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THE OPEN DOOR

GO FORTH AND
TEACH ALL NATIONS

how converts are made





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THE OPEN DOOR

HOW CONVERTS ARE MADE

OUR SUNDAY VISITOR
HUNTINGTON • INDIANA

1953



U•S•A

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BISHOP OF FORT WAYNE

Catholic Digest

The leading chapter of this book is reprinted from **The Catholic Digest**, and is a report on a nation-wide survey conducted by that publication. "The Open Door" stories are also reprints in large part from the **Digest**. Other chapters by Father O'Brien are re-prints from his popular column syndicated by the NCWC news service.

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WHO Makes Converts?

A Report on a National Survey

JOHN A. O'BRIEN

“JOE,” I asked, “how many have you started towards conversion?”

“None,” he replied, “I thought lay people had no business in that field; that it was up to the clergy and only them.”

“Does this mean then, Joe,” I continued, “that you, an insurance salesman, never once tried to interest a non-Catholic friend in your religion, never tried to recruit a prospect for an inquiry class, never invited a friend to Mass, or any of the other devotions?”

“Yes,” he confessed, “I’ve never so much as lifted a finger to win a convert to the Catholic Faith. I didn’t think laymen were supposed to butt into the business of the priests.”

This conversation occurred at a meeting in the school auditorium of St. Joseph’s Parish, Mishawaka, Indiana. At my suggestion the pastor, Father Curt A. Suelzer, had invited about 35 “live-wire” men and women to

at an Inquiry Forum which we were establishing there for the first time.

Before giving them some training in the technique of approaching churchless people and interesting them in the investigation of the claims of the Catholic Church, we thought it would be interesting to see how many had ever tried it on their own. Joe Campbell’s reaction was typical of those of most of the others present.

Is it typical of the attitude of the great majority of Catholic men and women? A religious survey recently conducted by *The Catholic Digest* provides the answer. To a cross section of people representing 75.9 million people in the U. S. who go to some church, two questions were asked: 1. “Have you ever tried to get anyone to join your religious group?” 2. “Did you ever succeed in getting anyone to join?”

The replies of the Catholics, representing 20.6 millions, showed that 72% had never

PROTESTANTS ARE MORE THAN TWICE AS ACTIVE IN WINNING CONVERTS AS CATHOLICS

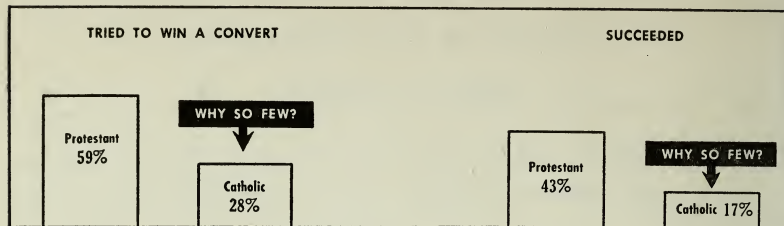


CHART III

even tried to get anyone to join the Church. Of the 28% who tried, 17% succeeded, 9% did not succeed, and 2% did not know whether they had been successful or not. In contrast to that feeble effort, the replies of all the Protestants, representing 53.3 millions, showed that 59% had definitely tried. Of these, 43% succeeded, 10% did not succeed and 6% did not know whether their efforts had proved successful or not.

This brings into clear relief several points worth noting: 1. The overwhelming majority (72%) of Catholic lay men and women have never so much as lifted a finger to win a convert for Christ. 2. Protestants are more than twice as zealous as Catholics in seeking to win converts, 59% against 28%. 3. Catholics need to learn effective techniques of winning converts, as only 17% of the 28% who tried, were successful, as com-

Table I—Showing the Percentage of Church Members Who Promote Their Faith

	Millions of People This Represents	Tried to Get Someone to Join	Did Not Succeed	Don't Know if Succeeded	Never Tried to Get Anyone to Join
		%	%	%	%
Catholics	20.6	28	17	9	2
Protestant total	53.3	59	43	10	6
Baptists	13.9	67	50	10	7
Methodists	12.7	56	39	8	9
Lutherans	6.1	49	28	19	2
Presbyterians	5.7	59	52	5	2
Episcopalians	2.3	53	45	6	2
Congrega- tionalists	1.0	32	19	10	3
Other Protestant Denominations	11.6	61	44	11	6
Jewish	1.8	27	24	3	0

MEMBERS OF VARIOUS FAITHS WHO TRIED TO WIN CONVERTS

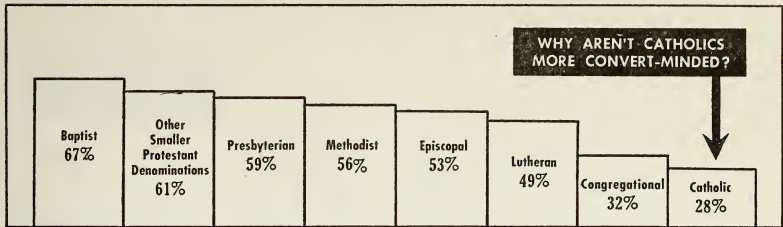


CHART II

pared with the 43% successful ones among the 59% Protestants who tried. 4. The chief difference between the two groups in convert-making effectiveness, however, is that the percentage of Protestants who try to win converts is more than twice as large as the percentage of Catholics. This is brought out vividly in Chart I.

A glance at Table I shows that among the Protestant denominations the Baptists are most active in seeking new members, 67% trying and 50% succeeding. A group comprising the smaller denominations, including the Pentecostals, ranked second, with 61% making the effort and 44% succeeding. The Presbyterians, with 59% trying and 52% succeeding, ranked third. The ratings are shown in Chart II.

On the whole, the denominations with the highest percent-

ages of members trying to win adherents experienced the largest relative gains, as shown in Chart III. It's a good illustration of the principle stressed by all schools of salesmanship: other things being equal, the salesman who knocks at the most doors makes the most sales. Catholics rank the lowest in sales for the simple reason that they knock at the fewest doors.

Investigating the convert making activities of men and women of all faiths, the *Digest* survey found, as was to be expected, that the women are more zealous: 52% of the women endeavored to win Church members and 37% succeeded, as compared with 47% and 34% for the men.

The survey sought to ascertain the relative activity of the various age groups in winning members for their respective

MEMBERS OF VARIOUS FAITHS WHO SUCCEEDED IN WINNING CONVERTS

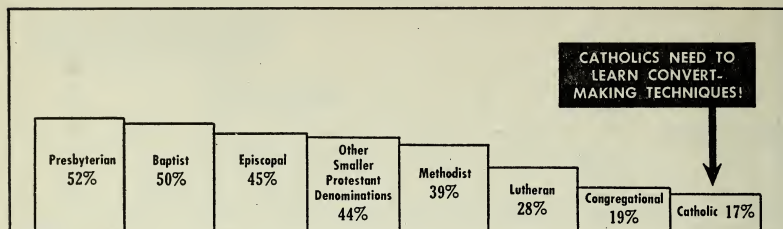


CHART III

faiths. The findings show that, on the whole, as the ages of Church members increase their efforts and their success in winning adherents likewise increase. Thus the two lowest age groups, 18 to 24 and 25 to 34, both reported 47% trying and 31% succeeding, as compared with 59% trying and 41% succeeding for the oldest age group, 65 and over.

How do the convert winning activities of whites compare with those of Negroes? The whites come off a poor second. The survey found that 66% of the Negroes tried to win converts, and 55% succeeded, as compared with 49% and 34% for the whites.

What educational level showed the greatest zeal? The group which had from one to three years of college education reported the highest percentage

of its members seeking to win Church members, 65% trying and 39% succeeding as compared with 48% and 34% for the one-to-three-years high school group. In general, efficiency in winning adherents increased as the cultural level advanced, the college graduate group reporting the highest of all: 41%.

Does occupation affect the interest of people in winning church members? The survey investigated the activities of members in the professional class, proprietors or managers, white-collar workers, service workers, manual laborers, and farmers. Of all these the farmers have by far the best record. Not less than 63% of them tried to win adherents and 43% succeeded. The professional group ranked second, with 53% trying and 38% succeeding. The

manual laborers came last, with but 46% trying and only 31% proving successful.

Does the amount of income affect the missionary activities of Church members? The survey found that those in the upper income bracket ranked first, with 55% trying to win adherents and 41% succeeding. There was little difference between the middle income group and the lower income bracket, 48% and 34% for the former as compared with 49% and 35% for the latter.

Does the size of the community tend to affect the missionary activities of Church people? The survey investigated the activities of residents of six different types of communities: cities over a million, 100,000 to 1 million, 25,000 to 100,000, 10,000 to 25,000, under 10,000, and rural districts. People living in the country showed by far the greatest missionary zeal. Not less than 58% tried to win new members for their Church and 39% succeeded.

Those living in communities of under 10,000 ranked second, with 53% trying and 39% succeeding. Curiously enough, residents of cities 25,000 to 100,000

had the poorest record, with but 40% trying and only 26% succeeding. The survey shows that, on the whole, religion thrives best in the country and in the smaller towns and villages.

Does geographical location tend to affect the religious mores of people? The survey investigated the activities of people in nine different sections. Residents of the South Atlantic section,* the so-called Bible belt, have by far the best record. Not less than 64% endeavored to win members for their Church, and 44% succeeded.

Those in the West South Central section† ranked second, with 60% trying and 45% succeeding. The poorest showing was made by the residents of New England with but 23% making any effort to recruit Church members and but 20% succeeding.

Thus it is seen that the survey investigated the recruiting activities of Church members from nine different angles: denominational membership, sex, age, race, education, occupation, income level, size of community and geographical region. While

*Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, W. Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

†Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas.

the finding in each of these fields is of interest, the one of paramount importance is the discovery that, of all the religious groups in the U. S., Catholics show the least interest and make the feeblest effort in seeking to recruit new members for their Faith.

The attitude of Joseph Campbell, that winning converts is the business of the clergy and that the laity should keep their noses out of it, is typical of the overwhelming majority of Catholic laymen. The result is that the Church is gaining but 120,000 converts a year when it should be winning ten times that many.

The greatest loss which the Church in America is suffering is that which results from the failure to harness the loyalty, devotion, and potential missionary zeal of its lay members. Here is a great spiritual Niagara whose boundless energy could be harnessed to the urgent job of bringing the light of Christ's teachings to the millions of churchless homes in America.

It is as obvious as the nose on one's face that a small band of 45,000 priests cannot personally reach 80 million churchless peo-

ple. It is bad enough that we are tapping—chiefly because we have made no systematic effort—but the tiniest bit of the zeal and energy of our numerous nuns and Brothers in the Christ-like apostolate of winning souls. It becomes, however, nothing short of sheer tragedy, somber and unrelieved, when we make no organized effort to enlist the millions of our laity in the divinely appointed duty of sharing the precious treasure of their holy Christian faith with those who have it not. It is only through their consecrated zeal that we can fill the spiritual void in the lives of eighty millions of our countrymen.

Why do so few of our laity, as loyal and devoted as any in the world, bother their heads about convert work? Because they are largely unaware of such a duty. Engrossed in the pressing work of building churches, schools, convents and rectories to keep up with expanding flocks, the clergy have failed to make this duty clear to them.

The words of Christ, "Go, teach ye all nations," were addressed not only to the Apostles but to all His disciples and fol-

lowers. The early Christians took this obligation seriously, and in a few centuries won the pagan Greek and Roman empires for Christ.

Pope Pius XI summoned the laity to co-partnership with the clergy. "We grieve," he said, "that the clergy is quite insufficient to cope with the needs of our times. Hence it is necessary that *all* men be apostles; it is necessary that the Catholic laity do not stand idle, but be united, and take their share in the holy warfare of winning the world for Christ."

At a congress in Rome, Pope Pius XII declared, in substance, "The time has come when the laity must take their place by the side of their consecrated leaders in the urgent task of bringing the teachings of Christ to those who know Him not. This is the most urgent task facing our laity and the form of Catholic Action closest to the heart of Christ."

In another pronouncement, His Holiness again declared, "Let priests preach from pulpits, in the streets and squares. Alongside the priests let the people, who have learned to penetrate minds and hearts

with their words and love, also speak."

Stressing the duty of the laity to take an active part in the convert apostolate, Archbishop Cushing declares, "The layman can and should and *must* share in the great work of gathering in the white harvest of souls, and often enough in the very planting of the first seeds. Indeed, the laity are ideally situated to recruit prospects for instruction. The convert movement will make notable progress only when every Catholic throws himself with zeal and determination into the task of winning each year at least one soul for Christ."

To make this duty clear to our laity from their childhood it would seem advisable to insert in the next edition of the Catechism the following question and answer, "Is it a duty on the part of every person to win souls for Christ?" "Yes, every Catholic is under a divine obligation to win souls for Christ by recruiting persons for instruction and, when necessary, by assisting in their instruction."

In addition to making the obligation clear to the laity, it is

necessary to provide them with the knowledge of suitable techniques. With this end in view, the following books outlining methods developed by fifty of the most successful convert makers have been recently published: *Winning Converts*, (P. J. Kenedy, New York, 248 pp. \$3.00), *Sharing the Faith*, (Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind., 246 pp. \$1.00), *The White Harvest*, (Newman, Westminster, Md.).

To show what attracts non-Catholics to the Church and the credentials which lead them to embrace the Faith, the following books of convert stories have been recently published: *The Road to Damascus* and *Where I Found Christ* (both by Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y. each \$2.50) feature noted writers and scholars; *Paths to Christ* (Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind. 256 pp. \$1.50) features the so-called "little fry," the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker; *The Way to Emmaus* (Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind. 368 pp. \$2.50), features chiefly noted ministers, theologians and those who had delved deeply into other faiths before entering the Church.

Catholics will learn how to in-

struct non-Catholics, right in their own homes if necessary, by reading the following books which have helped to lead thousands into the fold: *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, (Cloth, \$1.75 paper-bound, \$1.00) *What's the Truth about Catholics?* (Cloth, \$2.50, Quiz Edition, paper-bound, \$1.50, paper-bound, \$1.25), *The Faith of Millions*, (Cloth, \$2.50, paper-bound, \$1.50) all published by Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind. For persons with a college education or its equivalent, who need to be instructed on the philosophical truths underlying the Christian religion, *Truths Men Live By*, (Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind. \$3.25) will provide abundant suitable material drawn from both science and philosophy. The *Catholic Digest Reader* will provide any person with a good working knowledge of the Church and the activities of the Church, especially in the U. S. (500 pp. \$3.95. Write to Catholic Digest, 41 E. 8th St., St. Paul 2, Minn.). Millions of Catholics must undertake this work if the eighty millions of churchless people are to be won for Christ.

The careful reading of these

books and the loan of them to non-Catholic inquirers will enable all Catholics to win one or more converts a year. They will be further helped by the reading of the stories, *You Can Win Converts*, syndicated weekly by the N.C.W.C. News Service to more than sixty Catholic newspapers. The stories show how lay men and women win from three to fifty and more converts. By enlisting the laity in a diocesan-wide convert campaign Bishop Buddy of San Diego and his priests were able to win more than a thousand converts and to reclaim nearly five thousand fallen-aways.

The chart, embodying the findings of the *Catholic Digest* survey, showing the small percentage of Catholics who make any effort to win converts, should be placed in the classroom of every grade school, high school, college, and seminary. It should be hung in the vestibule of every church and placed in every home. It should be published in every Catholic paper and periodical. Its mean-

ing should be proclaimed from every pulpit.

Then our laity would realize that the greatest weakness of the Church in America is their failure to participate actively in bringing the saving truths of Christ to the millions who know Him not. With laymen recruiting members for the Inquiry Class held every three months in every parish we shall win more than a million converts a year.

Translate into action your present good intention by kneeling before a crucifix and reciting the following pledge:

"Dear Jesus, my crucified Lord and Saviour, I shall try earnestly and zealously to win for You the precious souls for whom You died by living a life of virtue and holiness, by setting an example of charity toward all men, and by bringing non-Catholics to Mass, by loaning them Catholic literature, by explaining to them points of doctrine, and by bringing them to a priest for further instruction. So help me, God!"

Lay Convert Makers

TO help you carry out your pledge to win at least one convert each year, I shall narrate a number of brief stories showing how various lay men and women, like yourself, managed to interest churchless individuals in the Catholic religion and subsequently won them for Christ. The way is long by precept, runs an old Latin saying, but short by example.

Better than a volume of ab-

stract theory as to how to win converts is a concrete example. Study how these individuals proceeded and you will learn the technique which gets results. You will note that prayer, kindness, tact and zeal are the elements running through the general pattern. The more conspicuous those elements are, the more fruitful are the efforts of the convert maker.

The Force of Example

“MOTHER, we must pray to our Lady of Fatima for the conversion of Russia!”

