

The Catholic
Press

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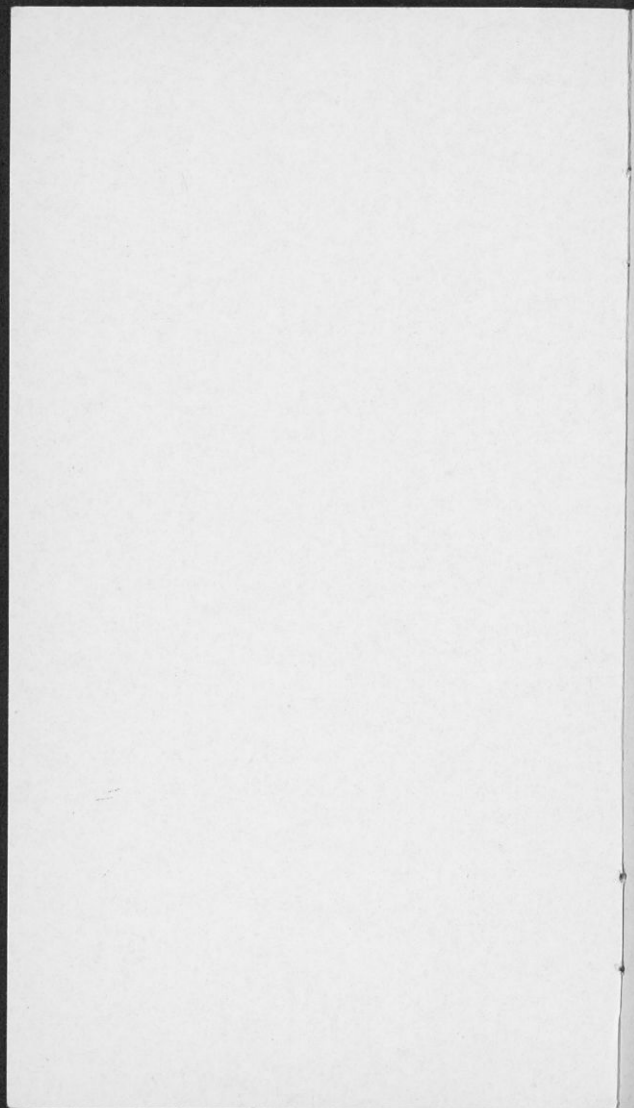
The Need of The Hour

Our Sunday Visitor Press
Huntington, Indiana

No. 37



THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD



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INTRODUCTION



Never before was it so necessary that the Catholic paper, devoted principally to instruction, reach every home and be read by all of its members. Catholic youths are subjected to so many evils which were unknown to their parents that there must be at least a weekly reminder to them of the lessons taught in their childhood, of the principles of morality which must guide their lives, and which, therefore, they must ever keep before themselves in their formative years.

Nearly every time the Holy Father advocates Catholic Action—and he does that almost daily—he emphasizes the need of people informing themselves as a prerequisite. Evidently people cannot combat error and deal with the many pernicious social movements of our day unless they be informed; and this information can hardly be conveyed to them except through an instructive Catholic paper or pamphlet literature.

The Study Club is suggested by the same idea—the need of more information on the part of the people if they would creditably represent their Church in Catholic Action. In your effort to enlist even your sodality officers in a Catholic Action movement you probably will have discovered that, willing as the men and women are, they need instruction, a program, information.

If the Publishing House, which publishes this pamphlet, and which produces more Catholic Action pamphlet literature than any House in the world, can be of any help to you, kindly command its services. Its record over twenty-two years, has been built on its motto "Serve the Church and its people."

THE CATHOLIC PRESS

The Need of the Hour

I

Needed For Catholic Action

The last four Popes, who lived during the years of the great expansion of the printing press, quite naturally became the most vehement advocates of the wider patronage of the Catholic Press. Bad literature must be paralleled with good literature; truth must be scattered through the printed word as abundantly as error; morality must be defended by the religious press as widely as immorality by the irreligious press; religion must utilize the press even more than irreligion, if it should expect to make progress.

Pope Leo XIII

Pope Leo XIII declared:

“Among the best methods for the defence of Religion there is none more suited to the present age, and none more efficacious than the Press. The Press is the work par excellence.”

If there was reason for Pope Leo to advocate the matching of the Catholic press with the secular in his

day, when conditions were not half so fatal to faith and morals as in the age in which our Catholic people now live, what, think you, would he declare today if he were living? The age of which Pope Leo spoke preceded the age of compulsory higher education, of the extensive patronage of secular colleges and universities, of the motion picture, of the burlesque show, of the night life away from home in dance halls, in unchaperoned automobile excursions; it preceded the new freedom advocated for youth, the farce of trial marriages, the encouragement of easy divorce.

