

reason he is capable of assuming a Personality. Those who think otherwise seem to place themselves above God. They presume that they alone can possess personalities, but not God. Only Christianity can satisfy my mind completely, because its idea of God is at once broad and personal. And it is Therese who has confirmed my faith in my religion, for her mind is as subtle and detached as that of Lao Tzu while her heart is as affectionate as that of Confucius. (*The Science of Love*, by J. Wu. C.T.S.I.).



AN ADVENTUROUS FAMILY

BY

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THE English Society of the Grail is a secular institute, autonomous and ecclesiastically approved, with its own rules and constitution. Its members are not religious, but laywomen who wish to dedicate their whole lives to work for Christ in the lay apostolate. Those who come to the Society come to an adventurous family.

Any girl can join the Society if she is willing to give herself to Christ to do anything, anywhere and at any time. There is room in the Society for girls of every social level and of every occupation, for anyone who wants to throw in her lot for life with a society of pioneers and who is prepared to accept the discipline of that Society. For lay institutes must be disciplined and their members be bound together with bonds of steel.

The lay apostolate cannot be driven by any mere transitory enthusiasm—indeed there is a distinct danger for women in any violent and undisciplined enthusiasm and if this is the driving power of an organisation then the life of an apostle cannot last longer than a few years. Exuberance and keenness, if they are not aided by the life of the spirit, tend to disintegrate the life of the apostle and to introduce a deep sense of frustration into her work. Everyone in the lay apostolate must have roots in Christ.

There cannot be any true discipline in a lay organisation unless it springs from a personal discipline; this cannot be imposed from above, but must spring from a member's heart and soul.

All discipline in the lay apostolate depends upon a right attitude towards authority. In the Society of the Grail there is complete obedience to the law of Christ as exercised within the sphere of authority, sanctioned and approved by the Church. The Grail insists on this attitude and has crowned it with the oath of obedience taken by its members on completion of their training.

This obedience is neither military nor heartless; the Society is a family, a family living in a community with its own spirit and loyalties, with easy access to authority and a complete absence of any suggestion of fear. Members surrender to authority because they want to do what Christ wants them to do, for love of him.

Because of this insistence on love every member of the Society must give her whole heart to Christ. This means a deliberate choice of Christ, to whom they plight their troth by a vow of chastity. They do this in order to free themselves to serve him in the apostolate and to keep their hearts for him, unblemished by any faults that might destroy their application to work and inspire them to carry it out for purely secondary motives.

As the Society of the Grail is a family, its members pool their ideas, talents, energies, every human quality; and they possess everything in common. This is important, for how can lay apostles preach Christ to the poor of Christ unless they themselves are poor? Therefore, members of the Society consecrate themselves to Christ in a common life by a promise of poverty. This does not mean that they have to become literally impoverished and needy—though in some cases it may, in fact, mean this—but that whoever comes to the Society with money, whoever makes money through her work in the Society, puts it to the common fund, to be used for each one's need.

Although life in the Society is disciplined, in a sense the life of a member is unpredictable and adventurous. There is certainly nothing meticulously ordered or staid about it. Each member of the Society puts herself at the service of Christ and is ready to travel anywhere for him, to do anything for him, whether it is working her way across England without any money in her pocket, cooking for a hundred people, working in a factory, undertaking any form of youth work or any activities whatever that may further

the kingdom of Christ. If one thing is essential in every member it is the ability to adapt herself, to be ready for anything.

A member of the Society is concerned with nothing less than a total dedication of herself to Christ in a life apostolate. And the Society in its turn recognises the implications of this. Once a member has dedicated herself by vow she is for ever a member of the Grail family, for better, for worse, in sickness, in health, in youth and old age. Though the field of her work will change as she grows older it will neither dwindle nor be of less value. The possibilities of work in the Society are almost infinite. 'A whole life and a full life' might well sum up the future any member will find.

Life in the Society is characterised by cheerfulness, one of the essential qualities of the lay apostolate. Cheerfulness is not an aptitude which one can put on like a coat: it springs from the knowledge that all are working for the same cause, the restoration of all things in Christ.

Because the members of the Society live in the world, and because they must not only be ready to put themselves at the service of all, but, without becoming individualists, be self-reliant and self-confident, quick to act in emergencies and ready to show initiative, there is no need to stress the importance of the period of training before they are allowed to become full members.

During this training, which lasts from three to five years, there is the same element of adventure. Candidates are not cooped up for the whole of this time, but as they become more firmly fixed through self-discipline they are introduced into the active apostolate. Natural gifts and talents are given scope; responsibility is given right from the start; endurance and initiative tests have their place. There are regular lectures and periods of study on the spiritual life, the constitutions, the lay apostolate. Life is centred round the Mass, candidates learning to offer themselves in the Mass in collaboration with Christ.

The aim of the Society is to consolidate its members in the life of the spirit, that they may be zealous, competent and safe as lay apostles, pioneers who are ready to do any work which will establish the kingdom of God.

When a candidate has completed her training she has the privilege of dedicating her life to Christ in the lay apostolate by the oath of obedience, the vow of chastity and the promise of poverty, as we have said. The fully-fledged member has come to know from experi-

ence that the apostolate is first and foremost a spiritual work, that she must be a witness to Christ rather than a propagandist. She has her times of daily meditation, prayer and spiritual reading and from now on her work will be more exacting, will bring greater responsibilities and call for continuous adaptability and initiative. She will be able to do it cheerfully because she knows that in obeying lawful authority she is obeying Christ, to whom she has dedicated her life. When Christ is with her everything is possible, and she finds additional strength in the knowledge that she can count on the unflinching support and loyalty of the family to which she belongs.

The object of the Society is, then, an inward-outward movement, by which each of the members, through her spiritual and community life radiates Christ and passes him on to others. This trend is reflected in the organisation of the Grail Movement, by which it is extended to girls who cannot give their whole lives to the apostolate and who, nevertheless, want to play the fullest part they can. Thus, in addition to the members of the actual Society there are groups or cells of Grail members and also individuals scattered over the country who are constantly in touch with the Society, from whom they receive apostolic formation, so that this 'inward-outward' movement may continue in them. These cells, sometimes official groups with their own chaplain, sometimes unofficial, informal cells will be established anywhere and in any country as opportunity arises, though this work is only one part of the Society's aim in the lay apostolate.

The Society has four houses in England and Wales: Field End House, Eastcote, Pinner, Middlesex—at present the training house for candidates—Waxwell Farm House, Pinner, Middlesex; 58 Sloane Street, London, S.W.1; and Ty Gwyn, Isle of Caldey, Pembrokeshire, South Wales.