

even though they enter the doors of the churches, because if they do not amend they will be separated at the appointed time. Imitate the good, bear with the evil, love all men; for you do not know what the man who is evil today will be tomorrow. Do not love their unrighteousness, but love them in order that they may attain to righteousness: for not only is the love of God enjoined upon us, but also the love of our neighbour; on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets. And no one fulfils this law except him who receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is truly equal to the Father and the Son. The Trinity itself is God, in whom we must place our hope, and not in any man whatever. For he by whom we are justified is quite distinct from those with whom we are justified.

The devil tempts us not only through inordinate desires but also through fear of insults and sufferings and of death itself. Now if a man suffers anything for the name of Christ and the hope of eternal life and steadfastly endures it, a greater reward will be given him; but if he yields to the devil, he will be condemned with him. Works of mercy however and godly humility obtain from the Lord that he does not allow his servants to be tempted more than they are able to endure.



COMMENT

Alone but never lonely

MUCH has recently been written in the popular press about that vast army of women who live on their own. Following the publication of such articles, a number of these people hotly denied that they are lonely but many others admitted that their loneliness is so great that it is the overwhelming aspect of their lives. Let us hope that no Catholic women were amongst those who made this sad admission: there is certainly no need for them to do so.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, to be lonely is to be 'solitary, isolated, unfrequented, companionless'. What an

impossible situation for the practising Catholic! Frequent reception of Holy Communion and a thoughtful pondering over the doctrine of the Indwelling must immediately prevent such abysmal loneliness. The woman who lives alone has perhaps more chance than many others to think frequently how the whole of her life is a partnership with Christ.

Then how can anyone be lonely who has our Lady as Mother and the Saints as friends? And how sad it is that that constant companion, our Guardian Angel, is so often forgotten. The lady who was suddenly heard to exclaim, 'Oh, I'm so sorry. Did I squash your wings?' may not have been theologically correct but she was certainly unlikely to feel lonely!

If we have no other person for whom to perform our household duties, we can always do them for the Holy Family. 'All for Jesus' should be a vital motive in our lives and not looked upon as a rather hackneyed and meaningless phrase.

Maybe you know the story of the stranger who once called entirely unexpectedly on an elderly lady. To the visitor's astonishment she was warmly greeted with the words: 'I'm so glad you've managed to come. I've been expecting you for some time.' In her caller the old lady saw Christ himself, her Lord for whom she kept everything in readiness, and in her pleasure she had spoken her thoughts aloud.

It is of course essential for us all to attain to perpetual awareness of Christ in our neighbour but the woman-on-her-own who neglects this aspect of the Faith is cutting herself adrift from one of her main sources of companionship.

We must learn to recognize God in the fish-queue as easily as we perceive his presence in church. Even those people who push ahead of us should be treated with respect. Our Lord submits himself humbly to the dictates of his creatures and it may be that in that person he is being carried where he would not. Anyway, the important thing is to acknowledge him in everyone else.

Yet on the natural plane we are gregarious creatures and a longing for human contact is understandable. The lone female instinctively craves a link with the rest of her fellows. Well, here in the fish-queue she has her chance. A cheerful comment to the elderly person in front, a helping hand to the one with an awkwardly packed basket . . . such opportunities are manifold.

If at first we lack courage to speak to people we do not know,

there is surely nothing to stop us talking to our Lord about them instead. Be quick to notice little things. Perhaps one person is obviously tired, another may be unwell, a third anxious—mention each one briefly but sincerely to Jesus. Quite incidentally, you'll be surprised to find how quickly the time passes before it's your turn to be served!

Such opportunity of self-forgetfulness through absorption in others comes to us in many particular places. Next time you're in the waiting-room of the doctor's surgery, take a look round at your fellow patients. Strain and worry will show on many a face. Unite yourself and each person's woes to the Passion of our Lord—and don't omit the obvious hypochondriac, who may well need help more desperately than anyone else in the room.

Odd snatches of conversation in the waiting-room reveal much to the sympathetic listener. A kind word in reply may often do more good than a bottleful of tonic. Again, cafés, buses and trains are all fruitful sources from which we may come to a closer understanding of our fellow-men. Form the habit of identifying yourself with the problems of others—and don't forget the waitresses' feet!

'That's all very well', I can hear some lone female objecting, 'but I'm not often able to get out. I don't even come into contact with the people you've been mentioning.'

The permanent invalid may receive much help from the organized Apostolate of the Sick, but admittedly there are many not-so-strong who are also of necessity frequently confined indoors. There must be few of these, however, who do not possess a wireless and this can be used not only for entertainment but as a real link to the needs of the world.

Newspapers too, both Catholic and secular, provide endless supplies of identifying ourselves with others by means of prayer. The Bishop fighting for his schools, those new missionaries setting sail, the family whose home was burnt to the ground, that person who tried to commit suicide—all concern you.

Then what about that knitting? If you don't have a family to knit for, why not embark on a blanket for refugees? (The Oxford Famine Relief Committee supply wool where required.) Ejaculatory and spontaneous prayers for the suffering recipient can readily be enmeshed with the stitches. And don't forget their persecutors. There is a scheme, started in America, whereby every

Catholic is asked to pray particularly for the conversion and salvation of one Communist soul.

Quite possibly you don't sleep very well. Never mind. Seize the opportunity to help the world along. Try saying an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be for everyone you know, or have read about or heard about that day.

If after a while this becomes too much of an effort, just remember before God the various groups of people who are working through the night—those in hospitals, on the sea, in the bakeries and so on. And say the *De Profundis* for those who have died since darkness fell.

These are only some ideas for the on-her-own woman. Plenty more will occur to each individual concerned once the matter is seriously considered. But above everything else, let us try to remember that 'alone' means 'all one'. Christ and his Mystical Body the Church, in heaven, in purgatory and on earth, are one—all one, with each one of us, so none can ever be lonely.

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EXTRACTS

EVANGELISER July-August 1958, the Belgian Review concerned with the spirit and techniques of the apostolate (*La Pensée Catholique*, Bruxelles 4, 40 Avenue de la Renaissance) has an interesting article *Pour une meilleure formation religieuse des enfants* which has a direct bearing on the theme of the present number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. We give here some excerpts in translation that are relevant not only to the teaching of religion to children, but also to the preaching of it to adults.

Mgr Charrue, Bishop of Namur, is quoted in this article as saying: In a de-christianized world the old methods of teaching are no longer effective. We are not dealing with children brought up in surroundings which are genuinely Christian. . . . Formerly, when the family and the village were Christian, learning by heart with a minimum of understanding could be sufficient to secure, from children in whose homes religious obligations were recognized, the unquestioning acceptance of revealed truths, confession of what must be sins because the Catechism says so, and a more or less genuine and regular reception of the sacraments.