Pope Pius X

Pope Pius X declared that the most influential means of spreading and of strengthening the faith is the

“offensive and defensive weapon of the Catholic press.”

As Pope Pius regarded the classroom in a religious school more important than the pulpit in the church, so he regarded the Catholic Press as the most potent method in existence for adult education.

Pope Benedict XV

Pope Benedict XV had the Catholic Press principally in mind when he said to the Bishops of Lombardy:

“It is your duty, and that of all the other Bishops and the clergy and especially of the priests who have the cure of souls, to guard the Christian people against the enemies of the faith; it is our duty to let the faithful know the truth of things, that they may not be drawn away from their loving mother the Church, but may remain ever closely united to it and to its supreme pastor, who has been constituted by God Himself guardian of the truth, minister of justice and charity.”

It must not be forgotten that we live in an age when everybody reads, and when editors and authors write what the people want to read. They take account of the wide-spread prejudice against the Catholic Church, to which they cater.

Invented by a Catholic and first employed in the interests of the Church, the printing press has, in modern times, become the most powerful agency for “the world, the flesh and the devil”. In many coun-

tries the most influential papers and periodicals are positively anti-religious; in other countries, like our own, they are not professedly so, but wield a more pernicious influence because they do the same work insidiously. They pay little notice to the churchman who defends religion and morality, but devote much space to the one who attacks an age-old belief, as they make a hero out of the university professor, who advocates some shameful practice. Most of our movies are based on novels which obtained a wide circulation because of their appeal to the lower instincts of the readers.

It is to the secular press of our day, and not to the pulpit, that people look for information bearing on religion, morality, social standards. Now it is clear that the average editor is not a theologian, and, therefore, cannot talk with authority on religion; that he is not a deep student and, therefore, does not cogitate correct premises; that he is not a philosopher, and, therefore, does not rea-

son accurately; and he is seldom on the right side of moral questions.

But it is our present alert Pontiff who, on frequent occasions, urges the general support and reading of the Catholic Press by Catholic people. "Catholic Action" is his great objective, but he insists that the reading of the Catholic Press and its introduction *by zealous laymen* into every Catholic home, and into many non-Catholic homes, is the first requisite for success of a Catholic Action movement. People cannot properly engage in Catholic Action unless they be informed; and they cannot be properly informed unless they read and study Catholic literature. The teaching which children receive in the class room must be amplified after school days; the many new movements and campaigns, which spring up almost over night, must be studied, analyzed, and if unsound must be exposed, confuted, and fought.

Pope Pius XI

Speaking to a group of university students His Holiness, Pius XI, said:

"It must often be lamented that the readers of Catholic journals and the paying subscribers are scarce; so much so that every time we are asked for a blessing for some Catholic journal we always intend a special blessing for the subscribers who pay. Here is a field of apostolate worthy of all the solicitude and interest of good Catholics, of the members of Catholic Action. They can never cultivate the Catholic Press enough, and according to the care with which they will prepare, so will the beneficent fruits be abundant. With this apostolate they will obtain the other precious result of averting the evil effects of a poisonous press that propagates things that should be banished not only by culture but also by civilization.

"Here then is a large field for apostolic activity, since the wide-spread reading of a good Press is a great good and the spread of the reading of a bad Press is a great evil. Especially for this activity do we rely on the collaboration of the laity, and we are confident of the final result, because Catholic Action will revive the times of apostolic preaching in the world when St. Paul gave the laity the order of the day and recommended the Church to them."

Religion on the Defensive

In our day religion is really on the defensive. Catholics have been so

inert that it might almost be said that they have their backs to the wall. Is it not true in Mexico? Is it not true of all Christians in Russia? Were it not for the assertion of their convictions on the part of the women of Spain in a recent election, it would be true in that country.

There has been a concerted effort on the part of many writers, of motion picture producers, actually to destroy the Christian ideals of life. Irreligion has become an aggressive religion; immoral movements, such as that of the Birth-Controllers, are promoted in the name of religion and higher civilization.

