

See were its total contribution to the war years, it would be an astounding achievement which the whole world should acclaim. But it was, in fact, only one section even of its material contribution. Even apart from the all-important work of catering for the religious needs of Catholics in prisons and concentration camps, material needs of all kinds were provided for. Food was collected by Vatican lorries and despatched to all prisoners, as far as was humanly possible. Books and calendars and Christmas cards were printed on the Vatican presses and sent to them. The Nuncios and Delegates organised the collection and distribution of food, clothes, tobacco, soap, musical instruments and of every other requirement. Special relief was organised for refugee Poles, and in Greece 6,000,000 cooked meals a day were the result of the Vatican's efforts. Through the generosity of Mr Myron Taylor, a large quantity of medical supplies were placed at the Pope's disposal. And so the unending and moving tale of Charity Abounding, 'which seeketh not her own', goes on.

It would be an irreparable loss for any Catholic not to have and to ponder over this matter-of-fact record of Christ-like charity. It would scarcely be less of a loss if it were not known to the many thousands of others of our countrymen who look for deliverance from the present chaos and seek in all earnestness a practical way to world peace and humanity of living. Great Britain is beholden, more than can be said, to its Apostolic Delegate for thus lifting the veil that normally covers the selfless, unceasing and universal charity of Holy Mother Church.

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V E Z E L A Y

VEZELAY is a place extraordinarily little known considering its beauty and historic interest. Situated some 150 miles south-west of Paris, in Burgundy, almost at the very centre of France, it was in the 12th century one of the great shrines of Christendom. To Vézelay pilgrims went from the whole of Europe to pay honour to St Mary Magdalen whose body the Benedictines claimed to have taken there from St Maximin. There in 1146 when the nave of the present basilica stood in all its newness, St Bernard preached the 2nd Crusade before King Louis VII and a multitude assembled from every Christian country. From the pulpit of the basilica 20 years later St Thomas Becket, in exile, solemnly excommunicated Henry II. To Vézelay went Henry's son, Richard Coeur de Lion, to take the Cross with Philip Augustus in the 3rd Crusade. St Francis's first foundation in France was made there, the Cordelerie on the slope of

the hill; Brother Pacificus founded it, and it was to be honoured with a visit from St Louis as he went to the Holy Land. Today only the Basilica remains, and a great wooden cross to commemorate St Bernard's preaching, and the ruined chapel of the Cordelerie. Vézelay stands a symbol of divided Christendom. The town was the birthplace of Theodore Béza. In 1568 the Protestants captured it, devastated the abbey which had for 30 years been secularised, its monks having long since become odious to the townsfolk, burned the relics, and subjected the Franciscans to the horrible sport of burying two of them up to their necks and playing bowls against them with the heads of their companions.

The Basilica remains. It is difficult to convey the beauty, the sense of lightness and luminousness, of restraint and spaciousness achieved in combination by the immense Romanesque narthex and nave and the Gothic chancel. Still more difficult to describe the entrancing wealth of sculpture, the marvellous tympanum representing Christ's mission to the Apostles over the doorway from antechurch to nave, or the varied richness of the carved capitals. Enough that it is a church such as a church should be, symbol of the new Jerusalem, spacious, harmonious, proportioned, crowning the summit up whose crest the warm, red-roofed, rose-grey-walled houses of Vézelay climb; an elect vessel, a temple of God.

This church, like all the churches of France, is the property of the state; in particular it is cared for by the department of Beaux Arts; they keep it beautifully, meticulously, a corpse without life. There is no abbey—the Benedictines of the great modern monastery of Pierre-qui-vire some 20 kilometres away provide a curé and two priests to carry out the services. To all intents and purposes it is unused, a monument,

But Vézelay holds a promise of renewal and reparation. During the days of the recent pilgrimage there, it was not only that the basilica lived again to the chant of monks and the splendour of liturgical sacrifice, not only that crowds from many countries invaded its precincts, that Mass was said in the open at St Bernard's Cross and that the ruined Cordelerie became murmurous with the Masses of pilgrim priests, Franciscans numerous amongst them. It was that the basilica lent itself to a deeper symbolism. There came a moment in that pilgrimage which none of the English group are likely to forget. We had all but reached the end of our long march. For 18 days we had walked through the heat of the July day, three carrying the Cross, three behind it reciting the Rosary in persistent intercession for peace, three behind them in silence, the rest following—talking, laughing, singing, praying. We had witnessed the thousands who

came to venerate our Cross; we had come through towns and villages, rested by the roadside, halted at Calvaries, passed by crowds and small country groups, met everywhere with the amazing hospitality of the French people; we had sung with them, prayed with them, lived with them, assisted at midnight Mass with them in place after place; and during those 18 days of kaleidoscopic experience we were being welded together by the force of the love of the Cross we bore. We were coming on that last evening from the hamlet of Bois de la Madeleine; there we had had supper and now, led by a guide up and down the wooded hills in the cool and quiet of a perfect evening, we were taking up our position for the night,

