

THE MYSTERY OF MARY, by R. Bernard O.P.; B. Herder Book Company, 37s. 6d.

This is an American translation of a book that has already been reprinted several times in France. It is a comprehensive work of meditation on our Lady, designed for everyone, in which theology and edification are blended, with a preponderance on the side of theology. Throughout, the author stays close to his sources, with constant references to scripture, the magisterium of the Church and St Thomas Aquinas. It is to be regretted that full advantage is not taken of some of the best of the more recent Mariological development by theologians. The book appears to have suffered in translation, so that it has the fault of so many works about Mary, a tendency to glutinize what otherwise could and should be useful statements. Surely we ought to be spared, for example, the reference (on p. 64) to 'the charm inherent in the vocation of the purest of adolescent girls'; and there is a good deal in this *genre* (p. 123): 'she espoused the sorrowful destiny of her beloved Son with every fiber of her being'. Though I have been unable to obtain a copy in the French, it seems likely that this sort of thing may have been quite acceptably phrased in the original. These failings mar, but do not destroy, the genuine value of the book.

ROBERT SHARP O.P.

MARY SAVE US, translated by K. A. Trimokes S.J.; Paulist Press, 50 cents.

In our centrally heated and somewhat enervated religious societies in the West you will come across many little books of devotion. These are sold in large numbers, probably because they are excessively sentimental, but they are not unlike pop records in that while they give you a slight titillation of the flesh and make you feel warm and cosy inside, they make no challenge upon your mental or spiritual resources. They are often rather nauseous compilations which I am inclined to think do more harm than good.

Such publications are shown up for what they are by this small book of prayers composed by Lithuanian refugees in Soviet Russia. These prayers have all the qualities that the others lack. They are a direct response to a human situation. They are in no way pretentious. They have no really great claims as literature. They are written by simple people who were taken from their homes and put into prison camps in Soviet territory thousands of miles from their villages in Lithuania. They have no great literary garnishings, they are surprisingly lacking in metaphor or sudden flashes of style and they have not the great rumble of rhythm that we are so used to in our own well loved prayers which have come down to us through the centuries. Yet reading these, nobody can doubt that they are a genuine response and a genuine appeal to God from people who find themselves in truly terrible conditions and seek help directly from him. And because of this their very simplicity—their almost stark nature—is very moving.