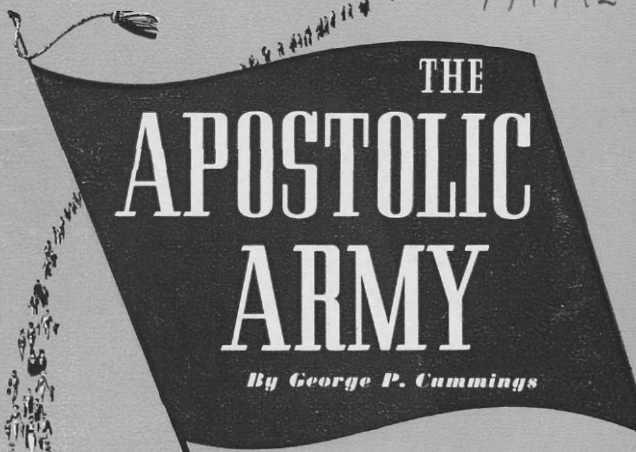


Cummings, George P.

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The Apostolic ...

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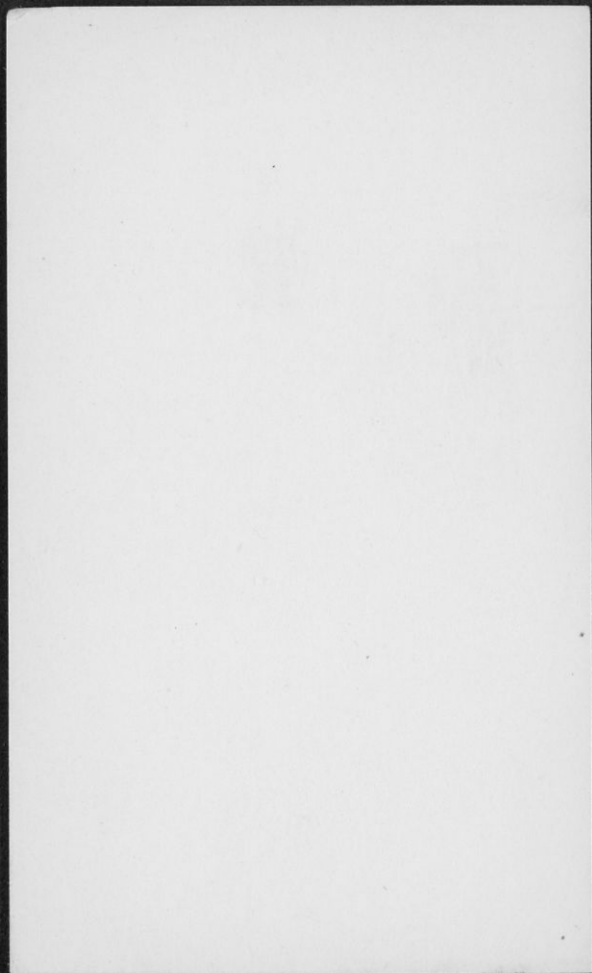
THE
APOSTOLIC
ARMY

By George P. Cummings



The Lay Order of St. Francis

"If each man or woman could understand that every other human being's life is as full of sorrows, of grief, and base temptations, of heartaches, of sorrow as his own, which he thinks so peculiarly isolated from the rest of life, how much kinder, how much richer he would be." William Allen White
For Our Town 21





Vade Mecum

A brief **vade mecum** of abiding and saving truths.

We should think about them, pray to understand them, try to live them.

We should make them matter of thought, of prayer, of living for all our days, to that day that never ends.

LOYAL TO CHRIST ALWAYS

If God be for us, who is against us?

Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?

But in all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,

Nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature

Shall be able to separate us from the love of God

Which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

—Romans 8: 31, 35, 37-39

IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding,

Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

For the rest, brethren,

Whatsoever things are true,

Whatsoever modest,

Whatsoever iust,

Whatsoever holy,

Whatsoever lovely,

Whatsoever of good fame,

If there be any virtue,

If any praise of discipline,

Think of these things.

The things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, these do ye.

And the God of peace shall be with you.

—Philippians 4: 7-9.

BRIEF COMMENTS

This indicates the way we should live, the thoughts we should entertain; the good we should constantly seek to attain. "In me" . . . means first of all Saint Paul, then anyone that has influenced us for good.

We know the power of example to keep us in spirit, in courage, in determination. We know, at all times, there are many thousands living the good life in the spirit of Christ. We know the Saints can always be looked to as those who illustrate powerfully and beautifully the Spirit of Christ.

We, also, should let our light shine before men, be the good odor of Christ, an example to others.

LOYALTY TO CHRIST, OUR HOME, THE SCHOOL,
THE CHURCH, THE STATE

In striving to live in the Spirit of Christ we shall meet with difficulty, as does every one. It is then we must renew our loyalty to Him by saying—nothing, absolutely nothing will ever separate us from the love of Christ.

JOURNEY'S END

The battle will be over some day, for each of us. The last duty attended to. In life we are

laureated for definite achievement; for a definite period of time well spent. At journey's end we shall be laureated again for definite achievement for a definite period of time well spent. The citation then will be "Well done, good and faithful servant. Because you have been faithful over a few things, I shall set you over many. Enter into the joy of the Lord." For the little I have asked of you, I now give you peace and happiness unsurpassed, peace and happiness unending.

Each Sunday, read this **vade mecum**, if not more frequently. When you go to Mass and receive Holy Communion on Sundays, refresh your spirit with those helpful words. Thus you will be strengthened to go forth and live another week in the Spirit of Christ, in the loyalty of Christ, in the hope of the great day, your eternal laureation.

COMFORT AT JOURNEY'S END

The time of my dissolution is at hand.

I have fought a good fight,

I have finished my course.

I have kept the faith.