These were the words which John Lynch, a youngster in the fourth grade, called out from the doorway when he came rushing home from Christ the King School in Milwaukee. Then sadly, his enthusiasm deflated, he added, “But you can’t understand. You don’t know anything about our Lady.”



A few days later when Mrs. Lynch was driving to the country, where her three children were to assist at Mass, Patricia remarked, “Mother, you had better remain seated during the Mass, as you don’t understand.”

“Thus did I notice,” observed Mrs. Lynch, “what every non-Catholic wife and mother in a mixed marriage must sooner or later discover, that lack of unity in religious faith inevit-

ably reflects itself in an inability to accompany husband and children into that spiritual domain where they're at home with God.

"I felt that I could go with them to the door but couldn't enter. I was a stranger to them in the very domain where most of all I wanted to be one with them."

Ruth Meyer was a devout Lutheran when she fell in love with William Lynch, a staunch and devoted Catholic. Realizing that they could never see eye to eye with each other in the important matter of religious faith, they separated. This happened not once but several times, until finally they could endure the estrangement no longer.

Ruth took the required six instructions and, with many misgivings on the part of her devout Lutheran parents, they were married by a priest. But this was only after her father had exacted from Bill the promise that he would never ask Ruth to embrace the Catholic Faith.

"Carefully and prayerfully," reports Ruth, "I watched unfold before my eyes the drama of

life in a family which, except for wife and mother, was thoroughly Catholic. I taught the children their catechism, heard them recite their prayers. I helped prepare them for their First Holy Communion, for Confirmation and for taking part in religious processions.

"In return they loved me and told me in their beautiful childish way about their beliefs. They acted out in their day-to-day lives the externals of the Church which were so different from those in which I had been reared."

During these years, sixteen in all, Ruth attended the Lutheran Church on Sundays with her parents while her husband and children went to Mass at the Church of Christ the King. There, unbeknown to their mother, they prayed with all their hearts that God would give her the precious gift of the Faith. At every Communion they received, they breathed the same prayer.

Finally their prayers and their example bore fruit. God's grace was working within her. The significance of the tremendous words of Christ to Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I

will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," broke through the stubborn wall of her resistance.

Here was the telltale evidence of the divine foundation of the Catholic Church—fifteen centuries before Lutheranism had seen the light of day. No longer could she fight against God, Scripture, reason, and the prayers of her husband and children.

After attending the Inquiry Class at the Gesu she was received into the Church and with tears of joy knelt by the side of her husband and two children at the Communion rail. Her oldest son, an acolyte, held the paten as she received her Eucharistic Lord.

"Could you single out, Ruth," I asked, "any one factor which was of especial helpfulness in making your decision?"

"Yes," she replied. "Powerful beyond all words was the wonderful example my husband gave over the years. His kindness, thoughtfulness and helpfulness, his deep love and devotion for his family, his complete interest in us and in our home constituted, under God, the paramount influence which helped me find my way into

Christ's true Church. Bill is a living example of the truth, beauty, goodness and love of the Catholic Faith. If all Catholics were like him the whole world would soon be Catholic."

By living his Faith William Lynch won four converts: his wife and his three children. For if he had been a weak and vacillating Catholic all four would have gone the other way. "A Catholic life, sincerely lived," remarked Ruth, "is the best means of propagating the faith; and it is a means within the power of the least among us."

In *Paths to Christ*, Our Sunday Visitor (\$1.50), Ruth tells the entire moving story of her conversion, which no one can read without finding a lump form in his throat and a tear in his eye. She closes her story with this beautiful prayer:

"Dear Lord, do not let the human in me spoil anything You give me to do. Push me back when I would go wrong, and make me go forward when I am afraid to do right. Be with me in my dealings with each soul with whom I come in contact, and grant that each may know, love and serve You better for having passed by me."

Wins 250 Converts



WINNING converts is something to which most lay Catholics turn their hand rarely, if at all. But for James L. McGrory, the gracious chargé d'affairs of the pamphlet room at St. John's Church, Thirteenth and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, it is a full time job.

How well he does it, may be judged from the fact that he has led more than 250 converts into the fold. Though he would disclaim the title, he is probably the champion lay convert maker of Pennsylvania. Gray haired, kindly, eager to help, Mr. McGrory has been in charge of the pamphlet room since it was founded in 1936. Indeed he has lifted it to the status of a Catholic Information Center and is now affectionately called "Mr. St. John's."

"I've heard a great deal, Mr. McGrory," I said, "about your work in leading so many people into the Church. The lay Catholics of this country would like

to know how you manage to interest so many in the Faith."

"It's a simple method," he replied, "and it could be used everywhere and by everyone. Hundreds of thousands of outsiders drop into Catholic churches. Some come to witness the Mass and other devotions. Others just step in out of curiosity to see what a Catholic church looks like on the inside.

"Here is our opportunity. And at St. John's we try to make the most of it. Being located in the downtown district, we probably have more visitors than most churches. So instead of the simple pamphlet rack holding a couple dozen titles, which you can find in the vestibule of some churches, we have this entire large room devoted to pamphlet display."

"How many pamphlets do you have?" I ventured.

"We stock them by the tens of thousands and have more than 2,000 catalogued. The first year

we sold 40,000 pamphlets and each year the sales increased. Last year, 1952, we passed the 300,000 mark. Altogether we've distributed over 3,000,000! That's probably a record for a parish church.

"Since we have carefully catalogued the topics treated, we are able to answer almost any question by handing the person a pamphlet. Then when he comes back with another question we locate another suitable pamphlet for him. The first thing you know, his misconceptions are corrected, his prejudices removed and he's ripe for instruction."

"How," I inquired, "do you make that transition from the pamphlet to the course of instructions?"

"I simply say to them: 'Here, you've been browsing long enough among these pamphlets, pecking here and pecking there. Why not go about this in a systematic way? Why not start at the beginning and learn about the divine foundation of the Church and her authority to teach all mankind all the truths which Christ brought into this world? Then you'll get somewhere.'

"Practically all agree that such is the best and most profitable way to proceed. Then I take them to the Inquiry Class conducted by Father Laurence F. Kelly and Father John J. Lynch every Tuesday and Friday evening. If they're from out of town or can't come, we arrange for their instruction by mail."

"How many," I asked, "are received each year?"

"More than a hundred. I've been a sponsor for Jewish converts, Negro converts, Oriental converts and converts from all walks of life. They're full of joy and gratitude.

"I should have been a Catholic years ago,' many say. 'I'm just beginning to live,' remark others. 'How wonderful to receive our Blessed Lord each day,' exclaim others.

"We use our pamphlet room to recruit members for the Inquiry Class. A pamphlet will be read by a person who wants to get the answer in a jiffy. It's a wonderful means of winning converts. Our pastor, Monsignor J. Leo Boyle, asks every parishioner to read and distribute one pamphlet each week and especially during Lent.

"In a nutshell, my method of winning converts is to put a pamphlet in the hands of as many people as possible and then follow through by bringing them to an Inquiry Class. The two go together, like a hand fitting into a glove. Hundreds of pamphlets, properly displayed in the church vestibule, will bring scores of truth seekers to an Inquiry Class.

"The church without four or five well stocked pamphlet racks is missing a splendid opportunity of winning souls. If

every Catholic followed Monsignor Boyle's suggestion and read and distributed a pamphlet each week, we'd win more than a million converts a year."

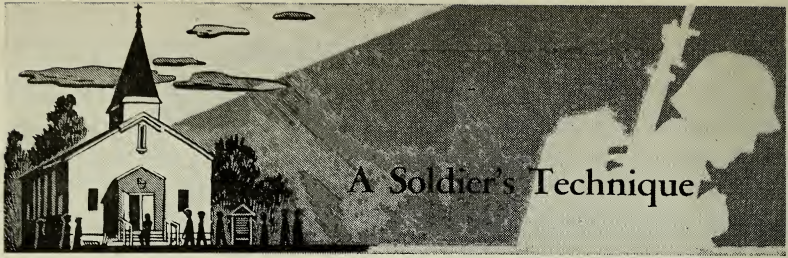
Yes, Mr. McGrory, you, Monsignor Boyle and the other grand priests at St. John's are right. You're setting an example for all of us. Pray that soon we all may be following your example, for it's the most eloquent and convincing demonstration in America of the mighty power of the little pamphlet to win converts for Christ.

Teacher Taught

WHEN the town's old high school burned down one summer, Jane began to attend the Catholic academy in a near-by town. She was impressed with the Church, and in due time asked for Baptism. Next year, her sister Joan followed her to the new school with the firm attitude that "they won't rope me in." She was a good student but showed no interest in religion.

During the summer months after she had graduated, Jane formed a catechism class to assist the missionary priest who came to her home town twice a month. In the fall, she went away to nurses' training school; and Joan returned to the Academy alone. When Sister asked her what had happened to Jane's class, Joan said, "I had to take it. There was no one else." Teaching catechism convinced her. Before the year was out she asked for Baptism. Soon afterwards her entire family joined her.

-S.M.L.



“SAY, chaplain, what is it that you Catholics have, that gets the boys out to church on Sunday, rain or shine? I’ve been noticing how they pack that chapel at every service while at our chapel there’s but a handful. What’s the secret, chaplain?”

“To answer that, Hosea,” replied chaplain Altieri, “I’d have to tell you about the heritage of divine truth which Christ bequeathed to His Church — the precious treasure which the Church shares with her children. In other words, I’d have to tell you the whole story.”

“That’s what I want,” said Hosea, “the whole story.”

The scene took place in December 1948 at Fort Riley, Kansas, where Hosea Alexander was a member of the 10th Infantry Division. Like thousands of others, he could not fail to note that Catholics took their religion seriously. They believed they got something out of their

attendance at Sunday Mass which helped them all during the week.

Here they were hurrying off to Mass while their non-Catholic buddies were still snoring in their bunks.

“How much education do you have?” inquired the chaplain.

“I graduated from Sumner High in St. Louis,” replied Hosea, “and I hope to go to college when I get out.”

“Fine! Come to my office and I’ll take you through *Father Smith Instructs Jackson* and pass on Christ’s legacy to you. I’ll explain God’s plan for your salvation, but you will have to do your own praying.

“That’s something that no one else can do for you. One comes to God most speedily when he’s on his knees. So pray each day, Hosea, that God will give you the light to see the truth and the courage to embrace it.”

“I’ll be glad to do that, chaplain, and I’ll also do some sup-

plementary reading so I'll understand it thoroughly."

"Splendid!" remarked chaplain Altieri. "That's what every inquirer should do. Read at least one book while taking instructions and then keep up that practice so you will not only know every detail yourself but you will also be able to explain it to others."

Like every one who with an open mind examines the teachings of the Catholic Church, Hosea saw that these were not the invention of man but the truths revealed by Christ. They enable all men to live here an abundant life, full of peace, joy and love, and thus prepare for eternal life with God in Heaven.

With beating heart and radiant smile Hosea entered the chapel on the morning of February 19, 1949, to make his profession of faith, to be baptized and to receive from the hands of his devoted chaplain, Father Dominic Altieri, his First Holy Communion.

"What can I do, Father," asked Hosea, "to show my gratitude to God?"

"The best way is to share the precious treasure of your holy Faith with others. Win a con-

vert for Christ every year. That's the thanks offering most pleasing to God."

"With God's help," promised Hosea, "I'll do it."

Hosea has more than kept his promise. Soon he interested Leroy Short and then Leroy's buddy, Charles Williams, in his new found treasure. Three months later Father Altieri baptized both, with Hosea as godfather for each.

Transferred to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, Hosea continued his missionary apostolate and soon was bringing Joe Laire to chaplain Thomas Byrne, S.J., for instruction.

He served Mass, read the Gospel aloud and distributed pamphlets, thoughtfully sent him by his good friend, Father James Bresnahan of St. Ann's Church in St. Louis. "I made those pamphlets," said Hosea, "serve as so many recruiting agents for Christ. They told the story better than I could."

Hosea Alexander is now a student in the Engineering School at Notre Dame, and despite the pressure of that stern course is still winning converts. Six in three years is his present record.

"Do you think, Hosea, you can keep up that pace?" I asked.

"I think I can, Father," he replied, "for I've worked out a technique that never fails. It takes me off the hot spot, too."

"What's that, Hosea?" I asked with eager interest.

"I get the truth seeker to learn his prayers and start saying them as soon as possible. Then I bring him to a priest who conducts an Inquiry Class, and the rest is easy sailing. That's the double-barreled technique of prayer and study . . . and it works every time."

In The Face Of Death

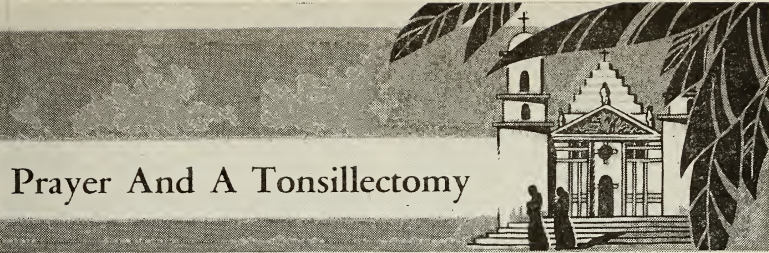
MY father's illness came suddenly and with drastic severity. The morning they took him to the operating room seems now like a nightmare. All I could do was to pray blindly, "Oh God, please don't let him die." But I received no consolation.

After father was out of danger, and I could visit frequently, I watched a woman waiting while her husband underwent a serious operation. His case was hopeless. I knew the pain that was gnawing at her heart. Her ordeal was worse than mine had been.

To my astonishment, instead of weeping bitterly, she sat there with a rosary in her hands. I shall never forget her look of serene peace. It was plain that she was completely resigned to God's will. Occasionally she would stop to question someone in her family, and then her eyes would show her suffering. But returning to her prayers, the same look of peace would settle on her features.

As I watched, the conviction grew that I must learn the basis of her faith. I must learn to face sorrow and adversity as bravely and confidently. If the Rosary meant so much to her, it might to me. The result: I turned to the Catholic faith, and, eventually, so did my family.

—Mrs. Kenneth Wilcox.



Prayer And A Tonsillectomy

“THIS is a red-letter day in my calendar – the day of my First Holy Communion. My heart is full of joy and gladness. What can I do, Father, to show my gratitude?”

“Win a convert for Christ,” said Father Joseph, O.F.M. “That’s the best way of repaying God for the priceless gift of faith. To do this you will have to live your Faith and by word and deed seek to share your treasure with others.”

Diana Ayres, who had just made her First Holy Communion at the Old Mission at Santa Barbara, California, never forgot that bit of advice. Since that June day in 1946 Diana has joined the Convert Makers of America, has led four persons into the Church and is still going strong.

“How did you manage, Diana,” I asked, “to interest these people in the Faith? That’s the technique that most lay Catholics want to know. They have

all the good will in the world but they’re frequently stymied because they don’t know just how to break the ice.”

“I’m afraid, Father,” she replied, “that there’s no uniform procedure. It varies with each case. You have to take advantage of any opening that presents itself. And this means one has to be on the alert all the time. With each of my converts the method of approach varied.”

“Tell us about them, Diana. That will be the best way of letting Catholics see how they can get in the entering wedge which will eventually pry open the door.”

“I was writing an article,” she said, “about Padre Junipero Serra for *St. Anthony’s Messenger*. Joan Foster was working with me at the book store. It was a rainy day and there were no customers. So, under the pretense of needing her help, I asked her if she would read the

rough draft to me so I could type it more rapidly.

"I thought this would be a means of whetting her appetite for more information about a religion which could inspire a member to such sanctity. It worked perfectly. Soon she was asking for more literature about those Franciscan missionaries and about the Catholic Faith.

"When her folks learned about her interest they began to bombard her with pamphlets of the 'convent-life-unveiled' brand. But Joan did not fall for those phony stories."

"Why?" I asked.

"Chiefly because she knew one Catholic intimately and had complete trust and faith in her. That person was myself. And she knew I would not be trying to snare her into anything unwholesome or dishonorable.

"I then took her to Benediction at the Old Mission and she was deeply impressed with the beauty of the service and with the reverence and devotion of the worshippers. The next step was to bring her to Father Gratian, O.F.M., for instructions. Three months later, on January 3, 1950, she was received into the Church. She now manages

the Mission Gift Shop at the Carmel Mission, the beautiful Shrine of Padre Serra, whose life was the entering wedge of interest in the Faith."

"How did you interest the others, Diana?" I asked.

"Betty, another girl at the book shop, had some personal problems. I listened to them and advised her. We had serious talks together. Only religion could help her solve her problems. I took her to Father Andrew, O.F.M., and in 1951 on November 24th (her birthday and Padre Serra's too!) she was baptized.

