

Catholic Lay Activities.

The Help Of The Laity Is Needed.

Written by the Rev. Albert Muntz, S. J., for the Press Bulletin Service of the Central Bureau of the C.V.

I.
New times, new duties! We are forcibly reminded of the truth of the saying when we look over the vast field of what is now commonly called "social work" and consider the important part that falls to the Catholic laity in carrying out the program of Christian social reform. And if this duty was large and responsible a generation ago, then today, in the era of the "social consciousness," and more recently, in the period of social reconstruction, it is even more urgent, since every phase of contemporary life is appraised almost exclusively from the standpoint of its contribution to social progress.

Verily, there is much truth in Father Frederick Faber's sayings, that "we must not make light of the differences of ages" and that "God's work must be done anew in every age." The three great Pontiffs of these days—Leo XIII, the lucid expounder of burning social problems, Pius X, who realized so fully the "democratic tendencies" of the time, and Benedict XV, who is blessing everywhere the work of our social apostles, and urging priest and people to apply the wisdom of Christ's Gospel to the solution of our task of social reconstruction—all of them recognized the necessity of gaining the support of our Catholic laymen in discharging their new duties in a new era, if the work of the Church Militant is to be continued with success among all the nations.

In the Catholic countries of Europe, where the need of Catholic lay action was more keenly felt because of the ever growing hostility of the enemies of the Church, which was shown especially in anti-Catholic legislation, the Bishops were not slow to issue the call for united action on the part of their flocks. In England the Catholic hierarchy found a splendid auxiliary in the Catholic Truth Society, and Catholic lay activity in that land is almost entirely in the hands of that organization. The work it has done by its "Penny Pamphlets on the Social Question," its "Catholic Social Yearbook," its "Social Guild Pamphlets," can never be too highly extolled. It is this admirably organized society that has aroused the "social sense" in thousands of English Catholics and it would be sad to speculate on what might have been the condition of Catholics in England had not the members of that body promoted, encouraged and strengthened every kind of social undertaking which could redound to the spiritual and material good of the nation. In that body were—as is proper and as should be the case in every country where Catholic social reform work is undertaken—both clerical and lay workers. Such union makes for real success, and to quote the ringing words from an article in the August-September number of "Bulletin of Catholic Federation": "When the bishops and the clergy and the laity are united in any measure affecting the interests of God and of Humanity there is no such word as 'fail'!"

In France there arose just when they were most needed great Catholic lay apostles. Among them was Count de Mun who declared publicly that "without Christianity there will never be any real social peace." Georges Goyau wrote splendid tracts on the social value of Catholicism, and the much tried Catholics of that country could look up to men like de la Tour du Pin, Lamy, Henri Lorin, Le Play, Duthoit, Maurice Eble and Max Turmann. Nor were these men given merely to theoretical speculations in social science, but they took part in the many "œuvres sociales" initiated by French Catholics. There was also the well-known "Action populaire" of Rheims, which is to the Catholics of France what the Catholic Truth Society is to England—a source of inspiration and a centre of highly organized social activity.

In Germany, where labored the great "socially minded" Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler, whom Pope Leo has called his great predecessor, the laity were very early aroused to the need of social activity. What the Catholics of that country achieved in the line of social reform is too well known to mention here.

And what about our own country? Here the field of activity and the opportunity for spiritual and moral leadership in the great social movements in which we are all so deeply concerned, is wider than in Europe. For America boasts of being the land of democracy, and wants to bring that blessing to other countries. Our public social welfare agencies, our magazines for civic and municipal reform, our schools of civics and philanthropy, are conducted by laymen. The numerous questions of civic and social and political significance, that are now being discussed in journals of sociology and economics, give our laymen an opportunity to present the Catholic viewpoint on these subjects. The lecture platform is ever occupied by the speaker (or the political quack) who comes to announce a theory of political reform or to outline a new doctrine of social progress.

Why then in the midst of all this activity—much of it well-directed, and much ill-directed—why should the Catholic layman stand aloof? The times cry for him. For now, if ever, the day of Catholic lay-activity has come. The problems that confront us in the political, social, educational, and even religious world are numerous and perplexing. If the layman were not needed the Bishops would not be looking for him. But they are looking for him. In most of our conventions—those, for instance, of the Catholic Education Association, the Federation of Catholic Societies, and the Central Society,—resolutions have been passed these many years in favor of what has come to be known as "Catholic lay activity." The phrase is large and covers a wide, vast range of activities that must no longer be neglected. Some of them will be outlined in the third part of this paper. But for the present suffice it to say that you are needed.

