

TWO NEW 'L'ESPRIT LITURGIQUE', also from Cerf and following the same motive of bringing life to the liturgy, are very welcome. No. 4, *Nos Enfants et La Messe*, by Alain de Sauvebœuf (Cerf, Blackfriars; 240 frs.), suggests a method of making the Mass live for children in opposition to methods which try simply to occupy them during Mass. It begins with the problem and the results of a very French *enquête* on the subject, and then follows the age group of the children according to their psychological development. Perhaps the most controversial section is that dealing with the eight-to-tens with their egocentric instincts and therefore with their insistence on 'My Mass'. But the book is essentially practical, taking children as they are, and suggesting notebooks and illustrations with great precision. No. 5, *Les Sacraments Signes de Vie*, by A.-M. Roguet, o.p. (Cerf, Blackfriars; n.p.), is of the greatest importance. No one has hitherto dealt with the sacraments in this clear, theological manner of exposition with which the author deals with the reality of the Signs in general and with each individual sacrament. He penetrates beneath the almost mechanical words of modern catechisms. It is to be hoped that this volume will be translated as a successor to Père Roguet's previous *La Messe: approches du Mystère*, the English version of which is now in the press.

POL JOATTON has written *En Ce Temps-Ci* (Desclée de Brouwer; 420 frs.) as an attempt to transpose the principal acts of the Gospel into modern life, since Christ lives always and the Gospel is always being lived. It is in the form of a dialogue or play, the Gospel characters being made into modern people.

FATHER GERALD VANN'S Lenten sermons on *The Pain of Christ*, together with his essay on *The Sorrow of God*, has proved that this is still the greatest theme of meditation. The little volume now appears in its third edition (Blackfriars Publications; 6s. 6d.) to inspire its constantly increasing number of readers with the simple sight of Christian suffering and the answer in the cross of Christ.



EXTRACTS

In the July and August-September issues of *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven* there are two articles on 'The Practice of Asceticism'. The first is a general discussion on asceticism and its problems. The second discusses at length the range of ascetical activity. The writer disclaims originality and wants 'to give, as objectively as possible, a summary of the classical writings on this subject and so offer the opportunity of making a comparison between traditional asceticism and the desires that the Holy Ghost inspires

in people of today'. In the second, and very practical, article he points out the range and path of asceticism—beginning with the mortification of the body and its senses, then the emotions, and so on through the fields of natural love, the intellect and finally to the will, the seat of evil in man.

'The purpose of the practice of asceticism is to form no respectable and well-balanced people, but *saints*; and that implies the use of means that will always be painful to our human nature. If it were not so, then the *scandalum crucis* would seem to be mere empty words.'

* * *

The need for mortification comes back eventually to the composite nature of man, at war against himself. He is at once a physical and spiritual being, and Padre Gabriele di S. Maria Maddalena, the modern leader in matters of spiritual theology, has shown clearly how supremely different man is from the animal in this 'the fundamental human conflict' (*Rivista di Vita Spirituale*, October, 1952).

There is within us a true conflict between our deeper tendencies: between the constructive ones that have the spirit for their head and those towards immediate personal satisfaction which have their origin in our animality. Those that are egocentric easily become 'egoistic'. If this conflict is not resolved by the due subordination of the search for pleasure to the fulfilment of our human mission, man remains 'diminished' in his moral life and in his own human development. . . . The situation imposes a clear and ineluctable law, the law of renunciation; he alone who renounces his inclinations for immediate pleasure and braces himself for a work that requires strength will be able to free his constructive tendencies sufficiently and to develop them so as to reach their full possibilities.

He goes on to show how this renunciation generates a true spirit of joy which characterises any true spirit of mortification. To deny oneself with cheerfulness is difficult enough for any Lent, but that is the true Christian ideal of the Cross.

Voluntary mortifications, we know, cannot be undertaken except under some form of obedience. In the beginning of a serious attempt to live as a Christian it is often very necessary to have a direction to prevent excesses in penances. As a rule the need for such direction becomes less as the Christian becomes more immediately responsive to the Holy Spirit. In discussing the nature of the obedience of submission due to the director, Père Paul Philippe, however (*Doctrine and Life*, December to January), suggests that the need from one angle increases:

Hence she (the Christian) must have recourse to an experienced director, not so much now in order to keep alive her love of God and lean her prudence on the director's, as in order to control her behaviour under

the movement of the Holy Spirit. And this need is all the greater the more the soul advances in the mystical life; she feels it all the more necessary to have this priestly supervision the more she rises above the human mode and plunges into the great darkness of the night of love. A blind submission must sometimes be asked of her.

But even here the author does not allow it to be true obedience since the director is not a superior. 'A submission', he continues, 'that borders on obedience without becoming obedience in the proper sense; it is still prudence.' This is of the utmost importance for those who glibly say that so long as they do their voluntary penances under obedience to a director it is clearly the will of God. The situation is not quite so clear-cut. The penitent must still exercise the virtue of prudence in choosing and implementing his mortifications, a prudence which listens humbly to the *advice* of the director.

* * *

THE SACRAMENT OF GOD'S HEALING is dealt with very freshly and constructively by Fr Harold Fuchs, O.S.B., in *Sponsa Regis* (December).

The consideration of man as a body *and* soul emphasises that Holy Unction is more a sacrament of 'fullness', of completion, than of the 'living' as it is usually termed. . . . The usual preparation for Unction, namely, the reception of Penance and Holy Communion (as Viaticum), plainly indicates that certainly the ordinary effect of the Anointing is not to be the remission of sin (Penance is the usual means to do that effectively), nor to make Christ or grace sacramentally and permanently present in the soul. (Viaticum is supposed to have done that).

From the very words of Scripture it has ordinary and extraordinary effects. Surely the ordinary effect is the healing or the helping of the soul unto glory. . . . It is absurd to hold that St James is saying the ordinary effect of the sacrament is the restoration of health to the body, for then all one would have to do to live for ever would be to receive Unction opportunely again and again! . . . The ordinary effect is the preparation of the soul for immediate entry into Heaven after death with purgatory.'

The only difficulty about all this is that it leaves the body and the oil it receives very much in the descendency. There must be more to it than that. Surely it is of importance that even after death the soul retains its transcendental relation to the material which is so honoured by the Church—honoured before death by this reverent anointing, honoured after death by reverent interment. The body is not to be despised even at or after death, at least if we follow the Church in her prayers and worship.