

OCTOBER

THE EDITOR

THE sanctification of time, of the centuries and moments as they pass, lies near the heart of Christian life, for Christianity is time redeemed: even the unbeliever must number all his days from the day the Word was made flesh. The praise of God, that primary work of the Church and all who are its members, is itself achieved within the temporal limits of dawn and dusk, and the divided day of the Church's prayer is but a reiterated and universal reminder that every moment is God's possession.

The antique and sober majesty of the Church's liturgical worship has often enough appealed to those for whom a later and less formal devotion may have little attraction, and the popular prayer addressed to our Lady, of which the Rosary is the type, may too easily be set off against the deep, recurring rhythms of the Liturgy. For many centuries now the month of October has been marked with the name of Mary, and, throughout the Catholic world, devotion to our Lady takes on, in the tenth month of the year, a renewed intensity. It is perhaps of use to turn aside for a moment from the large issues that haunt the mind and imagination of our time, the secular calamities and the remedies that men devise, to find in the fact of these myriad prayers a still point at which to rest. Christians themselves may too easily be infected by the restless itch of action, and lose the sense of time within eternity. The years of man and all the moments of them are sanctified indeed, but the weight they have is partial, and it passes.

Our Lady is the guarantor of man's redemption. She, the God-willed agent of our healing, must stand beside man in all the phases of his need. The mother of the Incarnation is the mother of men, and man's praise of God, man's declaration of his own misery or majesty, must find in her a unique interpreter, for her work is God's unique achievement. So it is that from cathedral to concentration camp, from contemplative choirs to prison cells, the cycle of her psalter, the Rosary, binds together, and never so surely as now, man's need of God, and man's need of Mary's intercession.

It is a sadness that a truth so strong and plain as that of Mary's place in our redemption seems, for so many beyond the Church's unity, a luxury of devotion, a dispensable extra, the baroque encrustation on a structure primitive and unadorned. Perhaps the fault is sometimes to be laid on those who know most readily her work and find her prayer most easy. It is the familiar furniture of a house long lived in that calls for no acknowledgement. But that evangelical repetition of words: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus!* can in this month of October, one may hope, receive once more its freshness and its force. All is here, or nothing is here.

For members of the Order of Preachers, and indeed for all who share that Order's life and spirit, the praise of Mary, and in particular, the use of the Rosary, have a traditional meaning, and whatever the controversies of scholars may have to say about the Dominican origin of the Rosary, it yet remains closely associated with the Order which has been its principal promoter. Here itself is something significant, that an order monastic in structure, and apostolic in work, rooted in liturgical piety and committed to the intellectual apostolate of truth, the order of St Thomas Aquinas and of St Catherine of Siena, should be the Order that is committed to foster the most 'popular' of devotions. Here, it may be, the strands unite; the classical reserve of the Liturgy and the spontaneous joy of a people's prayer, the theological achievement and the beads as they pass through the hands of all believers. The work of the Order of Preachers is the work of Christ and his apostles; it is the work of the Church, and its prayer no less is the Church's prayer. It is no proprietary pride that sees within the large limits of the Order elements at first sight so various, but essentially so one; a providential reminder that truth is not only an idea to be looked for, an ideal to be served; it is a life in which to be incorporated. And the rhythm of that life is prayer, and man's hope finds in Mary the chosen one who stands today as surely as at the moment of Annunciation to lead men to accept the truth and to live it.