"Ronald Mitchell became interested through his history course in the Missions and I took him to Brother Ambrose, and Father Erwin, O.F.M., finished the job by baptizing him at the Old Mission on October 4, 1951.

"I purposely put Jeannine in charge of the religious articles. Soon she was bombarding me with questions about the Rosary and other devotions. I explained these and other teachings of the Church, and Father Gratian continued the instructions.

"When she seemed to encour-

ter some roadblock I prayed especially hard, fasted for a couple days and offered the pains of a tonsillectomy for her. I remembered that Christ said some miracles require both prayer and fasting. They must have helped her over the roadblock, for a month later, on August 28th, the anniversary of Padre Serra's death, she was baptized 'Junipera' here at the Old Mission."

"Thanks," I said to the pretty, alert and zealous young manager of the Serra Gift Shop in Santa Barbara, "you've shown us all how to 'break the ice' for Christ. You're a capital sales-

lady for this shop and an even better one for God."

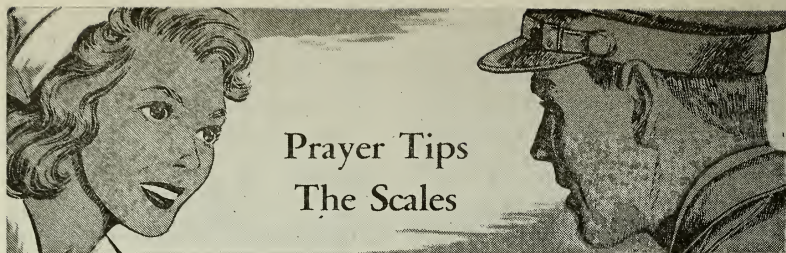
Such are the four methods of approach by which Diana inserted the entering wedge of divine truth into the questioning minds of four persons outside the fold. That wedge opened their minds to the fullness of divine truth and eventually it opened also the door to Christ's Church.

Oh, yes! I almost forgot about the prayer and the tonsillectomy. Diana would never forgive me! They too are part—and an important part—of the picture of winning a soul for Christ.

Worthwhile

MY Aunt, Sister Rosalita, who died quite a few years ago as Superior of Seton Academy, was beautiful and talented as a young girl and naturally had many admirers. The most persistent, a Protestant, she could not discourage. When he proposed, she informed him she was going to enter the convent. When he heard this he said, "If you become a nun I shall become a priest." Many years later in her convent she was told there was a Father Livingstone in the parlor to see her. To her amazement, he was none other than her would-be husband. He explained that when he heard her news he decided that whatever would entice her from the pleasures of the world must be worth-while embracing.

—Rosalita Johnson.



Prayer Tips The Scales

“FATHER, that’s the first time I ever heard a sermon urging lay people to win converts. I’m a convert myself and if Catholics only knew what a vacuum their holy religion can fill in the lives of others, they’d be more eager to share it.”

“Ralph,” I said, “that’s music to my ears. I wish I could have had you follow me in the pulpit and tell that to the congregation.”

Ralph Hartmus, his family and I were standing at the door of St. John’s Church in Hialeah, Florida, as the people were leaving after the 9 o’clock Mass on New Year’s Day. Father Peter Reilly, the Pastor, wanted to get an Inquiry Class started and had me preach on the convert apostolate at all the Masses.

Despite an extensive building program he has set a goal of 100 converts a year for his parish. I had all the congregation repeat after me the words of a pledge to try to recruit one pros-

pect each year. The Class opened three weeks later with 48 members.

“Tell me, Ralph,” I continued, “what brought you into the fold. Catholics like to know what first attracted a person to the Church and then what convinced him it’s the true Church.”

“I was a Master Sergeant in Company A, 114th Infantry Replacement Training Center, Camp Robinson, Arkansas, when I met Betty Mulrenin at the U.S.O. in Little Rock. Betty was a nurse at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital and a devout Catholic.

“She was the first Catholic girl that I dated. I admired her fine character and sensed the deep satisfaction and happiness which she got out of her religion. She encouraged me to look into it and gave me a copy of *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*.

“It got me so interested and enthused about the Catholic religion that soon I was raving

about it to the men at the camp. Then there came a backfire. Several of the soldiers began to bombard me with all sorts of charges against Catholics. They said I'd regret getting roped into such an outfit."

"Did you believe such charges?" I asked.

"Not entirely," replied Ralph, "but they disturbed me. I started praying day and night that God would help me to decide aright. After three weeks of fervent praying, I got up one morning with the definite conviction that I should take a complete course of instruction and have the chaplain clear up all the charges.

"It was like the feeling that comes to one, when he's been ailing, that he should see a good physician and not monkey around with quacks. I determined to see the chaplain, knowing that he's a specialist in these matters and would have all the answers.

"By this time I had spread my enthusiasm to Corporal Edward Like and took him with me to see Chaplain Sevasdas. He showed the charges to be unfounded, cleared everything up and, after a month of daily instruction, re-

ceived both of us into the Church."

"What really convinced you, Ralph," I asked, "that the Catholic Church was the true one?"

"The fact that it—and it alone—was founded directly by Christ centuries before any of the non-Catholic sects saw the light of day. That's the fact that will convince any inquirer if he will look at it with open eyes and an open mind.

"Knowing Betty helped a lot," he continued, "in making me feel instinctively that the accusations against the Church were phony. She's too wholesome and lovely a girl to blossom from a bad tree. But it was the divine foundation of the Church that showed me I need look no further for Christ's true Church.

"Two months later, on February 13, 1945, Betty and I marched down the aisle of the Little Rock Cathedral. Corporal Like was our best man. The new chaplain, Father Cornelius J. Lynch, S.J., gave us a beautiful wedding with all the trimmings. Like Father Sevasdas he too was wonderful to us and . . ."

"You can say that again," broke in Betty. "I wasn't sure I should give up my hard earned

Registered Nurse title for marriage. But Father Lynch convinced me, saying, 'Betty, MRS is better any day than a mere RN.' How right he was! Those two priests were like uncles to us both."

"Ralph," I asked, "have you won any others beside Corporal Like?"

"I got another soldier, with three children, interested. . . but I don't know whether he has followed through yet or not. But,"

pointing to a boy at each side of him and two little daughters with Betty, "how about these four children? Don't I get some credit for them?"

"Indeed you do, Ralph . . . and Betty, too . . . and help Father Reilly reach his goal of 100 converts . . . without fail."

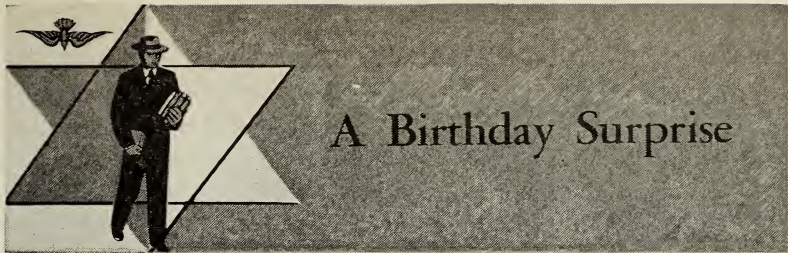
"It's a deal," said Ralph, "and the least I can do to show my gratitude for the greatest blessing that has ever come into my life!"

Witness

ABOUT a year ago I considered myself a fervent Jehovah's Witness. I met a Catholic boy and decided to convert him. It made me furious when he said I wouldn't convince him. A friend suggested I talk to a priest, and then make it clear to Larry that Catholics have no answers for our questions.

Taking the J. W. handbook with me, I summoned enough courage to knock at a rectory door. The priest received me more kindly than I had expected, and tolerated my carefully selected questions. Then he disarmed me rather suddenly by suggesting it would be easier for him to satisfy me completely if he explained the Catholic position from the beginning of the catechism. There would be no obligation on my part to complete the investigation of Catholic claims, and he promised not to make any effort to change my mind. So I made an appointment for the first instruction which led to my becoming a Catholic six months later.

—*Arlene Farone.*



“DARLING,” said Mrs.

Fausch, “the Paulist Fathers have converted that drug store at the corner of Columbus Avenue and 59th Street into a Catholic Information Center. Father Vincent F. Holden, C.S.P., is in charge. He’s not only an expert on religion but he’s also a kind and friendly priest. Wouldn’t you like to drop in on him and get the whole picture of our Faith?”

“Yes, Peg,” slowly replied her husband Benjamin, “I’ll drop in at that Center one of these days.”

The Fausch’s had been married twelve years and their only child, Mary, was now eleven. Benjamin had been born of Orthodox Jewish parents but had long since drifted from the Jewish Faith and now belonged to none. An educator and school administrator, he had many intellectual interests but had never gotten down to a serious study of the Catholic religion.

Despite the differences in religion, the marriage was a happy one. Benjamin accompanied his wife and daughter when Mary made her First Holy Communion and he was proud of her and rejoiced in her happiness. Peg had prayed for years for her husband’s conversion but had never previously felt that the time was quite ripe to suggest that he look into the Catholic religion.

Even now she said nothing about embracing the Faith—simply getting “the whole picture” from an expert. Ben knew what was really in her mind, however, and was somewhat apprehensive about the outcome, even though he agreed to go.

“I’d like to look into the Catholic religion,” said Ben a few days later when he called at the Information Center. “I’m not sure I’ll join the Church but as an educated man I feel I ought to know more about it.”

“Fine!” said Father Holden.

"We never ask a person to commit himself in advance. We're glad to tell you the whole story and let you decide. There'll be no pressure of any kind. Indeed it would be a sorry commentary on the cogency of our credentials if we had to resort to emotional appeals instead of letting the simple truth and the hard cold facts of history write their own impartial verdict upon your open mind."

"I'm happy to hear that, Father, for while I love my wife and daughter I always like to feel that what I'm doing is in accord with truth, reason and intelligence."

There was a complete meeting of minds and Mr. Fausch progressed rapidly under the tutelage of the scholarly Paulist Father.

"I was deeply impressed," remarked Benjamin later, "with the logic and reasonableness of the claims set forth by the Church. At no time did Father Holden urge me or high-pressure me into taking a step I couldn't or wouldn't take of my own volition.

"I'm sure he often prayed that God in His infinite wisdom would shower upon me His

bountiful grace to help me see that salvation was mine for the asking. I, too, prayed for guidance. Our prayers were answered. At last my mind was made up. It was time for me to enter the Promised Land."

Peg's birthday, October 26, fell that year on Sunday. Ben decided to surprise her. He invited her to drop in with him that afternoon for a little visit with Father Holden. There she was invited to witness Ben's baptism. Peg was thrilled. It was the best birthday gift she had ever received.

"I didn't realize at that time," reports Ben in telling the whole story in *Paths to Christ*, "that what I had planned as a birthday gift to her, would in reality be God's priceless gift to me. I was truly reborn."

The one thing previously lacking in their marital happiness was now supplied—a common Faith. The sharing of their spiritual experience added a new lustre and a quiet joy to their lovely home.

It's not always easy to know precisely when a Catholic should, like Peg, invite her non-Catholic spouse to look into the Faith and get the whole picture.

But some day it should, and it must, be spoken if the gap separating them in their spiritual life is to be bridged and the circle of their happiness is to be complete. And usually the sooner it is spoken, the better.

But always it must be preceded, accompanied and followed by a great outpouring of prayers and love. They never fail, for behind them is the power of God.

Windshield Missioner

I WAS a Sunday School teacher in a Protestant Church, but I was vaguely dissatisfied, ill at ease and unhappy with my religion. I was always reading the religious literatures of various Protestant sects. I was searching and yearning with an unspeakable longing for a religious faith I did not have.

Then one day while I was out shopping, someone tucked a copy of *Our Sunday Visitor* under the windshield wiper of my car. Scornfully I started to throw it away, but I decided it might be quite amusing and I most likely would find plenty of false religious teachings in it which I could expose to my Sunday School class, thus warning them against the evils of the Catholic Church.

So I started reading and a miracle happened. A great wonder and a strange elation grew within me. I read every page in that *Our Sunday Visitor*. I began reading everything Catholic I could get my hands on. The hunger within me grew by leaps and bounds.

Finally I got up enough courage to go see a priest. I began taking instructions and I and my four children were baptized. We became the first members of our family to ever belong to the only Church founded by Christ . . . The Roman Catholic Church.

—Roena Newton



A Minister Starts It All

CONVERTS are generally more zealous in sharing the precious treasure of their new-found faith than cradle Catholics. This is probably because they know from experience the void it fills and hence they appreciate it all the more. Then, too, learning it as adults, they frequently master it more thoroughly than those who learn it as little children. In addition, converts realize that the best way they can show their gratitude for the gift of faith is to share that faith with others.

Mrs. Helen C. Chapman, now of the Annunciation parish in St. Louis, has shown what one woman of strong faith and apostolic zeal can do both in winning other converts and in reclaiming fallen-aways.

She and her husband, Norman, were regular attendants at a non-Catholic church and Helen sang in the choir. It was a large adult choir of trained voices and, wearing cassocks

and surplices, they sang difficult four-part music.

"I felt happy," said Helen, "and sort of dedicated to God in being privileged to assist in the services. Then the picture changed when a new minister came. He was a young man who fancied himself rather important for his independent and radical ideas. He proceeded to shock his parishioners into sitting up and taking notice of what he had to say.

"His pronouncements showed that he had discarded many of the most fundamental articles of the Christian faith. It wasn't long before my husband refused to set foot inside the church. He stayed home and vented his anger on the grass with the lawn mower. My daughter and her husband also discontinued their attendance.

"Through several years," continued Helen, "I sat and fumed, reluctant to leave because of my joy in singing in the choir and

because there was no other church of that denomination in the vicinity. The minister became bolder and more radical in his sermons.

“Christ, he remarked, was a good man, and we should pattern our lives after His, though of course He wasn’t divine. His miracles? They were just tricks of magic to get the attention of the crowd. The Virgin Birth? How silly can you get? In his sermons there was never more than a single line of Scripture which he rarely developed.

“He usually rambled on until fortunately few knew what he was talking about. When he was feeling unusually ambitious, his sermon consisted of a review of some current best-seller, not a religious or even an historical work, but just fiction.

“Finally, I couldn’t take it any longer. I phoned the only Catholic friend I had and asked her to arrange an appointment with a priest so I could take instructions. My husband knew nothing of this. And never having been inside a rectory nor even having talked to a priest, I was quite nervous.

“Accordingly, I went to see Father George Gottwald, an as-

sistant at Holy Redeemer. He was very gracious to me, gave me a copy of *The Faith of Millions* (Our Sunday Visitor \$2.50), and told me to return when I had read it. I explained that I would be glad to read the book but wanted to start taking instructions at once. He said I could start Monday night at eight o’clock.

“That night I told my husband. He agreed to drive me but did not feel ready for the instructions. On Monday night when we arrived in front of the rectory, I persuaded Norman to come in and meet Father Gottwald. The result was we took instructions together and were baptized in the Church just before Thanksgiving in 1945. What a happy Thanksgiving Day that was for both of us!

“The next spring I got my daughter and her husband to start instructions and they and their three children were received into the Church. I next arranged for the instruction of a young cousin who was living with us and she too was received into the fold. All eight of us were confirmed and life took on a new radiance and beauty for all of us.”

"Was that the end?" we asked.

"No," she replied, "the climax is still to come. The man who brings fresh eggs to our home had noticed the happiness which the Catholic religion had brought into our lives. 'We're fallen - aways,' he confessed shamefacedly, 'but you've taught us a lesson and our family of five is now back in the Church. We'll hold fast to it and practice it, for life is hollow without it.'"

How strange is the Provi-

dence of God and how mysterious the workings of His grace! It all began when Helen's endurance of her minister's denials had reached the bursting point. How wonderful that God could turn the denial of His own divinity into a fountain of grace, leading eight converts and five fallen-aways into His outstretched arms! Oh, yes! God needed a human agent through whom to work and Helen Chapman was the lovely channel of His saving grace.

Furioso

DURING her senior year of high school, the young lady attended a Catholic school, and later became a Catholic. She heard the instructions given weekly by the pastor as well as the daily instructions of the teacher, remaining apparently indifferent.

Came graduation time, and the Sister took the pupils to church to practice. During a lull, some of the boys began talking and laughing. The Sister, usually mild to the point of blandness, used scathing words to express her disappointment and displeasure at "such conduct in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament."

"Just why this Sister, whose mildness was proverbial, should become so distressed and irate over a little innocent recreation made me curious," the convert said. "I sought and found the answer in the catechism. As a result, four members of my family have become Catholics."

—Sister C.

A Doctor Telephones



“FOR some years, Doctor Schilling, there’s been a void in my life which nothing seems to fill. I’m like a rudderless ship going aimlessly around and around. Life seems to have little purpose or meaning and I think it’s because I don’t feel right with God.”

“Do you have any definite religious faith, Mrs. Van Winkle?” asked the doctor.

