

BLACKFRIARS

(With which is incorporated *The Catholic Review*)

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EDITORIAL

LADYDAY of the financial year is a pathetic remnant of a Christian England that is no more. Mayday and Mary-month have no meaning now for the vast majority; but they are dear to the heart of the Catholic. Zealots for the Liturgy have been known to deplore the coincidence of "modern" May devotions with the Paschal and Pentecostal solemnities. Yet Catholic devotion to the Mother of God is fully intelligible only in the light of the fact of our incorporation into her Son which the Liturgy expresses and fosters. The more fully the Liturgy enables us to appreciate the truth of our oneness and solidarity with Christ through the indwelling of His Spirit, the less should we think inopportune the dedication of May to Mary. She is our Mother. That is no metaphor, but a statement of plain fact. In calling on her as our Mother we do not merely use a term of endearment; rather do we acknowledge the truth that in giving birth and breath to Jesus she gives birth and breath to us. He is our Brother; more precisely, we are part of Him, partakers of His Life, *members of His Body, of His Flesh and His Bones* (Eph. v, 30). One with Christ, His Father is our Father and His Mother our Mother. Liturgically we commemorate and re-enact the triumph of Our Saviour over sin and the wages of

BLACKFRIARS

sin, His ascension and glorification, His sending of the Spirit to be the Life-Giver of His mystical Body. But these liturgical celebrations are not the bare commemoration of bygone historical events: they are present realities. One with Him by His grace, imparted to us through the Sacraments, we share in His risen and ascended life. His Resurrection is not an isolated event: He is the *firstfruits of them that sleep* (I Cor. xv, 20). His Ascension is not unique: He has gone to prepare a place for us that where He is we may also be (John xiv, 3).

Devotion to Mary is the spontaneous overflow of the realization of our oneness with Christ. Because she is Mother of the Redeemer she is Mother of the redeemed. Because she is Mother of Christ she is Mother of *the Church which is His Body* (Eph. i, 22); and on her, too, the Spirit comes when the Church is animated at Pentecost. The more closely we are united to Our Lord by the Liturgy, the more we shall be impelled to sing *her* praises and to share the filial love of His Heart for her. As the Spring-month turns our minds naturally to the thought of the risen life of Christ which is given to us, so it turns them also to her who gave Him to life amongst us. May devotions and the liturgical spirit of the season, far from being antagonistic, are complementary one of the other; for the former provides for us just that element of the human and personal which may save our liturgical approach to God from formalism and unreality.

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BACK TO THE LAND is for earnest Catholics a bugle call, but some of them tend to be deafened by it to calls perhaps more urgent. This explains no doubt why the Ladyday number of *The Cross and The Plough* bears the bitter fruit of bitter disappointment at the decision of the Bishops regarding Catholic Land Associations. Kindness might seem to demand that this hasty reaction be passed over in silence; (the South of England Association adds a welcome slip dissociating itself from the ungracious comments of its Midland colleagues). But the principles involved call for mature consideration. The Bishops have, in the words of the Archbishop of Birmingham, "resolved that the hierarchy would not at present be justified in giving any official sanction to the Catholic Land Movement. . . . I feel," continues His

EDITORIAL

Grace, "that the comparatively small sums which the Catholic Land Settlement Associations would be able to raise would do little to remedy the defects which they are aiming at curing, and we need all the money we can raise for the building of new schools and churches in the new housing areas." The Archbishop of Westminster has explained that this in no way implies disapproval: "the only thing I thought inexpedient was the issue of an appeal for money."

It would be an impertinence on our part to presume to defend the Bishops' action; but in view of the comments of some spokesmen of the Land Movement it may not be amiss to re-assert some important principles which seem to have been overlooked. There is no "lack of correspondence" between the Holy Father's approval of the work of the Land Movement and the action of the Bishops. But first things must come first: the spiritual before the temporal; and, as BLACKFRIARS has so often insisted, devotion to ultimate principles and aims does not dispense us from immediate duties with regard to present realities. "Nineteen-twentieths of the Catholic community is urbanized" admits *The Cross and The Plough*; and the first duty of Christ's ministers is to provide the means of grace and the light of truth to that Catholic community. The immediate task of the successors of the Apostles is to set up the Cross where the mass of Catholics, actual or potential, *do* dwell rather than to provide Ploughs where they do not. It is unjust to assert that "the tiny origins of a new and Catholic civilization in England" have been "disowned by Catholic leaders." The Bishops know that a Catholic civilization is the overflowing of Catholic spiritual life and truth, and not *vice-versa*, and that their first task is to make that life and truth available for their people. Though by natural means we may sometimes remove the hindrances to grace, grace is not something which is superadded automatically when natural perfection has been secured; it is grace itself, and grace alone, that can heal nature, and the greater the corruptions and dangers of natural society the more urgent is the need to supply the means of grace to those who live in its midst. The Bishops are not short-sighted nor sacrificing the future to present expediencies; but they are putting Supernature before Nature, knowing that the restoration of the latter in the future cannot be assured without the intensification of the

BLACKFRIARS

former in the present. "At this moment," says the spokesman of the Midland Association, "which threatens the triumph of everything we hate, we re-affirm our hope that once more God will write straight with crooked lines." This set-back and disappointment may prove the greatest of blessings, and may add to the courage, self-sacrifice and the many other virtues of the organizers of the Land Movement that sense of proportion and more just estimate of the relative importance of their cause which is essential to its success in preparing a way for the Catholic civilization of the future.

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BLACKFRIARS offers its respectful felicitations and homage to His Excellency Monseigneur Joseph Lemieux, O.P., recently appointed by the Holy See to the Bishopric of Sendai in Japan. His Lordship was for two years an alumnus of Blackfriars, where he was occupied in the study of English and Japanese in preparation for his missionary work in Japan.

EDITOR.