

THE AIMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

What is the use of contemplative religious orders and congregations in the Catholic Church? Such is the question often put by well-meaning non-Catholics and, unfortunately, one not altogether unheard amongst ill-informed or worldly-minded Catholics themselves.

But, first of all, what is the meaning of religious orders of any sort? They consist of men or women who desire, with God's help, to lead a higher kind of religious life and to devote themselves more entirely to the service of God than is possible to those living in the world and hampered by its struggles and responsibilities, its pleasures and distractions. These people band together according to their sexes in communities, or religious families, and lead a uniform disciplined life under rules and superiors approved by ecclesiastical authority. Moreover in order to give stability and permanence to the kind of life they have freely adopted, they bind themselves voluntarily, and after adequate probation, by solemn promises to God, or "vows," as they are technically called.

No Catholic is bound to join such communities. This more perfect life is not commanded by Christ—it is only counseled or offered to those who feel that God gives them the moral leaning towards it and the moral strength to adopt it. In His Gospel our Lord distinctly points and invites to this higher path. Thus, to the young man who declared that he had kept all the commands of God "from his youth," and asked what more was wanting to him, Christ replied: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow Me." (St. Matt. xix., 21.) Our Lord said: "If thou wilt," He left the youth his free choice, so that he might either continue in the world in innocence or follow Christ in a special and higher sense. Again, in verses 10 to 12 of the same chapter, our Saviour speaks of those who have "made themselves" chaste for the kingdom of heaven—i.e., who voluntarily embrace the state of chastity or virginity in order to gain a higher place in His kingdom than those living in matrimony—a state set forth by St. Paul as being less perfect than virginity. (I. Cor. vii.) Of this higher state our Lord says: "He that can take let him take, showing that such a condition of life is not of precept, nor, indeed, given to all, but permissible to those who have the wish and the strength to 'take it.' For such a life our Lord bestows rich rewards: 'Every one that hath left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting.'" (St. Matt. xix., 29.) We have spoken of the religious state as a more perfect way. This means, therefore, that it imitates more closely the life and example of Jesus Christ. For He it is whom the Father gave to us as our most perfect model. But when we come to study that wondrous life of Christ, its many-sided beauty and perfection bewilders and dismays us. Its imperfections are far too varied and numerous for a man, or any set of men, to attempt copying them all—even in that qualified degree which becomes possible to our frail nature by the grace of God, but must ever fall far short of the Divine Original. From this very weakness and conscious incapacity of man springs the great variety of religious orders in the Catholic Church. Each class of these—not to mention particular orders within a class—contents itself with endeavoring to reproduce—at a distance—some particular phase or aspect of that most perfect life of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to discuss each religious order in detail. There are, however, two principal divisions:

1. Those which aim at imitating the hidden and interior life of our Saviour only and who do not mix with the outer world nor engage directly in external work for its benefit. These are called the purely "contemplative" orders.

2. Those devoted to copying Christ's public and active life—and called the "active" orders. But this must not be understood as though the latter class were solely active, to the exclusion of contemplation. For while chiefly known to the outside world by their external work for the spiritual, intellectual or corporal welfare of their fellow-beings, they include besides a contemplative element which acts as the main-spring of their external action.

There is that part of their life led secretly and before God alone, as well as the part—visible to others—consisting of spiritual ministry, education and spiritual and temporal works of mercy. With these "active" orders, however, we are not here concerned, nor is it necessary to point out their public usefulness. The latter is sufficiently evident from tangible results, and for the most part earns the respect—if not the approval—of all thinking men of whatever creed. Their benefit is seldom questioned except by the narrow-minded bigot who declines on principle to acknowledge any good springing from a Catholic source. It is then rather the purely contemplative orders that call for explanation; for the purpose and usefulness of these lies less upon the surface.

