

EDITORIAL

OUR first and most welcome duty is to offer our homage and obedience to the new Vicar of Christ, our Holy Father Pope John XXIII. Just as almost the whole world mourned the loss of his great predecessor, whose strong personality, acute mind and deep goodness caught the imagination of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, so the personality of the present Pope, in many ways very different, has impressed itself, even so early in his pontificate, upon the mind of the public at large by his energy, his almost homely accessibility and his genuine humility.

We are glad to be able to pay our homage to His Holiness in the number annually devoted to the cause of Christian unity. His wide experience as representative of the Holy See in the Near East and in France has brought him into close contact with the Eastern Orthodox Church and with the work for unity which is specially characteristic of French Catholicism. We feel confident that his sympathies will naturally engage him in promoting, throughout the whole of Christendom, a Catholic ecumenism loyal to the teaching of the Church and the directives of the Holy See, such as was initiated and encouraged by his great predecessor.

The present Unity number has three things for its particular aim; to show the terms and the spirit in which Catholics can pray for Christian unity, to illustrate ecumenical work on the continent and in particular one way in which the ecumenical dialogue is actually being carried out there under the authority of the hierarchy, and to give Catholics some idea of what responsible non-Catholic ecumenists think of the ecumenical work of their Catholic counterparts.

One country differs greatly from another in the conditions under which Catholic ecumenists must work. We are not suggesting that what is being done in Germany, for instance, can be immediately adopted here. The time is not yet ripe for so great an advance, and in all these matters our own Bishops are the only lawfully constituted judges. But it is good and useful for us to know the lines along which Catholic ecumenists elsewhere are pioneering new methods with the full approbation of authority.

The present Editor is relinquishing his position owing to his election as Provincial of the English Province. He wishes to thank

writers for and readers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* for their kindness to him during his two and a half years of editorship, and to recommend to them his successor, Fr Edmund Hill, O.P., whose name will be by no means unfamiliar to them.



THE CHURCH UNITY OCTAVE

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

The Substance of an Address given at Cambridge in 1957

IT cannot be emphasized too strongly that this is an octave of prayer for unity. A time, therefore, not so much for talking and listening to each other about our divisions and how we might heal them, but rather for talking and listening to God—trying to see our divisions with *his* eyes, and asking for *his* unity.

This octave—or eight days—of prayer for unity all began about fifty years ago at a place called Graymoor in the State of New York. A small community of very Catholic-minded clergymen of the American Episcopal Church lived there, trying to follow the rule and way of life of St Francis. They called themselves—they are still called—Friars of the Atonement. They were not, so far as I know, very distinguished theologians or what we should regard as abnormally saintly men; just sincere, hard-headed and hard-working American pastors living a community life. But they were disturbed men, who were genuinely concerned about the curious position in which they found themselves—even though that position was no fault or making of their own. For here they were, very Catholic-minded, yet belonging to a denomination which was not recognized to be Catholic by most Catholics. Here they were, trying to follow St Francis, yet out of communion with the Church of St Francis and with the Church authorities to whom St Francis had been so devoted and obedient.

But I suspect that there must have been something still deeper and more serious that was disturbing them, and which induced them to start and propagate this octave of prayer. For, as we have seen, they called themselves Friars or Brothers of the Atonement. That meant that they were especially dedicated to what the Lord Jesus did on the Cross. And what he did on the Cross was a work of atoning, of 'at-one-ing', of reuniting men with God and among