

EXTRACTS

IN QUEST OF VOCATIONS. The fourth volume of the series organised and produced by the Editors of *La Vie Spirituelle* to assist religious sisters in their present difficulties regarding vocations has now appeared. The first two of the series are appearing this month (September) in a single English volume—*Religious Sisters* (Blackfriars Publications). The third made up a special number of *La Vie Spirituelle* on the place of the Sister in the Church (July 1949). And now the fourth, *Le Discernment des Vocations de Religieuses*, can be obtained from *Les Editions du Cerf* (or Blackfriars Publications in England). Its eight essays, written by authorities who have already appeared in the previous volumes, deal with the call to perfection, the obligation of following a vocation, the principles employed in discerning a religious (and in particular a contemplative) vocation, the place of psychology in such discernment.

In view of recent interest in the subject of what constitutes a 'vocation' and the many misapprehensions regarding it, Père Motte's paper on the obligation of following a religious vocation is of very great importance. The call to a dedicated life in the state of perfection is of counsel and not of precept. A man who feels called to such a life, then, might seem free to take it or leave it. Does he offend God by ignoring a 'vocation'? The account of the rich young man in the Gospel suggests that he does. Without damaging the delicate balance of the author's answer we cannot summarise; but he concludes:

To help souls not to stumble in such a serious decision we should insist neither that they are free because the call is not of obligation, nor that they lie under an obligation because it is in itself more perfect. We should help them to stand before God and in face of their own lives, lead them to become conscious of themselves in relation to the divine plan which surrounds and penetrates them. . . .

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SPIRITUAL DIRECTION of this concrete and realistic nature at such times becomes practically a necessity. And in the two congresses held this year to consider the nature and duty of the modern spiritual director this point was made clear. The first congress was held at Avon, under the brilliant leadership of Père Bruno, who summed up the matter from the director's point of view: 'Nous sommes là, et nous sommes toujours de trop!'—for the director's one aim should be to put the soul in direct touch with God. The director, as Padre Luciano Maria underlined from the teaching of St John of the Cross, must be more than a mere 'prudent adviser'; he must col-

laborate as an instrument with the Holy Spirit, who is the true Director of Souls; he must discover the way God is leading the soul. The second congress, which was held at Rome, dealt more specifically with the different types of those who need direction. For the laity Don Cumal, a parish priest in Rome, spoke with a conviction born of experience.

Direction of the laity centres round the administration of the sacrament of penance which together with preaching constitutes the principal work of the parish priest.

And he went on to show how God works through the priest in the sacrament of penance, and the priest collaborates by his words in preparing the penitent to receive more fully the directive grace of the Spirit. The priest's words from the pulpit, too, lead the congregation deeper into the interior life in order to perceive more clearly and generously the movement of divine grace.

These two congresses are reported at length in the July number of *Rivista di Vita Spirituale* (Rome); and to this account we may add a reference to the article of 'The Qualities of a Spiritual Director' by P. Menendez-Reigada, the Spanish Dominican, in *Cross and Crown* (June). The author admonishes the director who limits the soul to ascetic practices and so stands in the way of the direct action of the Holy Spirit.

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'THE HOLY SPIRIT is known to us only by Revelation, i.e. through the history of salvation. Following the ancient catechesis Père Daniélou here resumes all that the Scriptures teach us of the third Person of the Holy Trinity. By this contact with the sources our theology of the Holy Spirit will here gain a new freshness and our prayer a revival of light and fervour.' Such is the claim made by the Editor for an article he publishes in the August-September number of *La Vie Spirituelle*. While it is surely rather discouraging to readers to be faced with so fantastic a 'blurb' for a twelve-page article, it will certainly repay study.

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THE SPIRITUALITY OF MARRIED LIFE is occupying the thoughts of the Grail movement in America. The magazine *Grail*, edited at St Meinrad's Abbey, Indiana, gives an account of the Christian family Movement in Chicago which already embraces 500 families.

The groups do not work on their own specific problems, but on the problems of the families in their parish or neighbourhood. Their own family becomes Christian through their efforts to help other families and to Christianise their surroundings.

The groups work on the normal Catholic Action lines. They have organised retreat-inquiry days for young couples intending to be married—and called the day typically 'Pre-Cana Day'. They sponsor talks on parent-child relationship, and many similar good works for neighbours families present or future have spread from this increasing movement.

Such an extraverted movement might tend to cool the hearth at home. But we find another publication put out by the Grail called *Marriages in Cana* by E. M. Sheehan in which the central spirituality of the family is encouraged too:

The chief gift that the bride and groom bear away from the altar on the wedding morning is a key to the Communion of Saints. Marriage, the sacrament, by divine generosity, has thrown open to one weak man and one weak woman one of the seven great doors to the inexhaustible treasuries of grace. From that time forward every act she performs as a wife and mother, every act he performs as a husband and father can be lightened by that Sun. And it will be precisely according to their response to these offerings of grace as wife or husband, and no longer as individuals, that each one will gain salvation. That is the meaning of vocation.

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RIVISTA LITURGICA ARGENTINA (Buenos Aires) brings to South America the model of what a liturgical review should be, including in each number different sections, doctrinal, practical, musical, so that a balance may reign in divine worship.

REVIEW FOR RELIGIOUS (June) continues the 'List of Questions' to be answered in the quinquennial report by pontifical institutes.

REVUE DES COMMUNAUTES RELIGIEUSES (July/August) contains a conference by P. Delchard, S.J., on the canonical legislation affecting novice mistresses.

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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