“My parents were deeply religious and I went to church and Sunday school. But apparently it didn’t sink very deeply because I’ve drifted away from church and haven’t even had my daughter baptized. I allowed her to grow up with the idea that when she’s mature she could choose her own religion.”

“Have you ever looked into the Catholic Faith? Its creed is clear-cut and its sacraments bring God’s grace to people to help them in every emergency. It shows how precious every soul is to God and thus it gives

meaning and purpose to every life, no matter how humble and apparently insignificant.”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Van Winkle, “I’ve dipped into it a little and was impressed with the authority with which it speaks. But, like many non-Catholics, I’m a bit shy about calling on a priest to get the full story, especially when I’m not sure I’ll embrace it.”

“There’s no need,” remarked the doctor, “to sign in advance on the dotted line. Any priest will be delighted to explain the Catholic Faith to you without putting you under the slightest obligation. They’re specialists in religion just as I am in medicine. I’ll be glad to phone Father Cunningham and make an appointment for you, if you wish.”

“Fine, doctor. Otherwise I’ll probably continue to drift and the emptiness in my life will increase instead of diminish.”

The conversation took place between Mrs. Earl L. Van Winkle and Dr. R. S. Schilling in his office in the Pueblo Clinic in Pueblo, Colorado. It marked the turning point in Mrs. Van Winkle's life and it started a series of conversions which is still continuing.

On December 10, 1949, Mrs. Van Winkle went to keep the appointment with Father L. F. Cunningham, S.J., Pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Church, so graciously made for her by Dr. Schilling. She brought along her married daughter who was then the mother of four children. It was time, the mother felt, for her daughter to make a definite commitment instead of drifting along much as she had done, always postponing the most important thing in life—the effort to find God and the Church which He established.

“We would like to learn more about the teachings of the Catholic Faith,” explained Mrs. Van Winkle, “but we aren't sure we want to join.”

“There is no greater pleasure for a priest,” Father Cunningham reassured them, “than to explain our holy religion to non-

Catholic inquirers. Be assured that you are under no obligation to embrace it. Indeed, you will not be pressured in the slightest way. All we ask is that you bring to this investigation an open mind and a willingness to pray to God for light to see the truth and the grace to follow it whithersoever it may lead you.”

As the evidence of the divine origin of the Catholic Church was unfolded before their eyes by this scholarly and zealous priest, all doubts vanished from their minds. In the light of Christ's teachings all the pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of life fell into place.

On February 23, 1950, at the age of 54, Mrs. Van Winkle was received into the Church and a little later her daughter and her four children were received. The following year Mrs. Van Winkle's son-in-law followed in the footsteps of his wife and children. At the Christmas Midnight Mass in 1952 Mrs. Van Winkle's husband (who had been a Mason) and her stepson, 24 years of age, made their First Holy Communion. Two grandchildren have since been received into the fold.

When Dr. Schilling phoned

Father Cunningham he little thought he was starting a spiritual chain reaction which thus far has brought eleven souls into the fold and which is still continuing. The doctor started it and with Father Cunningham's help Mrs. Earl Van Winkle "followed through," as she remarks, "with two carloads of my family and relatives."

"Do you see," she asks, "why

I can't say 'Thanks be to God!' often enough? I do say it daily in Holy Communion. As a member of the Legion of Mary and of the Third Order of St. Francis, I am striving to repay in a small way the abundant blessings which our dear Lord in His tender mercy and love has showered upon my family and myself. I hope that each year I can win more souls for Him."

Half-Opened Door

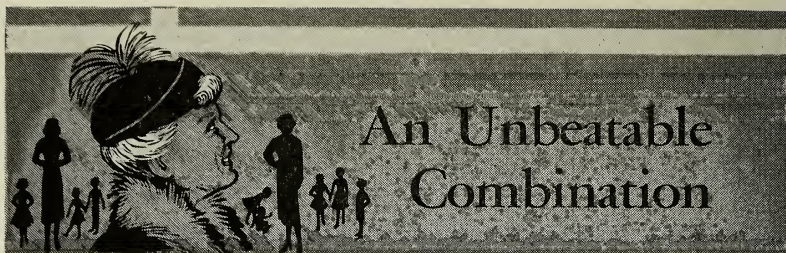
DURING the last year or two I have been saving my magazines and giving them to an organization which distributes them among the ships of the merchant marine. One day a young man came to our door to call for these magazines. Looking through the pile, he seemed disappointed and asked, "Haven't you any *Catholic Digests* this time?"

"No," I said, "we haven't finished with the last two ourselves. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I was born and baptized a Catholic," he answered, "but for many years I haven't been anything, and I stopped going to church. When I saw your *Catholic Digest*, I began to read them before turning them in to the ships. It wasn't long before I realized how much I'd been missing by leaving the Church. Now I've gone back. That little *Digest* has meant so much to me, and that's why I asked for it."

My husband and I are Episcopalians, but a Catholic friend, two years ago, sent us the magazine as a Christmas gift. We enjoy it so much that you now have my name on your regular subscription list, where I expect it to remain.

—Claudia Miles Stevens.



An Unbeatable Combination

MRS. EDGAR OLSON was attending the 9 o'clock Sunday Mass at St. Augustine's Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, when she heard us make the following announcement: "An Inquiry Class will be held on Monday and Thursday evenings at 8 o'clock in the school auditorium.

"St. Augustine's Parish has received as many as ninety converts in a year but has never reached the hundred mark. You will enable us to reach that coveted goal if each of you will do your best to bring one churchless friend or neighbor to this Class and God will reward you abundantly."

"I immediately thought," said Mrs. Olson, "of my two daughters-in-law, Velma and Betty. Here's an excellent chance to give them an insight into the Catholic Faith. Perhaps through God's grace they may be moved to embrace it and thus unify their family life and bring up their children fervent Catholics.

"That afternoon I called on Velma and told her about it. There's no obligation to join. You can find out all about the Catholic religion from an expert and see if it doesn't offer you something that will enrich your life here and help you achieve eternal life. There's nothing to lose and a lot to gain."

"Sounds attractive," remarked Velma. "I've often felt that it would be nice to join my husband Willis in prayer and thus set the example for our two youngsters. They'll be asking questions pretty soon if they see only one of their parents reciting the Rosary. I'll go with you."

Leaving Velma, Mrs. Olson drove over to Betty's and extended the same gracious invitation. Betty has five youngsters, and she too was feeling the need of unifying her family life and setting an example of a common religious faith and practice for her children.

"This is good news, indeed," remarked Betty. "It's nice to

know that Catholics are interested in sharing their faith with others. Most of us have thought of Catholics as rather a smug lot, so wrapped up in their own religion that they aren't concerned about outsiders. If Irving will 'baby sit' that evening, I'll go with you and Velma."

When Betty and Velma came with Mrs. Olson that Monday evening, they were surprised to see the large crowd that turned out. We had "talked it up" at all the Sunday Masses and had urged each adult to bring one inquirer and, if he couldn't do that, to come himself. Rarely have our laity been invited to take an active part in the apostolate of saving souls.

The hundreds that turned out that night gave a convincing demonstration of the willingness of the laity to respond to an appeal for spiritual help. It's such a pleasant change from the financial appeals with which they are usually inundated—much to the Pastor's regret.

Their response showed that when we once harness the good will and latent zeal of our laity, as loyal and devoted as in any country in the world, to the task of sharing their faith with

churchless friends, we shall win not merely 120,000 but a million converts each year. The enlistment of our 30,000,000 laity in recruiting attendance at Inquiry Classes is the next important step in the convert movement in America.

"Betty and Velma," said Mrs. Olson, "were delighted with that first session. Through the generous kindness of the pastor, Monsignor John R. Hackett, they were given their choice of a copy of *The Faith of Millions* or *What's the Truth about Catholics?* (Our Sunday Visitor, \$2.-50). The lecturer was kind and friendly, not a single critical word was spoken of members of other faiths, the talk was constructive and the emphasis was upon prayer and the love of God.

"It was just the sort of 'eye opener' both of them needed. There was no difficulty after that. They came to every meeting and found the teachings of the Church reasonable and the evidence of her divine origin unmistakable. They learned their prayers and recited them devoutly."

On Sunday, December 6, 1952, Betty and Velma, with

their husbands at their sides, along with 25 other members of the class received their First Holy Communion. It was the happiest day in their lives and in the lives of their families. Each evening they now recite the family Rosary and God has deepened and strengthened the unity of their respective homes with the pervasive influence of a common religious faith.

That Sunday was a red-letter day in the history of St. Augustine's parish. It was the first time in its long history that it

had witnessed the reception of a hundred converts in one year. Monsignor Hackett and his zealous assistants, Fathers R. P. Taffee and J. J. O'Meara were jubilant. We had driven up each evening from Notre Dame to give the lectures and we too were thrilled. But it was to lay recruiters, like Mrs. Edgar Olson, to whom under God we gave the credit for the record-breaking achievement. They and the Inquiry Class and God's grace are an unbeatable combination in any parish.

R.S.V.P.

THE Catholic lady, introducing her husband to a priest at a social function, said, "My husband, Father, is not a Catholic."

"How is it," said the priest, jokingly, "that you, married so long to this Catholic lady and having such charming Catholic children, have managed to stay outside the Church?"

"Well," said the gentleman, "no one ever invited me to join it!"

The lady, with red face and smiling confusion, admitted that she "thought" he was correct.

"In that case," said the priest, "I invite you to join, here and now."

"Thanks," said the gentleman, with an air of appreciation. "I accept."

—T.J.L., *St. Louis.*

Bookie

HE had taken his non-Catholic friend to Mass on a Sunday morning. It was the first time the friend had been in a Catholic church. The stranger found everything very interesting; he even noticed that at the end of Mass the altar boy took the book over to the Gospel side for the last Gospel. A week later he was at Mass again; this time the missal was not moved over to the Gospel side. Puzzled, he returned a week later and made a small bet with his Catholic friend that the book would go over this time.

The book did not go over; he paid off. A week later both were back at Mass, again a small wager that the book would not go over. It went over, and the non-Catholic gentleman paid off. After Mass he asked to be brought to the rectory. At the door he told the priest, "I'm losing money on your Church," and explained what had happened. One question led to another. Now he uses a missal.

—T. Q., California.

No Known Words

THE following incident was related to me by Father Agnellus Andrew, director of religious broadcasting for the BBC, last summer during his visit to America.

One evening he was preaching in a London church on a carefully prepared theme. Suddenly, halfway through, he forgot the next point of his sermon and went off on a tangent, speaking aimlessly of anything and everything that came into his head, while he tried desperately to remember his sermon. "It was the most embarrassing five minutes I ever spent in the pulpit," he relates. "You can imagine my surprise when, after the sermon, a man came into the vestry to congratulate me and asked to be received into the Church. He told me

how he had wandered in out of mere curiosity, and then added, 'I wasn't much interested in your sermon till you went off your subject deliberately and started talking directly to me. In that five minutes you answered all the questions that have been trying my soul for years.' He became a good convert, but to this day I have not the slightest idea of what I was talking about during that embarrassing and distressing five minutes."—*J. B. D.*

Last Words

A NON-CATHOLIC housewife stood watching a painter as he swayed casually suspended from the eaves of a three-story building. Suddenly a rope gave way. The workman plunged to the pavement 60 feet below. The housewife rushed to aid the victim, who gasped, "A priest, a priest!"



She had a vague knowledge of what the last sacraments mean to a dying Catholic, and hurried to telephone the nearest rectory. Meantime she had the injured man carried into her house. Later, she concluded there must be something in a religion that causes a person to forget his pain and think only of his soul. That did it.

—*Agnes M. Driscoll.*

Load Lightener

A NON-CATHOLIC schoolteacher entered the Gesu in Philadelphia. She wondered if Catholics really believed that Christ was present on the altar.

Her attention was attracted to an old Jesuit Brother, cumbersomely carrying a heavy bale of carpet across the sanctuary. In him she saw a test of the Catholic

faith. Breathlessly, she watched him. When he came before the tabernacle, he laid down his burden. He *did* genuflect, prayed, genuflected again, and went his way.

The young teacher prayed for the gift of faith. She took instructions, and was received into the Church. Later she became a Franciscan Sister.

—*Katherine O'Connor.*

Death Row

SIX months ago, I had less than the poorest of poor men, but now at 25 years of age, I am a millionaire. I have been in my life a manager of a restaurant and drive-in, a foreman, a radio operator, paint contractor, pilot, professional wrestler, semiprofessional baseball player, night-club manager, and dentistry student. I do not have a dime to show for all this. But now, I am in prison and a millionaire. It took a Sister of Mercy to help me make my fortune.

As I write this, I am in the condemned row of a Louisiana prison. I violated the Fifth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

I will never forget my first week in prison. No family, no friends, no nothing. I like to write, and I decided to pass my time that way, but I needed a dictionary. A cellmate, a Catholic who had turned from the faith, told me that the Sisters came three times a week. I should ask them and they would get me one.

I said, "Me, ask the Sisters? Are you crazy?" I was born and brought up a Mormon. I had heard plenty about Catholics, and I wanted no part of them. On the days the Sisters came, I would feign sleep, so there would be no chance of their talking to me.

A week went by. Then two. The third week I was writing an important letter, and a dictionary became must. I made up my mind to ask the Sisters for one.

My pride insisted on a correctly spelled letter, even if I had to sacrifice myself to a Catholic to get one.

When they came by, I said to one, "Pardon me, ma'm, but I was told that you would get me a dictionary if I asked you." I was all ready for a long speech. Wasn't I ashamed for what I had done? Did I believe in God? How terrible I was. Didn't I realize that I would go to hell?

But to my surprise, the Sister, in a kind, quiet voice, said, "Certainly. Is there anything else we can get you?"

Well, I thought to myself, this is just their underhanded way of doing business. When they come back next time, surely they will try to get me to join their Church, because I would be under obligation to them. I always try to be a gentleman, so I made up my mind to read any religious material they brought, but only out of politeness, nothing else.

True to their word, they were back in two days. Not only had they brought the dictionary, but there were fruit, cakes, cookies, candy, stationery, pencils and reading material. But not one religious tract nor pamphlet. Once, when I was little I had heard a mother tell her son that if he wasn't a good boy, the Catholics would get him. These Sisters just didn't correspond with what I had read and heard.

A number of visits came and went. Every time, there was the usual fruit and candy, but still no religious material.

I decided I wanted to find out about this Catholic faith, so I could decide for myself what it was all about. The best way, I thought, was to join and see for myself. So, when the Sisters came back I told them I wanted to join the Church. I was again dumbfounded, when they told me I was unable to join as I was. I had to know the Commandments of God and of the Church,

sacraments, indulgences, acts and things I had never even heard of before. All of these were to be found in a book called the catechism.

I was attracted by the Sister's beads. She explained the Rosary to me, also telling me that one of her favorite recreations was making rosaries. I asked if she thought that I could learn to say the Rosary.

"Certainly," she said, "if you can memorize four prayers, the Apostles Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be to the Father. I shall bring you a rosary the next time we come."

On Saturday, when Sister returned, I prayed my first Rosary and began an extensive study of the Catechism. It was not because I wished to be a Catholic, but because I was not going to let any seven or eight-year-old child know more about anything than I did. If they could learn the catechism, so could I.

But the more I read, the more I wanted to find out.

Then came the day when I went on trial for my life. Who stood by me? You guessed it. The Sisters, two Catholic ladies I had never seen, a matron, who is one of the kindest persons I have ever met, and my newly acquired Catholic friends.

Since my trial, I have received the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, and, yesterday, my First Communion. The feeling I received from Communion can never be explained by mere words, but anyone who has received Communion will understand how I feel.

Those who have read my story this far realize that the wealth I have accumulated is not in minted coins or printed paper, but a spiritual wealth, that can never be purchased by any earthly treasures.

I would not trade the peace and contentment I have now, and the graces that God has mercifully given me in prison, for my freedom. Though I may receive death, I sincerely say that I will accept it heartily, before I will give up being a millionaire.

Earthquake

I WAS praying for the conversion of my non-Catholic husband. Finally, he consented to take instructions.

We live in Montana. On the night of Oct. 24, 1935, he handed me the catechism he had been studying, saying, "Ask me the questions now." I asked, "Who made the world?" "God made the world," he replied.

The earth began to tremble. Furniture toppled. Dishes fell. We stood, rooted to the swaying spot. We had just had our first of many severe earthquakes.

"Now I know how powerful God is, and how weak we are," he said. He returned to his catechism with an enthusiasm he had not shown before, and became a Catholic on Easter.

—Mrs. J. W. Fleming.

