

## THE WORKERS' MASS

It is becoming a convention to object to the Apostolate of Christ the Worker because the name is misleading, or at any rate inadequate. The common answer, too, is becoming something of a recurrent theme. Yet if the answer is examined with an unbiassed mind it will be seen to be perfectly adequate. To quote from the Statutes: 'The Apostolate of Christ the Worker . . . is intended to be a means of bringing back to God the mass of the workers . . . It directs its energies towards the working masses throughout the world, irrespective of class and profession. It may be parochial, non-parochial or professional, according to the members who constitute the various branches. But though doubtless its work may take on a multitude of different aspects, it will remain, under this manifold activity, one indivisible body.' An even more forcible answer lies in the actual work of the Apostolate, a work which rises from the principle embodied in the last sentence of the quotation, the spirit of unity and brotherhood. Among the works of the Apostolate the founder has put first the celebration of a monthly Mass. By this scheme, now become the *Mass Calendar*, all Catholics of any status, workers or otherwise, may share in the work and privileges of the Apostolate by offering Mass once a month for specified intentions. Significantly this monthly Mass intention is not included among the preludes to apostolic work, it is not insisted on only as a preparation of soul, but it is the first and most important part of the actual apostolic work of the movement. Then the intentions themselves are not limited to securing privileges for the have-nots, or to taking care that the poor down-trodden classes are restored to a state of security even at the expense of others, but one intention is for the salvation of workers and *employers*, while another is reserved for promoters and benefactors of the Apostolate, who, as has already been seen, may be of any class. The Apostolate has always insisted very strongly that Mass must also be offered by and for the employers, and this is merely an application of the aims put forward by Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*: 'But the Church with Jesus Christ as her master and guide aims higher still. She lays down precepts yet more perfect, and tries to bind class to class in friendliness and good feeling' (18). So much for those who accuse the Apostolate of covert Communism.

The *Mass Calendar*, however, has a much more important significance than this mere apologetic use. Firstly, it is not treated as a piece of unreal contemplation unrelated to practical life; secondly, it is not limited to the 'workers' as a social class; and thirdly, it is a practical means not only of personal sanctification but of the sanctification of the whole of life, all that is easy, all that is hard, and even all that is indifferent.

The fact that one can become an associate of the Apostolate by offering Mass monthly, and can thus be considered an active member, shows a valuable realisation of the Mass as an Action. This is shown very clearly in the spirit of St. Joseph's 'House of Hospitality,' where the most important part of the day is the time of Mass and the half-hour of silence afterwards. There can be no doubt about the sincerity of this spirit; to an 'outsider' reading any issue of the *Vine and the Branches* it is plain. It is regarded as the necessary condition of all other Catholic work for the masses, not only because it draws down blessings on that work, but also because it is the spring and inspiration of that unity which is the foundation of any social work, and from which social justice and charity spring.

In its second aspect the *Mass Calendar* achieves something not only for the Apostolate of Christ the Worker, but also for the whole Catholic Church. It allows, or rather asks, that others besides those interested specifically in social work as a whole-time job should join in the work, and should share in the privileges of those who devote their lives to the work. In return the Apostolate prays for them and their work. It is perhaps looking far ahead, but it is certainly not presumptuous to see in this the germ of the most developed and highly conscious spirit of Christian liturgy. Moreover, if this ideal should be achieved, it would do for the unity of Christendom what no amount of talking and discussion could ever do. In other words, the Apostolate Mass is leading the way to the day when all Catholic societies will consider it part of their duty as sodalities within the Church to pray for other sodalities and their members, and by means of this liturgical prayer will share actually in their apostolic work, thereby sharing in the Apostolate of Christ in this world through the members of his Church. Once a month a Mass is offered for one of the following intentions: In reparation for sins committed against Jesus Christ the Worker, for the sanctification and salvation of workers and employers, for trade unions and manual labour, for the victims of labour and deceased members, for promoters and benefactors of the Apostolate, for the increase of apostles among the workers. Moreover, these Masses may be of-

ferred, and indeed it is the desire of the Apostolate that they should be offered, not only by workers, but by all classes, and it is already a fact that they are offered by communities of monks and nuns, by schools, by professional men, and so forth. They are offered at a certain time on a certain day and thereby achieve, in such material details, a further symbol of unity. When in addition it is remembered that all men who live the Christian life with any degree of seriousness are workers in the sense intended the unitive force of this Mass is even more evident.

