

Life of the Spirit

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CORPUS CHRISTI



WHEN Pius X restored the ancient practice of frequent Communion he brought new opportunities for a full Christian life to countless members of the Church. Today we owe that saintly Pope a great debt for his wisdom and charity in opening wide the channels of God's grace through this the greatest of sacraments. But such benefits always bring with them further responsibilities, and one of the ways in which Catholics today could show their gratitude to Pius X is by insisting upon the whole of his teaching on this subject which embraces the responsibilities as well as the benefits. The sacrament of Christ's body is now of such easy access that it is possible to approach the altar without much preparation and even out of routine. Pius X insisted that the more frequent our holy Communion the more careful should be our preparation for the reception of Christ's body. The preparation, as is pointed out elsewhere in this number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, must be by instruction of the mind as well as training of the will, and in order to prevent themselves from slipping into a superstitious attitude to the Sacrament Catholics must be frequently instructed and encouraged in their faith, and particularly in their faith in the Blessed Sacrament.

Just before the war the Holy See found it necessary to issue an instruction to Bishops and Superiors on the importance of a fitting preparation. The recipient must be in a state of grace and with a right intention—that is the barest minimum. But even this needs to be safeguarded and guaranteed. In schools and institutions it is sometimes possible to go to holy Communion with a bad conscience because the group is in the habit of communicating all together every day so that for one to fall out of the ranks is tantamount to public confession of grave sin, and the embarrassment of asking specially for a confessor 'out of hours' even when he is available is very great indeed. Again, the practice of spécial 'Communion Days' or 'General Communions' sometimes almost forces children or members of Catholic societies to go to holy Communion. So the Holy See wishes it to be made quite clear that abstention from daily Communion or from special communicating days carries with it no stigma or embarrassment. Also with frequent Communion must go frequent Con-

fession with great facility of approach to the confessor, and with as far as possible a choice of confessors. These instructions are of considerable moment. The occasions of moral compulsion, of doubtful or sacriligious Communion may be rare but they are so criminal that the utmost care is required to prevent them. Liberty of conscience and increasing preparation will avoid any slur on this great movement for frequent Communion. These precautions will help all those who communicate to expand under the influence of the holy one whom they receive, and so grow constantly in grace and understanding. The body of Christ is food indeed for the life and growth of the soul.

For these reasons we have consecrated most of the present issue to *Corpus Christi*, that minds and wills may be stirred to devotion with a deepening appreciation of the Sacrament.

NOTE. The *Instructio* referred to was issued by the Congregation of Sacramental Discipline after confirmation by Pope Pius XI on 3rd August, 1938.

GROWTH OF THE SOUL¹

BY

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IN speaking of that personal side that should be in our love and service of God it should be taken for granted that the life of service implies a certain growth in knowledge and love, and the service which after all is only an expression of that knowledge and love should also increase and grow. In all living things there is an ebb and flow and this is found in the spiritual life in very great measure. The growth is not necessarily maintained for long, it has set-backs. It is not necessary that one should notice growth. 'The Kingdom of God cometh not by observation'. We may notice it or we may not. In the lives of the saints from their own words it would seem they were often not conscious of it, did not seem to themselves to have seen any improvement, sometimes quite the reverse. St Francis of Assisi says many things that suggest that he saw no increase in his knowledge or love. So to notice the growth is not necessary to us; that other people should notice it—yes, but that we should—no. It is not ordinarily evident to the individual himself.

The better we are the worse our faults seem to us; to deepen our sanctity is to deepen our detestation of self. The more we are in love with God the worse our sins appear. In our worst moments sin appears little because we are less sensitive, in our best moments we appear to ourselves worse because deepening our sanctity reveals to us more of evil in our lives, not because we are worse but we are more

¹ From a retreat preached in Edinburgh in July, 1932.