As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice

Which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day,

And not only to me, but to them also

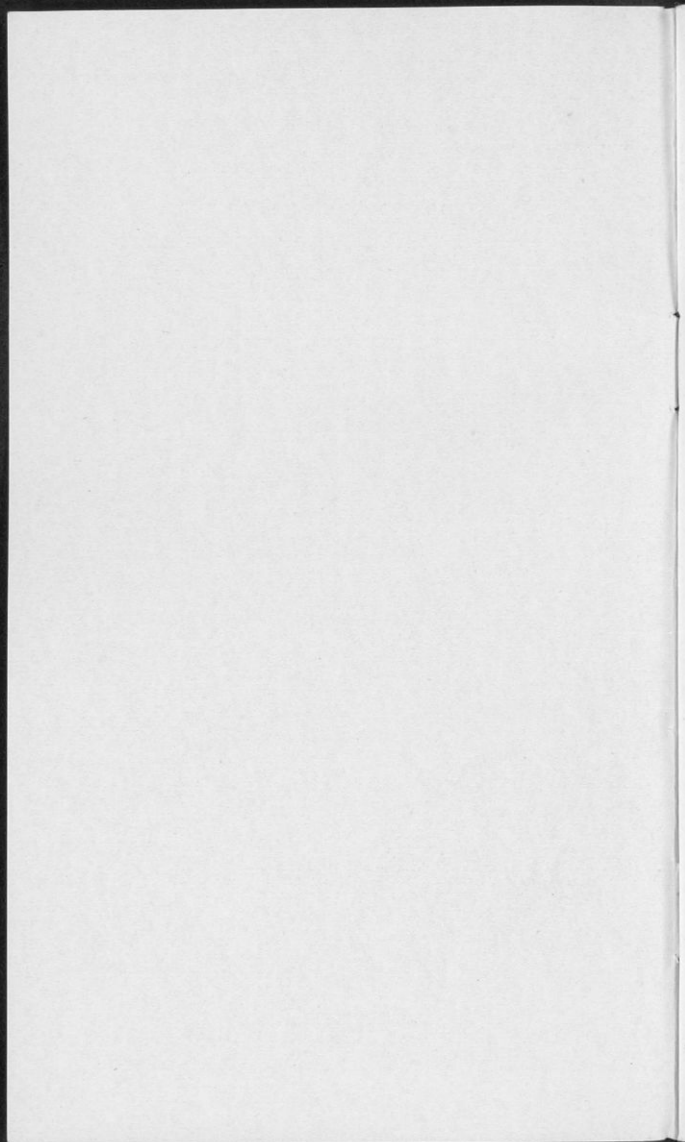
That love His coming. —Timothy 2: 5-8.

BAPTISMAL PROMISE


I renounce Satan and all his pomps and works,
and


I attach myself to Jesus Christ forever.

(Renew often, this allegiance to Christ.)



THE APOSTOLIC ARMY
THE LAY ORDER
OF
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI


By **George P. Cummings**
Franciscan Tertiary


Franciscan Herald Press
Publishers of Franciscan Literature
Chicago 9, Illinois

LORD, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Peace Prayer ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi.

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THE APOSTOLIC ARMY
THE LAY DEBTS OF
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

DEDICATED TO MARY
THE MOTHER OF GOD

My thanks to Sister Superior and the Sisters of The Community of the Sisters of Charity, Grey Nuns of St. Peter's Hospital, New Brunswick, N. J. for their many kindnesses to me — kindness that was responsible for many thoughts contained herein. And my heartfelt thanks to the Franciscan Fathers who helped me in the preparation of this booklet by generously giving of their time and knowledge.

G. C.

DEDICATED TO MARY
THE MOTHER OF GOD

My thanks to Sister Superior and the Sisters
of The Community of the Sisters of Charity
of St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri
for their kindness that was responsible for
many thoughts and ideas. A special
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THE APOSTOLIC ARMY
THE LAY ORDER OF
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



1. INTRODUCTORY

The late Will Rogers received the encyclical of Pope Pius XI on "Chaste Marriage" and the Wickersham report regarding Prohibition on the same day. He said: "I read the Holy Father's encyclical on birth control once and the Wickersham report on Prohibition many times. There is no doubt in my mind what Pope Pius meant, but the Wickersham report remains a complete mystery to me." He added: "Whether or not you agree with the Holy Father, you have to give him credit for calling a spade a spade, and if the world needs anything at this time, it is just that." Let us pursue this subject with like candor. In so doing we shall be imitating the Master, whose directness only hastened his crucifixion.

The unprecedented growth in our population has put a terrific strain on our schools, churches, utilities, hospitals, etc. The hospitals are woefully lacking in buildings, finances, and personnel. In New Jersey the lack of hospitals is so

acute that in a recent election the voters approved a bond issue of \$25,000,000 for the erection of new buildings. The situation is bad throughout the country. Funds are low, with the exception perhaps in hospitals maintained by individual states. The insufficiency of personnel is very serious. Many of our hospital sisters, nurses, and orderlies are working themselves to death. Recruiting campaigns to induce young women to train as nurses in "this noble profession" are conducted everywhere. All might take to heart the slogan which they use: "Learn to take care of others, and you will take care of yourself." Yet despite these difficulties, the hospitals are producing marvelous results. Of the first two deficiencies I think we can say that as Catholics and as good citizens we contribute our share in donations and taxes to hospitals, whether they are Catholic or not.

Layman to layman, I should like to have a chat with you regarding the Third Order of St. Francis, the lack of personnel in hospitals, and attendant possibilities, adhering to the old adage that "it's an ill wind that doesn't blow some good". In the present instant the good to be derived is our opportunity to perform the corporal works of mercy, thereby procur-

ing our own sanctification through volunteer hospital work and in so doing, my dear brothers and sisters of St. Francis, presenting the world an answer to its problems through Catholic action based on the Christian tenets of our order.

Hence this booklet :

2. ST. FRANCIS AND HIS DISCIPLES

We call ourselves Franciscans because our father and founder is St. Francis. As you know, we should "be distinguished, as by a special badge, by brotherly love". Does love, charity, really set us apart from our brothers in the Faith? Are we doing what we can, without going too far out of our way, to relieve bodily, mental, and spiritual distress?

In the present materialistic atmosphere it is good to revert to the times of our Seraphic father, or better still, to picture to ourselves what Francis would do were he in our midst today. A son of the ambitious, wealthy merchant Peter Bernardone, and reared in comfort and luxury, he loved fine clothes, spent money lavishly on entertainment, gloried in being king at the sports and festivities of Assisi's younger set, and dreamed of becoming a famous knight.

A kiss which he imprinted on a leper was the beginning of a radical change. In his Testament he says: "The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance: While I was yet in sin, it seemed to me an intolerably repulsive thing to see lepers, and the Lord himself drew me into their midst and I worked with compassion among them. When I came away from them, what before had seemed bitter to me, became for me a source of sweetness in body and soul. Then, after waiting a little, I left the world."

Francis bade adieu to his former ambitions and became a knight of Christ, a herald of the Great King. Through intense prayer and heroic self-conquest, he attained to such Christlikeness that he is justly called a mirror of Christ, or as Pope Pius XI put it, Francis appeared as a second Christ to his contemporaries.

With incredible zeal he traveled about preaching peace and penance and doing good. The charity of Christ consumed him. No sacrifice was too great, no labor too menial. In every man he saw an image of the Creator, a brother or sister to be led to eternal happiness. Francis would not have considered himself a friend of Christ had he not worked for

the salvation of souls for whom Christ shed his blood. The poor and the sick were his particular friends; for them he went begging and deprived himself of necessary clothing and food. When the sacred stigmata prevented him from walking, he had himself carried from place to place, in order to encourage and console his fellow men. He and his disciples propped up the tottering Church. Francis is everybody's saint.

