

The Angelus

The appeal of the Angelus has made captive the mind of Christian people. In the lands where it had accustomed sway its tones spiritualised the hour and the place. In the hearts where it owns answering pulses it brings moments of reverent pause. Poet and Painter have felt the glow of it and the magic of its spell. Whether at the evening bell or in the high noon of the day, it lifts the spirit upward and brings down upon the earth the sense of a benediction. And to the willing, the reverent, the devout, it does come down in blessing.

It is an echo of the great message of salvation. If we stop a moment to hearken, our hearts re-echo back to celestial listeners the words brought from above by the Angel; and with minds bowed in prayerful acclaim we join our voices to repeat:

Ave Maria

Be it done according to thy word.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Just a few instants to recall that great moment of all earthly times which was to transfigure the destiny of mankind and to spell anew the history of the world; which in sooth "blotted out the handwriting which was against us."

Amidst the engrossments of daily toils the Angelus tolls and tells of a Divine Life-giving to be blood kin to us all; bringing the Divinity to the earth, to our hands, our hearts, to our Faith and Love. Is it too often to recall it daily? Is it too much, in the long circle of the hours, to yield to it a moment's pause? What a little thing it is, that brief pause. But if faithfully adhered to, impressed upon remembrance, surely in the unseen realms of the spirit's valuations that pause stands recorded for the Great Day. It steadies the will to retain its claim and its hold upon God's Heaven, and upon the Saviour who came to reclaim that Heaven for us—the Divine Child promised and bestowed upon the human race to salvage it from its wreckings; to inspire it with the grace and the assurances of His Truths; to beckon to it and comfort it with the charm, the tenderness, the Divine appealing of His Love.

So adoringly we say:

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Oh! sweet custom. Oh! briefly sung but dear notes of faith and of ultimate aspiration.

There are melodies of early remembrance, or which circumstances has impressed upon our heart's hearing. How they come back to us, amid the discordances of life, with their erstwhile yet ever renewed appeal. A few notes perhaps; may be barely more than the title-name and the occurrence it recalls. Still what recurrent echoes are awakened in our memory. Sweet in some such way to remembering ears are the simple tones of the Angelus.

When the years have rolled over us, and their billowing surges grow feebler and fainter, how warmly the few minutes revert to mind which we yielded to recall that supreme moment which was to usher in the Saviour—minutes in which our lips were

hallowed by holy salutations, praise and prayer. Thank God we remembered to repeat them. May it be remembered of us as again we say:

Ave Maria.

Be it done according to thy word.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

What better time than this year of Jubilee if hitherto unheeded, to attune our spirit to the call which the Angelus rings out for us all. If only around mid-day—unobtrusively if need be—our minds bow in recollection and in joined appeal with so many rejoicing voices, how blessed those minutes may

prove in the long course of life. They will soon cause inaudible echoes to remain in the secret recesses of our soul. They will grow in resonance and in meaning to us. They will make abiding home within us by the sweet force of goodwill and hospitable hearing.

And you, Blessed Mother, who was to be the "Cause of our joy," and in this great Treaty between Heaven and earth you to whom God's ambassador was deputed as to the one perfect flower of the world—"Mystical Rose"—who drew the Saviour down—please hear our united salutation; and remember us, too, as we say:

Blessed art Thou, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

—ALBERT REYNAUD, in the *Missionary*.

Week-end Retreats

What is a Retreat? Simply a few days set aside each year for prayer and serious thought on the affairs of our salvation and on the means to be taken to assure it. There are two kinds of Retreats. The first has for its object the betterment of a man who has adopted an unchangeable form of life, for instance marriage, or who is irrevocably settled in a profession. Let us take an example. Mr. Clayband is a doctor or a lawyer already established in life. He makes an annual Retreat of three days not to decide what he will do, but to find out in what points during the past year he has been neglectful of his duties as a Catholic and what he must do to mend matters. If he seriously desires to make further progress and to lead a more intense Catholic life, he takes practical resolutions which will help him to overcome his neglect in the future.

The second form of Retreat deals usually with the early decisions of young people who have made a Retreat, who do not know what effect a Retreat will have on their lives, and who probably never heard of the so-called "Retreats of decision." To illustrate: Tom Sawyer is a student in college; he is on the eve of graduation. The question of his future career begins to trouble him. What will he be? A priest? He has not the least desire to be one. A lawyer? He feels no attraction for that profession. A simple farmer's life tempts him no more than the rest. What is he going to do? A friend speaks to him about a week-end Retreat and urges him to make one. He consents and off he goes to a Retreat house.

A Life Choice.

After spending three days there in serious reflection and in prayer enlightened by the Holy Ghost—circumstances which made him see things in altogether different colors—he chose the profession that may have hitherto appealed the least to him.

What was the secret of this change of view? Simply this: During the three days in silence alone with God his Maker, he reflected and conscientiously weighed the pros and the cons, the reasons for and against adopting this or that career to which he had imagined he was called, and he found that arguments which he had hitherto thought weakest were, on the contrary, the strongest in favor of his becoming, say a lawyer. He realised that in this profession he could best regulate his life according to his real ambitions and most in keeping

with his duties and obligations as a Catholic. He knows now that he is where God wants him, that he is doing the will of God, and that even as a lawyer he can save his soul as well as in any other profession. Had he not been informed of the Retreat method of deciding things, had he not obeyed the impulse and made off to the Retreat house, he would undoubtedly have wasted much time in useless brain-racking, and in the end would have chosen a profession which was never meant to be his.

What is said here about the legal profession may also be said of the others, even the sublime call to the priesthood. Many young men do not seem to realise that God does not want to leave His flocks without shepherds. And yet they must know that there are millions who have no one to lead them or break for them the Bread of Life. Many a young college graduate hears the silent whisper of vocation to the priesthood and refuses to listen. Why not clear his conscience by spending three days in the silence and prayer of a Retreat and finding out, once for all, just what God wants him to do?

Important Decisions.

Week-end Retreats are very important. The object is precisely to prevent young men from making wrong decisions, to keep them from taking steps which they will regret in after life. Priests and laymen are sparing no efforts to spread a knowledge of the Retreat Movement throughout the world, so that everybody will be able to take counsel of the Holy Ghost in the important matters of life. Marriage, for instance, would be a happier state for thousands if they would give a few days to serious thought and prayer beforehand, in order to study the sacredness as well as the responsibilities of the state which they are about to embrace.

At the end of their school or college courses, and before they have definitely decided to begin a career, let our young men respond to the zealous appeals of their directors and friends and plunge into a three days' Retreat. They will come out with new and powerful motives for leading lives that will make them a credit to the Church of which they are members. Lay Retreats are forming our lay leaders and lay apostles. Who will say that the Church does not need them?—B. LEAHY, S.J., in *Canadian Messenger*.

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