For, says Father John Norris in his fine brochure, "The Help of the Laity" (Catholic Truth Society), "Our modern life, with its great, unwieldy cities and towns, with its free expression of opinion and discussion, with its higher education spread over a wider area, with its all-embracing journalism, and its wider public life, has created difficulties which the clergy alone can not meet; is full of dangers which they are too few to contend with; has given rise to situations, serious and dangerous, which the clergy cannot fully deal with; and further, has taught

large numbers of men to be critical and suspicious of everything a cleric does, or says. In other words, modern life has made work, abundant work, which the laity, and perhaps they alone, can do; and my contention is, that, while they can be of immense service to the Church, and do much for God, they will at the same time save themselves from the unrest and weariness of those who are swayed and ruled by the Time-spirit, and will be free from the contamination of materialistic views and mere materialistic aims and purposes."

Though these words do not specify what is required of the laity, they at least hint at the duties which the "lay apostolate" imposes upon the Catholic. Yet the same author defines in another place what "lay" work should imply. He says that it is "work not directly intended for one's own benefit, but work outside our own work in life, and intended in some way or other, sometimes directly, but often indirectly, to further the cause of God and His Church or the welfare of our neighbor." This is also the explanation given by Father Meschler in his pamphlet on the "Lay-apostolate."

But our work along these lines must be constructive. Of what use to bewail the fact that our Catholic press is not supported, that Catholic books are not read, that Catholic schools are not patronized, that active membership in Catholic societies is ignored, if we do not set about remedying the evil by good example? Of what avail to pass resolutions condemning "attacks upon our religious rights" and upon the "rights of our schools" if we do not bring home to those in power frankly, yet convincingly, just what are our rights in the premises, and clearly outline the steps we feel bound to take to secure them?

On the other hand, "constructive" work of this kind, which is sorely needed just now, much more needed and much more useful than fiery screeds against our "enemies" or vituperative language against a supposed adversary who is nowhere to be seen, can be done much better by a society, a body of Catholics, than by an individual. Hence organization, but well-directed, sane, prudent, intelligent organization and team-work will be needed to secure the desirable end in view. Organization, says Archbishop Faulhaber, is the "most potent force in the social life of to-day. Organization is, so to say, the eighth sacrament of the 19th and 20th centuries."

When our leading reviews refer to the Social Reconstruction as the "bishops' program." They seem to sense that it has behind it the authority of the "socially-minded" rulers of the Church in America. And the fact, that this important document voices the opinion of such a large number of our clear thinkers on great problems of labor and industry, makes its favorable acceptance by the country at large all the more appreciated by Catholics. In his review of that Reconstruction Program in "The Nation" (March 29, 1919) Mr. Raymond Swing said: "The bishops have taken a courageous step, possibly one that some day will be designated as the most serviceable that Catholicism has recently ventured in America. . . . That a quartet of Catholic clergymen should give the country stronger labor doctrine, more intelligently presented and more persuasive, than the reconstruction committee of the American Federation of Labor, is a clue to the times."

Here then we have an instance of the wonderful potency that lies beneath our great Catholic principles of social reform. But these principles must be "intelligently presented" and applied. And it will be the duty of the Catholic layman to bring them to full fruition for the benefit of a world sorely harassed by evils which seldom loomed up so savagely as in these our times. It will be the privilege of our Catholic laymen, working fraternally and in a spirit worthy of this high cause, in their Catholic organizations, to bring this boon to society.

There is no longer any doubt, therefore, that the day of Catholic social activity is fully upon us. The Bishops in the conference at Washington D. C., September 24th, appointed a committee of laymen for "Catholic lay activities." All that remains for us to do is to set forth briefly the excellence of this "apostolate," and to indicate the opportunities for the highest type of social service that it offers to the Catholic laity.

A noted Jesuit, Father Meschler, has clearly explained the reasons why every member of the Church should be eager to do what he can in this wide domain of Catholic lay activity.