Suddenly we came in sight of that lovely basilica, not two miles away, down on our right, riding gracefully above the houses at its foot. The *Salve Regina* broke from us, expressing more than we could say. We marched silently until we came to a place in the hill-track on a slope facing the basilica. We set up our great, travel-worn Cross on the outer parapet of the pathway and built a fire in the centre of the track. We prayed facing the basilica, and waited, and the shadows of night fell around us. Some of the pilgrims went a little away and confessed. Lightning flickered on the horizon beyond the basilica, a distant storm. It seemed hours that we waited. At last it was quite dark and we saw nothing but our gaunt cross and the dim outline of the church against the sky. Bells began to ring, silvery in the distance, and for a moment the breeze carried the voices of the monks to us as they chanted some office. Then the signal came, a rocket from the tower; we answered it with our own rocket and the fires of the fourteen crosses assembled in the hills round Vézelay blazed out in the dark, our own bathing our Cross in its fierce light. At the same moment the basilica was floodlit, first the facade, then the transept, at length the buttresses and clerestory and the whole nave. It became a vision, the bride of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, the City of God upon a hill, perfect in its proportions, the Body of Christ. It held away the menace of the storm, high and luminous, standing against the night. It was a vision given to us as we stood in the full warmth of our blazing fire, seen in the background of our boldly lit Cross, a vision in the heat of charity.

It did not last. As suddenly as it had been lit the basilica was plunged back into darkness; our fire burned low, to be kept in all night as we watched in relays before the Cross. The Cross stood out alone, palely now, against the dark valley. We slept under the stars, under the threat of the storm which never came. In the morning we rose before dawn, we carried the Cross, always in silence, down into the valley, up the steep slope of Vézelay. We did not come to the

basilica, we did not see it as we climbed. It had been a vision, an ideal, and we were still on the way. We had glimpsed the goal and it was ours now to hold fast only to the Cross. Even to be united at Mass and in Communion with the pilgrims of the thirteen other crosses we were not to come to the basilica; we met in the field of St Bernard's Cross and there out of sight of the church we had Mass, the Mass of pilgrims yet on their way, in faith, in the shadow of the Cross. Not till later, much later that day, were we to come to the basilica as men reaching the perfect possession of the kingdom of God. Later we were to see the basilica with its packed crowds, later to assist at the splendid offices chanted for those few days of its renewal by the monks of Pierre-qui-vire and presided over by cardinals and bishops. But as long as we were on the way, *viatores*, the Cross was our craft, the key to the kingdom,

I would say that in that evening and in the first moments of that morning we reached the true climax of the Vézelay pilgrimage for peace. What followed was not serious; it was a jamboree, a fair. It disappointed us as it disappointed all the other pilgrims who had followed their crosses across France; we felt deceived. We were divided from our Cross. The Cross we loved and in whose love we loved each other for all our differences and disagreements was set on one side. The crowds had not come for prayer. They had not come for penance. They had not come to search for peace in the serious sacrifice of the Cross. They came, it seemed, for the spectacular; the kingdom of this world with its hubbub invaded and overflowed what we had seen as the kingdom of God. This can be said without bitterness and without ungenerous criticism of the organisers. It was in a measure bound to happen that way. The congress was not international as it should have been; only a few countries were represented, all but ourselves French-speaking; there had been difficulties with visas, there had not been time enough, there had been oversights and omissions. There was not enough insistence on the central theme of peace; the magnificence and variety of the ceremonies acted only as distractions. Above all there had been the apathy and lack of response of Catholics throughout the world. On the way we had seen as can have been rarely seen the power of Catholicism for unity; but, for the most part the Crosses were carried by small groups of Scouts and Guides; there was generosity amounting to heroism amongst them—but only our Cross had the maturity and responsibility of a group drawn from all classes and ages and professions, only our Cross seemed to come with the multiplied prayers and sacrifices of a whole country, carried anonymously in the name of thousands. That was our privilege, and it was what made a tremendous im-

pression all through France. . . . So much must be said to explain why I do not dwell on the days at Vézelay itself. For the rest it is a digression. To take up the theme of this article, the concrete lesson of the cross that was borne in on us with astonishing clarity, we must take things from the beginning.