A man will say: "Though not a Catholic, I can nevertheless see the usefulness of Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans or perhaps even of Jesuits and of other orders devoted to study and teaching, to missionary labors and other good works. I can most of all esteem the life of the Little Sisters of the Poor, of Sisters of Mercy, of Charity, etc. I don't agree with their religious ways, still less with the creed they profess; but yet they are truly earnest people who, at the expense of self, strive to better the world in which they live according to their lights. But—look at the Cistercian, Carthusian, Trappist monks, or the Cistercian, Trappistine, Carmelite nuns! They are hidden away all their lives from the sight of men—they are perfectly useless people—mere drones in the beehive! They spend all their time in prayers, fasting, labor within their enclosure, and do no good to anybody except possibly to themselves. What useless purpose can they serve? Why don't they do something? Surely these people must admit that in the wicked world upon which they turn their backs there are spiritual needs enough and to spare wherewith to satisfy their utmost zeal! Why, then, don't they come out of their seclusion and work for God?" Such is certainly the feeling of many, and there is some reason to fear, not of non-Catholics alone. There is, nevertheless, a fundamental fallacy underlying such an attitude of mind, viz., the false and unspiritual notion that there can be no rational purpose, no usefulness, no exercise of zeal for the souls of others, no advantage to the world at large in the hiddenness of a contemplative's vocation. This is a wholly mistaken view, unworthy of any one who regards himself as religiously-minded. It bears stamped upon it the crude utilitarianism of a material age that sees little good in any form of endeavor which does not issue, and that speedily, in tangible benefits to humanity, especially those of a material kind, let us say, a twopenny tube. It is the spirit of the day, even in religious matters—to depreciate any sort of effort which does not at once take shape in a new church or mission house, or society, or club—in a new hospital ward, orphanage or school. Visible success is the god of our times.

But to deal more directly with the false picture of contemplative orders portrayed above. Let it be granted for a moment that no advantage accrues to the outside world from the secluded religious life of a contemplative. Does it follow that his vocation is a useless one? Will you, Christian reader, seriously declare it an unprofitable thing to devote one's whole life, however secretly, to adoring and worshipping Almighty God, to meditating day by day upon His law and upon the life of His Divine Son, to perfecting one's soul—valued by our Lord at the infinite price of His precious blood? Which comes first, God and His service or man and his advantage? And if God is to come first, then the worship and service of Him in our hearts and in secret comes first also, and utility to man second.

Notice this. There is hardly a single objection that men bring against the contemplative's mode of life that might not equally be urged, if a man dared, against that of our Lord Himself during those long years of subjection and seclusion in the cottage of Nazareth and up to the day He left it to begin His public life of preaching and miracles. We know He came from heaven for the one great purpose of saving the world and regenerating human life in all its phases. Of what use, then, men might exclaim, for the rest of a world "sealed in darkness and the

shadow of death" was His lowly labor as the "Son of the carpenter" in Joseph's workshop; of what practical service those years of silent prayer to the Father, of voluntary obedience to His Mother and her spouse, of His hardships and self-denial! Was not all the world looking for the light of His blessed countenance, and in utmost need of the saving gospel of His lips!

Why did He not come out and do something?

But Jesus went on praying, enduring, carpentering. Such was His manner of life for some thirty years. He worked among men for at most three. Yet unthinking people make it a charge against contemplatives that they should take Christ's hidden life for their model! Well, at all events, these monks and nuns are in good company—even the very best. They have a fairly safe precedent for their behavior in the practice of their divine example. Perhaps they can afford to disregard the flippant censure of those who fail to appreciate an earnest and humble endeavor to copy the greater portion of the Master's earthly life and to go on carpentering. In truth, such adverse criticism comes simply from forgetting the obvious first principle that a man's chief duty in life is to worship God, to do His will and to cultivate Christ-like virtue in his heart. Such is the lesson of Nazareth, one sorely needed in days of fuss and bustle, of "interviewing" and myriad forms of self-advertisement. The lesson of Nazareth; by his mastery of which, according to his state of life, a man will be finally judged, and not by his visible success in Apostolic labor, in philanthropic enterprise or the number of figures in his donations to hospital funds and like laudable objects.

The true utility of anything consists in its serving the ends for which it was made; its degree of usefulness depends upon the measure of this its serviceableness. A pen made to write, but not writing, is useless. A musical instrument silent under the player's touch is useless. The test, then, of man's utility here below is the degree in which he serves the purpose of his creation, and that purpose, as every Christian knows, is that he save his own soul and gain heaven by serving his God in the way God calls upon him to serve—F. M. De Zulueta, S. J., in English Messenger of Sacred Heart.

GOOD BLOOD

Is the Secret of Health, Vigor and Happiness.

