

this is not merely negatively but positively evil. Out of it there comes, sooner or later, a dismal sense of unreality, which hardens the hearer and paralyzes or disheartens the preacher. And, therefore, the co-operation of the laity in every form of the Church's life becomes essential alike to their own spiritual life and the lasting efficiency of the clergy. Even apostolic hearts would have fainted and faltered if, in the first ages of the Church's work, it had not been for the Aquilas and Priscillas, whose loving labors so cheered them.

III. I know what will be said by a great many honest and earnest men and women, in all our congregations, when we come to them with this plea for an increased activity on the part of the laity in the Church's work. It will be said that such activity implies a religious enthusiasm which is not theirs, and which they cannot but feel that it would be hollow and unreal to affect. Undoubtedly, of many persons this is true, and if it is, then does it not bring us to that which is after all the Church's most urgent want—*the deepening of her spiritual life?* Ours is an age of great mental activity, and especially of organized activity. The Church never had so many agencies—so much machinery for the doing of her work—until it has come to be a question whether running the machinery has not exhausted that vitality of which it was meant to be the expression. I have heard a parish clergyman much commended for holding seven services, including three celebrations of the Holy Communion, in a single day. I wish I could see their virtue. It is impossible, where there are so many mechanical duties to be performed, but that the spirit in which they are performed should not be mechanical also; and it has certainly sometimes happened that our often-church-going has not deepened seriousness or earnestness of character. And so, behind all our other needs as Churchmen and Christian disciples, there stands—I am sure there is not one of us but is conscious of it—the need of deepening the spiritual life; to come closer into the presence of that Lord whom we profess to serve, until, like her who grasped the hem of His garment with