Participation of a common human nature is the bond that unites all men into one great family. All other connections arise out of this relationship. Mankind is the first and greatest family to which, by nature, we all belong. "Therefore its woes and sorrows should be our first concern. Our Divine Saviour Himself has strongly impressed upon us the importance of sympathy for our suffering brother. For He made fraternal love the test of His true followers."

In fact, we can do nothing that is more in keeping with our human nature and more befitting the society of which we are members, than practice charity, and so help to lighten the burdens of a brother handicapped in the race of life. For by doing this we are contributing to the solidity of the very foundation of society. Social peace and happiness are largely based on mutual trust and forbearance and helpfulness. But all this means more than mere well-wishing. It implies a steady purpose to do our share in the alleviation of distress and the blotting out of social evils and grievances. "Go thou, and do likewise," is the Divine behest spoken to all of us, but especially to the Catholic, who must act on the belief that faith without good works avails nothing.

The world at large, moreover, has come to realize, through the lessons of the last five painful years, that no real national progress and prosperity are possible without the spirit of service in the hearts of men. The best of our modern literature is largely a homily on the text: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Coleridge has well expressed in "The Ancient Mariner" the great lesson that is being brought home to us today, more insistently than ever:

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small."

(To be continued.)

We Print

Envelopes, Letterheads, Noteheads, Posters, Circulars, etc.
++ ST. PETERS BOTE, MÜNSTER, SASK. ++

SUITS DRY CLEANED

HAVE YOUR SUITS DRY CLEANED. We Dry-Clean Ladies' and Gents' Garments, sent per parcel post. First Class Workmanship. HUMBOLDT TAILORING CO.

When looking for LAND

see me. I can sell you land at all prices and on the terms you want. A.J. RIES, ST. GREGOR.

Advertise in the St. Peters Bote.

Pianos, Phonographs, Accordions, Harmonicas, Violins and other Musical Instruments

We are now prepared to fill all your wants in these lines. For QUALITY CORRECTNESS and PRICE our instruments cannot be excelled by any firm in Canada. With every Piano or Phonograph we give a LASTING GUARANTEE, none that is to be good only until the instrument is once used, but we together with the manufacturers stay by our guarantee for years after. Another point you must bear in mind; you will not have to wait for months in case you need ANY REPAIRS, as you will have to with most other machines. We have ALL REPAIRS CONSTANTLY ON HAND.

2000 RECORDS to select from. Prices from 20 cts. up. Send for our Catalogues. We will gladly mail it to you.

We have a large stock of Silverware, Cut Glas, Clocks, Stationary, Religious Books and Pictures, Statues, etc.

M. I. MEYERS Jeweller and Optician HUMBOLDT

For Wedding Gifts and Rings

see

E. Thornberg

Watchmaker and Jeweller

Issuer of Marriage Licenses. Main St., HUMBOLDT, SASK.

CALL IN TO MY SHOWROOM

and look over the New

BRISCOE SPECIAL

the Car with the Half Million Dollar Motor.

The Price is within reach of everybody wanting an up-to-date Car.

I WILL GIVE YOU A DEMONSTRATION ANY TIME

Let me know your requirements and I can supply your wants in anything for the Farm. FARMERS! I have a Portable Granary on exhibit at my ware house in Humboldt. Double ply lumber and metal roof. Get my price before buying elsewhere.

E. D. LELACHEUR

THE HUMBOLDT MACHINE MAN
Main Street HUMBOLDT, SASK.

The Christchild Arrived

with A Large Assortment of

Toys for the Children, Candies, Nuts etc.

Large Assortment of Jewelry

You can find something for everybody in our assortment
Watches, Clocks, Charms, Fobs, Chains etc.
Don't buy until you have examined our lines.

All Kinds Gramophones and Records.

W. F. Hargarten, Bruno, Sask.

You are safe in a threefold way, if you bring your prescription to us: 1) We use for the prescription exactly what the doctor prescribed, every article being of standard strength, fresh and pure; 2) We examine and reexamine the prescription, whereby every error as to drug or quantity is excluded; 3) We are satisfied with a reasonable profit and charge the lowest prices for the best quality. These are three reasons why you should buy from us.

G. R. WATSON, HUMBOLDT, SASK.
DRUGGIST The Rexall Store STATIONER