

And as the mounting furnace
 the approaching end proclaims,
 for all to hear she calls aloud
 thrice on the Name of Names
 and enters into Paradise with a great rush of flames.

With the elect of Heaven
 henceforth her place shall be,
 a standard-bearer in that high
 and blessed company
 of those who nearest are to God. My sweet Saint, pray for me.

THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES¹

3. *The Active Orders*

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

AT first sight it may seem strange to call some orders 'active' and others not. In one sense the contemplative orders are the most active of all: a Cistercian monk who rises at two in the morning, and spends many hours in prayer but as many in hard manual work, could scarcely be called idle. But in the technical sense those orders called 'active' are deliberately concerned with the works of active charity—whether spiritual (as in missionary work) or temporal (as in the care of the sick or in educating children). They, like all religious orders from the very beginning, are concerned with the following of the counsels of the Gospels in an organized life according to rule, but the monastic features of stability and a liturgical structure, as well as the characteristic organization of the frairs, are sacrificed in order that their particular active work can be more effectively pursued.

Strictly speaking these orders are not orders at all, since they do

¹ The last of three talks given on the Overseas Service of the B.B.C. in October, 1955.

not take the solemn vows that are the mark of the monks and the friars. But this is a technicality of the canon law which scarcely concerns our present purpose in describing their work. For the active orders first came into being, as did the monks and the friars in their time, to meet a need of the Church and were constituted to meet that need. The Reformation was an immense challenge to the Church, and it was soon evident that new methods were needed to win back people lost to Catholic allegiance and to stimulate the spiritual life of the faithful. It was the Jesuits most of all who were to be the instrument of the reform within the Church that was to be the answer to the Reformation which had caused so great a breach in Christian unity.

The Company of Jesus (to give the Jesuits their proper name) was something wholly new in the Church. Founded by St Ignatius Loyola in 1534, himself a soldier, its primary aim was to be at the disposal of the Pope for whatever work was needed. To that end the new order dispensed with the traditional sanctions of life in community and the solemn celebration of the liturgy, in order to be wholly available for the active work of preaching, teaching and missionary activity in even the remotest ends of the earth. The military experience of its founder was reflected in the structure of the order, with its long and arduous training, its insistence on the most exact and instant obedience, its emphasis on the perfect discipline of the will. As one historian has put it, 'wherever there was a Jesuit there was the whole order'. And so from the very beginning the Jesuits were unsurpassed as scholars, educators, administrators and zealous missionaries. They were commandoes, always available and perfectly trained.

The instrument for the spiritual formation of the Jesuits was *The Spiritual Exercises*, drawn up by St Ignatius himself, and this document was to affect most profoundly the whole of Catholic spirituality. The emphasis here was on a systematic meditation on the fundamental truths of religion as declared in the life of Christ so that the individual will would be moved to an exact and prompt response. Once more, it was the individual's will that mattered: the technique was that of the commando.

The immense success of the Jesuits—one has only to think of such achievements as those of St Francis Xavier in evangelizing the Far East or of the Jesuit 'reductions' in Paraguay—showed that there were indeed whole areas of the Church's work which

needed to be dealt with by religious congregations dedicated to special ends. And so the last four hundred years have seen the development of an immense number of congregations both of men and women, which, while bound by the general principles of religious life, are immediately concerned with a specific form of active religious work. Their inspiration, whether acknowledged or not, is that of the Company of Jesus.

Such, among congregations of men, are the Passionists, founded by St Paul of the Cross in 1720, and the Redemptorists, founded by St Alphonsus in 1732—both alike concerned with giving missions and retreats. Later, among many congregations, one can instance the Salesians, whose founder was St John Bosco in 1854, and whose special work is that of educating boys. There have, too, been numerous congregations of Brothers (i.e., religious who are not priests), specifically founded for educational work, such as the Christian Brothers, founded by St John Baptist de la Salle in 1684 and the centenary of whose arrival in England was celebrated last year. Again, there are congregations devoted to the service of the sick, and it is not always realized that the whole idea of free medical service for the poor was established as long ago as 1582 by St Camillus of Lellis when he began his order of the Ministers of the Sick.