Good blood—rich, red blood—is the greatest enemy that disease can have. It stimulates every organ to throw off ailment that may attack it. Good blood is the only positive cure for such complaints as anaemia, nervousness, neuralgia, skin eruptions, indigestion, rheumatism, etc., because these diseases cannot exist where the blood is good. The secret of good blood—rich, red, life-giving blood—is Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Where these pills are used it means life, health and vigor. Mr. Robert Lee, a well known resident of New Westminster, B. C., says:—"Before I began using Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, my blood was in a very impure condition, and as a result, itchy pimples broke out all over my body. My appetite was fickle and I was easily tired. I tried several medicines, but they did not help me. Then my wife urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. I got half a dozen boxes, and by the time I had used them, I was fully restored to health, and my skin was smooth and clear. The pills are the best medicine I know of for purifying the blood." Sold by all medicine dealers or sent post paid at 50c per box or six boxes for \$2.50, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont. Do not take a substitute, or something said to be "just as good." The "just as good" medicines never cured anyone.

Tread cheerfully every day the path in which Providence leads; seek nothing, be discouraged by nothing, set duty in the present moment, trust all without reserve to the will and power of God.

The majority of men recognize nothing in human affairs as good unless it yields some return, and they love those friends most—as they do their cattle—from whom they hope to obtain the most profit. Thus they lack that loveliest and most natural form of friendship which is sought for its own sake only; for do they know from experience how beautiful and how lofty such friendship

Whims and Fads Of Science.

(By An Occasional Contributor.)

The word "perhaps" seems to be the only answer that certain disbelievers, or infidels, can give when they are required to make statements, based upon scientific knowledge, regarding the future. That word "perhaps" indicates the difference between the certainty that Faith inspires and the uncertainty that a lack of Faith creates. After all, there is no question, concerning man, his past, his present, and his future, that cannot be solved by Faith. And equally there is no such question that science can infallibly answer. This is a bold statement, but one that the experience of time teaches us, and that no unprejudiced mind can deny. This leads to a very interesting subject, treated in a most scientific manner, by a writer who appears to have but little faith, if he had any, and who depends entirely upon science, human science, for the solution of all problems.

Writing about the catastrophe of last May at Martinique, Louis Rabinovitch, has an article in the "Cosmos," a scientific publication of Paris. He imagines a like disaster, but so great as to involve the whole earth. Should such an event take place, he says that from a distant world its appearance and progress would exactly parallel what we see in the case of new stars that appear in the heavens, from time to time. After telling us that the earth's crust is far less secure than we now imagine, he proceeds with his theory. In reproducing this long extract we deem it necessary in order to have a clear idea of the author's theories, and to show that they are just as unstable as the earth's surface, while the conclusions he draws from the whole are absolutely null.

He says:—

"Suppose that, following upon an extraordinary twisting movement due to retreat of the central mass, a whole portion of the sea-bottom should give way, and falling suddenly should let in the mass of the ocean's waters upon the incandescent interior matter. The water would be decomposed by the heat, the hydrogen would burn, and it would burn more as it had access to more oxygen.

"The conflagration would thus gain gradually in force, accompanied by electric phenomena, and the greater part of the earth's crust would probably be displaced.

"The earth, passing through a critical epoch and returning for the time being to its formative period, would again be nothing but a globe of fire.

"For the far-off worlds that swing in sidereal space, this would be the phenomenon of a new star that blazes out all at once, increases in brilliancy as if it would eclipse the luminous splendor of all its neighbors, and then becomes feebler and feebler, to disappear finally forever in the profound darkness of the limitless distance.

"But the terrestrial crust would not be dispersed in air; its shattered particles would not be projected into space. They would remain fixed, so to speak, on the pasty mass on which they rest. And the gases that would be formed under this burning mass, compressed under the chaotic substance of the crust, would liquefy an enormous pressure.

"This is just what is revealed by the spectra of the 'new stars.' These abnormal pressures have been especially noticed in the spectrum of the Novae of 1892 and in all the new stars that have appeared in recent years.

"After this frightful catastrophe had produced in this manner the appearance of a new sun, the time would come when its ephemeral light would begin to be extinguished.

"It might happen that the phenomenon would not diminish in intensity over the whole surface of the globe. One region might become less active because the elements that favored conflagration were exhausted there. Little by little the dark points would become more definite and would extend, so that, brought around periodically by the rotation of the globe, they would give rise to a variable star.

"This is just what happens in the Novae; first we find differences of brilliancy without periodical variation, then, little by little, a periodicity becomes established, indicating clearly the duration of revolution. Finally, regular pulsations are visible

little and dies as a sun to be revived as a fertile globe.

"In our hypothesis, our earth would cool off relatively soon, because the climatological conditions would not be the same as at its formation. The waters would condense, the seas and continents would be differently distributed over its surface, and another era of life would begin.

"A relative frequency of new stars is now being noticed. The Novae, as astronomers call them, all (or almost all) have the lines of hydrogen; some are, or rather have been, variable.