Accident

SEVERAL years ago I gave a young lady a little identification case in which was enclosed a message reading, "I am a Catholic; in case of accident call a priest." Several months later, she in turn gave it away, to a young non-Catholic gentleman who said he would wear it just to please her. Months later he was involved in an automobile accident which knocked him unconscious. In trying to identify him, by-standers found the identification case and note. They took him to a Catholic hospital, where a priest administered Extreme Unction and gave him conditional absolution.

When, several days later, the patient regained consciousness, the priest told him about it. The puzzled patient was very much surprised and wanted to know the meaning of the sacraments he had so inadvertently received. When he had finished learning about these, he wanted to know still more. He ended up by taking instructions and joining the Church.

For And Against

WHEN Fred and I became engaged he told me that the law of his Church made it necessary to bring up any children of our marriage as Catholics. I was highly indignant, and began a crusade of questioning. I visited ministers of just about every Protestant sect in New York City to ask them their reasons for "protesting" Catholicism. At Fred's request, I also took Catholic premarital instructions at a Paulist Information center.

The ministers' replies generally followed a pattern: "My dear girl, do please be careful!" "Don't take such a foolhardy step!" "Why, Catholics aren't fundamentalists." "They worship idols, my dear!" "You have to confess to a priest."

I also asked advice of a group headed by a well-known "ex-priest," the late Father Lehmann. Surely here I would get the real inside story of what was wrong with Catholicism! When I explained the purpose of my visit, Father Lehmann was cautiously interested and rather reserved. After a few minutes he looked directly at me and said, "if you can truly accept the teachings of the Catholic Church, I strongly advise you to enter that Church. Unfortunately, I was unable to keep my faith."

Father Malloy of the Paulist Information center gave explicit, clear, logical, and truthful replies to all my questions. Here was a certainty and authority that contrasted sharply with the ambiguous and confused replies that I received from almost all the ministers.

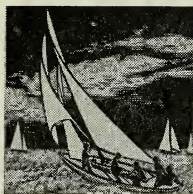
For a year I tallied arguments in the "For" and "Against" columns. One night I was bound to admit to myself that there were very few reasons on the "Against" side, and the few there were not compelling. I realized then that I had found my future children's religion, and my own.

—Sheila Link.

Yawler

A FEW summers ago, five young college students chartered a 40-foot yawl for a vacation. Since boyhood they had all sailed small boats around Cape Cod and the Maine coast.

On this particular cruise they met a fleet of yachts sailing in a long-distance ocean race. It was an exciting sight. The boys kept out of the way of the racing yachts, but could not resist hovering near them.



After several days of magnificent weather, with a spanking S.W. breeze, the wind hauled around to the N.W., and ominous black clouds gathered. Shortly afterwards, a terrific storm hit them and they took in all sail and hove to.

But their little boat was old and not very seaworthy. Before long it was only too evident that she would not weather the storm. One of the boys became panic-stricken. To his astonishment, his four shipmates got down on their knees in the sloshing cockpit water, and prayed. One held up the little crucifix on the end of his rosary.

While his teeth chattered, the boy tried to hear what the others were saying. They were reciting the act of contrition, calmly preparing for a Christian death. He was amazed. Soon he was kneeling beside them, trying to remember some prayer from his early childhood.

All were rescued. A Coast Guard vessel, sent out from New London to check on the yachts in the race, took them aboard just before their yawl foundered and sank. The young fellow was so impressed by the calm faith of his friends that he induced his father to let him attend their school, a Catholic one, and during the next year he entered the Church.

Best To Die In

FIFTY-FOUR years ago I was a student nurse in a southern hospital. Though it was often my duty to attend the dying, I found nothing strange nor unseemly in the fact that the relatives of the dying stood beside the bed, often weeping bitterly, but never uttering a prayer.

The first time I saw a Catholic die, with the attending priest and the family saying prayers for the dying, I decided that I wanted to die a Catholic.

I was instructed during Lent, baptized on Holy Saturday, and received my first Holy Communion on Easter, 1897.

—Clara S. Catherwood.

Anesthetized

IN 1914, while teaching in the public school of a southern city, I lived in a rooming house run by a Catholic woman. Her little daughter was having trouble with her homework, and I helped her. After we went through her spelling and her reader and number work, she handed me her catechism. Weeks went into months of such auditing. When I chanced to say, "I didn't know Catholics believed anything like this; I'd like to know more," she told her teacher and confronted me thereafter with a larger and more advanced catechism. She came home later with *The Faith of Our Fathers*, which I also read. Years passed, and I was in many places. Sometimes I would say a Hail Mary. The prayer had a fascination. I had intended to take instructions but just didn't get around to it.

The time came when I found myself in a Catholic hospital for a serious operation. Among the routine questions was the one about my religion. I said, "I am a Methodist."

When I was well on the mend, Mother Superior came in. She had my record. "I see you have listed your religion as Protestant," she said. I said that was true, and asked her why she questioned it. "Oh, I thought there might be some mistake," she said. "You are the only Methodist we ever had who continually repeated the Hail Mary while coming out of the anesthetic."

My illness was serious, and I had much time to think. But even so, more years passed and more Hail Marys were said before I was led to take instructions. I have often thought, since entering the Church, how much that little child and the Hail Mary had helped me.

—Mrs. J. McA.

Curious People

WHEN the television engineer came to the rectory to install a new set, he almost wished he hadn't. In the first place, he was not a Catholic; and in the second place, the two young assistants proved unusually trying. From the time he started to work till he hooked up the last wire, they plied him with technical questions. Many times he put down his tools, and in tones of exasperation described everything in ABC fashion. Father Pete, particularly, never seemed content with one answer, but always asked a follow-up. The time passed the dinner hour.

Finally, as the repair man was escaping through the front door, Father Pete apologetically thanked him for his time, adding brightly, "If you ever have any questions about *my* business, call me up."

The TV engineer considered for a second. Then he smiled grimly. "Well, I've missed my dinner, anyhow. How about right now?"

Six months later he was received into the Church.

—Sally Leighton.

Three Kind Words

RECENTLY a friend told me that he had decided to join the Catholic Church. "Good," I said, "but what made you come to that decision?"

"Well, the other day when I sold some hogs, I celebrated a little too much and my wife was having difficulty in getting me to the car. Finally she threatened, 'If you don't straighten up, I'm going to call the cops!'

"A well-dressed gentleman was walking past. He sniffed and remarked, 'I don't blame you, madam; I would, too.'



"By the time we were in front of our parking place a big fellow with his collar on backwards came along. He helped me into the car, saying 'God bless you.' I decided I could use some of his religion."

—*Hope Rogers.*

A.A.

BARNEY, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, was worried. He had not made the fifth step of the program, which reads "Admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." At my suggestion he chose a Catholic priest as the other human being.

The next time I saw Barney he told me, "Joe, A. A. has a beautiful program. So has the Catholic Church. If A. A. could restore me to mental normalcy, I believe Catholicism can restore me to God."

Needless to say, Barney is now a Catholic and a good one. So also are a lot of other A. A.'s.

—*Joseph T. Keenan.*

Pick Up

FRESH out of high school and in a strange eastern city,

I was rather lonely on that Sunday afternoon. It was just by chance that I met a Catholic girl who also had some time "to waste." She was only 15 years old, yet she taught me more manners and morals in that one afternoon than I had learned previously in my whole life. I have never seen the girl since, but I shall never forget the way she inspired me. I made up my mind then that I wanted to become a Catholic. I did, one month later.

—*Jon A. Baker.*

Done Without Endeavor

MY husband, who is a non-Catholic, finally consented to attend one Mass with me though he had been reared in a world full of prejudices towards Catholics. The pastor asked for prayers for a deceased parishioner. Suddenly, I noticed my husband kneeling, praying devoutly. On the way home he said that his father had died 12 years before and that this was the first Church that he knew about that prayed for the dead. Now, he is taking instructions and looking forward to the day that he will be a member of such a Church. —*Mrs. G. M.*

Rabid Rabbit

ONE Sunday afternoon Father Hugh Craig, Maryknoller in Korea, was visited by a peasant's wife, a devout Catholic. Only this morning her obstinately pagan husband had finally come to church with her.

She said, "He seemed much impressed until you started to preach how important the rabbit was in the world; now he says, 'The Church is nonsense.'"

Father Craig had spent hours the previous night

preparing a talk on "Virtue." Now he learned that it was on "Rabbits." The Korean word for *virtue* sounds very much like the word for *rabbit*.

He immediately set out with the farmer's wife to correct his error. Yes, the farmer became a faithful Catholic.

—H. B. Kim.

Librarian Looks

MY job is to buy new books and discard the old ones for a public library. About a year ago, I noticed that our religious division was deficient in Catholic books. I asked the help of a Catholic librarian in selecting some, and then began, out of curiosity, to read them. I read a good deal. I was interested, but not convinced.

Months later, a book was brought in which had been missing for years. On our records, it had long since been marked off as lost. My assistant asked me whether, since it was so faded and shabby, it should be rebound or just thrown away. I told her I'd look it over and decide.

It was the story of the conversion of the famous English writer, Arnold Lunn, called *Now I See*. I took it home and read it.

Now I see.

He Was Scolded In

MY sister lives in the neighborhood of a Protestant theological seminary.

Some years ago, one of the students was assigned, as all the students are, to visit various near-by churches, of all denominations, to study the delivery and style of the sermon.

My sister remembers the day he came to her parish

church, not because she saw him, but because of the sermon. She says the pastor outdid himself. He scolded the parishioners for coming in late, said they barged down the aisle like ships in full sail, distracting the rest of the congregation. They were strong enough to do anything they wanted, all week long; but on Sunday they were too feeble to get to church on time, and too delicate to remain until the end of Mass.

"No congregation will stand that," thought the student. "This is one church that will be empty next Sunday."

The following Sunday, he returned to see how few parishioners would be there. To his astonishment the pews were crowded, the back of the church full of standees! He could not understand it. He came back the next Sunday, and the Sunday after. The church was always crowded, no matter how unpleasant the sermon.

So the young man decided to ask the priest about it.

On the day my sister came to tell me the story, she had attended the first Mass of that same student.

—*Mrs. A. R. Riker.*

Bridge Game

LAST summer a group of non-Catholic women at a bridge party awarded a Baltimore penny catechism as a "booby" prize. It was given as a joke, and there was much laughing and some scoffing by all except the young lady who received it. She took it home and started to read it out of curiosity. The more she read, the more interested she became. Finally, after some time, she asked for instructions and was received into the Catholic Church. Later, through her exemplary living, five of her close relatives and friends entered the Church.

—*S. M. A.*

Smart Little Indian Maiden

SOME years ago when the Catholic Indian missions of the Northwest were under the supervision of the Indian Bureau, Washington, D. C., a government official visited a 1st and 2nd-grade classroom of one of the missions and asked the Sister in charge to continue with the lesson she was teaching. The subject happened to be Christian Doctrine.

In the course of the instructions, she asked the class, "Why did God make you?"

One little Indian tot raised her hand, and answered, "God made me to know, love, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him in the next." The visitor called the little one to him and asked her to repeat the answer.

Some months later Sister received a letter from the government official saying he had learned the purpose of his existence from a little Indian maiden in her classroom and that he was taking instructions in the Catholic faith and hoped to be received into the Church in a short time.

—*Katherine O'Connor.*

Screened

THE handsome bachelor, visiting his aunt in our small town, created the usual stir of feminine interest. I had three dates with him, and on the third he asked me why I objected to kissing.

"It's against my religion," I said, safe on the other side of a latched screen door, not bothering to explain that I was talking of my own personal creed and not necessarily trying to teach that of the Church.

Three years later I was surprised to learn that he had joined the Church.

"I hunted through my Bible," he said, "to find what was written about kissing. Then I read your Bible and other Catholic doctrine hoping to find the answer to my question. Well, I never really did find the exact answer, I guess, but I did find answers to other things that were bothering me. So here I am with a rosary like yours."

—Mrs. L. B. C.

Wine, Women And Argument

MY friend and I were students at a Jesuit university in 1939. He fell "madly in love" with a girl at the school. She was not a Catholic girl, and she tended to be a bit on the wild side, to put it mildly. I told my buddy that she was just after a good time, and if he kept going with her it might cost him his education. (We were both working our way.) But he would have none of it—said he was going to marry the gal—and he a very grown-up 18. I bet him ten bucks I could take her away from him, merely because I could spend a little more money. He bet. Then he told her about it. They decided to teach me a lesson. She would go with me, kid me along, then drop me on my head.



Came the big day. We went to a little night club near by. I guess I didn't cover my disapproval very well. She began to laugh at my ethics, morals, and faith. I fought back. In four hours, we had two glasses of wine, one dance, and about 60 separate arguments. Suddenly I found that she wasn't ridiculing; she was debating—and well, too.

We went out together every night for the next three weeks. I discovered that she had no set of laws to follow, and that she considered authority something to be evaded. But when I could prove a point she would concede

it. She gradually dropped the banter and became serious. She cried a couple of times. Finally she exhausted my store of knowledge. I took her to my Jesuit faculty adviser. She battled with him for six months, before she conceded all and became an intelligent and brave Catholic.

Well, my friend is happily married now, and to a good Catholic girl. But no better a Catholic than the mother of my three kids. She's one of the best converts I know. My friend gave us the ten bucks for a wedding present in 1943.

—J. H. C.

Medalist

I WAS just preparing to go to bed when I received an urgent call from the hospital.

“Father, come quickly. We have an emergency case. He's wearing a medal with the inscription, ‘Please send for a Catholic priest in case of accident.’”

I was directed to the unconscious man, and administered Extreme Unction. He suddenly regained consciousness. I reassured him.

“But, Father, I am not a Catholic. I've worn this medal for a long while, and always intended to become a Catholic. Please baptize me now.”

I baptized him as they wheeled him toward the elevator. He died before he reached the operating room.

—Charles A. Cronin.

Actress

THE nun's play was a simple story about a Roman vestal virgin who chose Christianity and death. Cast in the lead role was a young non-Catholic lady. The quiet heroism of the martyred vestal attracted her at

once. Daily rehearsals found the spell growing until she was completely enthralled. After the third curtain-call of the final performance she was opening her heart. A year later she was baptized. Vacation found her back home. Her daily-Mass-and-Communion habit at first alarmed her parents, her younger sister and brother. But within a year all five knelt together at the Communion rail.

—*Louis Schuster.*

Comic Relief

OUR children traded comic books with children of a near-by family whom I heard were anti-Catholic. Though our son said they liked them, I was afraid their parents might resent Catholic literature. I explained to their mother that perhaps we should have her approval before sending more. She surprised me with, "Oh, yes, do send all of them, I read them myself." Later she asked questions. "Does the Catholic Church *really* teach so-and-so?" "Is this the way you Catholics feel about such-and-such?" When our pastor announced an inquirers' class she went, and was baptized recently.

—*Mrs. F. W.*

Mutual Sponsors

I HAD just finished reading an interesting pamphlet about the Catholic Church, and tossed it across the table to a business acquaintance who shared the hotel room with me at a convention. As we both looked at the pamphlet, I said: "Not a bad argument, Jim."

About a year later I got a long-distance call. It was Jim, and he asked me if I would act as his sponsor at Baptism. He was becoming a Catholic on the strength of that pamphlet, and felt that I should be called in on the happy day. "But, Jim," I said. "I'm not a Catholic."

“What! You old son-of-a-gun. I read that out of courtesy to you.”

There wasn't much I could do about it. To return the courtesy to Jim, I read Catholic literature in earnest. Soon Jim was my sponsor. —*Carl Conrad.*

Forced Reading

THE old couple on the isolated Oklahoma farm were now really angry. It was bad enough for their niece to have become a Catholic but why should she thrust all this Catholic literature upon them? However, reading material was scarce and the winter evenings were long, and it was better to have Catholic papers than none at all. Dad knew how bitterly anti-Catholic mother was, so he used to amuse himself by reading aloud articles from the Catholic periodicals. He enjoyed her reactions and comments, which were sharp and bitter.

The missionary Father who received them into the Church is all out for the Catholic press, and why shouldn't he be? —*Thomas Lynch, O.M.I.*

Slip Shows

I AM a poor writer. If I had been a better writer maybe Bob would never have become a Catholic.

I have written many articles and sent them to various magazines. Usually they come back accompanied by that inevitable blue rejection slip. Bob also was a writer, and often we would compare notes—and rejection slips.

One day I submitted an article to the *Catholic Digest*, and I must admit I wasn't too surprised when it came back about two weeks later. I didn't think my stuff was too bad, and neither did Bob, but we just couldn't get the editors around to our way of thinking.

There was something different about this rejection slip, however. On it were the words, "Most rejection slips are blue, which is usually the way one feels when he receives them. This one, however, is green, the symbol of hope and encouragement."

I thought it a novel way of being turned down, and the next time Bob came over I showed it to him. A smile crossed his face as he read. Then he turned to me. "You Catholics find hope in everything, don't you?" he said.

