

EXTRACTS

HELP FOR RELIGIOUS SISTERS continues to be Père Plé's theme in the *Supplement de la Vie Spirituelle* No. 7 (November 1948). The lack of contact and co-ordination among the various Orders and Congregations has been, he says, a source of weakness which has been considerably diminished in the past few years. The article is in fact a summary of the various committees and organisations which have been set up in France to facilitate the mutual assistance of the various groups of Sisters throughout the country. There are unions of teaching sisters and of 'welfare' workers—including nursing sisters and those engaged in social work. There have also been numerous courses of study and retreats for superiors or for novice mistresses which have served to break down barriers of isolation which so easily and imperceptibly raise themselves round a body of men or women, particularly those engaged in religious occupations. Père Plé also cites the various publications which have helped in the same work of co-operation among religious and he concludes with a short account of the great work which goes on in London at 27 Claverton Street for assisting girls in finding their vocation in religious life. Evidently in the matter of co-operation among religious, the association of teaching sisters and the house at Claverton Street have both provided inspiration for Père Plé's work. In a few years this indefatigable and tactful work of the Editor of *La Vie Spirituelle* will be seen to have done more for the renewal of religious life in Europe than almost any other human activity. May God continue to bless and prosper it.

Another volume just arrived from the same source and following up *La Directoire* is devoted to the work of the Novice Mistress. *Pour Les Maitresses Des Novices* (6s. 6d. direct from *Blackfriars*) includes a dozen substantial essays on various aspects of the novitiate by men and women specially qualified to speak. A more detailed account of this volume will appear in a subsequent issue of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

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SPIRITUAL DIRECTION is the subject of the December catechetical instruction appearing in the Italian Carmelite review *Revista di Vita Spirituale*. The whole of this 'Little Catechism of the Spiritual Life' when completed will be most valuable and it is typical of the thorough and scientific work done by this review which at the same time retains a popular style:

1. *Who is a Spiritual Director?*

A Spiritual Director is the priest who undertakes the care of directing the soul in the life of perfection. . . .

3. *Is the Spiritual Director the principal guide of the soul?*

No. The soul's principal guide is the Holy Spirit, but it belongs to the Spiritual Director to help the soul to recognise

for certain the voice and impulse of the Spirit, for she, in her inexperience may confuse it with a natural impulse.

4. *Should the Spiritual Director be a single person?*

Obviously it is desirable that one and the same priest should direct the soul. . . . Nevertheless since the principal guide is the Holy Spirit, he can secure the soul as well by several successive human voices. . . .

5. *Does this 'unique' direction exclude the intervention of any other besides the Director?*

Most assuredly, No. . . .

And this balanced treatment goes on to specify more carefully the precise rôle of the Director and to insist on the only purpose of such spiritual education which is the speedy sanctification of the soul.

But people sometimes forget in speaking of Direction that the dispositions of the one who wishes to be directed are equally as important as those of the Director. A certain Sister Enrica, O.P., sets out bravely to consider this point in the other Italian spiritual review (*Vita Cristiana*, Nov.-Dec., 1948) from the point of view of feminine psychology.

Is a 'true' and efficacious spiritual director possible, she asks, for a woman who suffers from 'stupidity'? We believe not. By stupidity I do not mean a lack of intelligence, but that sort characteristic of feminine stupidity which comes above all from an absence of 'good sense' defined as 'reason applied to the immediate and practical things of life'.

Those who are blessed with good sense must further contribute an absolute sincerity, a level-headed discretion and a faithful perseverance; otherwise direction is useless. Suor Erica discusses these three characteristics, all of which are sufficiently difficult for many women.

The same number of *Vita Cristiana* has a useful article on *Formation in Chastity in Seminaries*, which the author, an Italian Dominican, treats in a positive manner and with conviction. Such subjects as these are often taken for granted. The Director will only be really successful if he has first proved himself a proficient 'directee' particularly in matters of such positive and dynamic value as that of chastity.

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THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK (could not this become the general English name instead of the misleading 'Last Sacraments?') is considered in two recent publications of the Editions du Cerf. The fifteenth issue of *Maison-Dieu* (3s. 6d.) reports the congress held at Vanves last April, when a group of priests met to consider the pastoral implications of the Sacrament. There are admirable papers on the psychology of sick people, on the 'integration of the sick in the life of the parish' and on illness in liturgical tradition, apart from

the more technical contributions on the administration and liturgy of the Sacrament. At a time when the State is assuming such ubiquitous responsibilities for the health of its citizens, the healing function of the Church grows more urgent. The Sacrament of the Sick, certainly the least known of all the sacraments in the immense richness of its forms and the profundity of the teaching it imparts, needs to be made popular, that is to say known by the people of God. To this end the Liturgical Album, *Le Sacrament des Malades* (1s. 0d.) is devoted. As usual in this superlative series, photographic illustrations supplement a vivid and practical text. Most useful is an analysis of the parts of the Sacrament (with the main parts in the vernacular), together with actual illustrations of the manual actions of the priest.

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LA VIE SPIRITUELLE for December has an article by Mgr Garonne on reading the Psalms 'in the light of the Gospels', an excellent aid to mental prayer, and a study of 'the evangelical message of St Benedict Labre' by Dom Doyère. Of special interest is an account of the eremitical life in Carmelite tradition, written by a French Carmelite who is a member of the community of hermits established last year by the French and Belgian Provinces at Roquebrune.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Brown and Nolan*. C. Lattey, S.J.: The Book of Daniel, 12s. 6d.
B.O.W.. Catholic Diary, 1949; J. P. de Caussade, S.J.: Spiritual Letters, 6s.;
 J. O'Connell: The Rubrics of the Forty Hour Exposition, 3s. 6d.; Francis
 Trochu: The Curé D'Ars, 18s.
Clonmore and Reynolds. R. Butler, S.J.: The Words of the Mass, 7s. 6d.; John
 Carr, C.S.S.R.: Blessed Maria Goretti, 3s. 6d.
Gill (Dublin). Little Catechism of the Act of Oblation of St Thérèse, 1s.; Fr
 Canice, O.F.M.Cap.: Mary's Rosary, 3d.; Olive Mary Scanlon: The Barquo
 of Peter, 5s.
Sands. Teresa Lloyd: Jesus Teaching, 8s. 6d.
Sheed and Ward. Catherine de Hueck: Dear Bishop, 6s.

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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