Now, evidently, if wide-spread attacks are made on Catholic faith, Catholic practice, Catholic morality, these must not only be defended, but they must be proclaimed offensively or aggressively. Nothing will be gained by their defense or bold assertion from the pulpit, because the 100,000,000 non-Catholics of the United States do not hear that defense or presentation. It will not help to have them defended or presented in the

Catholic Press if the 22,000,000 Catholics do not subscribe to and read its products. Everyone of these 22,000,000 is obliged by the obligations of his Baptism and of his Confirmation; he is obliged by the Commandments of the love of God and neighbor; by his relationship to Christ, to become an Apostle for the enlightenment of the 100,000,000, whose attitude towards the Catholic Church must be considerably altered even if it be only hoped that they will have sympathy for Catholic ideals as opposed to those of the apostles of immorality.

But the generality of the Catholic laity cannot become apostles unless they first become informed. Hence every priest feels it his duty to urge all his people to receive into their homes a Catholic paper and to read it; every Catholic lay person should feel it his duty, in keeping with the demand of the head of his Church, to participate in Study Clubs fostered by the Catholic societies of his parish.

II

WHAT DO OUR PEOPLE READ?

Our Catholic people, who are trained in youth so differently from others, read the same literature that others do—and what is that? Well, scan the titles of magazines, weekly or monthly, in any news-stand; note the hundreds of weekly and monthly periodicals exhibited on the large news-stands of a railway station. Nine-tenths of the total deals with trash if it does not actually deal with things highly suggestive and spiritually harmful. Hundreds of tons of pornographic and salacious material are distributed over the country to be placed on sale every month for boys and girls to buy and read.

The well-known writer, Hendrick W. VanLoon, characterizes it “a putrid stream of the most despicable, the most iniquitous, and, on the whole, the most dangerous form of a degraded variety of literature to be sold after being publicly sent through the mails.”

It is plain filth masquerading as literature. It ranges all the way from "confessional" magazines to plain pornography, and there is no distinction whatever between any of them. Some sell as "art," some as "comic," some as "physical training," some as "romance." They are all literary garbage, smut and eroticism.

The Editor of the WINNIPEG TRIBUNE writes as follows on this subject:

"Take a look at the bookshelves. Good books in thousands are being published, of course, but along with them another stream of filth. For mature minds they are harmless, possibly. For immature minds, they constitute a poisoned well. There is no reference here to the frankly sexual works, published for limited circulation. It does comparatively little harm. It is the 'best sellers,' the stream novels that young people read. A few years ago almost any one of the popular novels of today would have been prohibited public sale or

circulation. The moral they teach, if they can be said to have a moral, is that sin is gay and attractive, and brings no suffering in the tolerant and pleasant world of today. The moving picture industry will not be accused of being oversqueamish—but last year, according to Will H. Hays, more than a hundred successful novels were submitted to picture producers and refused because, in plain language, they were too dirty.

“From all these sources comes the food for the minds of the boys and girls. It is no cause for wonder if they think virtue old-fashioned and nastiness nice. It is almost a miracle if any of them attain to the ideals of right living, honor, truth and cleanliness of mind. It is fashionable to sneer at reformers as white-collared hypocrites and kill-joys, and no one sneers louder than those who are lining their purses with the proceeds of the filth they peddle. But it does not require the instinct of a reformer to deplore the morals and manners of the day,

or the influence they have on the growing generation. Surely it is a time for some searching of hearts. Surely, also, it is time for aggressive action against those who for pay are debauching the minds of our youth. At least responsible public authority can purge the newsstands, the bookshelves, the stage and the screen of some of the rottenness and disease they are spreading, and give the church and the school and the decent home some chance of shaping the character of boys and girls."

Practically every paper of consequence features a Woman's Page daily, and supplies a whole section for the women readers on Sundays, nearly all of which is morally pernicious. We have every reason to presume that Catholic women, as well as others, relate their problems to Dorothy Dix or one of the other women who furnish the "copy" for these papers. Are they not likely to be misdirected in relation to courtship and marriage? To coun-

teract this danger OUR SUNDAY VISITOR, because it is the most widely read popular weekly, has introduced a Woman's Page, and has engaged the services of a very well informed woman with orthodox views to conduct it. For the mere amount of postage to cover the cost of a reply she will direct Catholic women by mail in a truly Catholic way.

But if most of the reading of our young people is both intellectually and spiritually harmful, is it not absolutely imperative that at least one Catholic paper, devoted to sound instruction and to a defense of Catholic ideals, enter every home and that it be regularly read by the young and married as an antidote and conserving force?

