

ROCKY ROAD TO RUIN

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IT IS SO EASY to remember our hopes at the end of the war in 1945 and so disheartening to recognize how utterly they have failed to bear fruit. There was much cheering and flag-waving; people prayed for and promised a peace which would never end. We had seen the last of humanity's scourge, war. Peace was assured for generations to come. We could return to the free and wonderful life which should be ours by national heritage. We had had enough of war. Now was the time for peace. There must surely now be peace.

Our hearts are heavy with shame and weary with disappointment when we realize that, three years later, we are still far from the peace we so eagerly desired. True, the shooting has stopped but only with the uneasy hesitation of an armistice and not with the assuring finality of real peace. The flags are still waving, not now to welcome peace, but to fan reluctant hearts into the state of fiery patriotism which is necessary before the shooting may once more begin. Political eloquence is hard at work with the oratory which means war. No one dares promise peace now. Our leaders realize that, of all the planks in the shaky political platform of today, this would be the weakest. Only three years have passed since the end of the war but, with them, has passed all hope of finding the peace for which that war was fought. There is still deep discord in the world. Disagreement and division have ripped the world to the core; absolutely divergent philosophies are being preached and believed by hearts torn asunder by doubt. Nowhere does true unity, the mother of true peace, exist. It is a dark world indeed.

Yet we know that peace and unity do exist in this world even if they are not *of* this world. The Catholic Church possesses this unity and displays it for all to see as one of her most prized gifts and precious heritages. She is one the world over, teaching in the Arctic icelands the same truths that are taught in the

Belgian Congo. She is one because she professes, the world over, one faith, one Lord, and one Baptism. Sharing in this union are millions upon millions of souls all over the earth who are bound together in a sacramental unity which defies all attempts at disruption. Through the Sacraments all Catholics become one, loving one another because they love God. Seven steps, as it were, to unity, the Sacraments bring us slowly, but inevitably together; they bring us slowly, but inevitably to God. Many men become One Man, losing their selfish qualities, acquiring the greatness of heart which was Christ's. They seek peace, giving what is due to God and neighbor. The Catholic soul is a generous soul, united in love with all men and at peace in his heart.

THE WORLD HAS ITS OWN WAY

The Catholic way is a strange way in the eyes of the world. The Sacraments are as foreign to the children of darkness as is the Christ who gave those Sacraments. We are superstitious medievalists who place our hopes in unreasoning ritual and silly ceremony. Yet, strange to relate, these very scoffers have themselves set up a system of their own wherein they hope to find the peace which seems always to slip from their narrow, pleasure-grasping fingers. They have set up their own sacraments, sacraments of sin and corruption, synthetic sacraments which will not unite the hearts of men with the golden bond of love but will tear them asunder with the terrific force of hate. Theirs are sacraments which are not the means of sanctification but the sure road to hell and damnation. Still, they hope to find peace and unity in these sacraments, seeing in them the answer to their yearnings and desires. But it is a useless quest, for these worldly sacraments lead not to the unity that brings peace but to the disruptive uneasiness of discontent and unrest.

It is a strange system they have devised, a litany of license standing in bold opposition to everything that might be considered Christian and worthy of the nobility and dignity which is man's. For the Sacrament of Baptism, they have substituted Birth Control; for Confirmation they have adopted Physical Culture, Gluttony has taken the place of the Eucharist and the tribunal of Penance has given way to Freudian Psychoanalysis; Divorce replaces Matrimony and Holy Orders falls to Rugged Individualism while Extreme Unction yields its place to the last official ministrations of Euthanasia.

THEIR PART IN PEACE

What has been the contribution to the cause of world unity and peace made by these sacraments of the world? What, first of all, has been the part played by Birth Control in fostering the unity of the human race? Disregard for human life is its only fruit. Catholic truth maintains that God alone has the power of giving and taking life; the Sacrament of Baptism adds to this life, giving it greater abundance and promising a life without end. Those who practice Birth Control deny God's power over life and death and assume it to themselves; in their selfishness they have neither the desire nor the time to give to the raising of children. Tampering with life, they reap death. Birth Control is the first weapon for the disruption of the family. World unity can never exist if society is diseased at its very roots with the evil of broken families. Still these worldlings will continue to look for peace. They fail, and wonder why.

Has Physical Culture played a big part in the search for peace? Is it strength of the body that is needed for peace? Rather is it not strength of soul, strength to be generous, strength to love, strength which comes to the Catholic through Confirmation? With Physical Culture in the scale of the world's values belongs the prevalent deification of the physical sciences. Although admirable in themselves, they are still ordered to the care of the body and, when overemphasized, tend rather to its destruction. We are living in the Golden Age of Physical Comfort; there is no part of the world which cannot be reached in a short space of time. News over a day old is not news; it is history. The earth has become but a large city. To that extent we have achieved unity and are becoming ever more unified. The unity of a few years ago was likened to the unity of the atom. That unity is gone now. It blew up over Hiroshima.

Unity cannot be on the physical level and pass for true unity. All things physical are divisible. They can only help, or hinder, the unity of higher things. To cultivate bodily culture, physical strength, or material power, without regard for anything higher, is not to cultivate or foster unity. If these things are developed without the guide of the soul they lead to chaos. Monsters appear in the land; great dim-witted monsters who play with things like money, power and atoms. It is only by being strong spiritually that we shall have the strength to guide the power of our bodies and of the universe to its proper goal. Confirmation, not

Physical Culture, will help us do this; Confirmation, not Physical Culture, will contribute to world unity.