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There is each year a national pilgrimage to Vézelay on the feast of St Mary Magdalen. (New relics of the saint were taken in the last century from Sens and given back to Vézelay from which they had originally come.) This year the Benedictines of Pierre-qui-vire took occasion of the annual pilgrimage to celebrate the 8th Centenary of St Bernard's preaching the Crusade. They had the idea of inaugurating a new crusade of prayer and penance for peace. They invited pilgrims to come from as many countries as possible and from all the corners of France; they invited them to an act of prayer and penitence, to come on foot, praying, carrying a 6ft. Cross weighing 90 pounds. They did this in conscious response to the reiterated appeals of Pope Pius XII for some such crusade by Christians for peace. The pilgrimage inaugurates this crusade. It is not the crusade itself, Vézelay—of this our pilgrims are convinced—is a beginning only. Fourteen crosses were carried and set up as Stations of the Cross in the basilica. It was hoped that this would constitute a centre for peace in different countries, and that similar centres might eventually be set up in a like way in other countries.¹

These, when we set out, were abstract notions enough. What came of our experience was immensely concrete. The English organisers, generously supported by the Catholic press, appealed for prayers, volunteers, and money to defray the expenses of the pilgrimage. The overwhelming response to all the requests is proof that what was asked went home to the deepest instincts of Catholics in this country; there were too many volunteers, too much money was contributed (it has been made into a fund for the prosecution of further peace activities), and reports still come in of the remarkable response to the demand for prayers and sacrifices; there has been a unanimity of prayer quite unexpected, and conversions to prayer have most certainly been wrought; what touched people was the demand made on their generosity, the demand for penance and the example of penance

¹ Preliminary measures were in fact taken by the representatives of various peace organizations—including the Union of Prayer for Peace—for the establishment of a central organization at Pierre-qui-vire (eventually to be removed to Vézelay where the monks hope to re-establish a monastery); this organization aims at co-ordinating the Catholic peace movements in different countries, disseminating Papal directives and counsels concerning peace, and promoting more intensive Catholic efforts for peace.

set by the pilgrims. These were the effects at large, which must be maintained. The effect upon the pilgrims themselves was even more striking. The thirty who were chosen from the hundred who applied were as disparate as could be. In the shadow of the Cross, drawn by the love of Christ who died upon it, in the spirit of prayer and sacrifice that centred upon that instrument of his love, we found a unity that was the very pattern of Christian peace. It was not only the companionship of the road; it was not simply that we had shared hardships and pleasures, uncertainties and disappointment; hikers and campers have that much to show. But we drew near to each other, different as we were in outlook and education and character, because by the force of the Cross we were drawn near to God; we drew near to each other not merely at the level of men thrown together in an adventure, but as Christ's brothers who with no natural grounds of communion may yet be one in the adopted sonship through Christ of God. We were visibly united because the Cross was visible in our lives—visible, tangible symbol of unity. Together we carried it, held it to be kissed by the French people amongst whom we passed. We shared its burden with them; we shared its burden with one Frenchman and a German prisoner. It was the same Cross that Londoners had venerated; whether in the great churches of Dieppe and Chartres with their crowds of townfolk or in the little village churches of Normandy, of the Beauce, of central France, whether in the historic marketplace of Rouen or by the wayside where little groups and families came out to meet us with flowers, it was the same Cross and the same love and veneration that encircled it; it made the same appeal to rich and poor, to sorrowful and joyful, to the crabbed heart and the generous, to the saint and the sinner. And we, for the time being, were the instruments of this instrument of love. We witnessed the power of the Cross to unite men; no wonder that we were ourselves united as we should never have thought possible. The *Credo* sung as we entered churches was our common profession of faith; The *Pater Noster* our manifesto; the *Salve Regina* our common praise of a single Mother; the Rosary, recited in our respective languages, our daily, humble prayer; and at the altar, at midnight when men and women and children laid aside the day's business, with our great Cross set before it, we celebrated the Sacrifice which is the sacrament also of unity; we offered ourselves and the world with the Victim of love to the Father.