What would Francis do were he on earth today? Just what he did over seven hundred years ago: he would spurn worldly possessions and honors, and serve God in doing good to his fellow men. He still lives and works in our midst through the Franciscan order, which encircles the globe like a beautiful rosary of self-effacing charity, the lengthened shadow of the personality of its Christlike founder. True to the injunctions of its founder, the order flourishes, not among the rich and powerful, but among the poor, the afflicted, the lowly. For these were the clients of Francis, and they are still the clients of his order and the object of their special predilection. No more authentic expression of the spirit of Christ's courage and love will be found in the world today.¹

3. THE CONVENT IN THE WORLD

We Tertiaries are not religious in the strict sense of the word. Pope Benedict XV writes in his encyclical on the occasion of the seventh centenary of the Third Order in 1921:

“The Third Order came as a kind of climax to the illustrious and immortal services which Francis rendered to Christianity, and for which he was justly styled a pillar of strength given to the Church by God at a critical moment, and nothing better illustrates the extent and intensity of his burning zeal to promote in every way the glory of Jesus Christ. Stirred with concern over the evils which beset the Church of the day, Francis with incredible zeal undertook the reformation of conditions according to the Christian standard, by founding two communities, one of men and one of women, who were bound by solemn vows to espouse the humility of the Cross; and not being able to receive into the cloister all who were drawn to him by the desire of profiting by his teaching, he conceived a plan to make the pursuit of Christian perfection possible to those who lived amid the turmoil of the world. He therefore founded the Order of Tertiaries, an order in the

true sense of the word, not indeed bound by religious vows, as are the other two orders, but distinguished by the same simple life and practice of penance."

The simple life of penance of the Franciscan friars and sisters should characterize us. As Pius XI said in part of the Tertiaries of the Aracoeli fraternity:

"It is the religious life in spirit. It is the spirit of that life and perfection carried into the family, into everyday life, the ordinary life of the world. Thus, in the life of the Tertiary, to the vow of chastity . . . corresponds the spirit of penance through mortification in his entire manner of living. To the vow of obedience corresponds the spirit of obedience which enters into all his devoted and generous sacrifices in obeying the commandments of God and the laws of the Church, as well as the manifestations of authority and the exigencies of his daily duty. To the vow of poverty corresponds the detachment of his heart from the goods of the world and his liberal and generous charity toward the unfortunate and suffering. Thus the spirit of the Franciscan Tertiary is the apostolate of Christian life, Christian faith, and Christian peace carried about everywhere, to every hearth, every walk of life, every

one of the various social relations." (Cf. *Rome Hath Spoken*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Ill.)

To me the Franciscan vocation is a sign of God's special love. The Franciscan way of life is eminently adapted to human nature. There are ascetical writers who demand renunciation of all love for visible things as a condition of sainthood. A number of saints have made this abjuration; Francis did not. He was in love with nature. All earthly creatures were to him members of God's family, brothers and sisters. Francis, however, shunned all inordinate attachment to creatures and used them only as a ladder to ascend to the Creator. They revealed God's perfection to him.

The members of the Third Order Secular have not the security of the cloister. But there are souls who long for the cloister and cannot be admitted. The father and mother of St. Therese of Lisieux knocked at cloister doors in vain. God had other designs for them. He distributes his graces as he wills. For us the important thing is cooperation. Then, too, if the Franciscans in the cloister have some advantages, we out in the world have others. Rules and regulations do not tie us down to a definite time and place. Much is left

to our choice and initiative. Avenues closed to priests and religious are open to us. Our lot is cast with the ordinary run of people. In many ways we can influence the multitude by word and example more than priests and religious can. We can meet them on our own ground; they do not shy from us as they often do from people of the cloth. Moreover, in many cases prejudice does not have to be overcome before a start can be made. Many conversions to the Faith are started by the laity.

Secular Tertiaries thus have an immense power for good. It is for each of us to use that power according to his strength and opportunity. I am reminded here of the proverbial elephant: "If we only knew our strength!" A look at the illustrious line of lay saints and their marvelous accomplishments will convince anybody that God has always intended that the laity should participate in propagating the Faith. Saint Francis himself never held in his hands the white Host of the Mass, but for seven hundred years the world has watched those two bleeding hands uplifted, offering to God his every thought and word and deed. It is a matter of showing that we appreciate our God-given

gift of faith by proving magnanimous in our efforts to propagate it.

It is true, the world in which we are living is wicked. Its seductiveness is great and manifold. Only strong characters escape its allurements. But it is no less true that "God fits the back to the burden". St. Paul says: "We know that for those who love God all things work together unto good." God does not deny grace to him who does what he can. Fidelity to the word we Tertiaries pledge to Mother Church at our profession assures us of abundant graces.

4. THE LIFE BEAUTIFUL

What makes life beautiful and happy? Is it the worldly existence portrayed by motion picture, radio, and television? No, life is not really made happy by what the world offers—conveniences, amusements, fat bank accounts, political power, social triumphs, and the like. The worldlings have no true happiness here, and no hope for happiness hereafter. Their so-called goods are nothing but glittering tinsel and pricking thorns. There comes to mind a man who said, "I have drunk \$20,000 worth of wine, and I am still thirsty." Man's heart was created to possess the

Sacred Heart of Jesus, and it will never be satiated until it rests in that Heart.

Our mild rule (which, by the way, does not of itself oblige under any sin) points out to us the safe way to happiness by imposing moderation in the use of temporal things, perseverance in devout prayer, the frequent reception of the Sacraments, and the habitual performance of our work with a holy intention. If we follow these injunctions of our rule, we will enjoy peace of mind and serenity of heart; God will be with us. "So much for so little." It makes us think of our Savior's words: "Whoever gives to one of these little ones but a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

We are in prominent society in the Third Order. Popes and cardinals, bishops and priests, scholars and artists, statesmen and soldiers, men and women of sterling character grace the roster. The order has ever been the cradle of saints, from all walks of life, from princes to peasants. All who submit whole-heartedly to the light burden and sweet yoke of the rule find rest for their soul and belong to the highest nobility.

Our order is a part of the God-fearing

and God-loving progeny of St. Francis. Who can count the prayers and sighs ascending day and night from humble and contrite hearts to the throne of the Almighty? How many labors and sacrifices are performed for the salvation of souls? God alone knows the tortures the children of St. Francis have been undergoing even down to this day in Iron Curtain lands. From the news reaching us we can only infer that the sufferings of soul and body are inhuman, inspired, it seems, by evil spirits.

But the point I wish to make here, is that we share not only in the spiritual fruits of the good works performed by the millions of our Tertiary members, but "of all who are enrolled under the banner of the Seraphic founder St. Francis, no matter to what order or family of the orders they belong". What confidence this should give us! We are not alone in our combat to gain life everlasting. Yes, we are more than mere members of Christ's mystical body; we are a select portion of it.

The twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorys which we recite daily, have a very special value and significance. They are not merely private devotions, but an official prayer said in obedience to and

in the name of the Church. We act as her spokesmen. There is a great difference when these prayers are said with the same devotion by a Tertiary and by a non-Tertiary. In the former case they partake of the dignity and power of the prayer of the Church, and spouse of Christ. They are for us what the Breviary is for priests.