"Is their appearance to be explained on the theory that we have just advanced? No one can know at present how this is. Perhaps the Novae are warnings—far off, but living examples of the fate that awaits us some day or other.

"According to the prophecies, the earth should perish by fire. Perhaps our suffering and corrupt humanity is fated to disappear at some future time in the bursting forth of some gigantic furnace of this kind.

"Perhaps!" Here we have a long series of arguments, probably based upon scientific foundations, but certainly useless as guides to humanity, as far as concerns the future. In fact, he ends it all with the everlasting "Perhaps!"

Faith tells us that this world will end, and by fire, on the last day, in God's good time, when each creature shall have performed its mission, and when the Angel shall come to summon the dead of the ages to judgment. Is not this very simple, very exact, very easy to understand, and very reasonable? It is the teaching of our religion, and there is no doubt and no uncertainty about it. There is no "perhaps" in the conclusions. We have here a very fair illustration of the difference between the assurance that upholds the man of Faith and the doubt and uncertainty that must inevitably follow all scientific investigation, no matter how learned, in matters concerning the spiritual, the immortal, the eternal. As it is with the end of the world, so is it with every other subject of a kindred nature. After all it is a mere matter of speculation, with its element of uncertainty, in all human affairs; but Faith is certain, and conclusive.

IF BABY COULD TALK.

"I am sure if baby could only talk," says Mrs. B. Gaffney, L'Amable, Ont., "she would praise Baby's Own Tablets too. They have given better results than any other medicine I have ever used for my little one." This is the verdict of all mothers who have used Baby's Own Tablets, and it is the very best proof that no other medicine can equal them for the speedy relief and cure of the common ailments of little ones. These Tablets cure colic, constipation, sour stomach, diarrhoea and simple fevers; they break up colds, prevent croup, and they the irritation accompanying the cutting of teeth, and are positively guaranteed to contain no opiate. All children take them readily, and for very young infants they can be crushed to a powder. (You can get Baby's Own Tablets from any druggist at 25c a box, or they will be mailed, postage paid, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N.Y. Send for our book on the care of infants and young children. Every mother should have it.)

The Italian Divorce Bill

The new year has begun with something like open war between Church and State in Italy, says "Vox Urbis," the Roman correspondent of the New York "Freeman's Journal." Strange as it may appear, the Catholic religion is the officially recognized church of the State in Italy, and the first article of the Constitution declares this in set terms. The Government's project of divorce is in flat defiance of this union. The Church declares that it is never lawful to dissolve a duly ratified and consummated marriage; the Italian Government now proposes to dissolve marriages in certain cases and to permit the divorced parties to marry again. A similar measure has been introduced before the Italian Parliament at least a dozen times already, but all previous attempts were little more than a preparation of the ground for the final struggle which has now been entered upon. That the sentiment of the population is almost unanimously against the proposed

but the present ministry, which is entirely in the hands of the Freemasons, has decided that the obnoxious measure is to be forced through at any cost.

Never before has there been such a united movement of the Catholic forces of the country as that which has been brought to life by the introduction of this bill. Nearly all the bishops of the country have addressed pastorals to their flocks calling on them to oppose it by all means in their power; and those bishops who have not yet done so are only waiting for a favorable opportunity; committees are being formed and meetings of protest are being held in all the great towns; and a monster petition to which nearly four millions of names have already been signed is being drawn up for presentation to the Parliament in which the signatories denounce in the strongest terms this latest attempt to introduce the pest of divorce into the Italian home.

A very instructive example of the methods to which the Government is ready to resort has just occurred. The authors of the bill have announced through their official organs that the organizers of this petition are to be charged with fraud before the civil courts for irregularities committed in the manner of securing signatures. As a matter of fact, all legal precautions have been taken by the latter to secure that the petition be a really genuine expression of the feelings of the country, and the device of the divorcists is intended to frighten the timid against signing the petition.

"Lives of the Irish Saints."

It is just twenty years ago since a venerable Archbishop, recently deceased, expressed the "pious wish that the 'Lives of the Irish Saints' would be completed ere the opening of the twentieth century. Canon O'Hanlon, of Sandymount, our modern Colgan, has long been laboring to bring to a successful issue his colossal work in Irish hagiology, giving all that is known of the acts of Irish saints. Already nine portly volumes have appeared, treating of thousands of Irish saints, covering the calendar from January to the end of September. When it is borne in mind that these nine volumes represent about 6,000 pages in royal octavo, the bare work of transcription must have been enormous. But when we mention that these 6,000 pages are cram full of historical facts, with copious notes and references—and that the venerable author has exercised a scrupulous care in the compilation of what has been termed an encyclopedia of Irish saint history—it will be nothing but common justice to give unstinted praise to the learned writer, who has done for Ireland what the Bollandists did for the Church at large. The marvel is, how one man alone could have succeeded even by long continued and absorbing labor, to produce such a work.—Dublin Freeman's Journal.