We learned, in a word, the old and ever new lesson of the power of the Cross. This is not a magic power. We did not carry some fetish with us that bound us together. The pilgrimage was a pilgrimage for peace. We were taught that peace is not merely the negative absence of the

horrors of war, the selfish indulgence of quiet leisure. Peace is in the give and take of men bound in society; it is the tranquillity of order founded on love and sacrifice; it is the establishment of confidence in the secure knowledge that whatever our disagreements (which are bound to be) we have a common loyalty and love, we are brothers of Christ in the household of the children of God. And only because the Cross is the instrument and the symbol of sacrifice and love does it become the reconciliation of enmities, the practical antidote (as we found) to class strife and warfare between nations, That is why it appeared, in the approach to Vézelay that I have tried to describe, as the key to the kingdom that we glimpsed; that is why it is the condition of peace in the world. Peace in the positive sense is the kingdom of God on earth, the communion of saints. The means to this end is that the Cross should be visible in our lives.

From all this it appears that the problem of peace and the problems of renewing Christianity in Europe are not two separate problems but one and the same thing. To spread the knowledge of the kingdom of God in our immediate surroundings, and to persuade men to take the practical means to its establishment is the duty towards the world of every Catholic; it is his duty, because it is in his power alone to contribute his inheritance of universality. In the immediate pursuit of this duty the ancient Catholic practice of pilgrimage seems to be ripe for coming into its own. It affords what discussion and meetings cannot, the practical experimentation of the kingdom of God; for it draws men of all kinds into one body, it makes them an interdependent community united in a common endeavour, with the Cross, if they carry it, visible in their midst. And at the same time it gives opportunity for discussion and meditation and apostolate. On our way to Vézelay the chaplains gave conferences on the central theme of the Incarnation, which is the inception of the kingdom of God; they were held in public, on the side of a hill, on a village green, in a café, in a barn; questions were welcomed. The life of the Church was lived and discussed before onlookers; priest and layman came together in this intimate exchange, and the onlooker could see and understand something of the full Christian life, a life of community and doctrine, without his being harangued or 'got at'; the implications for an apostolate along these lines in England are obvious. Other discussions, no less valuable, took place between the representatives of different catholic associations, one man leading, the others questioning, arguing, learning to appreciate each other's views and activities. Nor are these the only advantages of a pilgrimage; it is bound to be penitential, feet are bound to be sore, tempers frayed, bodies tired. It is bound to be accompanied by prayer and it may appeal to many who

would like a retreat but need a holiday in the open air or are shy of houses of retreat.

Vézelay is a beginning. The pilgrims have formed, provisionally, a committee to pursue its ideals. It will promote the pursuit of peace by the establishment of the kingdom of God in this country; it will organise pilgrimages up and down the country, seeking thereby to give Catholics opportunities of coming together, of realising the strength of the Cross, of preaching and practising their faith.

O. P.

THE JAPANESE RETURN HOME

IN European and American publications it is customary to describe the Japanese as a mysterious, impenetrable, deceitful and enigmatical race. To a certain extent, a similar description is made to apply to the Chinese also, with the exception—at least for so long as they still belong to the United Nations—of ‘deceitfulness.’

That East and West are quite different and do not understand one another very well is a generally accepted fact. The Eastern peoples have quite a different spiritual orientation, and for that reason we shall never be able to understand the Japanese and Chinese completely, in the sense of finding an absolutely satisfactory ‘explanation’ of them. Our nervous reactions and sense impressions are quite different from theirs.¹ Our two life-streams—to use that beautiful Oriental metaphor—do not merge. They do not even flow in parallel directions. They have a quite different mental machinery. Our whole brain system, physical energies, reactions to intellectual and sensorial impressions and other unnameable forces of our racial complexion, are different from theirs. The case is not the same with the German or the Frenchman or the member of any other white race. These we can fully understand; we may not agree with them; but their way of doing things and their outlook on life, their objectives are for us reasonable. This is not the case with the Far Easterner. Of course, if we consider the human mind with reference to its essence, we shall find it to be one and the same in all men. Yet this one mind works differently in an Oriental and in an Occidental, so that we are justified in speaking of an Eastern and a Western mind. As an Oriental puts it rather poetically: ‘The Oriental mind remains as Oriental as though it had been created to be so. From the beginning, ever since the tendency toward variation proceeded, the Oriental mind as such began

¹ In *The Far East Must Be Understood* (Luzac & Co.) I have tried to compile a short bibliography of reliable books on the Far East.