A study of our rule will show that it is a practical guide to Christian perfection, an adaptation of its principles to everyday modern life. St. Francis was broad-minded in the best sense of the word. He proposed the goal in a few bold strokes and left great freedom in the choice of the means and the manner of striving toward the goal.

It is true, due to its broad application our rule lacks the unction of the rule of the Franciscan convent orders. But our spiritual guides are to supply that deficiency. They are to teach us the Franciscan way of life and nourish our souls with Franciscan food as it applies to us severally.

The Third Order is a storehouse of spiritual treasures. Without any difficulty we can gain many indulgences wherever we may live. What splendid opportunities to help our deceased dear ones and to lay up treasures for eternity!

Every city street and every country road has its poor who stand in need of bodily or spiritual assistance. Adding the works of mercy to our prayer and the discharge of our duties is the other substantial half of our life as Tertiaries. It fills our cup of happiness and makes our life beautiful in the best sense of the word.

Francis traced out in his life the amazing paradox that a person begins to live only when he forgets himself by being absorbed in the welfare of others. Beneath the soft and gentle music of social altruism and unselfish service for love of God whose image man is, the ear, sensitive to the overtones, will not fail to detect those tones coming ever and anon from the iron chord of courage, the courage of self-effacing conquest, the courage of joyous service, the courage of self-effacing love.¹

Readers of this booklet who are not Tertiaries can obtain information about the Third Order not only from Tertiaries but also from the Friars Minor, the Conventuals, the Capuchins, and the members of the Third Order Regular, including the members of the various Franciscan sisterhoods and brotherhoods.

What has been said above is corroborated in a statement made by a priest to

Fr. Bernard Christen, then minister general of the Friars Minor Capuchin, and related by the latter at a meeting of Tertiaries in Freiburg October 4, 1894:

"I am the pastor of a small parish in the diocese of Trent. A few years ago I had one of your fathers conduct a mission. Everything went well until, deviating from his subject, he spoke on the Third Order and urged my people to join it. I was so incensed that I interrupted the sermon and forbade him to continue on this point. In the sacristy I repeated my command.

"The good seed, however, had fallen on fertile ground. Without my knowledge the best parishioners were invested in the monastery at Trent and soon formed a regularly functioning little fraternity. After some time I noticed a decided change. Attendance at services and the reception of the sacraments increased. The love and fear of God again entered the homes. Family feuds of long standing and other deplorable evils disappeared. The Christian virtues flourished.

"I had done nothing to bring about the marvelous improvement. Beginning to observe and investigate, I discovered the little fraternity which had been leading a hidden life like the Christians in the

Catacombs. To the prudent zeal, the prayers, the charity and kindness of the humble Tertiaries I owed the renewal of my parish.

“I was honest enough to acknowledge the fact. On the following Sunday I confessed my fault in the pulpit and asked pardon. To prove my conversion, I declared myself ready to enter the Third Order and, should it be desired, to direct the fraternity.”

5. THE LADY LOVE OF ST. FRANCIS

There has ever been an affinity between poverty, suffering, and the performance of the corporal works of mercy, inasmuch as so little of these virtuous elements is accepted or done from a supernatural point of view. Yet the point is entirely lost unless the latter view animates us.

Our Seraphic father espoused Evangelical poverty. Not only did he give up all possessions, returning even the clothes he wore to his angry father in the court of the bishop of Assisi, but he chose the company of the poor and the destitute. Of those who wished to join his brotherhood he demanded that they distribute all their possessions among the poor. Francis personified poverty and made it his lady

and queen, whom he loved with all the ardor of his heart. No knight was so devoted to his lady love as was Francis to his Lady Poverty. He died covered with a borrowed habit and lying on the bare ground. His holy romance with the Lady Poverty has ever touched the hearts of men and inspired poets and artists. In reality, he loved the poor Christ and his poor Mother in the guise of Lady Poverty.

Renunciation of earthly goods is not required of us Tertiaries; it would not even be desirable. Because we live in the world and share the various responsibilities of our fellow citizens, we need material resources. Riches are not evil in themselves. Our holy patrons King Louis of France and Queen Elizabeth of Thuringia had large possessions in their day. Like them, however, we must keep ourselves free from inordinate attachments, never allow temporal goods to master us, and use them as stewards according to God's will.

Since it is difficult to possess as if one possessed not, read the following beautiful prayer which St. Francis addressed to his Lord, and meditate on it:

"O Jesus, Poverty welcomed you in the crib, and like a faithful armor-bearer

she kept at your side in the great combat you waged for our redemption. During your passion she alone did not forsake you. Mary, your Mother, stopped at the foot of the cross, but Poverty mounted it with you and clasped you in her embrace till the very end. And when you were dying of thirst, as a watchful spouse she prepared the gall for you. You expired in the ardor of her embraces. Nor did she leave you when you were dead, O Lord Jesus, for she allowed not your body to rest elsewhere than in a borrowed grave."*

It was because Francis had the courage to walk so faithfully in the footsteps of Him who did not have whereon to lay his head that he had so great a devotion to poverty. The secret of his love which, while it has provoked admiration, has mystified so many, is revealed in that prayer.¹

If poverty is your portion, think of Christ's example and be resigned. If God has blessed you with earthly substance, share it generously with the poor. Almsgiving is highly commended in Sacred

*Full text of the prayer here briefly summarized, in *The Words Of St. Francis*, Meyer, Franciscan Herald Press.

Scripture. Giving is a part of living, especially for the Tertiary of St. Francis.

6. AN ATTENDANT OF LADY POVERTY

Poverty as practiced by our Seraphic father is attended by suffering. Not all who suffer are poor, but all who are really poor, suffer in one way or another. They lack the necessities of life, are often hungry and cold, and are looked upon as a burden to society.

God did not make suffering. The first man brought it on us by sin. All mankind sinned in Adam's fall, so all mankind is subject to the consequences of sin. Suffering is as universal as sin. But God who knows how to draw good out of evil, has turned suffering into an instrument of salvation. His incarnate Son has redeemed us by the cross. If we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him. The world would like to banish suffering at all costs, but man will never rid the world of sorrow and pain.

The pity is that suffering is so often misunderstood, wasted. We suffer from the cradle to the grave. Of itself that profits us little, and we are fortunate if we remain patient enough to refrain from making it a cause of our damnation. In

the nature of things it is not nearly so pathetic that we suffer as that we suffer in vain.

If there is one question in this world which we have to understand fully with God's grace, it is this matter of suffering, if we are to make any progress in the spiritual life. Since it is so much a part of us, it should be the sun about which our life revolves.

