

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

STUDY THE CATECHISM

Every Catholic should realize that in religion are truths of the utmost importance which must be known, and duties absolutely essential for happiness which must be performed.

Since vast differences exist in the opportunities among men for the acquisition of this knowledge, and also in mental capacity, the method of teaching these truths and duties must be accommodated to all in such a manner that each can realize that "This is eternal life to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

To effect this purpose, the Council Trent commanded that a Catechism should be prepared for the instruction of the people. This work was intended "To meet the mischievous activity of the reformers and to rear the edifice of Christian knowledge on a secure and solid basis; to afford the faithful a fixed standard of Christian belief and to the pastor, a prescribed form of religious instruction. It is a work to abate prejudice, instruct ignorance, promote piety, and to contain a comprehensive summary of the dogmas of Christian faith, and an epitome of the principles of Catholic morality."

In our day, science is a word that demands respect. It is the specialist who claims scientific knowledge about agriculture, geology, botany, economics, electricity, mathematics, as astronomy or any other branch of human investigation, what should be the limit of admiration for the specialists who spend their life's best work in acquiring and dispensing knowledge about the infinite majesty of God, Who is the source and fountain-head of all beauty, all science, all truth, and all perfection? Whatever of grandeur and excellence man discover in created beings is only a feeble ray of the beauty, the perfection and the infinite majesty of God, Who made all things, the qualities and quantities of which man labor so long to discover, and of which they really know so little.

If science concerning created beings is essential and worthy of honor, how much more necessary and more glorious is science concerning the Creator? If for the sake of self-exaltation, or for the purpose of contributing to the comfort of man during the brief period of his visit to this earth, men toil, slave, endure and suffer, what should be the zeal and devotion necessary to learn and to teach the truths which give here and hereafter "Peace which the world cannot give!"

Religion, therefore, is the queen of sciences, the most glorious, the most consolating and the most necessary. It treats of the grandest of all subjects; viz., God. It explains the one greatest of all facts; viz., that God has made all the laws which regulate all created things and beings. It makes manifest that the "Heavens and earth are full of His glory." It teaches the truth about death, death and eternity. It permeates all history; it reaches into the very life and soul of every human being. National life is impossible without it, and every civic life follows when the principles of religion are ignored or violated.

It is the most consoling of sciences. Without it life would be an insupportable enigma, full of horror from beginning to end. Darkness would reign in our minds bestiality and ferocity in our manners; civilization and all its benefits would be impossible.

Deprived of divine light, and the rules of conduct which come from faith, hope and charity, man would be a human wolf, a prey to man all the lessons taught and the duties required by religion, and there is no foundation left for civil government or human happiness. Justice, truth, mercy would be but dreams.

Therefore, to hold what has been gained for the world by the faith, hope and charity of the predecessors in religion, it is absolutely necessary, for the young to acquire and for all others to renew a comprehensive knowledge of the truths essential to individual and civic happiness, and for all to understand that they are under obligation to be responsible to God for the performance of the duties required by Him.

The Catechism contains a most complete compendium of these essentials. It is a book which should command the chief place in every home. It is an absolute necessity, not only to children, but also to the other members of the family who, perhaps, have not looked at it since they left Sunday school. To them, it is ever new, because as adults, they are able better to understand and to apply its lessons. When they renew their study of the Catechism, they will be surprised at the profundity and yet, clearness of its doctrine, and also at the considerable portion of it forgotten by them.

Parents should study it in order to explain its truths to their children, and also to non-Catholic acquaintances, many of whom are sincere in their search for truth and light. To neglect this great work may result in gravest detriment. God alone can read the future of those who are now children. He alone knows amid what trials and conditions they will soon be placed. He alone knows who and what their associates will be in public and private life. He alone knows what dangers will threaten their faith and morals.

No duty of parents is more important than that which obliges them to furnish spiritual chart and compass for the guidance of their children amid the storms and tempests certain to come into every life. All must wage strenuous battle for a medium of happiness here and for the salvation of their immortal souls. They must have adequate ways and means for these purposes.

