

THE END OF THE YEAR AT SPODE HOUSE

THE MARIAN YEAR was brought to a close with the feast of the Immaculate Conception, last month, and in preparation for this finale a small conference-retreat gathered at Spode House on December 3. The chief purpose of the gathering, which was placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Compassion, was to see whether anything could be done to fulfil the desire she constantly expresses in her modern apparitions that Christians should do penance. She asks for 'Prayer and Penance', and while the former is often heeded in Rosary Crusades and such movements, the call to penance seems harder to follow. Our Lady herself has shown the true way of penance by entering so completely into the sufferings of her Son, and it was pointed out how the call falls first upon the way we accept other people's pains and problems and then our own day-to-day unpleasant experiences which we cannot avoid. But it was felt that something more communal might be undertaken. The Fraternity of the Sick which exists in France and which has been outlined in the pages of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* was instanced as one way of fulfilling the call. A second proposal was a League or Crusade of Penance, which would not necessarily be just one other Catholic organization, but a movement that could link up all Christians in making effective and sanctifying the many hardships and inconveniences that people have to bear today, and so turn the evil of the times into something fruitful. It is to be hoped that this will be followed up.

THE QUESTION OF PEACE, which has been raised in 'Points of View', was also the subject of a conference at Spode House, to herald the Christmas Feast of Peace and to prepare for a year of greater realization of the Christian's mission of peace in the modern world. For some time it has become increasingly clear that the modern nature of warfare has called for a modification of the traditional teaching about the 'Just War', and the Holy Father has himself spoken very strongly against the so-called A.B.C. war with the latest weapons of destruction. 'Jotter' in *The Catholic Herald* urged this conference to consider the vocation of the Peacemaker as analogous to that of the religious who dedicates himself to a special form of perfection, and with this in view Fr Mark Brocklehurst opened with a talk on Christian Peace, showing how the Christian begins from the interior peace, a fruit of charity, in which discords within oneself and with other people are resolved. This is an essential background which the pacifist easily forgets in his concern with the particular problems of warfare. The soldier can achieve this peace as much as the pacifist. The rest of the weekend dealt with the more particular problems raised by modern methods of warfare,

which the Holy Father has condemned in outspoken terms. The Christian has a vocation to make peace and he has a duty to attempt to resolve the conflicts of the present day as well as the uncertainties raised by these modern methods.

In this way the conference prepared for the Feast of Peace, Christmas, which had its own celebrations at Spode House, both liturgical and convivial.

THE NEW YEAR AT SPODE HOUSE

THE YEAR 1955 opens at the Conference house with an Aquinas study week-end on human behaviour, following the second part of St Thomas' *Summa*, conducted by Fr Mark Brocklehurst, O.P. (January 8-9). This is the third of a series which links up the teaching of St Thomas with modern thinking on the subject of morality or human behaviour. This is followed by a Youth Leadership Course conducted by Fr Anthony Ross, O.P. (January 14 to 16), and a week's course for Novice Mistresses, another course for Nursing Sisters and a study week-end for engaged and young married couples (February 4 to 6). This latter on 'Christian Marriage' will have several speakers to deal with the modern problems of married life. It will give practical points to many of the principles discussed in the present issue of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. The Church's teaching on the sacrament of marriage is often found to be extremely difficult and on occasion to demand heroism from husband and wife; but often the difficulties are increased through a lack of understanding of the full implications of this teaching. It is only at such week-ends as this that personal discussion can help towards a full realization of the doctrine and its application to the individual case.

Later in the year Spode House will see the resumption of the series on Religion and the Arts—Music during Easter Week, the Visual Arts at Whitsuntide, Literature in July, and Drama in August. There will be also week-ends for Catholic Psychologists, for Catholic Philosophers, Scientists, and a *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* conference on Prayer. All these activities are based on the common life of the Christian, not merely as intellectual exercises but as linked with the liturgy and the daily life of those who share for the time the same roof and the same board.

A booking fee of 5s. is required to be sent in advance for any of these events and should be sent to:

THE WARDEN,
HAWKESYARD PRIORY,
RUGELEY,
STAFFS.

A detailed prospectus of the courses, study week-ends, retreats and conferences will be sent on request to the Warden at the above address.