Francis went through the most acute pains of body and soul, but he remained Brother Joy. He took our holy Faith's view of suffering, which is beautifully described by St. Francis de Sales and St. Paul. The former writes: "Death, affliction, labors, which by the just ordinance of God are the punishments of sin, are also by his sweet mercy so many means to increase in glory. Blessed then are poverty, hunger, sadness, death, persecution, for they are the just punishments of our sins, but punishments so tempered with divine sweetness and clemency that their bitterness is made sweet." St. Paul says: "There was given me a thorn for the flesh" (very likely a chronic illness), "a messenger of Satan to buffet me. Concerning this I thrice besought the Lord that it might leave me and he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for

strength is made perfect in weakness.' Gladly therefore I will glory in my infirmities, with insults, with hardships, with persecutions, with distresses. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

We who have not the illumination of the saints, must realize that one of the characteristic differences between us and them appears in our attitude and theirs toward suffering. For the saints ever seemed to understand that suffering is of some extraordinary value which only God can appreciate, since his beloved Son thirsted for it so.

7. THE FRANCISCAN TRADEMARK

As already indicated, charity should be our distinguishing mark. Uncharitable and Franciscan are mutually exclusive. Francis is known as the "Seraphic saint" because of his burning charity, his love of God and neighbor. He strove with might and main to love as Christ has loved us. If we wish to be genuine children of his, we must honestly try to imitate his charity as far as our condition permits.

Our love of neighbor is the measure of our love of God. Do you wish to know how much you love God? Then find out how much you love your fellow man. St.

John asks: "How can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love God, whom he does not see?" The same apostle says that as Christ has laid down his life for us, so we also ought to lay down our life for the brethren. St. Paul teaches that love of neighbor is the fulfillment of the whole law.

To love as Christ has loved us, we must cultivate sentiments of kindness and forgiveness toward all men, and banish at once false suspicion, rash judgment, and spiteful thought. If we love Christ in our fellowmen, our love is supernatural, rooted in the Faith. If our deeds are performed from purely natural motives, we cheat God, ourselves, and our neighbor: God, because our deeds have no reference to him; ourselves, because our deeds have no value of satisfaction or merit; our neighbor, because our deeds lack that Christlike halo which touches and soothes hearts.

Our Seraphic father, merciless toward himself, overflowed with compassion for others. No one appealed to him in vain. He always found something to give to the needy, even though it might be only a piece of his poor clothes or a portion of his scanty meals.

We belong to the Order of Penance. As

the Most Rev. Leonard M. Bello, late minister general of the Friars Minor, explained: to be in penance meant to Francis to imitate Christ. And to imitate Christ means to offer up our works of piety to God, to bear within us the sufferings of our Savior by mortification of the flesh, and to exercise works of mercy.

The Popes keep calling for the propagation and advancement of the Third Order. Our country is literally dotted with Franciscan organizations, erected and maintained for the common good by the various Franciscan convent orders. But is our Third Order Secular what it should be? Do we deserve the titles of "Soldiery of Christ" and "the New Maccabees," which Pope Gregory IX bestowed on the first Tertiaries?

No! Certainly not all of us! Why not? Let me express my thought in the form of another question: Does the charity of Christ urge us to be channels of grace to others, to lead stray sheep back to the Good Shepherd, to save souls, to share our spiritual treasures with our neighbor?

The Third Order needs action for its existence and development. Fraternities without action sink to the level of devotional societies, stagnate and disintegrate. The rule inculcates helpfulness,

good example, the promotion of piety and good works, and the apostolate of the press. In the Franciscan scheme prayer and work go hand in hand. According to Tertiary St. Pius X, active charity is as peculiar to the Third Order as penance. If a fraternity does not cultivate active charity, there is no good reason why it should exist. Secular Franciscans need action both as an outlet for accumulated spiritual energy and as a sort of dynamo to increase that energy.

Men and institutions are judged by their deeds rather than by their ideals. An ideal amounts to little unless it is put to practical purpose. The Third Order must prove by its works that it is an important factor in solving the problems which confront the world today. Unless it does that, it cannot hope to get the support necessary to make it the leaven for the masses which it should be.

The Church asks for action. The Popes of our times take such great interest in the Third Order because they are convinced that it can repeat its achievements of the past. Why are their lofty hopes still so far from realization?

The fault lies not with the Third Order as such, nor with its adaptation to modern times. Am I wrong in saying that it is the

Tertiaries themselves who are responsible for this situation? They must get busy and apply their rule and Franciscan spirit to changed conditions.

Without hard and persevering labor it is impossible today to win society for the principles of the Gospel to any appreciable degree. Social reforms are not brought about by watchful waiting nor by spending all our efforts on our own salvation. Many of our Tertiaries are doing wonders in the apostolic field. Yet there are many more who could and should share in this work.

It is a sad commentary, but we of the Faith have to admit that we who are in possession of the truth have not the zeal, enthusiasm, or devotion for our cause which the Communists, who are in gross error, have for theirs. The Third Order in our country would flourish even more than it is if we were equal to the Communists in these attributes.

8. MINISTERING TO THE SUFFERING CHRIST

In the sick we visit, we console and serve Jesus suffering and dying for our redemption. At the last judgment Christ will mention our visits to him in the sick

as a cause of reward, and our failure to visit him in the sick as a cause of punishment. Our patron St. Elizabeth said to her companions, "Oh, how fortunate we are in being permitted to wash and clothe our Lord and Savior in the person of the lepers!"

The purpose of such visits is not mere sociability, but the bodily and spiritual welfare of the patients. We must seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls. On the one hand, we must carefully avoid whatever might point to forwardness, curiosity, impatience, or mere worldliness. The sick should feel that they are doing us a favor by accepting our sympathy and services.

Ministering to the sick in the way described is a source of choice graces and blessings. It awakens wholesome thoughts and elicits good resolutions. What has happened to others may happen to us at any moment—now healthy and strong, the next hour writhing in pain and facing death. We can almost feel the uncertainty of life and the prudence of preparedness for the final decisive account. Why cling to fleeting satisfactions? In these matters God's will must be our guide. In licit enjoyments we should practice moderation in order to build up resistance against

forbidden pleasure.

Helping the sick offers splendid opportunities to exercise charity, humility, patience, meekness, and self-denial. The hospital room is a school of perfection. It is a withdrawal from the chaotic life about us, a little retreat, an oasis if you will. Here the real philosophy of life is laid bare, in its truest form. Where can a more suitable place be found for the study of this philosophy than the place which ushers in life amid travail, and eases life out, more often, in silence. Very likely Providence had led or will lead us to this school some time or other.

Wherever he went, Christ was surrounded by suffering people, and he cured them. Serving the sick is an excellent way of imitating Christ, especially if we zealously practice the lessons imparted. Because we show mercy to him in the person of the sick, we are sure of a multitude of graces. He will not be outdone in generosity by his creatures. For the ounces we give him, we receive pounds in return.

If religious conduct a hospital in your neighborhood, offer them your services. There you are near Jesus in the tabernacle and have edifying company. Our Tertiary brothers can find meritorious work for instance in watching at the bed-

side of a patient or in volunteering as orderlies in the men's ward of a hospital, if for only a few hours a week. Our sisters can do even more; they may volunteer their services besides in making bandages, mending linens, and the like. Similar aid can be rendered in homes for the aged and in orphanages and nurseries. We should not hesitate either to offer assistance to secular institutions.