Catholic parents give years of thought and vast sums of money for the advancement of their children in worldly affairs; much greater sacrifice should be made to comply with the words of Our Lord, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

—The Pilot.

CARDINAL NEWMAN'S RULES

The recently published Life of Cardinal Newman by Wilfred Ward brings into the public eye again the maxims framed by the great English convert for those who would excel in writing or in

public speaking. As a writer and a speaker Cardinal Newman was most effective, and the rules which he followed and which he desired others to follow are all the more interesting because of his own great power with both the written and the spoken word. Here are some of the most important of his maxims:

A man should be in earnest by which I mean he should write not for the sake of writing, but to bring out his thoughts. He should never aim at being eloquent.

He should keep his idea in view, and should write sentences over and over again till he has expressed his meaning accurately, forcibly and in few words.

He should aim at being understood by his hearers or readers. He should use words which are likely to be understood. Ornament and amplification will come spontaneously in due time, but he should never seek them.

He must creep before he can fly, by which I mean that humility, which is a great Christian virtue, has a place in literary composition. He who is ambitious will never write well, but he who tries to say simply what he feels, what religion demands, what faith teaches, what the gospel promises, will be eloquent without intending it, and will write better English than if he made a study of English literature.

A DEADLY HABIT

A fault-finding, criticising habit is fatal to all excellence. Nothing will struggle forward quicker than a tendency to hunt for flaws, to rejoice in the unlovely, like a hog which always has his nose in the mud and rarely looks up. The direction in which we look indicates the life aim, and young people who are always looking for something to criticize for the crooked and the ugly, who are always suspicious, who invariably look at the worst side of others, are but giving the world a picture of themselves.

The disposition to see the worst instead of the best grows on one very rapidly, until it ultimately strangles all the beautiful and crushes out all that is good in oneself. No matter how many times your confidence has been betrayed, do not allow yourself to sour, do not lose faith in people. The bad are the exceptions; most people are honest and true and mean to do what is right.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

A FOUR YEAR OLD SAINT

She was not a child-martyr of long ago, nor is she a saint in the canonical sense, though it is quite possible she may some day become so. Only a little Irish girl who died in Cork, February 2, 1908, aged four years, five months and eight days. The facts of her short career were so extraordinary that the Bishop of Cork permitted them to be related to Rome and wrote a letter giving them formal recognition of her sanctity, and the Holy Father addressed an autograph reply to her schoolmates in which he expressed the wish "that they may always keep as good as their companion Nellie who was called to heaven while still a child."

Her life has been since written in Italian by a priest attached to the Vatican, and dedicated to Pope Pius X, by the express permission of His Holiness; and a "Priest of the diocese of Cork" has given a charming account of her in a penny brochure of some 20,000 words under the title, "Little Nellie of Holy God," (Cork: Guy & Co.), which has the exceptional merit of letting the little flower speak for herself. Nellie O'Grady Hogan was born of poor but truly Irish parents August 24, 1903. When she was three years old her saintly mother died, and the four children were placed with charitable institutions in Cork, Nellie, with her sister, going to St. Finbar's Industrial School, conducted by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. She was sickly from the first, an inheritance from her mother's disease, tuberculosis, and was a constant sufferer from other painful maladies, but she was always cheerful, insisted on sharing with others whatever was offered her, and never complained after she had become acquainted with little over three, with "the story of Holy God."

Seeing a statue of the Infant of Prague on an altar in the Infirmary she asked what it was, and being told it was an image of the Child Jesus, she wanted to know His whole story. She then called Him "Holy God," and spoke of Him by no other name thereafter. She would ask Him for many things, chiefly for others, but on one day she was rebuked by the nurse for asking the globe in the hands of the Child's statue in exchange for her "little shoes." "Oh," she replied, "He can give them, if He likes." Indeed, it appears she had special warrant for thinking so from the many instances related of her personal relations with the Child Jesus and the unusual favors she received from Him. When she made the Way of the Cross in her nurse's arms, Nellie became agitated at the Crucifixion, and wanted to know "why are they hurting Him," and why "Holy God" allows them. On hearing the explanation she burst into tears, crying between sobs: "Poor Holy God!" She used the same expression whenever her eyes fell on the Crucifix.