From that time on, his interest in our faith increased and soon he was taking instructions. Today Bob is a good Catholic, and it all started with a green rejection slip.

Escort

WHILE employed as a psychiatric aide in a veterans' hospital, I had the task of escorting a group of patients to Mass on Sunday. It was necessary to have another employee to assist me, and whenever possible I selected a Catholic. One Sunday, unable to find a fellow Catholic to help me, I secured the services of a man I knew was not. He sat through the entire Mass. I was rather surprised when the following Sunday he asked if he could go on the Mass detail with me. I readily assented, and for several months thereafter he assisted every Sunday. Then I had to take an extended leave of absence. When I returned I found that my helper had taken over my escort duties. And I noticed that he no longer just sat in the pew. He knelt and took part in the Mass. When I remarked on this he said, "You know, from that first Sunday I found beauty in the Mass. I have since found peace of mind." He was taking instructions, and was soon baptized. His might be called a conversion in line of duty. —George C. Hannifin

Sweeney's Icicle

FOLLOWING a Communion breakfast I attended in Tokyo a few months ago, the principal speaker, a Catholic brigadier-general, told of his conversion to the faith. It had come about, he said, through the exemplary courage of a young corporal with whom he had served in France during the 1st World War. "I can't even recall his name now," he added with feeling in his



voice, "but wherever he is, God bless him." Every night, the general went on to explain, regardless of the taunts, wisecracks and objects aimed at him by his comrades, the Catholic corporal knelt down alongside his blankets to say his prayers. At the conclusion of his speech, the general was congratulated by many of his avid listeners, including a middle-aged Catholic chaplain who clasped the speaker's hand nervously and affectionately as he said, "You're sure, general, you weren't the sergeant who stuck the big icicle down my back that cold, winter night back in 1917! Corporal Sweeney was the name!"

Good Conduct Ribbon

ON the afternoon of Dec. 7, 1943, we WAC's arrived at Naples Italy. Our home was to be the spacious, but secluded, St. Giovanni Bosco institute. This institute was run by nuns, and had housed young women students attending the University of Naples. We were 175 girls of varied nationalities and faiths, and from all walks of life.

The first few weeks were hectic—for us and the six Sisters. Since the battle front was near by, our curfew hour was 7 p.m. Consequently, we had to rely on our own resources for entertainment. During long evening

hours we tried to acquaint ourselves with the Sisters, but they avoided us.

Our normal American way of living seemed to disturb them. We shouted very unladylike from one end of the corridor to the other; went out with GI's, unchaperoned; had an occasional dance in our dining room with completely strange men!

We tried hard to avoid conflicts. We decided that bugle calls would not mix with ringing of the chapel bells; that we would respect their holy days and hours.

Gradually, as weeks slipped by, we came to know them, and they, us. They rearranged their schedule so that the Catholic girls could attend Mass before breakfast. Sister Rita, because she alone among the six could speak English became our liaison. At first she was reluctant to ride in the army jeep, but months later it was not unusual to see her alongside our first sergeant, jeeping through the Neapolitan thoroughfares with her black veil trailing in the wind. She even organized evening classes for those of us who wished to study Italian. I attended Sister Rita's classes, but I became more interested in the catechism text she used. Patiently, she explained the multitude of questions I asked.

Sister Francesca managed our laundry. Our New York girls taught her to count in Brooklynized English. When counting our laundry change, she would say, "Toity-tree cents." Then she would laugh.

Little, pink-cheeked Sister Angelina did our mending. Sisters Maria, Clarina, and Josefa did our washing and ironing to perfection.

Spring came, and so did the GIs with rest leaves from the front lines. Some of us fell in love, and in wartime desperation, felt that marriage could not be postponed until eventual reunion in the U. S. Whether it was for our Catholic girls, who were married in the convent's beautiful chapel, or for the Protestant girls,

who were married in the convent's patio, the Sisters fluttered about, maternally arranging every little detail.

Within a year we had "Americanized" the Italian nuns, and within that small period of time, they had captured our hearts. They sprinkled their conversations with *Okay's*, *Hi's*, *So long's*, and other minor American slang expressions, and they even developed an acute taste for army peanut butter and hot dogs!

Then in November, 1944, our company received orders to move up the Italian coast to Leghorn, to join advanced headquarters. On that cold, gray morning, the six Sisters were at the gate to bid us each an individual, tear-filled farewell.

The night before, I went to the Sisters' quarters to bid them a personal good bye. For the very shy Sister Angelina, who had never been to Rome, I had a medallion, purchased in Rome while on leave and blessed by His Holiness. She asked me to pin it to her habit beneath her white starched bib, and there alongside two other "medals," an American European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign ribbon and an American Good Conduct ribbon, I pinned the medallion. And as I kissed her on the cheek, she said in her very broken English, "Take it easy!"

From Italy we went to the Philippine Islands. I never forgot, however, those informal Italian lessons with Sister Rita. Three years later I became a Catholic. Sister Rita of Naples had unknowingly planted the seed.

—Dorothy Mallory.

Reverse English

TO a Jehovah Witness my two children and I owe a debt of gratitude. How glad I am that I didn't close the door the day a *Watchtower* representative called at my home ten years ago, before I became a

Catholic. That call and each succeeding one opened the door wider and wider to the faith she was maligning. She brought up old as well as new calumnies against the Catholic Church, but each aroused my curiosity. I sought further and learned the truth.

I've often wondered what her reaction would be if she knew the part she had unwittingly played in my conversion. Each time now a Jehovah Witness calls, I remember the first one, and give a pamphlet to him or her. I am gratefully returning a favor.

—*Helene Pate.*

Poster Poser

THE Reds were in control of Barcelona, Spain, in 1937.

Propaganda posters, calling for volunteers, were all over the city. One stopped me short. The background was a battle scene with mines, tanks, exploding shells, and communist soldiers, sprawled in blood, dead. Over it a mighty finger pointed at me. The inscription was: "And *you*, what have *you* done for communism?" The poster hit me hard. It moved me. I became a convinced communist.

Only later I thought, "What has communism done for me?" I also remembered then the churches the communists had burned. At the end of the war, I became a Jesuit, and I am now at a Catholic mission in India.

A few months ago, I prepared a poster for a mission academy. I found myself putting a mission setting in the background, a poor chapel, an orphanage, neophytes, and a priest with the cross of Christ. A mighty finger pointed at the passer-by. It demanded, "And *you*, what have *you* done for Christ?"

I knew the onlooker would stop and think, with a compelling result, "What has Christ done for me?"

—*José X. Gracia, S.J.*

Long Wait

KIRONDE was an ordinary boy; one of many who came to the missions of the Mill Hill Fathers in Uganda. He was anxious to be a Catholic. For two years, he had walked five miles for his catechism classes. Then one day he stopped Father after class. "I shall not be coming any more" he said. He told how the people of his village had forbidden him to become a Christian. "But, Father, I shall return when I am older."

Years later, war came to Uganda, as it came to the rest of the world. From lonely villages in the African bush, men were trained as soldiers. One day, the chaplain to the East African troops visited a desert unit. He noticed a hospital off the main road. He joked with the troops, and sought out the Catholics.

In one ward, he saw the ominous screen around one of the beds. A nurse told him that the patient was dangerously ill. She thought he was a pagan. The chaplain went behind the screen. He saw a poor Negro with ashen face. "Maybe he is from Uganda," the priest thought to himself, and addressed the patient.

Slowly the man opened his tired eyes. He was happy to hear his own language. After a few minutes, excitedly, painfully, he tried to pull himself up in the bed, staring at the priest. "I know you," he said at last. "I saw you in the mission when I used to go for instructions." It was Kironde, no longer a boy. No one could frighten him now. He asked the priest to baptize him. "And every day, I said my prayers. I have never forgotten. I always intended to return to the mission." He started to recite the Apostles Creed.

There was a tin mug by the bedside, full of water. The priest took it, and there Kironde became Joseph.

—P. Begley.

Kidder Bill

MY brother Bill married a lovely non-Catholic girl.

After many months, we gave up hope for her conversion. Bill, though, had other ideas. He went to Mass regularly and he always made it a point to mention to his wife the number of nice-looking girls who also went to church. Seeing him alone, he said, they presumed he was single, and a lot of them always smiled at him.



That got Jean. She was taking instructions within a month. Her husband needed a chaperon for Mass, and he got one.

—M. C. B.

Correspondence Course

I MARRIED a Catholic who didn't go to church. But whenever we discussed religion, he would insist that his was the true Church. The Catholic Church! I "knew" that "Catholics have to pay to go to confession; that they bow to idols; race through ready-made prayers." I heard more sordid slanders.

Then one Sunday I saw the Knights of Columbus ad, "You Hear Strange Things About Catholics." I sent for the free booklet. The article about mixed marriage took my eye. The Catholics were right about it. Other things were enlightening, too. I began to wonder—maybe my husband could be right. The other booklets made sense, too. I took the K of C correspondence course on Christian Doctrine, and my husband studied also. He had never had such instruction.

The Congregation of Mission Fathers (Vincentians) graded my papers and answered my many, many questions. It was amazing how prejudices flew out the win-

dow as soon as truth touched them. Even so, two years passed before I visited our parish priest. I half expected a bawling out, but he was kind and understanding. Soon my husband went to confession for the first time in years. Our four children and I were baptized. (I, conditionally, for I had gone through a baptismal ceremony in my previous church.) Our civil marriage was validated in a Mass just for us and at that early morning Mass I made my first Communion. To others hesitant about the way ahead, I can only suggest that they do as I—simply write a note to the Religious Home Study Course, 4422 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis 8, Mo. There they will get all the answers. —Mrs. F. McA.

Up The Hill

MY grandfather was practicing law in a Midwestern town. His office was at the end of the main street, which ended at the foot of a hill. Near the top of the hill stood the Catholic church. Each morning, grandfather would walk to the window and look out.

One morning he noticed an Irish woman walking up the hill. After that he found himself watching for her. He had an unobstructed view to the top, and each morning his eye could follow her all the way up to the Catholic church. He knew who she was; in a town that size everyone knew everyone else. She was a widow who supported her children by doing housework.

Several months passed; winter came, and one cold, icy morning my grandfather arrived at his office after having battled his way over the glassy streets. As he always did, he moved to the window to look out. He mentally bet with himself that the little Irish widow would not be walking up the steep, frozen hillside to church. When he looked out, his heart rose in his mouth. As he said many times afterward, "Tears came to my

eyes as I watched. There was the old dear on her hands and knees crawling up that icy hill!"

He didn't work that day. He closed his office and went home. My grandmother had a helper, a young Irish girl. When the girl heard the commotion in the parlor she looked in. My grandfather boomed at her in a loud voice, "Are you Catholic?" She was so frightened at the unexpected question and the disruption of the usually smooth-running house that all she could do was nod. "Do you have any books about it?" Again she nodded. My grandfather continued, "Please go get them. I want to see what it is in that Church that would make a woman crawl up a hill on her hands and knees to get to it."

The rest of the story is simple. From the example of that little Irish woman, our whole family was converted. And three generations later there are five Catholic homes.

—*Mary Jane Darrow.*

Shuffle And New Deal

WHEN I took a furnished room a few doors from a Catholic church it never crossed my mind that the location might have drawbacks. At 7:30 on my first morning I was awakened by shuffling feet. I peered out the window and saw a group of children, shepherded by nuns, on their way to Mass.

Every morning that week the same "nuisance" took place. On Sunday the hubbub was greater, and, in addition, it started at six and lasted till noon.

Things had come to a pretty pass when a white, native-born Protestant couldn't enjoy an extra 40 winks on a Sunday morning. I could lie in bed as long as I wished but I definitely could *not* enjoy it. I kept thinking of all those people going to church—going to church—going to church! And in the end it wore me down.

I figured that in a throng that size one non-Catholic might escape detection.

I played my hunch and it worked. I prided myself on kneeling, sitting, and standing at just the right times.

Sometimes today, I hear converts boasting that Bishop Sheen or Father So-and-So led them to the faith. Few can make the boast I can. I was driven there by 350 parochial-school pupils shuffling their way to daily Mass. Thanks, kids!—*Mrs. Lygia Erdland Meter.*

Collector

WE were in Los Angeles, looking for a suit for my son.

I was wearing a pair of sapphire earrings. I noticed the suit salesman looking at them. Finally he said, "Your earrings are sapphires, are they not? Let me show you some lovely ones." He took from his pocket a white tissue-paper package, opened it, and displayed a cross of fine gold filigree set in sapphires. It was exquisite. "Collecting crosses," he said, "is my hobby. I have more than 300. The antique dealers and second-hand men, who know me, always let me know when a cross of any interest is brought to them. On my free days I spend my time arranging my collection. I have them all cataloged.

"I started my collection when my sister's friend died and left a beautiful crucifix to my sister. My sister gave it to me. That was the beginning. Every spare penny since has been put away to buy crosses. I don't buy just crucifixes, but any cross that is lovely and has a history. One day I bought a cross with a picture of a saint on one side. I can't catalog this, I thought, until I find out something about the saint. I went to the library and got a book that gave the life of the saint. It interested me greatly. Then one day I found a rosary with an unusual crucifix. I knew that Catholics had their rosaries blessed, and I wondered if this were blessed. The next morn-

ing I passed a Catholic Church. I walked up the steps of the rectory and asked a young priest if he would bless my rosary. He invited me in, and I watched him closely. We talked, became friends. One day I asked about instructions. It was on my 63rd birthday that I received my first Holy Communion."

—*Blanche Granger.*

Robber's Reward

WHEN I was a boy, my mother used to take me with her when she went out to do house work. I remember one trip when, as my mother was shaking out the bedding, I spied a purple rosary. The gold cross glittered. As much from curiosity as anything else, I sneaked it into my pocket.

At home in bed, I examined my prize. It was then that I noticed the tiny Figure hanging in agony on the cross. I knew little about religion then, but I did know that the figure represented our Lord. I hid the rosary. But I did not sleep that night. I could not get my mind off the crucified Christ.

I pleaded sick the next day, but my mother insisted I go with her. Evidently, no one at the house missed the rosary, but I watched for the chance to put it back under the bedroom pillow. Still curious, I looked over the room. On a table near the bed was a booklet on devotions to the Blessed Virgin, including the Rosary.

From then on, I was both curious and concerned. Without telling my mother, I went back to the house some time later and confessed to the theft of the rosary. I also said I would like to know more about it and Catholic doctrine.

Today both my mother and I are Catholics, all because I once stole a rosary.

—*Leon Williams.*

Turnabout

WHEN the nazis and the Soviets occupied Poland in 1939, the pastor in a small town in the Russian zone was arrested on fictitious charges by order of the communist major. The clergyman was condemned to hard labor, without any trial, and was deported instantly. In 1941 he was liberated by the German forces.



The Red officer responsible for the condemnation was seized, but escaped. Not far from Hungary, his destination, his pursuers forced him to stay in the woods for weeks. Food was scarce, and, completely exhausted, he was waiting for death when some Polish men found him. They took him to a lone inn near by. Recognizing the former pastor among the strangers, he expected no good.

But he was wrong. The clergyman helped him hide from the nazis until 1944. The communist, overcome by such Christian treatment, became a Catholic. In 1946 he fled to the western democratic world. —*P. Hebel.*

Sticker For A Cop

OUR little niece put it there. Since my wife and I were leaving on a second honeymoon, we were too excited to pay any attention.

Not until we got to St. Louis did we note the sticker on the windshield. A traffic policeman pointed at it when we returned to the car after we had overparked.

"I've been waiting here," he said. "I owe you folks a ticket. But what I want to know first is what's this sticker you've got on the windshield."

My wife glanced at it. It said, "Will you say daily, 'Blessed be the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and ask your

friends to do likewise.'” My wife told the officer about our Lady of Fatima, her promises for world peace, and the conversion of Russia.

The policeman rubbed his chin. “Well, I never heard that one before,” he said.

“If you’re really interested, any Catholic priest in St. Louis can tell you more,” said my wife.

The officer said nothing. He asked for our registration card, made a note. “In St. Louis,” he said, “we have no special laws for visitors. You ought to have a ticket. But let it go this time.”

Several months later we got a letter. “Instead of sticking you with a ticket,” it said, “you stuck me with that sticker. I’m taking instructions. Could you be my sponsors for my baptism on Aug. 21, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary? And can you get me a few hundred of those stickers?”
—Henry S. Banach.

Ripping Wrapper

BACK in 1870 there were no Catholics in Newton Grove, N.C. One day Dr. John C. Monk, the resident physician, received a package of books wrapped in a copy of the New York *Herald* in which there happened to be a sermon on *The Unity of the True Faith*. Dr. Monk read, became interested, then addressed a letter to “Any Catholic priest or bishop in Wilmington, N.C.” Results came by way of a letter from Bishop Gibbons, later Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. After that things began to happen. Not only did Dr. Monk and his entire family become Catholics, but by 1897 there were 300 Catholics at Newton Grove, which had not a single Catholic 27 years before.