The spirit engendered by this aspect of the movement should break down the barriers to social justice, and above all that barrier which is only too prominent in the Church itself: the over consciousness of one's personal interests, even though they be religious, to the detriment of all other forms of activity in the Church. Too often members of the Church are willing to plough only their own furrow, and are too engrossed in their own work to take any interest in that of others, still less to share their interests and least of all to help them. The work of one society is 'foreign' to members of any other society, and not only are they unwilling to co-operate as sodalists, but it never seems to occur to them that the least they can do is to share spiritually in the work of their fellows, and this can best be done in the Mass. It appears, then, that by its Mass Intentions the Apostolate of Christ the Worker is doing a work of great value to the whole Church, and if it thrives we can look forward to a day when members of the various societies or sodalities so necessary within the Church will consider it part of their duty as members to share in the work of all other Catholic Sodalities, and offer up with others their works and prayers in Christ on the Altar of Sacrifice.

Finally, the practical value of the Mass, if it may be so termed, is emphasised by the Apostolate Mass. In this respect the Statutes are at their best in expounding the spirit which inspires the movement. In dealing with the place of the Mass for the Workers in the organisation of the Apostolate, they do not attempt to gloss over the unpleasant side of a worker's life, and still less to effect a cowardly escape. The evil is remedied, and its remedy lies in the Mass where all the trials and sufferings in the very humdrum day of a working man are lifted up and sanctified in the Holy Sacrifice. Christ's work on earth was made holy by the very fact of his being a poor man who did many days' toil for the love of God; Christ's work on earth is continued in the Mass; who then can doubt that one of God's warmest desires is that the workers who repeat Christ's life on earth should bring their work nearer to his by means of its

sanctification in the Mass. This is clearly Father Schuh's intention and he summarises it in the wish that Christ the Divine Worker should 'establish his kingdom among us; he alone can give such peace and prosperity as is possible in this world; he alone can soothe the angry heart, by adding to man's daily bread the hope of an eternal life of bliss.' In doing this the Apostolate aims at instilling the consciousness of Co-Apostleship and, above all, of Co-Victimship with Christ in the Mass. These are elements which have often been lacking in Christian consciousness: we have either made our own work too independent of God and been driven to presumption, or we have made God too aloof from men and plunged into despair. There has been little realisation of our function as co-operators with Christ in Redemption. The need for an understanding of Co-Apostleship is and always has been clear, and it is scarcely necessary to say how a consciousness of Co-Victimship is one of the major factors in remedying Christian discontent in these times.

Finally, the Mass Intention scheme of the Apostolate stands as eloquent testimony to the true meaning of the word Worker. No one can pretend to understand this scheme and continue to object to the name. It is quite certain that the movement as it stands is not only untainted by Communism, except in the sense in which all Catholics are communists, but it has the power to remedy one of the greatest of modern spiritual evils—spiritual and religious class distinction.

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SEEKING FOR TROUBLE: SAINTS FOR CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION. By Margaret T. Monro. (Longmans; 5s.)

It would be difficult to praise too highly this 'effort to bring the Saints within the range of twentieth century people.' Miss Monro's effort has been entirely successful. Seldom can asceticism—in theory, in practice, and in its social by-products—have been so fascinatingly presented. The varied aspects of asceticism are discussed in shrewd and interesting prefaces and each illustrated by the life of a saint. These lives are all most readable and often entertaining—surely a rare feat in hagiography! The chapter on Christian civilization with its illustration from the life of St. Thomas Aquinas is particularly fine. There are a few minor points which one might dispute, but to do so with such a praiseworthy book would be ungracious.

K.M.