She quickly grasped the mystery of the Real Presence in the Tabernacle, or, as she put it, why Holy God was "Shut up in that little house," and was quite glad that He was not "squeezed." Soon her searching questions about religious-mysteries and practices exhausted the information of the nurse, who had not been long a Catholic and who confesses that Nellie cured her of many residual antipathies against the religion. The nurse, though usually a daily communicant, sometimes failed to receive, and on such occasions Nellie informed by some spiritual instinct, would fix reproachful eyes upon her, saying: "You didn't get Holy God today." Once she thought Nellie was dying and said so, but the child replied, "No, Holy God says I'm not good enough yet." When questioned she said Holy God "did come and stand there," and her clear description did not correspond with the picture she had known.

She was soon to die, and her spiritual perception was so extraordinary that the bishop, unasked, administered to

her Communion. She told him: "I am Holy God's little soldier now." She then began to have an insatiable desire for Holy Communion. She knew instinctively, though there was no human means of her knowing it, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and would cry: "Holy God is not in the lock-up to-day; take me down to Him." Then in her childish language she would speak the thoughts of God's saints. As, despite her begging, she could not yet "get Holy God," she insisted that a Sister would come immediately after receiving Holy Communion and kiss her. Soon the bishop, after a Jesuit Father had pronounced the child extraordinarily endowed with God's love and arrived at the age of reason, permitted her to receive Holy Communion. "The child," writes the Father, "hungers for her God and received Him from my hands in a transport of love." In the remaining two months she received "Holy God" thirty-two times, and spent nearly all her day in thanksgiving. A nosocomer from a diseased bone in her jaw had been hitherto almost unbearable but disappeared completely after her First Communion. She insisted on being dressed in spotless white when receiving Holy Communion, and she would have none but fresh natural flowers, "Holy God's own flowers," around Him.

Asked to pray for certain sick persons she told what would happen in each case, and it proved true. She had announced that she would "fly to Holy God on Holy God's own day." With tears of joy in her eyes which were fixed longingly on something invisible, and trying to move towards it, she died on Sunday, the Feast of the Purification of Mary and of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple. "Holy God and Holy God's Mother came for her," wrote her schoolmates to Pius X.

Many other extraordinary things are told concerning "Nellie of Holy God," that happened before and after her death. A most touching letter written by the children of St. Finbar's School, to "Our dear Holy Father," recites that soon after her death they had "made a novena that she would obtain for her little companions and all little children over the whole world the great favor of receiving Holy Communion as near to the age that she received it as possible." They deftly insinuate that it was through Nellie's intercession that the Holy Father issued the Decree in favor of Children's Communion: "And if it is not wrong to think so, we would be so happy, dear Holy Father, if you made our little flower a saint, the little saint of Child Communion. All we know is that she cried for Holy God and she got Him, and now she asked Holy God to come to us and we too have got Him." They finish by asking "dear Holy Father's special blessing for all in this holy house, for all Irish children, and for the land where this little flower grew—dear old Ireland."

The Holy Father sent them the blessing, written with his own hand, and though he should not grant their further request to make a saint of Nellie, her life should tend to warm the faith and love of "all little children over the whole world" who may read it, even of their elders.—M. K.

CATHOLIC LITERATURE

It is a matter of sincere regret that Catholics as a body show such apathy and indifference to the mission of the press. In this century of infidelity and lawlessness our enemies have captured the press, and are using it as a weapon to undo the work of Mother Church. Day by day the most sacred tenets of religion are exposed to the scorn and ridicule of men.

