESTIONS LITURGIQUES ET PAROISSIALES (June) includes an account by Père Pichard, O.P. of his 'liturgical missions', and especially of the 'Week of the seven sacraments', which brings to the faithful a living representation of their sacramental life. Père Pichard emphasises that

while there is a vast mass that is being de-Christianised, there is also a small body of people who give us great hope. It is with them we are immediately concerned, for our faithful Christians are for the most part uninstructed catechumens. Let us make of them intelligent communities, conscious of the bond which unites them, and which is none other than the sacramental system. It is useless to hope for the 'return' of the masses so long as new converts are hurled into a pseudo-community which submits out of routine to rites of whose meaning it has no idea. On the other hand a parish which participates in a living way in the mystery of our Lord will attract men to itself in attracting men to Christ.

REVUE DES COMMUNAUTÉS RELIGIEUSES (L'Édition Universelle, Bruxelles) for April-June has a long discussion on the recent Apostolic Constitution for Secular Institutes (*Provida Mater Ecclesia*) the text of which it gives in full in French. The author of the article, Père J. Creusen, S.J., shows what this official recognition of the existing institutes has done:

By this recognition and official intervention what was a 'moral state' of perfection has become a 'legal state of perfection'.

These congregations of people living in the world in the lay-state but under vows are the modern form of religious life which has to stand up to an increasing persecution and penetrate into districts where the religious habit and 'organisation' would make any apostolate impossible. The author writes from Rome and his comments bear the marks of authority.

PRAEGRATOR.