—Father Lahey in the *Ave Maria* (14 June '52).

Elevator

MANY Protestants do not understand the Mass. But I can thank a Chicago minister for my introduction to it.

I had gone there for the Easter week end. In the telephone directory I located the 1st Methodist church, near my hotel. But at the address I found only a business section. Then I noticed an unusually large crowd passing into the arcade. I joined it, just to see where everyone was going. I was swept into an elevator, hoisted a few flights, and propelled into the balcony of a great church, filled with people. I was impressed. I decided that out of war had come great good—people were returning to the things that count.

The central point of a Protestant service is the sermon. On the ability of the minister to arouse his listeners depends the success of the service. The minister was a magnificent speaker, and I shall never forget his sermon.

He began by asking why Catholics go to Mass. He gave a few of the answers—they go out of fear; they have to, etc. But he said none of these explains it. Catholics go because every day they have the events of Calvary reenacted upon their altars. Protestants hear too little about the crucifixion. He gave a vivid word picture of the Passion, and of the Resurrection. I was moved. I walked the lake front all day and thought of what he said.

I was still thinking the next day in my Indianapolis office. I automatically picked up the phone and dialed St. Joan of Arc church. (My name is Joan). I had never spoken to a priest before. I am sure I did not call him Father. I think I called him Reverend. But I was baptized within six weeks.

—Joan Stanley

Big Name

WE rented a cottage at Lake Chargoggagogmanchaugagogchaubunagungamaug at Webster, Mass. I never said the name right, which annoyed my Indian landlady, whose ancestors named it.

We brought a radio with us so that we could listen to the evening Family Rosary broadcast. The landlady was provoked at our devotion to this program. One evening I asked, "Why don't you learn to say the Rosary with us, Ma?" Hot Indian temper filled her charcoal eyes. "I'll learn to say your Rosary when you learn to say my lake correctly."

The next day I borrowed a library book which gave an account of the lake's history. A few afternoons later, when Ma Wilson came over to borrow ice cubes, I surprised her with my knowledge of Lake Chargoggagogmanchaugagogchaubunagungamaug, and was even able to tell her the name meant "You fish on your side, I fish on my side, and nobody will fish in the middle."

"A bargain's a bargain," she said. "Get me one of those Catholic rosaries."

At the end of the season, Ma told us one evening, "You know, children, I'm going to miss you when you move back to the city, but next summer we'll have a better time. I hope to be a full-blooded Catholic by then."

—Henry S. Banach.

All In

I WAS about ten years old when I met Father Carlyle.

He was a wonderfully kind man, never too busy to talk to a small Protestant brat. I knew nothing about him beyond the fact that he seemed to be a swell guy who somehow or other had gotten mixed up with the wrong Church. Only once did he mention religion to

me and that was to tell me that some day I would be a Catholic.

His prophecy haunted me for years, and I resisted it with increasing frenzy. With great eagerness, I looked for excuses for not becoming a Catholic.

Finally I found the supreme excuse. It was a book called *Thirty Years In Hell*, and was written to expose the Catholic Church. The author was a former priest, and this, to me, was the last authority. I read a chapter and rushed to Father Carlyle. I wanted him to know that I was wise to it all.

Father Carlyle and I reviewed the entire book. When we were finished, I burned it, and asked to take instructions.

Father Carlyle could understand my initial antagonism. He had gone through a similar experience himself. He, the founder and first abbot of the Benedictines of Caldey, founded his monastery as an Anglican and later brought his Community into the Church.

Later, the excommunicated author of *Thirty Years In Hell* returned to the Catholic Church and retracted everything in his book. —Vernon M. Cunningham.

Fish Eater

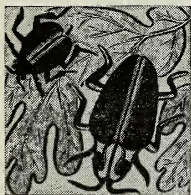
A FRIEND of mine, when he was young, worked in a leather factory. His fellow workers were not Catholics and when on Friday he brought his egg, fish and cheese sandwiches for lunch, he had to undergo quite a bit of razzing. They called him a fish-eater, and flaunted their meat sandwiches before his eyes. Of course, it was all good-natured kidding, but there was one man whose bitter taunts were obviously serious. Despite all this, my friend remained firm, continued bringing the same lunch, and never got ruffled by his friends' kidding. He

answered their questions straightforwardly, but the bitter sarcasm of that one man remained in his memory.

Years later, he saw that old acquaintance again, leaving a Catholic church, dressed as a Catholic priest. The two recognized each other, and fell to talking over old times. Finally the priest said, "It was your example that aroused my interest in Catholicism. I thought if a man like that can take the taunts of a crowd, and still remain proud of his faith—there must be something wonderful about that faith. That led me to inquire about the Church. Today I celebrated my first Mass."

—*Mary F. Cunningham*

Entomologist



A SCIENTIST looked at a bug
 With his keen microscopical eye,
 And he said, "What I see
 Is a lesson to me
 That I'll never forget till I die.

"For the infinitesimal bug,
 Whether taken in part or in whole,

From whisker and feeler,
 To smeller and squealer,
 Is under one central control.

"Such unity built in a bug!"
 The scientist pondered and then,
 "If God will do that
 For a flea or a gnat,
 Would He plan with less wisdom for men?"

"Would He fashion a Church for us here,
 Through which all his blessings might flow
 With a unity less
 Than his bug's? I confess
 That there's no other answer but No!"

So the scientist, led by the bug,
Started off on a diligent quest
For a unified church,
And in all of his search
Only one measured up to the test.

And today people ask him, and smile,
When he answers their questioning shrug,
And says in reply,
“’Tis a fact, sir, that I
Was led into the Church by a bug.”

These verses, by Arnott J. White, are an account of the conversion of Samuel Haldeman (1812–1880), a professor of Natural Science at the University of Pennsylvania.
—Yolanda C. Bergamini.

Pen Pal

AS a girl of 14, I joined a movie-fan club, and found a pen pal in the same club. He mentioned that he was a Catholic. I hadn't thought about the Church before.

My pal sent pamphlets, at my request, but they didn't satisfy. On a trip to Dalton, Ga., I decided to find out what a Catholic church looked like. I visited St. Joseph's.

In 1949, I was graduated from high school, and became a nurse's aid in a state hospital. I started going to morning Mass. After a few weeks, I approached the priest, telling him that I wanted to be a Catholic. He said that I would have to take instructions. I did.

I saved money for tuition at a school for nursing. When I was ready for the school, I chose a Catholic hospital for my training, intending to continue my instructions. But I had been in nurses training only a short time when I got pneumonia. A month later I was

a patient in the state hospital. No more instructions. I had my rosary, but that was all.

Then I learned about correspondence courses in religious instruction. I enrolled. The course took about three months. By that time the doctor said I was improving, and I hoped to receive Baptism at St. Mary's. But last July 29 my doctor told me I had fluid on my chest; I had to remain in bed. But I prayed for Baptism. A fellow patient offered to be my sponsor. I would receive the sacrament on the feast of the Assumption.

The day finally came. I had to wear my blue pajamas and robe, and was baptized on the porch of a tuberculosis ward. But that didn't matter. I had too much to be happy about, among other things joining the pen-pal club when I was 14. —*Mary Keith.*

Wristlet

WE lived in a "Cat-licker vs. Pup-licker" neighborhood.

I belonged to the team who yelled at the Catholic kids as they went by to school. One day I found a bright chain of beads, just long enough to go around my wrist. I wore it. A "Cat-licker" girl, a friend of mine, took me to her mother, who explained that the beads were not to be worn, but to be prayed upon. She taught me the Hail Mary. I remembered only the second half, but I prayed it often, fingering the beads and saying, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

My public-school teacher took me to Benediction with her during May, and I heard this prayer over and over in the Rosary. I got permission from my father to become a Catholic. Holy Mary, Mother of God, had prayed for me. It was a lovely thing to abandon the "Pup-" team and go over to the "Cat-lickers."

—S. M. C. S.

Deeds Over Words

HE was tall, handsome, persuasive—and a traitor. During the German occupation of Italy he had served in the S.S. army. He boasted of being called “the human beast.” Now he was in jail.

When Msgr. M. Nasalli Rocca, prison chaplain, visited him in jail, he was received with blasphemies and obscenities. Nevertheless, in his loneliness, and little by little, he came to welcome the priest’s visits. But he assured Monsignor Rocca that he would never be converted. Rather, he would convert the monsignor.

The other prisoners made their Easter duty. But he replied sarcastically to the monsignor’s Easter greeting, taunting him for his failure to convert a “thorough scoundrel.”

In June, he was tried and sentenced to be shot from behind. The monsignor hurried to see him, found him strangely changed.

“Father,” he said, “your talks and your books left me unmoved. But this morning at the trial, among the mothers and widows whose relatives I had arrested and even killed, I recognized a lady. Her son of 17 I had killed with my own two hands.

“When the verdict was given, that lady in black, with tears in her eyes, passed near me and said, ‘Poor Mr. T. I have prayed God and my son so much for you, that they wouldn’t sentence you to death.’

“That mother’s tears, her pardon, and the religion which inspired it were too much for me. Father . . . I believe, I believe, I believe, even I!”

Four days afterward, with the healing oil of Extreme Unction, Father Rocca anointed the bullet-shattered head.

—Valentine Dorbetello
from *Il Diario* of Monsignor Rocca.

Blitz

THE Battle of Britain! London was being bombed nightly. In February of 1941 I was working in London as secretary to a doctor. Another girl, Mary, worked there as a nurse. Being a staunch Scotch Presbyterian, I just barely tolerated Mary as being one of those Irish R. C.'s.

On my return one evening from a symphony concert, I found that our house had had a direct hit and was in flames. I saw Mary being carried out on a stretcher, and I went to the hospital with her. On her deathbed she pressed her rosary into my hand. I asked her where she wished the rosary sent.

"It is for you, Dorothy," she said.

"No, Mary, you are making a mistake," I murmured.

"You will need it," she smiled, and died. I kept the beads.

The bombing steadily got worse. Some weeks later I went alone one evening to a piano recital. On arrival, I found that the recital had been postponed because of an air-raid warning. I ducked hastily into the nearest building.

Waves of organ music and lights, lights everywhere, met me. I was in a Catholic church. A beautiful Benediction service was taking place. I knelt, and lowered my head whenever I saw the people around me doing so. They were singing a hymn. A few minutes later a bell at the altar sounded loudly three times, and again I bowed my head with the others.

Suddenly I heard a magnificent voice from the altar, loud and reverent: "Blessed be God." The congregation echoed "Blessed be God." "Blessed be His holy Name." "Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man."

The beauty of it! Never had I witnessed such an af-

firmation of faith. The *Hallelujah Chorus* was as nothing compared to it. Tears sprang to my eyes. From that moment I was in heart and spirit a Catholic. I arranged for instruction the following day.

—*Dorothy Blair.*

Northern Light

MY husband and I invited several guests to spend the Christmas holidays with us. We were living near the Arctic circle in Alaska at that time and guests would help drive away some of our cold loneliness.



These guests included a Norwegian surgeon, a novelist, an ex-pugilist and a poet. Though the camaraderie was delightful, we were, nevertheless, a bit homesick. In the midst of our reminiscing we heard the voice of a musher, probably several miles away, shouting the familiar "Mush on! Mush on! Mush on!" to a dog team.

The surgeon said, "That sounds like the Catholic priest! I wonder where he is going this bitterly cold night."

Our dogs in the lean-to, excited by the spectacular display of northern lights and the call of the musher, began to howl their weird wolf cry. We hushed the dogs and, reaching for coats and parkas, hurried outside to wait for the traveler. All was silent, now, except for the creaking of sled runners and the urgent command of the driver. Soon, on the top of a hill, a man muffled in parka and furs, at the handlebars of a sled drawn by seven dogs, was silhouetted against the aurora borealis. The poet whispered, reverently—"God, what a sermon!"

We hailed the musher and learned that he *was* the Jesuit priest, traveling 25 miles to bring Viaticum to a

dying Siwash Indian. Only the poet knew the real meaning of the priest's sacred mission, and knelt in the snow.

Far into the night and early dawn, we discussed that meaning, and learned much from our guest. When, a few years later, my husband and I were received into the Mystical Body, we recalled our first instruction, the wordless sermon depicting the splendor of truth in the Arctic sky.

—*Rose Roy.*

The Blind See

I AM blind, and another blind person led me to the open door of the Church. My blind friend Richard Michaeis is a member of the Philadelphia Catholic Guild for the Blind. He asked me if I would like to attend a meeting.

I said, "Yes, if a non-Catholic would be welcome." Father Thomas J. Rilley, guild moderator, assured Richard that I would be welcome, and also invited me to come early enough for the Rosary and sermon with which the meetings are opened.

I found the first meeting so interesting, I came again, and again, thanks to the guides who volunteer their services and cars. The light of grace glowed in my darkness, I asked for instructions, and was baptized and received First Communion.

One of my guides, Miss Elizabeth McCalla, consented to be my sponsor. Now, I cannot thank her and the guild enough for their help and encouragement; and I am eternally indebted to the Little Sister of the Assumption who instructed me, and Mrs. Brogan, my convert friend, who read and taught me my prayers and catechism. And more and more do I appreciate the atmosphere of peace in church, due to the reverence paid the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacle, which also drew me toward the Church.

—*Elsie Lutz.*

Prisoner

A LAWYER was accused of embezzling funds. He and his wife were Protestants, he the director of the choir. The lawyer was found guilty, and given 10 years. His wife thought that if someone with a little prestige would put in a good word for him with the judge, his term might be shortened.

She approached the Catholic priest. The priest knew the lawyer quite well. He consented, and when the judge asked the priest to appear in behalf of the accused, he did so. The lawyer, upon hearing what the Catholic priest had done for him, immediately wrote an article for his home-town paper praising the Church and the priest.

His term was shortened to three years; and when he arrived home, one of his Catholic neighbors was first to welcome him. The lawyer's greeting to his Catholic neighbor was, "Well, I believe the same as you do now, Bill. I'm a Catholic, too." He had taken instructions while he was serving his term, and now his wife is taking instructions from the priest who went to bat for her husband.

—Miss Marie K. Ryan

Home Run Error

AN error made in the records at Denver's Children's hospital in 1941 has resulted to date in six conversions to the Church.

Young Father John Regan, then an assistant in Cathedral parish, visited a 15-year-old patient, Patricia McAnespie, while making his hospital rounds. "Would you like to go to confession, Patricia?"

The young girl looked at him, puzzled. "Confession? I don't know what you mean."

An orderly had mistakenly listed her as a Catholic. But that did not end it for Patricia McAnespie. She thought it over and ended up by asking Father Regan to tell her about the Catholic faith. Six months later she was received into the Church.

That excited her older brother's interest. A year later Jack McAnespie was received into the Church.

This set the parents of the two children to thinking. In 1946, when Father Regan returned to Denver from a stint in the armed services as a chaplain, the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph McAnespie, took instructions and were baptized.

Then, in 1950, Father Regan, still amazed at the chain of events that had started with a mistaken entry on a hospital form, baptized Patricia's husband of two years, John Collins, and their little month-old daughter, Ann Elizabeth.

Six conversions in nine years! Father Regan cannot believe, somehow, that it is all a mistake.

—*Ed Miller.*

Statuesque

WHEN I was about 12 years old my mother and I were shopping in a large variety store. Mother said, "Look around and pick out something you'd like and I'll buy it for you." I looked at jewelry and a lot of foolish things that would appeal to a 12-year-old. Then my eyes were drawn to a beautiful statue of what I thought was the Blessed Virgin. (I later found out that it was "The Little Flower.") I didn't hesitate for a minute. I said, "This is what I want, Mother." She looked at me askance. "This is for a Catholic, and you're a Protestant," she said. My mind wasn't to be changed, though, and I left the store with the statue held tightly in my arms. When we

arrived home I put the statue on my dresser where I could admire it. We moved quite often but my statue traveled wherever we went.

About six years later, Mother had a spare room and decided to rent it. A young man came to look at it, and as he was going through our apartment he spied my statue. He was a Catholic, and thinking we were a Catholic family, he decided it would be a nice place to live.

The young man and I fell in love. I turned Catholic and we were married. We have three children, a boy and two girls, who all go to parochial schools. Now, 22 years later, my statue of St. Theresa still stands on my dresser. Some of the paint has worn off and her nose is broken but I wouldn't part with her for anything.

