

AN AQUINAS CENTRE

THE EDITOR

THE name of Father Vincent McNabb needs no introduction to the readers of BLACKFRIARS. From the first issue in 1920 to the time of his death in 1943, he was one of its most faithful contributors, and the ideal of a review devoted to the application of the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas to the problems of the contemporary world was one which was close to his heart.

Fr Vincent's work did not end with his death, and the perpetuation of his memory could never be a mere monument. It is for that reason that it has been decided to establish at St Dominic's Priory in London (where Fr Vincent spent the last twenty-three years of his life and which was in a special sense his spiritual home), a centre where it will be possible to provide retreats, lectures, conferences, week-ends for study and indeed any gathering at all which might help in building up that adult and informed Catholic life which Fr Vincent himself did so much to foster. The Priory Hall, hitherto used as a social club (a need now admirably supplied by the neighbouring Blackfriars Hall) is being reconstructed for this purpose. Completely redecorated and refurnished, with a new floor, lighting and heating, the Aquinas Centre (as the memorial to Fr Vincent will be called), will soon be ready for use. It provides accommodation, if necessary, for two or three hundred people, but can easily be adapted for the convenience of much smaller groups. It is hoped that, apart from the programme of events arranged by the Centre's committee, it will be found useful by the many specialized societies which in London often experience some difficulty in finding a suitable home for their meetings. The Centre is easily accessible from most parts of London, and its work will have the advantage of being closely integrated with the liturgical life of the Priory which it adjoins. A library and reading-room, as well as facilities for refreshments, will add to its usefulness. It is planned, too, to provide an oratory in the Centre itself.

The value of such a Centre scarcely needs emphasizing. The success of the similar undertaking at Spode House, near the Dominican Priory at Hawkesyard in Staffordshire, has shown how

real is the need for a place of meeting where Catholics can gather in a sympathetic setting not merely to learn, but, however briefly, to live as a community. And the need in London is especially urgent.

At the recent international conference of Pax Romana, held in Nottingham, a principal theme was the need for a Christian adult education that shall equip those who have left school for the difficult task of living in a secular society. A principal purpose of the Aquinas Centre is to meet such a need, and that not in an abstract or an academic way but practically and with a sympathetic respect for the varying needs of those who will want to make use of it. It is for that reason that any suggestion for the development of the Centre will be gladly considered. Its facilities will be at the disposal of all organizations that are anxious to co-operate in its work and a meeting shortly to be called will discuss ways and means of providing for their needs. It is hoped that the Centre itself will be formally opened in January.

All those who are grateful for the life and work of Father Vincent McNabb will, we hope, be glad to help in this perpetuation of his memory. But the establishment of the Aquinas Centre will involve much hard work and considerable expense. We confidently look to the readers of BLACKFRIARS (whose ideals the Centre is designed to exemplify) to help in every way they can. Readers living within easy reach of the Centre will, we are sure, give its activities their support. But we ask every reader to send a contribution, however small, to help in the initial work of establishing this London memorial to Father Vincent McNabb. Contributions (marked 'Aquinas Centre') should be sent to the Very Rev. Fr Prior, St Dominic's Priory, Southampton Road, London, N.W.5.