

present evils and too few constructive remedies, we will here leave the question of the divorce between the life of ordinary men and the organization of the parish. Another writer in this issue of *THE LIFE*, however, has suggested a return to the Psalms as a real remedy. Already in France the new version and new music of the Psalms sponsored by the translators of the *Bible de Jérusalem* and Père Gelineau, S.J., have received a wide popular appeal. They have become almost popular songs which will surely make some impression on those who sing them. In England some of these psalms with their psalmody have been put into English by The Grail. And Fr Sebastian Bullough, O.P., has translated a set of psalms for Vespers and these have been set to music by Anthony Milner. These words and tunes, which together make up a liturgical office capable of being used by a parish choir and congregation, may perhaps grow to a similar popularity. This is at least one sign of the rediscovery of a link between parish and its liturgy on the one side and the normal life of man on the other.



SEASONAL PRAYER

E.B.

THERE is in our lives a natural rhythm to which we must all conform: we are born, we grow to adolescence, reach maturity and then die. This larger individual rhythm, which is repeated in all animate nature, has its smaller counterpart in each cell of our bodies, and then again our bodily functions fit into the larger rhythms of our lives. All the rhythms must in their turn harmonize with the mighty throb of nature herself, whose endless cycle of the seasons brings home to all of us our ultimate dependence upon the Creator—God himself.

Mankind used to be very conscious that he was only a small

part of the whole: he was much more aware than he is today that he had his appointed place in the vast scheme of things, and that he must co-operate with, rather than go against, nature. He knew, too, that certain work had to be done at certain seasons of the year in order to live at all. He must prepare the land in the late autumn and early spring, then sow his crops and later gather them in. His own rhythmic life was in harmony with that of nature, and the balanced order of his days—prayer, work, and rest from his labours—was linked to the rhythmic liturgical seasons of the Church. His life was lived as a *whole*, there was no separation of one aspect of it from another: prayer, work, and thanksgiving, were as much a part of it as eating, sleeping, and raising a family.

In this mechanistic, scientific, age there is an increasing separation of man from his basic relationship to the rhythms of nature. Herded into vast cities and living an almost ant-like existence, he is aware only in a more general way of the rhythmic cycles of the seasons. It is, for the most part, merely a question of adapting himself to seasonal changes of temperature and not much more. He has forgotten the knowledge of his forbears who worked on the land or in close proximity to it. So tasteless and synthetic has his food become, that it bears no relation to natural products. His bread (pulpy, white, agenized, chalk and vitamin fortified) is easily obtainable in the shops in fancy shapes and sizes: his milk (pasteurized, homogenized, T.T. tested and bottled) is delivered at his doorstep: bloated cabbages, cauliflowers, and potatoes (all artificially stimulated to such growth) are obtainable at the greengrocer's round the corner; apples, too, and other fruit, evenly graded and mounting in symmetrical tiers, both wearisome to the eye as well as taste, can be bought. These things he takes for granted without realizing that there is a relationship between his life and his food.

The countryman must of necessity be more aware than the townsman of his relationship to the seasons, the plants and animals from which his food comes. If he owns a garden he knows very well that there are times of digging, sowing, planting and then gathering what has come to fruition, but he too is likely to come under the sway of the scientist, who persuades him that he can get bigger and better vegetables and fruit more quickly and cheaply by using poisons for his weeds, chemicals

to stimulate growth, poison sprays for his fruit trees, quite unmindful of the fact that he is upsetting the balance of nature. No *immediately* harmful results are apparent. If he owns cattle he is sure to be enthusiastic about artificial insemination—that final abuse of the sacred function of sex, even in animals, who are sentient creatures and not merely *things*. If he has extensive woodlands on his property then he is often tempted to clean-fell it because of the good price paid for timber—but he cannot afford to replant! If open-cast coal runs through his land then he is compensated for the loss of soil and pasture, but nothing can justify such desecration for quick monetary returns—not even to this hardened countryman!

This exploitation of the land, this *forcing* of the natural rhythm to a quicker tempo, this commercial outlook so utterly unfeeling, this 'agriculture is an industry' mania, is bringing about man's final divorce from nature. Soon it will become absolute. Once this happens then his separation from the things of God will be complete.

This is not a general plea for a 'back to the land' movement or a compost cult which, even if desirable, is now quite impossible. Still less is it meant to imply that one cannot be a good Christian unless one eats whole-wheat bread and abstains from meat; but it is a plea for a more general awareness of our increasingly diminishing horizons, and our circumscribed spiritual lives. It is a plea for an integrity which includes praise, thanksgiving, and reverence for all creation, and appreciation of its beauty too. Man's central position within the whole balanced order of creation is shown most beautifully in the psalms.