—*Edna M. Bigham.*

Order In Church

A CERTAIN non-Catholic, perhaps through curiosity, one day seated himself in a rear pew during Mass. Through the Mass he sat, even up to the Consecration. Next to him knelt a Catholic man. Seeing that the non-Catholic made no effort to kneel at the Consecration, the Catholic was vexed into impropriety himself and growled to his seated companion, in no uncertain terms, "Dammit, kneel down." The non-Catholic was so taken by surprise that without hesitation he did as the Catholic commanded. The result: his curiosity was aroused. He wondered at the importance of this having to kneel down. Leaving the church, he made it a point to introduce himself to the Catholic, and asked what the Mass was all about. He received the answer and in due time took instructions and was received into the Church, all because of a few "strong words" uttered at the right time.

—*Rita Bezy.*

Nick Of Time

| REMEMBER my mother teaching her family about God and His wonderful gifts. We were non-Catholics, and for 41 years I went from one church to another.

Then the time came at last for God to work His wonders. I was sitting in a Catholic hospital with my son for three long days. Midnight, All Saints day, I went to the chapel to try to pray, and I seemed to hear a voice calling me. It asked, "Has your child been baptized?" I got to my feet and ran to find Sister Superior. She was already sleeping, but got up and prayed with me.

I begged her to call the priest. He came to me and talked the rest of the night, and we also prayed.



When it was daylight the priest said, "Your son is with God. He was baptized just before he died." Then it seemed to me there was no one else but the priest and God there with me. I walked out of the hospital a believing Catholic.

That was 20 years ago. My other four children are now Catholics, too. And when I think of my 41 years in darkness, I pray God to help me keep my faith.

—*Mary Olson.*

Rhodesiana

| HAD known Elias Chigomo back in the savannah veldt of the native reservations of the MaShona tribes in Rhodesia, where I ran an Anglican mission. There I had baptized Elias. There Elias had learned simple arithmetic at the mission school and sufficient English to get him a simple job anywhere in Southern Africa.

Now Elias stood before me on the sidewalk of a

busy street in Johannesburg. This chance meeting, three days by train from the native backveldt, was sheer coincidence.

"And what are you doing here?" I asked him.

"I work as office messenger boy, sir," he replied.

"And how do you like it here?"

"Ah!" he smiled, "Very big life here. Very small life home in Muriwa's country."

Money was the bait that brought thousands like Elias from the veldt into "Jo'burg," where so many settled and lost themselves in its life, and their souls too, in some cases. "What about church?" I inquired.

Elias glanced at me, then at the sidewalk, and as he answered this and other questions he fitfully kicked and toed at the near-by curb. "Church very hard," he said, "for poor MaShona boy. Here in Jo'burg, no services at church in my language like at home and at mission."

"But there is a fine native church over in Sophiatown," I said to him.

"Yes" said Elias. "Fine church for Anglican native folk. But they sing SiXhosa one Sunday and SeSuto the next. Not enough native MaShona for my language to sing. Besides AmaXhosa people and BaSuto people not want MaShona people sing their language in Jo'burg."

"What about white man's Anglican church?" I said.

It was Elias's turn to protest. "Sir, you know churchwarden gentlemen in white men's church doesn't want black boy around. When white men finish coming out from church, I go in and I see white man's clergyman. I tell him I want to confess. (Our mission, in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, taught confession.) White men's clergyman say no need I confess. God forgive me sins if I confess without coming to clergyman. I tell him I confess clergyman and God too. He say best thing I go to

native church if I must confess. Church very hard for MaShona boy in Jo'burg!"

There was Elias's problem. As a missionary it was mine too. Was it really fair, I asked myself, to continue missions among native folk in Africa which taught a way of life which was so hard to fulfill as soon as they left their native backveldt for the big cities of the white men?

Suppose Elias's first contact with Christianity had been through the Catholic missions. Would this problem ever have confronted him? Would he ever have been puzzled by services in a vernacular which was strange when he moved from one tribal area to another? Would he ever have been confronted with a clergyman who advised him that confession was not really necessary when, probably, the one thing he wanted most in the new life of a strange city was just that?

A Catholic native convert, whether he came into the cities of the Union of South Africa from north of the Zambesi or from the semi-desert of Southwest Africa, knew what he could find and expect in these cities of the white people: the same pastoral care, the same Mother Church, the same Mass for Suto or Nyasa boy, for white man or colored.

I found myself wishing that, for his own sake, poor Elias had never met any other than a Catholic mission. I found myself regretting that for these native folk who leave their heathen ways for what they understand Christianity to be, there should be any other missions than those of the Catholic Church. My own problem had concerned apostolicity, episcopacy, and papacy. Poor Elias's had been of practical concern. Here was one more argument in favor of Catholic Christianity.

I made my decision. I am now, four years later, a Catholic school-master in England.

—*Frank Roberts.*

Made Faces at Priest

YES, today would be the day—right after her nap. Well, yes, she would take her milk and graham crackers first—maybe even an ice-cream cone if the “Good Humour” man came around. Then she would go directly to the front yard. He always passed their house about that time of the day. Then she would show him—she would let him know—she would——. But her mother’s call put an end to planning, for now she had to go upstairs for her nap, though she fully knew she was too excited to sleep.

Two hours later, nap finished, lunch consumed, she sailed triumphantly to the front yard and sat down near the elm tree—from there she could see him as he rounded the corner. Then immediately she would start walking to the sidewalk and stop just a few feet away. Oh, she could hardly wait, but it would be worth the waiting, she told her doll, as she grabbed it to straighten out its dress.

There he was! All dressed in black with just a white band around his neck. Now was the time! She rose boldly and strode toward the walk, hardly able to control herself until she would arrive just a few feet from him. There—he was looking at her—now was the time! And confident as Napoleon she took her stand and did it! She screwed up her tiny eyes and nose until she had made the most awful face at him (she had been practicing before a mirror—she knew just how to do it!) But every line in her face disappeared when he made a face at her exactly as she had done. Surprised at her own game, she ran back into the house so rapidly that she did not hear the priest’s chuckles.

By the next afternoon her original fright had disappeared somewhat, leaving her as bold as the previous day. The same scene occurred; the same faces were made

by each. But this time as she backed away from him, she found herself walking right into her mother's arms. "Oh, Mummy!" And then she realized that Mummy was laughing and so was the man all dressed in black. Why, he seemed almost as nice as her father—and he wasn't making that ugly face any longer!

Thus was the first contact made, and within a few months both mother and father had asked to take instructions to become Catholics. —S.M.J.

Sixteen

SIXTEEN years ago I snapped out of a five-day coma to my first acquaintance with the Catholic Church. The nun standing by my bedside was stern faced, sharp spoken. "Say your prayers," she said, "and thank God. It is only by His special favor that you are alive today." In the following days, before I left the hospital with my tiny premature girl, I learned what she had done. "I baptized you when we thought you were dying," she said. "Your husband said you would want to be. Then I prayed through the night that you might be spared for your children." She told me it was almost impossible that my child would live more than a few weeks, but she made me promise that, if she did, we would visit her. That summer we made the visit.

The years passed, and I was busy with a growing family. I had no further contact with the Church. Sometimes I would think of that old nun, but I did not think to pray. When our little girl was 12, she asked to attend the catechism class in the parish church. A few weeks later my husband and I knelt in the chapel while she was baptized. The following winter we were instructed.

I have an ageless picture of the face framed in a bedcap as my old friend lay on her deathbed in my visit

afterwards. I went to thank her for her prayers, to tell her of the peace and joy I had found. She forgot her pain and weakness, and her eyes were soft and glad as she asked about my children and their children. She had reason for her interest, for her prayers had led three of us home.

—(Mrs.) Maude McKinney.

Salesman Sold

ON the feast day of the Holy Rosary, our high-school senior class acted out the Living Rosary on the campus. Right in the middle of our prayers, a salesman



walked into the school yard. He didn't seem to know what was going on, until an unseen choir chanting the Magnificat halted him in his tracks. Then he turned, fascinated by something that was happening outside our grounds. Staring in from the iron fence that surrounds our school stood a little old lady, bent and poorly dressed.

Clutched in her wrinkled hand was a rosary, and with her lips she was following our prayers. The salesman stood as if in a trance and waited until the end.

This year, on the feast of the Holy Rosary, he returned again. This time he wasn't selling anything. He came to tell the Sisters that his previous year's experience had made him a Catholic.

—M. T.

Long Argument

IN a biology class in an eastern university we were discussing the philosophical and religious significance of evolution. The generalizations finally whittled down to a debate between another student, a professed atheist, and myself. Although not an evolutionist myself, it was

easy to point out that, even if the theory were proved a fact, it would be to God's greater honor and glory. After all is it not a greater feat to clear a pool table with one shot than to do it ball by ball?

The bell ended our argument, but my friend accepted a challenge, and frequent meetings followed. Evolution still did not explain first causes—the arguments of St. Thomas appealed to his intellect. Finally, after months of discussion, reading, and prayer he had to admit the Catholic claim and joined the Church. He entered the service, after which nothing but a Catholic education would satisfy him. He had arrived at the faith through reason. Now he wished to arrive at reason through the faith. My friend now studies at a Catholic university and is preparing to enter the field of psychiatry.

—*Vincent A. Corsall.*

Door to Door

THIS story might well be called *The Open Door to the Open Door*, for it was this very column that helped my husband into the Church. We had been married only a short time when his long interest in our faith matured sufficiently for him to enroll in an instruction class. However, as an air-force pilot he was beset by chronic setbacks: absences on flights, change of instructors, and change of station.

When, on arrival at our new station, we found that we would be there only six months before leaving for overseas duty, he said that he was too discouraged to start all over again with such a time limit. My prayers were redoubled, but nothing seemed to help.

A few weeks later I was hospitalized with the birth of our first child, and passed much of the time reading. It was then I read in *The Open Door* of a woman who was converted by the Knights of Columbus correspond-

ence course in religion. This seemed the perfect answer, and I wrote to the director before I left the hospital. His immediate and personal answer was appreciated by my husband, who requested the course almost by return mail.

Three months and six lessons later, after a few brief conversations with our parish priest, my husband was baptized, as happy a man (and wife) as could be found. Prior to reading *The Open Door*, neither of us had known that such a thing as correspondence courses in religion existed. Before we left that station, at least one other person was enrolled in the correspondence course.

—*Mary Jane Regan.*

Curiosity Kills Three Cats

OLD Doctor Timothy Papin was a man of extraordinary piety. You might see him at all the early Masses at St. Francis Xavier's in St. Louis. After the 7 o'clock Mass, he would make the Way of the Cross. In the chancel just beyond the last station, there was a huge crucifix. He would conclude his morning devotions by kneeling, and embracing this cross for fully a quarter of an hour every morning.



Despite all his piety, when it came to choosing a wife he selected a non-Catholic. He was twice a widower and both his second and third marriages were also to non-Catholics.

But all three wives became Catholics. Asked how his wives were won to the faith, he would explain: "All women are richly endowed with a blessed curiosity. I had a first volume of the works of Alphonsus Rodriguez on *Christian Perfection*. Its first chapter emphasized "The great value that we should place on spiritual

things." I used to read this book rather furtively and then carefully hide it away as if I were afraid my wife should know what I was reading. All three wives found the book no matter how carefully I concealed it, read it, and found how great an esteem they should have for spiritual things. There is no controversy in that book but there is the breath of the Holy Spirit that moves honest hearts into the true fold."

—*Laurence Kenny, S.J.*

Tenacity in Faith

A FEW weeks ago, a daily communicant from my parish told me this:

"During our lunch hour at the local steel mill, the idle chatter of our group invariably turned to religion and particularly the Catholic Church. The only Catholic in the group, five in all, was a college student on the co-op educational plan. We made a fool out of the poor fellow, taunting him because he wasn't too sharp on his catechism and Church History. He was likeable though, and had lots of determination.

"One afternoon after an especially hilarious lunch hour at his expense, the boy invited me to dinner at his home on the following week. I was embarrassed at his frankness and tenacity—there was nothing to do but accept the invitation.

"The following week, I went to dinner at the boy's home. Later the same evening, against all my resolutions, the boy took me to see his pastor. Down deep inside, I felt I could out-talk the priest just as I had all other Catholics. To humor my host I went along with bored resignation.

"I was suprisingly interested in what the priest had to say because he had the answers to all my problems

and he set the Church in a light I had never considered before. Two and a half hours later, I signed up for the Inquiry Classes then beginning with the understanding that I was not obliged to become a Catholic at their completion.

“Several weeks and many classes later, I told my cronies at the mill about my change of heart and future plans. Some of them are considering the possibilities for the next session of Inquiry Classes.”

All of this happened because a young college student had the convictions of his Faith and the tenacity to follow those convictions!
—J. P. Ashton

The Mass

“*BELIEVE in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord . . .*”

Keith had recited the Apostles Creed in church every Sunday morning for as long as he could remember. But this Sunday for the first time he was listening to the words. What did they really mean?

Keith was a Methodist—as were his parents, his parents’ parents and their parents. He had attended Sunday School and church each Sunday since he was four years old. He was active in all church affairs and when he was afraid or in trouble he prayed. That was the extent of his religion, and it satisfied him.

That is, until a few weeks ago. Now, at the age of 21, alone in a big city on his first job, he had begun to feel the need for something more tangible, something stronger. He couldn’t put his finger on it, but something was missing from his life. He had talked with his minister about the beliefs and doctrines of his church, but had

found nothing new—nothing that he had not always known.

“ . . . the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.”

Did his church *really* believe in the communion of Saints when it did not recognize the existence of Saints? Is the forgiveness of sins only for the next life? Why not now—today?

Here was a starting point. He would find a church that truly believed in the words of the Apostles Creed. But where to turn? He had visited other churches—Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran—and had found little that differed from Methodist beliefs.

His answer was in the Creed itself.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church . . .”

Oh, he had heard the explanation many times that this catholic was spelled with a small “c” but maybe it shouldn’t be. It was worth a try, and anyway, he would not have to wait until next Sunday to begin his search for he knew that Mass was held every day.

Early the next morning Keith went to Mass. He bought a small missal at the door and went in and knelt with the other early risers. What followed was the most wonderful experience of his life. There, on his knees, he met God. And he was not at a loss for words, for in his hand he held the most beautiful words of praise, thanksgiving and petition that he had ever read.

In the weeks that followed, he rushed through each day toward the next morning when he could again read the words and see Christ with his own eyes as the priest elevated the Host.

Keith came to my husband and me for advice on books to read, how to begin instructions, etc., but we

cannot claim him as "our convert" for in his heart Keith became a Catholic that first morning as he knelt and opened his missal.

—Mrs. John V. Whittenburg.

In Front Of The 8-Ball

IN 1944 a Protestant young man prepared to go overseas with his outfit. When he reached Honolulu he was dropped off as a replacement. I met him there and took him to Mass with me several times.



When I was packing to go home in 1946, he called, seeming very upset over the loss of a small gold cross. His name had been inscribed on the back, and he said he had wanted me to have it, but he had lost it out on the sands while on guard duty the night before. I told him in a light, offhand manner that a prayer to St. Anthony usually takes care of things like that for me.

Two days later a camp dog called 8-Ball came into the canteen. In his mouth was the very cross my friend had lost.

The young man is now an ardent Catholic and my husband. I am wearing the cross I feel is responsible for both his conversion and marriage.

—Mrs. Lloyd E. Elliott

The Open Door

I HAVE lived in New York City all my life, but because I was born of Jewish parents, who were, and are, as devout in their religion as I am in my newly found belief, I knew nothing about the Catholic Church. My first contact with Catholicity came quite by accident. I was

caught in a sudden storm and sought shelter in a church which was nearby. Upon entering the building I knew only that it was a church, and not that it was a Catholic church.

I stood in the vestibule for several minutes and then, because I noticed others entering, went inside. It was early evening. I was going home from work as were thousands of others. Hundreds of worshippers, it seemed to me, entered that church, not merely to get out of the rain, but to pray. They came, stayed a few minutes, then departed. But while there they evidenced real devotion. Many lighted candles, others simply knelt down and prayed. Some entered a little box which I learned later was a confessional.

From my brief visit in that Catholic Church and the impression made upon me by the devotion of the Catholics who entered while I was there, grew a longing to know more about Catholicity. I returned several times, and on one occasion noticed a Catholic paper in the rear of the church. I picked it up and took it home with me. It was *Our Sunday Visitor*. The next Sunday and for weeks after, I returned to the church to get the current issue of this paper. Later I subscribed for it. For five years I read it attentively, and also the Catholic pamphlets and books which I saw advertised therein. Then I approached the parish priest at the church nearest my home, took instructions and was baptized.

My visit to that church to get out of the rain was an accident. It might well have been a Protestant church in which I sought shelter. If it had been I would still be a Jew in religion as well as in nationality and would have missed a happiness of which I had previously never dreamed. But I do not believe I would be a Catholic today if I had not seen a copy of *Our Sunday Visitor*, from which I learned most of what I know about God and His Church.

—D. A. B.