Helpful Reading a Necessity

It must ever be borne in mind that religious Catholic parents are subscribers to several Catholic papers and to three or four Catholic

magazines. They also *read* these periodicals, although they are in least need of their lessons. It is not at all so certain that their children read them. But the vast majority of Catholic homes in the United States are unreached by any Catholic paper with regularity, and their members have nothing to support either their faith or their morals other than the meagre religious instruction they had in youth and the sermons they hear from the pulpit. Children in these families are in great danger. The Catholic paper reading habit should be formed in the grade school, should be continued in the high school and college. Then the next generation would likely be subscribers to the Catholic paper not only out of a sense of duty, but because they would have grown to respect its contents.

But we must also take account of the fact that one-half of the Catholic children in the United States are not in parish schools, that they re-

ceive only occasional religious instruction, that they absolutely need the instructive Catholic paper to supplement their lack of religious knowledge. Parents cannot have their attention called too frequently to the obligation resting on their consciences to supply instructive Catholic reading to their children, and then to see to it that they will actually pursue it.

On a Children's Page, the most widely read in America, OUR SUNDAY VISITOR covers the entire Catechism every year, always in just a little different manner, but having in mind that for one-half the Catholic children in our country there is little offered in substitution.

No Catholic Action effort will be successful unless the beneficiaries are also subscribers to an instructive Catholic paper. Half the things to which the attention of Catholics must be called are unsuited for pulpit exposition,

Church Door Distribution

The habit has become more and more in vogue of distributing the Catholic paper at the Church exits on Sunday, although there are some priests who do not like that method of distribution. But could a priest present a stronger argument for the need of introducing the Catholic paper into every home than to almost force it on the people as they leave church? Could the people themselves be half as much impressed by a pulpit exhortation to read a Catholic paper as by the presence of the St. Vincent de Paul men or others becoming newsboys every Sunday for the cause of religion and morality?

Since people leave the church in a rush the most effective way of placing a Catholic paper in the hands of all, is to have men distribute the same while the people are still in their pews, for instance, during the recital of the prayers after a low Mass, or even during the last gospel. In this case the priest will

remind the people from the pulpit that men will receive their little offering for the paper as they leave the church. Through this method not only would all Catholic people receive the paper, and some families two or three copies so that they might pass on one to a non-Catholic neighbor, but the revenue received would be sufficient to pay for the paper several times over, leaving a little sum for parish charities or any other cause.

When enemies of the Catholic Church, of religion and morality generally, create new problems for us, we must expect to meet them in a new way; the old way will not do. Religious literature, if only a Sunday school paper, is always handed to those attending Protestant Sunday school classes.

III

ALL READING EITHER HELPS OR HURTS

You Need the Catholic Press

The effect of all that is written is either good or bad, even when the writer may not have either effect in mind. In most publications, including the daily newspaper, there appears little which will result in positive good to the reader, but much which imperceptibly leaves an evil imprint.

This same may be said of the spoken word of men of prominence—of the college and university professor. They either teach truth or falsehood; and if their viewpoint be false they certainly teach error, and therefore do harm rather than good to those who pay for the privilege of sitting in their audience or classroom.

Let us suppose that the writer or speaker or teacher is wrong in his views concerning God, concerning Christ, concerning the Church, concerning marriage, concerning government; is he not, whether willfully or unwillfully, teaching error to his

confidants, and therefore doing them an injury, creating false views which must be harmful in their application?

Now, it should be needless to spend any time in an effort to prove that the average non-Catholic minister, or educator, or moralist or sociologist does entertain erroneous views concerning God, Christ, His Church, moral and social questions.

There is no neutral position; either a man is right on these all important matters or he is wrong. Hence when he airs his views on these subjects he is either spreading truth or error, unconsciously doing good or harm.

The power of the press is such that it is capable of forming a common erroneous consent of mankind, and consequently of establishing a false criterion of certitude. Yet national public opinion is the conscience of the nation; upon it depends the line of action of the public or nation at large.

In our day a politician with the power of the press and of the radio to back him, and the passions and

emotions of people at his command, is able to control the conscience of a whole nation. This has been proved in Russia, in Germany.

All the while God Almighty has a personal representative in this world, who holds a divine mandate to teach the nations the revelation and laws of God. He is right theologically, and therefore morally and philosophically. He does frequently speak to the world in the name of God, in virtue of his high office as head of the Kingdom of Christ. But granting that his decisions are promulgated from 100,000 pulpits throughout the world, and carried to the members of His Kingdom through the Catholic press, four-fifths of mankind are still unreached by his message. The powerful secular press, the anti-Christian press, the organs of the hundreds of sectarian religious organizations seldom promulgate his teaching except to attack it.