Let us follow the example of our saintly ancestors, which contributed greatly toward spreading the Third Order. Conall O'Leary O.F.M. writes:

"It was about the year 1221 that St. Francis went through Tuscany, preaching that men should do penance for their sins and take upon themselves the sweet yoke of the Gospel. The grace of God, working through the simple, fervent eloquence of the little Poor Man of Assisi touched the heart of the people, and they came to him, asking, What must we do to be saved? At Florence especially his hearers were inflamed with enthusiasm for the service of God. The men formed a congregation which founded a hospital to care for the sick and the aged. A similar group of women visited the sick and poor in the city and its suburbs."

One wonders if the spirit which ap-

peared so essential at the birth of the Third Order is not to some degree necessary for its continued life and propagation.

Not all of us can offer services to institutions, but all of us can offer aid and consolation to the sick and helpless in their homes. A great burden is lifted from a poor mother's shoulders when a friend offers assistance or volunteers to watch an hour or two at the bedside of her ailing husband. Our sisters have a large and fertile field here in which to exercise their apostolate. For many it would mean little hardship occasionally to prepare a meal, care for the little ones, clean rooms, mend clothes, wash the laundry, and the like, for a poor sick mother in the neighborhood.

Natural aversion to being around the sick may be advanced as a reason why some cannot partake in this type of work. If the will is there, that revulsion will be short-lived, as it was in the case of St. Francis through the grace of God.

Thrill seeking, in this age of ours, appears to be just a part of living. What money, energy and precious time is spent chasing this elusive rainbow? Would you like to be thrilled. The formula is very simple. Ferret out God's old, sick, and

lonely—they will not be long in finding—
if you have the desire in your heart. Min-
ister to them. Try it and see!

Some Tertiaries may be able to obtain
gratis the services of a physician for a
needy patient, or to procure the proper
institutional care for him.

9. AUXILIARIES OF THE PRIESTS

As children of St. Francis we are auxil-
iaries of the priests. Our priests need their
time for prayer, study, and the exercise
of the sacred ministry. They are to con-
tinue the redemptive work of Christ. The
faithful expect them to provide for all
their spiritual wants. In return the faithful
owe them unstinted support.

We should readily take the front lines
in our respective parish. Thereby we also
encourage others to become active. Thus
we can greatly contribute to make our
parish a harmoniously working unit, to
the joy of the pastor and of the eternal
High Priest whom he represents.

Once it is known that we render services
willingly, opportunities will not be lacking.
It is often a great help if Tertiary brothers
when they are at leisure, donate a few
hours of labor or help make repairs. The
sisters, especially in small parishes and
in the missions, may be welcome to keep

the church clean, decorate the altars, take care of the linens, and the like.

Most of us are so situated, especially in cities, that we can do work of a more or less spiritual nature. We can contact newcomers and acquaint them with the priests. There may be chances of bringing back careless families and individuals to the practice of their religion, and to dispel the prejudices of non-Catholics. By the promotion of religious study clubs we can accomplish much good.

A small fraternity in a middle-sized city did fine spiritual work. The sisters prevailed on a number of parents to send their children to parochial school. They had several invalid marriages validated, some children baptized and others dressed for making their first holy Communion. Tertiaries acted as sponsors at baptisms and as witnesses at marriages.

10. ASSISTANT MISSIONARIES

Fervent sons and daughters of the Seraphic founder are not spiritual isolationists, who think only of their own salvation and that of their family. Their model is our Savior, who came to serve and lay down his life for all men. They are truly Catholic, universal, all-embrac-

ing. Their heart goes out to God's unhappy children who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

It is their ardent desire that God be known and loved by all men, that not a single soul be lost. At home they work in various ways with the missionaries in foreign lands.

All of us should and can have the missions at heart, be co-missionaries. Working for the conversion of the unbelieving and other dissidents is essential to the Church, consequently to our own Catholicity, and certainly to our Franciscanism. Christ commissioned the Church to make disciples of all nations. Are we not part and parcel of the Church? In a joint letter the four Franciscan Fathers General exhort us to collaborate generously with all the enterprises of the Holy See. Among these enterprises missionary activities are of first importance.

As stated repeatedly, charity is the Franciscan trademark. Now, if you ask how we can exercise the general charity, I answer with Pope Pius XI: "Charity towards the missions surpasses all other works and acts of charity as the soul surpasses the body, Heaven surpasses the earth, and eternity surpasses time."

These words should be a powerful in-

centive to take a lively interest in spreading the Gospel. Our principal means are prayer and sacrifice. Through them we may hope to obtain missionary vocations. Christ told his disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest send laborers into his vineyard. Faith is a free gift to God. Can we doubt that fervent prayer will obtain it for some souls? When the Apostles ordained deacons to preside over the distribution of alms in Jerusalem, they devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Prayer was assigned the first place!

Occasions for sacrifices are always present. We can offer up the daily grind of work, unpleasant experiences, offences against our person, infirmities, acts of self-denial, and practices of religion and charity. Wealthier members should readily make financial contributions. What we give to the missions is a loan to God.

Many fraternities have groups of circles making articles for the missions. Our sisters should consider it an honor and a privilege to help as much as possible. Furnishing things for the altar gives them a special share in the holy Sacrifice. Whatever is needed in Divine services draws God's blessing down on the donor.

11. MESSENGERS OF PEACE

Peace is a most desirable good. Of what use is all else, if peace is missing? Do we not read of persons who had all the world offers and yet committed suicide? They certainly did not have peace in their hearts.

The prophets foretold that our Savior would be the Prince of Peace. At his birth angels announced peace to men of good will. Wherever he appeared, words of peace flowed from his lips and streams of peace from his heart. Shortly before his suffering, he bequeathed peace to the Church: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." The peace of Christ is the fruit of the Holy spirit.

Our Seraphic father was a most zealous apostle of peace. He commanded his friars to wish peace to all they met, and on entering a house to say, "Peace be to this house." The first words of his sermons were, "May the Lord give you his peace". Peace was his favorite subject. What he preached, he practiced. Not only did he avoid most carefully whatever might disturb peace, but he healed discord wherever he found it. As his children, it behooves us to do the same.

In order to promote the peace of Christ we must know what this peace is and possess it ourselves. It does not consist in freedom from humiliations, adversities and sufferings. Christ's whole earthly life was a chain of crosses, yet he was at peace. He left us his peace. The peace of Christ consists in complete submission to God's good pleasure. As the heliotrope ever faces the sun from its rising to its going down, so should our mind and heart ever face God and in so doing acquiesce in his holy will.