All the doubts of sceptics are as nothing, or as very little, compared with the great doubt which arises in men's minds from the ways of Christians themselves—saying one thing and doing another.

Take courage, poor hearts; commence again to smile and devote yourself. If men make no return, either through forgetfulness, inability, or indifference, so much the better! God will reward you in Heaven; and is not God's recompense worth more than that of men?

Why so busy with thyself? Leave Providence to act, whose eyes are ever upon thee in the greatest danger, and who will always save thee.—Life of St. Catherine of Siena. Seek to mingle gentleness in all your rebukes; bear with the infirmities of others; make allowances for constitutional frailties; never say harsh things if kind things will do as well.

Each man is responsible for his own character. Each man has the liberty of sowing what he pleases. The harvest that he reaps is the aggregate of his habits—that is to say, his character. Accordingly, then, it is for each man to say whether he will be good or bad, whether he will grow better or worse. Each man is responsible for his destiny. He is responsible for his character. Character determines destiny. A profound truth lies in the words of Ballou: "Every man is the architect of his own fortune." Daily character is destiny.

A STR

The whirr of a lathe floor, close, hot air of the machine, the Via Bardonecchia street, the hammer struck a stronger note in the symphony.

Away toward the Grand blue bloused fisherman cranes, and Mere Ricordo's kindly chatter rose and fell. Nello stopped and bought limes and apricots.

"The mother is in good luck," said Pietro in the carpenter's shop as he deftly inserted his shears beneath a cupid's wing, and a shred away to make the doll more downy.

The lathe hummed on, for his comrade, worked by this comrade, wanted to earn enough to buy those corals which hung in little shop across the bridge. Nello cared to stop his wheel.

"She is in good spirits," said Pietro, "because the American has taken a fancy to me, and declares she will come to Paris and train her as he would a dog."

The lathe ceased turning suddenly that the bannerist being carved was almost jerked, with a touch on the clamp to see all was right. Nello bent to his work again.

"Little Rosa herself is dejected. She has been put to detention in the school, but prefers the world."

"The child is but sixteen, another worker. The signora's scar have a maid so young."

"Have I not told you," said Nello, getting up and strolling toward the door, "that the signora has a fancy to Rosa?—and when Americans take ideas into heads they carry them to the end?"

Rosa has a pretty face, a handsome eyes of the truest blue. He rolled a cigarette in the air of a connoisseur. "I like handsome faces above therefore the pretty Rosa is company the signora to Paris." "How soon?" It was Nello spoke now.

"In a fortnight—in a week three days—I do not know! What does it matter? There is a clock of San Marco striking! Nello! Nello! You work as well one turned your wheel."

The merry Pietro passed on the street. Other workers stretched their wearied arms, their blue-washed blouses, and turned homeward. Nello worked on, his lathe hummed steadily now that no distant tongue voiced news which interrupted the regularity of the hand.

Then followed two days without the sound of the lathe for hours in succession than ever before. Dare he offer the gift? Had not bought it yet—could until the four liras were saved of the scanty wage. A fortnight—three days—which? The words were full of torturing certainty.

"The little Rosa will come rich woman; her wages will be a thousand liras, I hear," said gossiping Pietro. "She will be a fine dot while away, and come when she is thirty."

"Thirty! When a woman is worth looking at!" "True; but then you must be the dot!" And the worker laid all except Nello, from whose came no sound.

At last the day came when four liras were in his hand. He tried to the little shop where his heart beat high with hope, touched their smooth surface.

How they would become little Rosa! How her great would sparkle with pleasure. Nello told her they were for her own!

A hundred times he rehearsed as he sat at his work, would watch her face as she stepped to the little parcel. Perhaps she would let him clasp them round her neck.

He had never told Rosa of his concept in a dumb, faithful way, a dog may who serves his master and guards her always, and with a careless word of approval a passing smile. But to-night would tell her, for he would see the good wages; and was in his uncle's hair to the business of the carpenter's shop.

Nello thought himself lucky to have the little shop.