MORE WAYS TO RUIN

What have Gluttony and Selfishness done to bring about peace? They have succeeded in blinding men to the fellowship which they share in Christ. They have cast a shadow over man's spiritual eyesight; he is prevented from seeing Christ in other men and he heeds not the cries for help from a starving world. Many in Europe are living lives of extreme wretchedness because they have no food, no coal, and no shelter. The glutton, selfish to the core, cares little to help.

On the contrary, the man who believes in the tremendous reality of the most Holy Eucharist, who loves Christ therein contained, will also love Christ no matter wherein He is contained. A fervent reception of Holy Communion is equivalent to a fervent prayer for the welfare of the Mystical Body. It is not selfish, for by receiving Our Lord we seek to become like Him; and in becoming like unto Him, we grow greatly in love, in generosity. These dispositions go a long way toward unity and peace; the selfishness of the glutton does not.

The world takes another step toward its concept of peace and unity with the ministrations of Freudian Psychoanalysis. This is not to condemn the good which can certainly be accomplished by a conscientious straight-thinking psychiatrist; we speak here of the charlatan who attempts to substitute the couch for the confessional, reducing any concept of Christian morality to middle classed, Middle Aged taboos and superstition. He claims for himself the power of cleansing the conscience by removing the restrictive blocs and pent-up impulses of conventional morality and permitting the soul to run headlong, free and easy, into the abyss of self destruction. This is his admirable contribution to peace and unity in the world. Those who go to him, seeking, at least implicitly, the forgiveness of sins, will never find peace. God alone has power to forgive sins and He has not delegated such power to pseudo-psychiatrists. The priest in the confessional has that power. Certainly he contributes more, immeasurably more, to world unity than does any psychiatrist, good or bad. The repentance and forgiveness of the Sacrament of Penance are necessary for peace. In the psychiatrist's office there is no such repentance and forgiveness.

What has divorce contributed to the unity of the human race? The very word itself suggests anything but unity. It is a knife thrust to the very heart of the family. It has weakened the strong foundation upon which world unity must be built. The Catholic Church by preserving whole and incorrupt her doctrine on Christian marriage is the only institution in the world that can assure world unity. The sacrilegious treatment of the sanctity of marriage has gone far toward bringing about the moribund morality of the present day world. Divorce is now the sacrament; permanent union the oddity. The Church has been firm. It is obvious now that she has also been right. True seekers after world unity look with longing on the Church's doctrine on marriage. It is surely the beginning of the answer. But too many refuse to listen.

THE ROAD OF THE RUGGED

There is something virile to the phrase Rugged Individualism. There is something pitiful and sterile about the fact. When man first conceived of himself as an individual, then later as a rugged one, he began what we call the heresy of secularism. God may exist; He does not influence or interest me. I alone am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul. I shall make a million dollars if I wish. I can do whatever I please. I am responsible to no one. With such an outlook on life, anything could happen, and did. Under the guise of liberty was found the ugliness of disobedience. The chains of authority were cast aside for the debasing shackles of slavery to the passions. Can that be the road to unity and peace? Slavery denies freedom of action which is a preamble to peace. When men are united with God through faith, freedom is found at its best. Whenever that bond has been destroyed by disobedience, the heritage of freedom is exchanged for the servitude of the passions.

The Church has chosen a good word to describe the Sacrament of Authority. She calls it Holy Orders. In that name there is seen the necessity for and the act of the Sacrament itself. So that all may live lives properly ordered to God, someone has to give orders, to show the way in the darkness. All men are the children of God; but, children being what they are, someone must have charge of them, must help them along the way, showing them the path. There must be someone to direct them and make laws for them. If men would listen to these delegates of

God, there would be no trouble. There would be unity of action and affection and, consequently, peace. But Rugged Individualism is opposed, lock, stock and barrel to Holy Orders. It is a false sacrament giving a false peace.

OUT OF THEIR MISERY

The world has even devised a sacrament to parallel Extreme Unction. It has taken refuge in an act which is opposed most obviously to the common good of the whole race. Euthanasia is an attack on a most precious right of man, the right to life; and, as such, is certainly a most hateful enemy of society. It reduces man's dignity to the level of the utilitarian. A man has a right to life, they say, as long as he is useful. When he has outlived his usefulness, he must be destroyed like an aged cat who can no longer catch mice. This perversion of outlook found its most gruesome expression in the unbridled cruelty and murder of the prison camps of Europe. Euthanasia cannot be reconciled with the common good and, consequently, cannot bring peace and unity into the world.

Could such a doctrine of death be reconciled with the Catholic Sacrament of Extreme Unction? The Christian believing in this Sacrament is filled with hope, with confidence and joy. He loves life because he knows life. The Euthanasia advocates are pessimists who fear life, running from a monster of their own making. The Christian can be a confirmed optimist, possessing a freedom of spirit and a joy which goes a long way toward obtaining peace of mind, of the family and of the world.

We can see then that the Church has the only sure road to true unity in her Sacraments. They were instituted by Christ to lead us closer to God, the first principle of all unity. If we do not have the grace of Christ in our souls, unity can never exist. This life should be a foretaste of the next. Here we should know something of that charity which makes all men one. Strengthened by the Sacraments, we should yearn for the day when we, in perfect peace and unity, shall contemplate the Most Holy Trinity for all eternity.