Thus Psalm 103 (Mgr Knox's translation):

'Bless the Lord, my soul; O Lord my God, what magnificence is thine! Glory and beauty are thy clothing. The light is a garment thou dost wrap about thee, the heavens a curtain thy hand unfolds.

'The waters of heaven are thy antechamber, the clouds thy chariot; on the wings of the wind thou dost come and go. . . .

'He sends the torrents down the ravines, water-courses among the hills that give drink to every wild beast; here the wild asses may slake their thirst. The birds of heaven, too, will roost beside them; vocal is every bough with their music.

'From thy high dwelling-place thou dost send rain upon

the hills; thy hand gives earth all her plenty. Grass must grow for the cattle; for men, too, she must put forth her shoots, if thou art to bring corn out of the earth; if there is to be wine that will rejoice man's heart, oil to make his face shine, and bread that will keep man's strength from failing. . . .

'He has given us the moon for our calendar; the sun knows well the hour of its setting. Thou dost decree darkness, and the night falls; in the night all the forest is astir with prowling beasts'; etc.

Then Psalm 148, which begins: 'Give praise to the Lord in heaven, praise him all that dwells on high!' and goes on to exhort the angels, sun and moon, fire, hail, snow and mist, mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars, beasts and cattle, creeping things and flying birds, kings and peoples, princes and judges, men and maidens, old men and boys, to . . . 'give praise to the Lord's name. His name is exalted as no other . . .'

This list is intended to include the *whole* of life and things on earth, in its paean of praise to God. If we, when we praise God and give thanks, can maintain this all-inclusiveness in our very outlook and attitude, to things and creatures, then we must of necessity, it would seem, be unable to abuse his natural gifts in the ways indicated at the beginning of this article.

The city dweller and the factory worker have to take things as they find them now. Such a person may feel that the imaginative effort of seeing beyond his own horizon is too much for him: if so, that is his tragedy. The city housewife, though, is more fortunate; she cooks for the family and in cutting a brussels sprout or cabbage she can pause 'To see the glory in things commonplace . . . a cabbage heart, with leaf on leaf close-furled in symmetry's perfection'. Or when dusting she may come across a spider in a corner and reflect for a moment on the marvellous industry and ingenuity of so small a creature. In the country, the sight of a spider's web in the early morning, spangled with dewdrops glistening in the sun, is breathtaking in its beauty. But sentimental as this may seem to some, the point is that we should try to cultivate that all-inclusive vision of the psalmist who did not leave out the 'creeping things' in his praise of God. An increased awareness, that ability to see things with that 'inner eye', does lead to a fuller spiritual life. Mother Church has always emphasized this wider vision. She blesses all man's material

things, and at Rogation-tide she blesses the earth and the crops, sown in order that in due season they may bring forth in abundance. 'That thou wouldst vouchsafe to give and preserve the fruits of the earth, we beseech thee, hear us'—we pray at that time. It is a tragedy of this scientific age that we should have to try to *cultivate* the vision, now almost lost to us, of the psalmist; to him it was something that sprang from his heart. As Dame Julian of Norwich says: 'But for failing in love on our part, therefore is all our travail.'



EULOGY ON SAINTS PETER AND PAUL¹

ST LEO THE GREAT, POPE

DEARLY beloved, the whole world is a partaker of all sacred solemnities, and love of the one faith demands that if honour is given any event, touching the salvation of all men, it would be celebrated everywhere with common rejoicing. Truly should today's festival be honoured, in addition to the reverence which it has merited from all the world, with a special and unique exultation in our City so that in the place where the death of the chief Apostles was made glorious there on the day of their martyrdom may exist a pre-eminence of joy. For these are the men through whom the good tidings of Christ brought a new light to you, O Rome, and you, Mistress of Error in the past, became the Disciple of Truth. These are your holy fathers and true shepherds who founded you so as to place you in heavenly kingdoms, establishing you much better and much more successfully than they by whose zeal the first foundations of your walls were laid. In fact, the one who gave you his name defiled you with his brother's blood. These are the ones who lifted you to such glory that as a holy nation, a chosen race, a

¹ Migne *Patrologia Latina* 54: 422-428. Translated by Sister M. Melchior, O.P., River Forest.