

Editorial

The people of God of the New Alliance are not a people set apart and isolated, but a people intermingled with the rest of mankind. They are the wheat left to grow with the cockle, the leaven by which all mankind will be brought to Christ. (Mt. 13:24-33)

The people of the Old Alliance were the bearers of the seed of the true faith. However, in God's economy of salvation, their faith had not yet been confirmed. They were far from steadfast in their allegiance to Yahweh and their faith was fragile. That the seed of the true faith might be preserved Yahweh forbade their intermingling with other peoples lest they be persuaded to worship strange gods. They were commanded to isolate themselves and to form a ghetto nation. They interpreted this command so strictly that they began their conquest of the Promised Land by exterminating entire populations, men, women and children.

With the salvific activity of Christ a new people was formed, a people whose faith is nourished and confirmed by the Spirit. This people, which in its beginnings is compared to a mustard seed, (Mt. 13:31-32) was given the command to preach the good news to all nations. Thus the people of the New Alliance would no longer confine themselves to the ghetto. There would no longer be any need for artificial means to protect a fragile faith. The proper locale for this people is in the world with other men, other men waiting to hear the good news of salvation.

Does this mean that the monastic or contemplative life is a perversion of God's economy of salvation? Certainly not, for Christ himself

tells us that "Mary has chosen the better part." (Lk. 10:42) Contemplatives do not retreat to their monasteries to protect a fragile faith, but rather to "give themselves to God alone in solitude and . . . constant prayer." (Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, 7.) The role of the contemplative, like that of other Christians, is giving witness to Christ in the midst of men. "They brighten God's people with the richest splendors of sanctity. By their example they motivate this people, by imparting a hidden apostolic fruitfulness they make this people grow. Thus they are the glory of the Church and an overflowing fountain of heavenly graces." (7)

St. Paul points out that "not all members have the same function." (Rom. 12:4) Not all Christians are called to lead the same form of life, very few are called to be contemplatives. But all are called to the mission of spreading the faith of Christ, all are called to be missionaries. Christians living in the world among men exercise their function as leaven by living their faith—a faith that is exteriorized by acts of charity, a faith that should not fear corruption in a non-Christian society.

The faith of the people of the New Alliance is strong and incorruptible because it is constantly renewed and invigorated by the liturgy. Christians come together in the liturgy to relive salvation history. In the first part of the mass they are placed in a situation comparable to that of the Old Alliance. They are instructed by the word of God, they are given an understanding of their faith and are thus prepared to relive the Pascal Mystery. In the second part of the mass the salvific activity of Christ is re-enacted and the mass is concluded with the faithful fulfilling the command of Christ to eat his flesh and to drink his blood. The faithful emerge from the liturgy strengthened in their faith and prepared to go out into the world to give witness to Christ.

The world is not a Christian world and never has been, although Christians have been giving witness to Christ for almost two thousand years. We may not reasonably expect that the world will become Christian within our own lifetimes, but we must, nevertheless, continue our mission as apostles of Christ. Our world is a world of sin and corruption, of war, violence and hatred, but it is also a world in which is found the people of the New Alliance through whom, some day, the whole world will be leavened.