

EDITORIAL

TWO of our issues in recent months have been devoted to the theme of the Religious Life. The intention had been to complete the series with two more, but we regret that circumstances have interfered with this design. Meanwhile, as a contrast, this present number is concerned with the Lay Life, the infinitely various vocation of the *plebs sancta Dei* to follow Christ. Four of the main articles are by lay people, and discuss the living of the faith in different secular contexts; a fifth, by a priest, deals with the parish, as being in principle the microcosm of God's holy people and the necessary focus of their Christian life.

The lament is frequently heard that the world has become and will go on becoming a much more difficult place than it used to be for people to be Catholics in. There is a little substance to the complaint, but for the most part it is, we cannot help feeling, misconceived, as the following articles go a long way to show. The misconception seems to be that being a Catholic is primarily a duty, and primarily involves the keeping of standards which the world is assaulting with steadily increasing force. But being a Catholic Christian is *not* primarily a duty, nor a matter of standards of conduct; surely it is first and foremost a grace, a mercy, a hope, a being rescued by God from the pit. The deeper the mire and clay, the greater the relief at being pulled out of it. The thicker the world's darkness is, the greater will be the appeal and the consolation of the light of the world. As one of these articles suggests, the world to which the apostles preached was quite as hostile as ours to the truth of Christ. We may then confidently assume that our hard-bitten world is really as vulnerable to the saving mercy of Christ as was the pagan world of Rome. But it is up to us to show our contemporaries that the Church is not bent before all else on loading them with duties and obligations, but on offering them divine consolations, the fulness of 'joy and peace in believing'.