Error is not sympathetic towards truth; the worldly-minded resent interference with their standards; the

nationally-minded will not hearken to any teaching opposed to the political system to which they are committed. The representative of God is, therefore, not wanted at the Councils of Nations or at Peace Conferences.

So powerful are the powers of evil, of prejudice, of nationalism, of selfish interests, that whole groups as well as the individual fear the teacher or counselor, who might disturb their preconceived ideas or preferences.

Is the Church of God, therefore, to remain ever confined within its present membership limits? Is truth ever to remain relegated to one corner by error? It would seem so, unless those possessed of the truth become more aggressive, declare it "in season and out of season" to their neighbors who are in error.

Since the secular and irreligious press is responsible for practically all the errors and ills in society, a powerful Catholic press is needed for the promulgation of truth and right principles, for the exposition of the

errors in a dozen philosophical and sociological systems. The Catholic press, more than the Catholic pulpit, more than the parochial school, must be the teacher of Catholic adults who, in turn, must serve the cause of God, Church and morality by an effort to alter the views of non-Catholics of their community.

We would not underestimate the importance of prayer in this missionary effort, because the generality of people are in greater need of grace than they are of argument for their intellects. But "campaigning for Christ" and for the truth is a duty of every follower of Christ; his propaganda weapons should be a combination of prayer, good example and Catholic literature.

Because the Catholic reads the secular papers and magazines as does his non-Catholic neighbor, he is bound to be influenced adversely by the errors and false views contained in such literature unless he himself is a regular reader of the Catholic

press as well. The truth must be so fixed in his mind that error and moral wrong may be easily detected; he should be so conversant with the arguments to support the teachings of his own Church that he will never lack the ability to defend them before others.

But the little Catechism, which he studied at school, will not be of sufficient help; it does not acquaint him with Protestant errors, nor with the false social philosophy of our day. It only defines Catholic truth and Catholic practice. It has been well said that one is not fully competent to deal with an adversary unless he knows nearly as much about his viewpoint as about his own. Such knowledge must come from post-school day study, and especially from Catholic papers and magazines of an instructive character, which do acquaint our people with the Protestant error, or the modernist view, or the social evil, and then defeat it by the application of Catholic truth and the moral principles of which our Church

is the infallible guardian and interpreter.

The uninstructed Catholic youth, as the youth unsupported by Catholic Sacraments, often succumbs. Weak whether in faith or morals he becomes a victim of his environment. Prevailing public opinion is bound to affect every person, unwilling though he may be to share in it. People may avoid the partnership of guilt, but never the consequences. He who lives amid physical contagion, is certain to fall a victim unless he use a counteracting medicine. In a similar manner, the one who is surrounded by those who are committed to false doctrines, which, because of copious literature devoted to their spread, float in the intellectual atmosphere like an invisible and active miasma, will be infected by such errors unless he take frequent draughts of the medicine of truth.

Everyone builds up his life on what may be denominated a *philosophy of life*; and if this philosophy be false, evidently one's life will not be guided

by truth. For this reason it is safe to say that most non-Catholic literature, from the newspaper to the beautifully bound volume, contains much that is poison, much that is bound to injure the mind, heart, and will of the people who read it.

ARE YOU A TRUE CATHOLIC?

The true Catholic does not rest contented with hearing Mass and receiving the Sacraments. He is heart and soul with the Church in all Her aims and aspirations. He is eager to know Her mind and inform himself accurately and fully on Her doctrines. He would understand Her plans and remedy the evils of the social order. He would be acquainted with Her present achievements in the missionary and other fields and versed in Her glorious history. He is solicitous, too, that his neighbor who is not of the fold be brought within range of the Church's influence, be disabused of his prejudices, admire Her, and by the grace of God accept Her teachings.

All this and much more would be

simply impossible without the aid of the Catholic Press through books, pamphlets, periodicals and especially papers. The secular press, meritorious though it is in many respects and even indispensable, does not and cannot meet these important religious and social requirements as the Catholic Church demands they must be met.

Our numerous diocesan organizations both of men and women such as Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters of America, Holy Name Societies and sodalities of various titles, could show their belief in Catholic Action and loyalty to the Holy Father and their Bishop in no more practical way than devoting themselves as organizations to the cause of the Catholic Press. Certain it is that no general program of Catholic Action is possible except through the inspiration and aid of a powerful and widely diffused Catholic Press. Without it the masses of the Catholic laity will not even learn what Catholic Action signifies.—The Most Rev. Edmund F. Gibbons, Bishop of Albany.

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