Complete resignation implies constant watchfulness over ourselves, abstention from all rash judgment and from meddling in affairs that do not concern us. *The Imitation of Christ* says: "Never to feel any disturbance at all, nor to suffer any trouble of mind or body, belongs not to this life, but to the state of eternal rest." No matter what tribulations befall us, if our will runs parallel with the will and pleasure of God, we shall have peace, radiate peace, and our words of peace will be blessed.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

12. MINSTRELS OF THE LORD

Diseases of heart and nerves are on

the increase. The modern way of life is taking its toll. John F. Quinlan, M.D., in *Whither Ethics in Medicine* writes: "Insanity is on the increase. Some authorities claim the increase is out of proportion to the increase in population. Psychiatrists tell us that it is due in a great measure to the strain incidental to making a living. Temperaments which would bear up well in a simpler environment, crack under the strain in our own."

Schizophrenia is given as an illustration. Doesn't it strike you that much of life's complexity is needless? Why this obeisance to wealth, to position, to learning? These futile goals which men have set and for which they goad themselves beyond their endurance, are in greatest measure responsible for the rupture in personality.

"Why worry when you can pray?" Worry bespeaks a tremendous lack of faith, makes one miserable, and changes nothing. Listen to Oliver Wendell Holmes and William James. The first says: "It is faith in something and enthusiasm that makes life worth looking at." The second observes: "The sovereign cure for worry is religion. It supplies motive power for action and the enthusiasm which commits the whole man, mind and heart and soul,

to the undertakings."

These two gentlemen offer good advice for joy in the success of an undertaking, but we want continual joy in God. St. Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always". With regard to our temporal lot we do as Christ and the Psalmist tell us. Christ says: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all things will be given to you besides." The Psalmist writes, "Cast your care upon the Lord, and he will sustain you." We rejoice in the loving care of our heavenly Father.

Pat was a cheerful Christian. "It could be worse", was his invariable comment when any one approached him with complaints. One day a friend told him, "Last night I dreamed I had died and went to Hell." Again, "It could be worse!" The disconcerted friend wanted to know how it could be worse. Pat said, "If it were true!"

"Yes, it could be worse. For a visual demonstration, visit the wards of hospitals. You will discover suffering and sorrow that you never dreamed existed. Your lot in life will appear to be not too bad after all. Your heart will swell with gratitude toward God for his goodness to you.

St. Francis could not bear long faces.

We should be minstrels of the Lord, be cheerful ourselves and spread cheer wherever we can, especially in our families. Cheerfulness is an essential element of Franciscanism. Instead of his mortifications making Francis gloomy or irritable, it heightened his cheerfulness and deepened his joy.

His early love of song never waned, and during his last illness he spent much of his time singing. A God-intoxicated man if there ever was one, his love of God and of all God's creatures flowed from him in language so tender that the words seem like lyrics of love.

13. A HOBBY

This is the day of hobbies; without a hobby one is just not in the swim. We hear of the most fantastic things classified as hobbies. Let me suggest to you a hobby that is as natural as breathing—greater love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus through true Franciscanism.

Here is a hobby the results of which are enjoyed not only here but hereafter. When stamps, bric-a-brac, painting, wood-working, and the like have long passed into oblivion, this hobby will be just bearing fruition, please God, in the Beatific

Vision, as expressed by St. Paul: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the heart of man what God has in store for those who love him."

In other words, make a hobby of some pursuit based on Catholic Action, an activity so necessary today. The Church and civil society need men and women of initiative and energy. When the enemies are working at full speed day and night, we dare not sit back. Nevertheless we must beware of what Pope Pius XII calls "the heresy of action."

Only men and women of God are fit to do God's work. Once they are convinced that an enterprise is God's will, no difficulty, no opposition, no persecution should deter them. Convinced that without Christ we can do nothing, they consider themselves as mere instruments in his hands, claim for themselves neither recognition nor temporal rewards, and leave success or failure to him.

This holy indifference they acquire through fervent mental and vocal prayer, through spiritual reading—in short, that holy inwardness in which God becomes their all, a spirit so commonly resulting from the Third Order spirit and life that it is proverbial.

Sometimes a laudable enterprise which

according to all human calculations ought to succeed goes on the rocks. The preceding statement has one explanation, as the Psalmist says: "Unless the Lord build the house, they have labored in vain who built it. Unless the Lord protects the city, the guard keeps watch in vain."

14. COURAGE

The life of man on earth is a warfare, patient Job tells us. St. Paul says that all who wish to lead a pious life, must be ready to suffer persecution. At best it is no child's play to fight the battles of life, to remain in the state of grace, to live up to the Franciscan standard. Courage is indispensable. If our first parents had had the backbone to resist the Tempter, the human race would not have been plunged into sin and misery. The courageous love of Jesus and Mary brought salvation.

It would be difficult to point out the most courageous act of Jesus, but if one may hazard a thought, it was his prayer of resignation during his agony in the garden of Olives. There he saw himself loaded down with all the sins of the world, and for this filthy mess he was to atone with his life. He saw the terrible

degradation, suffering and death before him.

As he looked down through the years to our day and to us, we may well wonder whether he saw anything in our lives which offered him any degree of solace. He saw the loss of countless souls despite his tremendous sacrifice. He saw the coldness and indifference of souls dedicated to him. His natural aversion to what he saw was so intense that his resistance to it forced blood from his heart through the pores of his body.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, full of grace, versed in the prophets, knew the meaning of courage when she said, "Be it done to me according to your word." When she offered her Babe in the Temple, holy Simeon said to her, "Your own soul a sword shall pierce." Surely the sharpest sword pierced her soul when she, the Mother, stood at the foot of the cross on which her Divine Son was bleeding away his life.

The millions of martyrs and other saints did not lack courage when they followed the example of Jesus and Mary. They represent all walks of life; by far the greatest number of them belonged to the laity. We may assume that even now many saints are hidden under over-

alls and patched house dresses. These good men and women make great sacrifices, such as to attend holy Mass and receive holy Communion on weekdays, to say the Rosary and make a meditation daily, to bear their cross patiently, and to contribute to good causes. They have the courage of the first Christians. No doubt their many prayers and sacrifices are holding back punishments which the wicked world deserves.

One of the many lessons which the saints teach us is that as it is not possible to be near a fire without getting some warmth from it, so it is not possible to be near to the seat of all courage, to God himself, without being imbued with this attribute.

15. CONCLUSION

As an engineer the writer cannot leave the project without resorting to a mathematical formula. Suppose seventy-five per cent is our passing mark in the Book of Life. If we try only to reach this mark, we run a risk of failing. It is nothing unusual to fall below the ideal. If we earnestly work for one hundred per cent, we can safely assume that we shall make seventy-five per cent. Our Divine Head-

master will see to that. For it has never been known that he let a willing fellow down.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must aim high in activities for God and souls, but we must aim still higher in fervent prayer. It has been said that prayer is the strength of man and the weakness of God.

The story has it that John the beloved disciple and Judas the traitor were posed for by the same man, in Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece *The Last Supper*. Years of sin and degradation fitted him for the character of the betrayer from so lofty a start as the portrayer of St. John.