There are of course hundreds of orders of women devoted to the active works of charity, and the familiar sight in every town of sisters of every sort, visiting the sick or teaching in schools, is universal evidence of how widespread is this aspect of religious life. It is not always realized that by this in England and Wales alone there are more than eleven hundred convents of religious sisters, and that perhaps as many as twelve thousand sisters are engaged in countless works of charity throughout the land.

It would be impossible to give any real impression of the manifold work of the active orders in England today. For the last few years exhibitions have been held in the principal cities to foster religious vocations in this country, and they have given a vivid picture of the variety and vigour of the work undertaken by men and women alike. It is being increasingly realized that the work of religious orders in our contemporary world demands the greatest professional competence as well as a sense of vocation, and the social services as well as medicine and nursing are being increasingly accepted as fields for religious work. Here the religious

orders are often in close touch with the multiple agencies of the Welfare State, and perhaps the traditional sense of vocation which motivates the priest, brother or nun can do much to humanize and indeed to spiritualize what can otherwise become the impersonal provision of the State.

It is perhaps in the field of education that the active orders are most apparent. The Jesuits, true to their tradition as educators, are responsible for many large schools, and there is scarcely a modern order of men that does not find in education one of its principal fields of work. This is reflected in their presence in the universities and in the growing share they take in educational affairs generally. And the orders of women—especially such professionally acknowledged teachers as the Sisters of Notre Dame or the Sisters of the Holy Child—are even more prominent in these activities. One might instance such an achievement as that of the Sisters of Notre Dame at Liverpool, where they are responsible for a large training-college for teachers, a huge day grammar-school for girls, several primary schools and a child guidance clinic, where psychologists and doctors work in close conjunction with the Sisters.

A further field of work for the active orders and one that attracts many vocations is that of the foreign missions. This is of particular importance in Great Britain, with its great responsibilities in the Commonwealth and the colonies, and it is in this country that many hundreds of future priests and religious sisters are trained for the works of charity—schools, hospitals, orphanages and many more—which they so heroically undertake in every corner of the free world.

But the scope of the works they undertake must not blind one to their motive, namely, that of vocation: of seeing Christ in the persons of those in need of every sort. The Gospels are a stern reminder that in the end the follower of Christ will be judged by how far he has identified himself with the sick, the hungry, the ignorant, the sad. In so far as it is done to the least of these it is done to Christ himself. Here is the answer to the repeated challenge—'Show us your works!' It was Mgr Ronald Knox, in his contribution to a series of talks on the Third Programme of the B.B.C. on 'The Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians', who pointed out that the most enduring Catholic contribution to the nineteenth century in England was in fact that of the religious sisters. Their devotion to the sick and the neglected amidst the horrors of

the industrial towns was a light in a dark place and did perhaps more than anything else to show what Christianity can mean in practice.

If, then, we want to sum up what religious life of every sort must ultimately mean we are left with the word 'vocation', the call to serve God in a life that is dedicated by vow. And however much that life may vary, from the wholly contemplative life of the Cistercian monk in his cloister to the wholly active work of the Sister, who may even nowadays have no special form of dress to distinguish her, the source is always the same: a love of God and our neighbour for his sake that evokes this generous and sacrificial response. And it can never be mere utility that can be the standard of its worth. The hidden life of the Carmelite nun avails for each one of us at this moment: her prayers, her mortification, are offered for you and for me. The point really is that we are members one of another, and the religious orders, of every sort and condition, exist to say that this is true.

FATHER HUDDLESTONE AND SOUTH AFRICA

FINBAR SYNOTT, O.P.

FATHER HUDDLESTONE has become a great centre of controversy, and it is most important to sort matters out carefully when considering his book.¹ It describes his experiences, particularly in the 'black spots' of Johannesburg, and gives views in judgment on South Africa and race relations in South Africa.

Most of the book is in the form of incidents showing the effect of discriminating laws on the African. As regards narrative matter, it is factual; although selected, it is not exaggerated. What he says of the African's hardships under the Pass Laws, the housing shortage and permit restrictions, the summary methods of the

1 *Nought For Your Comfort*, by Trevor Huddleston, C.R. (Collins; 12s. 6d.)