

## EDITORIAL

PERFECTION, in the technical sense in which we use the term when we speak of being bound to seek perfection, is the fullest possible realization of the spiritual potentialities of the individual person under the power of God's grace: *be ye also perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*. All baptized persons, whatever their particular status or vocation may be, are bound to have this perfection as their ultimate aim. It is of course an aim that can only be completely realized by the possession of God in the Beatific vision, which is the object of the virtue of hope and for which every human being has been created.

When we speak of being bound to perfection we are thinking as a rule, and sometimes thinking exclusively, of those who have entered the religious state; here again the term is a technical one and does not or should not contain the implication that others are not living a religious life or that their obligations are in any way less religious, though they may be different. Religious, in the technical sense, have placed themselves in the *state* of perfection by taking the vows of religion; poverty, chastity and obedience. They have undertaken, that is, to realize this perfection in a *particular* way, through the observance of their vows and through their life in community. By these they lay aside the more ordinary ways of serving God in the world, including the married state (to the carrying into effect of which, nevertheless, God has appointed what he has not done for religious, a special sacrament, with its own particular graces).

In one sense the religious state (together with the episcopate) is a higher mode of life than any other vocation, to the extent that its sacrifices and duties are such as to tend, of their very nature, to concentrate attention on the things of God, whereas the sacrifices demanded for the true service of God in other vocations are neither so easily perceived as being God's will, nor do they lead so directly to preoccupation with the things of God. For this reason God calls men and women to the religious life or to the priesthood in far less numbers than he does to avocations by which they may serve him in the material concerns of the life of the world. This is in the very nature of things, for the life of the world would cease altogether if it were not so.

It would be a great mistake therefore, yet it is a mistake often unconsciously made, to think of vocations other than to the religious life and the priesthood, as a *second best*. Every vocation is a primary vocation, in as much as it is God's special call to that particular person, and no vocation could be in any sense a second best unless it were entered upon in spite of a clear call from God to the religious life, the priesthood or some other vocation in its very nature higher than the one actually undertaken.

It would also be a great mistake to imagine that the subject matter of the vows of religion has no particular relevance to the life of other baptized persons, lay people called to follow Christ. Every follower of Christ is bound to obedience to God's law and will, and under God to his diocesan bishop, to the supreme jurisdiction of the Pope, and to the just laws of the land. Children are bound to obey their parents, and adults their lawful superiors in so far as they are under contract to do so. Every Christian is bound to be chaste; within marriage there is a marital chastity that must be observed. Every Christian too is bound to that poverty of spirit which must control and sanctify the ownership of all material things.

With these thoughts in view we have decided to devote the next four numbers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, with the exception of the January number which will be as usual a Unity number, to the general theme of Religious life. The articles in them will be on the Religious Vows, on doctrine, and on prayer, treated in such a way as to engage the interest of lay people and religious equally. There will also be a series on Secular Institutes, their nature and work.

\* \* \*

As we go to press the news is broadcast of the death of our Holy Father Pope Pius XII. We join with the whole Catholic world, and with countless others who are not Catholics, in expressing deep reverence for his person and sorrow at our loss, and in praying for the repose of his soul. He will be held in honour as one of the greatest of modern popes for the loving care and wisdom with which he governed the Church during his long pontificate.—R.I.P.