In the pages of the press the anti-Catholic bigot is sure of a sympathetic audience when he holds forth on the errors and heresies of the Church. Yet we—Catholic young men—accept these attacks and relapse into a state of mental coma. As children of the Church, we never consider that we have our duties to perform to that sacred institution.

Consequently to use the words of Father Plater, S. J., we surrender ourselves to "the perversion of the antilegal Roman correspondent, the sociological charlatan, the decadent literary critic, and the pseudo-scientific cheap journal." We fall to follow intelligently the battle which the Church is waging on a hundred fields, because we do not interest ourselves in the daily teachings of the press. We build churches and convents, endow schools and colleges, found and establish homes; but ignore completely that mighty power which tramples upon and obliterates the work of such institutions—the printing press. Each day the un-Christian spirit in the press grows apace. It seeks to remove Truth from its pedestal and enthrone error in its place. It parades its spirit of independence and scoffs at Christianity. It accepts dictation from no ruler, save from the atheist and agnostic. It decides the most sacred issues of the world with the mock wisdom of a jester. This independent spirit has estranged the press from the considerations of all Christians, who believe that its mission should be the cultivation of Truth, Justice and Charity among men.

It is quite in keeping with the spirit of the age to find the press ignoring or trying to ignore—the existence of a Divinity. The hydra of secularism surmounts and dominates its articles. Its pages inspire men to build up educational systems devoid of religious knowledge, to found colleges and academies from whose halls the sacred influence of religion is banished.

It teaches them to build up fortunes in mines or railroads, to interest themselves in the cultivation of orchards, in the designing of aeroplanes, or in the breeding of race horses, but—this daily mentor—never points out the way to all happiness and prosperity in the recognition and worship of an omniscient and omnipotent Being.

Now it may be pertinent to ask, has Catholic literature any possibilities? Are there any new worlds which it may conquer? Yes; there are great possibilities before Catholic literature. In the untilled fields of thought the Catholic litterateur will find much work for his hands to do. We live in an atmosphere that is poisonous to Catholicity, and unconsciously we inhale the vapors of that atmosphere. It lies in the hands of Catholic writers to purify that atmosphere, and render its evil effects less dangerous to mankind.

The great truths which adorn the pages of Catholic literature must be used to point out the moral obligations of the age. The spirit of the day is not one of seriousness—we are, one and all, desirous of shirking the solemn responsibilities of life. We find the daily path of duty irksome and monotonous. We try to forget our responsibilities in a happy round of pleasures but we soon



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CATHOLIC LITERATURE

find ourselves at the end of the tether. The still, small voice of conscience commands us to begin our labors anew. Our duties and responsibilities cannot be shirked. They form a barrier which effectually blocks the path of pleasure. Our moral obligations loom large before us and command our attention. The great truths which enrich the pages of Catholic literature will help us to bear our burdens in a spirit of abnegation and self-sacrifice. Its teaching will bring home to us our personal and social responsibilities. The mission of Catholic literature is obvious. It has to destroy the apate spirit of the age, and to create an appreciation for the outlines of eternal Truth.

The doctrines of error must be supplanted by those of Truth, and the multitude brought back from the unhealthy luxury of "the fleshpots of Egypt." Catholic literature must shake the gaudy trappings of the hour from its shoulders, and stride forth in the glory of its supernatural raiment. It must be less apologetic and a little more enterprising in its time, and must no longer be the patient but of the buffoons of Christendom. It must strike dumb the lying taunts of agnostic and atheist, and "with fire-touched lips" preach eternal truth in the forum and market place, until no longer be "a voice crying in the wilderness but must vindicate its Divine Charter, and confound and subdue those who endeavor to defame its teachings. It must create a desire for the fruit of the Tree of Wisdom, and destroy the longing for the poisoned fruit of the tree of Evil.