The story presents an obvious lesson. As in this man's life, so in the life of each of us, there is no limit to the height to which we can rise in our quest of God's love, nor to the depth to which we can fall in the rejection of that love. Either depends on our correspondence with God's grace. We can end as John did, with our head on that beloved breast; or end as Judas did—we can hunt for someone who will pay us thirty pieces of silver for the betrayal of the Godman. In effect each mortal sin committed reenacts this crime, and one wonders if the recompense is not often less than thirty

pieces of silver!

We are ever being assured that this, that, or the other is an exact science today. What more exact science is there in the world than the salvation of our soul through the teachings of the Church of our dear Lord? And how could it be otherwise, since the foundation of this Church was laid really long before the wheels of time began to turn, laid by the eternal Wisdom as an essential part of the Divine economy, of God's mighty, all-embracing plan for his glory through the salvation of mankind. Despite its magnitude the plan can be summed up in a few words: We are living for time or for eternity, for God or for mammon, as friends of Christ or as his enemies—there is no middling way.

For the world's ills a choice is offered: Christ or chaos!

Let us borrow a thought from St. Peter's answer to our Lord when he said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of everlasting life." In this instance: If in living lives in imitation of Christ, and thus keeping the commandments of God and the laws of the Church, fashioning our homes after the little home at Nazareth through the family Rosary and Franciscan traditions, helping the

least of God's little ones regardless of race, creed or color because in each we see the lineaments of Christ, and doing unto others as we would have others do unto us,—I say, if the answer is not here, where are we to look for another?

Again, dear reader, you are invited to join our Franciscan family if you do not already belong. To be a saint is not a requirement. Practical Catholicity and the sincere desire to live more closely to our Lord—these are the prime requisites. The Third Order of St. Francis is not nearly so interested in finding saints as it is in making saints. Nor are Tertiaries interested in being better than others—they want above all just to make themselves better than they are now.

And for us Tertiaries, just one parting shot: if we have not arrived as yet at this happy state, what better time than now to ask the reason . . . WHY?

Yes, we have "an apostolic army" in the Third Order of St. Francis—a standing army which numbers millions, and one of the oldest in the world, since it is over 700 years old, although the term young would be more appropriate. This legion throughout the world is trying to follow closely in the footsteps of the Master.

But that the writer may not be misunderstood, he would like to make one point clear. Because of his apparent negativeness at times, this thought has been uppermost in his mind, as stated by St. Francis de Sales: "I am glad that you make a new beginning daily. There is no better means of progress in the spiritual life than to be continually beginning afresh, and never to think we have done enough."

Well, my friend, we have come to the road's end, and I hope you have enjoyed our little chat as much as I have. But I just remember someone has been overlooked in our discussion. Do you know who that is? You are right—it is Mary. Of all people to forget! That must not be! For as Mary brought about the first miracle through her intercession at the marriage feast at Cana, so she will continue to do down through the ages to that day which shall be unique in the history of the world, the day which shall see the sun rise but shall see its setting restrained by the hand of God.

A number of years ago one of London's largest newspapers offered one thousand pounds to the one who would write the best story on the miracle of Jesus changing the water into wine at the marriage

feast at Cana. It was open to any one of whatever age. The number of words was optional. College and university people vied for the very lucrative prize. In some cases volumes were written.

You could never guess who won the contest. A little girl in the sixth grade of St. Mary's parochial school in London! She quoted an English poet: "Jesus looked upon the water, and it blushed in the eyes of its Maker!"

Praises of the Blessed Virgin
by St. Francis

Hail, holy Lady! Most holy Queen!
Mother of God, Mary! Yet ever a Virgin,
Chosen by the most high holy Father
in Heaven,
And by him with his most holy beloved
Son and the Spirit Paraclete consecrated!
You in whom there was and there is
All the fulness of grace and everything
good!
Hail, his palace! Hail, his tabernacle!
Hail his home! Hail, his vesture!
Hail, his handmaiden! Hail his Mother!
And hail too, all you holy virtues, which
by the grace and light of the Holy Ghost
are infused into the hearts of the faith-

ful, to make of the faithless faithful children of God!—*Words of St. Francis.*
MARY, MOTHER OF GOD AND OUR MOTHER, PRAY JESUS FOR US THAT WE MAY BE MADE WORTHY OF THE PROMISES OF CHRIST.”

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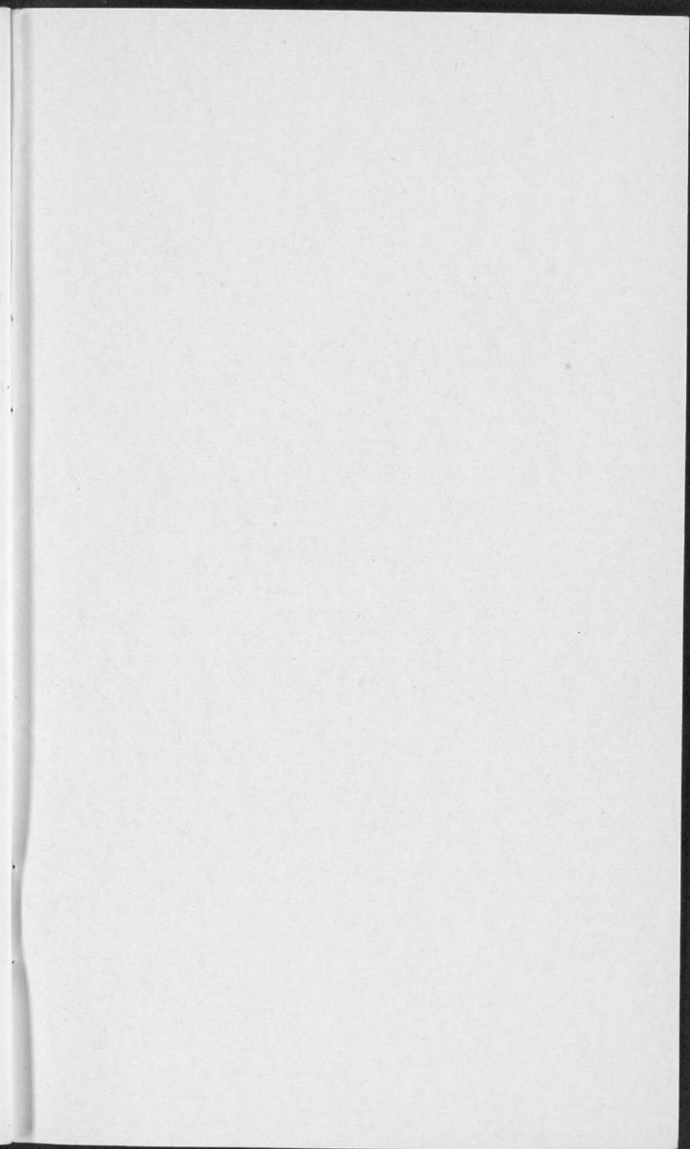
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Yours in the Sacred Heart,

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