It is the pages of the press that the strong men of our Faith (to quote from a recent essay of Canon Sheehan's), we must acquire "the passion for self-improvement and the faculty for distinguishing between a taste for the froth and foam of much contemporaneous literature, and the desire—if you would be strong man of feeding your mind on great and inspiring thought—the marrow of the giants. And if ever the day shall come when the artisan in his workshop, the laborer in his cottage, the clerk in his office, the student in his attic, shall understand that the legacies of all the ages are theirs, and that beneath their hands, are the priceless treasures, garnered for them by the intellectual kings of our race, and that this means the ecstasy of noble thinking, then we shall have moved forward toward that national felicity which is our real prosperity."

But Catholic literature has a still greater mission to perform. Its voice sounds over the waste spaces of life, and re-echoes in the halls of the world. It calls to the young sons and daughters with a call that is not in vain. But it also calls to those who dwell outside the pale of the Church, and bids them "enter and fear not." The influence of Catholic literature has been attested by many converts, from Newman downwards. It is the beacon-light which illumines the dark ways and the subtle windings of error. It calls with an insistent voice to those who stray in the ways of error and darkness, and pleads with them to walk in the paths of truth and light. Like a true mother, it shields not, but leads them on to the house of wisdom and glory—the Catholic Church where all men join in the common recognition and worship of the all-merciful and all-powerful Being.—J. B. O'Riordan, in the Southern Cross.

A FOUL WINGED BIRD

There are two kinds of scandal—the scandal our wicked lives give to the innocent, and the scandal our no less wicked tongues spread. Both are fruitful of evil: the scandal of our lives has slain its thousands, but the scandal of our tongues has slain its tens of thousands. To-day I shall speak only of the scandal of the tongue.

Scandal is a sort of foul-winged bird a happy black with the blackness of hell. It has two long wings, so that it flies, old beyond the years of the grey hills, flies swifter than the wind. The demon of scandal has a thousand eyes, and a thousand ears, and a thousand tongues—basilisk eyes that kill with a stare; ears that hear the very grass growing; tongues whose edge is sharper than the sword and more venomous than all the worms of the Nile.

With all her tongues wagging this fearful creature wings through the valley of the world. She flies in at palace windows; she stops with equal pace at the cottage gate; she stays her footsteps at the broken door of the hotel. And everywhere she sets her foot, she leaves a filth like unto the slime which

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the caterpillar trails over the flowers. In her wake follows wars and rumors of wars.

The food of the scandal is human hearts and souls. She drags from poor, wind-swept graves the bones of the dead, and with ghoulish glee feasts on the forgotten ashes. Worse than the bite of the gnat, the sting of the wasp, the blow of the serpent—far worse is a single tongue of scandal.

Scandal is a gehenna wherein souls are roasted and blasted, a simon which baneful breath so often destroys the flowers of virtue; a canker which eats away all that is good and noble. Most women are too fond of scandal—women, as the Apostle of the gentile says, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. When women get together how quick they are to regale the minds of one another with juicy bits of what can hardly be called scandal, but is so near scandal that there is no other name for it! Let a woman receive the faintest whisper of some neighbor's shortcoming, and the news is "as an arrow that sticks in a man's thigh"—she must get rid of it. And a great many men, a very great many, are no better in this respect than the women.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

If a man were shown to me who had a long memory for little kindnesses, who never seemed out of debt in his affections who exaggerated his obligations to others, kept anniversaries of them and repaid them twenty-times over, I should be more struck with the likelihood of his turning out a saint than if I heard that he disciplined himself to blood daily, slept on the bare boards, enjoyed the prayer of quiet, had been scourged by devils, and had seen our Blessed Lady. Alas, we forget the ten lepers and nine that were ungrateful—Father Faber.

Scandal is a sort of foul-winged bird a happy black with the blackness of hell. It has two long wings, so that it flies, old beyond the years of the grey hills, flies swifter than the wind. The demon of scandal has a thousand eyes, and a thousand ears, and a thousand tongues—basilisk eyes that kill with a stare; ears that hear the very grass growing; tongues whose edge is sharper than the sword and more venomous than all the worms of the Nile.

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