

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER CORNER

In League with the Sacred Heart

By Rev. PEDRO VERCELES, S.J.
National Director

As, at present everybody is talking about Communism and Religion, it may be well to point out why there is such opposition between Catholicism and Communism.

Communism is not only a political enemy which threatens our freedom, it is not only the enemy of our culture and religion which prowls around our frontiers as Islam of ancient times. It is a mighty force that pervades every place and threatens everything. Like Catholicism it claims to be universal and it has spread with the rapidity of lightning all over the world; frontiers are unknown to it, it passes through the most compact lines, enters well guarded strongholds, unbalances the clearest minds and shakes the most steadfast of hearts.

Like Catholicism, it has its apostles who go everywhere, and make "converts" in the most unexpected quarters. It has its fanatics, who call themselves martyrs. Like Catholicism it pretends to ennoble man and with man the whole of human society, to raise it to the highest level it can possibly attain, and thus create a new civilization, a new literature, a new moral code, a new ideal, a new

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ABOUT THE ARTICLE

The following speech delivered by the Rev. Father Ledit, S.J. in one of the A of P directors' conventions in Rome, will be of great interest not only to our Associates and Promoters but also to all our Cross readers. It is timely, solid, interesting.

May we take this opportunity of inviting once again Cross readers to join the Apostleship of Prayer. Conditions for membership are easy and simple, but the benefits are many and most consoling. To Promoters the Sacred Heart made this promise. "Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be effaced."

To become a member, apply to your Parish Priest or write to the National Office of the Apostleship of Prayer, 2821, Herran, Manila.

— The National Director

THE APOSTLESHIP . . .

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human race! If ever the world has seen a more fantastic realization of the diabolical scheme, which St. Ignatius describes in his meditation on the "Two Standards" it has now certainly become a fact which even the blind must see.

It is needless to say that Communism is the enemy of Religion; only those who do not wish to see can deny it. Communism is non-religious and anti-religious.

First, it is non-religious inasmuch as it tries to build up a society from which God is banished. It is hard for us to realize the great extent of this plan, since religion fills the very air we breathe. Surrounded by our churches, having always the crucifix before our eyes, receiving our Catholic newspapers and listening to the intimate confidences of our faithful, we are, as it were, steeped in the supernatural. There is nothing like that in Russia. For a great number of the U. R. S. S. inhabitants God no longer exists. The faithful must worship God in secret.

The quinquennial plans have given rise to new cities that have, so to speak, sprung up from the desert. No churches, no priests, no divine worship for these countless multitudes.

Whole districts are today without church and without priest, to be exact for our Catholics there are just two foreign priests. The lamps which burned before the Blessed Sacrament are extinguished. . . . The little bol-

shevik, goes to the Kindergarten, then to school and meetings of the pioneers; from there he passes to the Komsomol, then to the factory and to the army, takes part in all the sports, grows old and dies, and during all these years, the school the press, the public speakers, the government decrees, have told him that there is no God! Atheism, formerly was madness of the few, now it has become the normal state of countless multitudes.

If, when meditating on hell, we can understand, that the essence of damnation is the loss of God, we may feel some pity for the immense masses immersed in this inferno of the U. R. S. S.

For the materialist, who looks on things only from the outside, these considerations have no interest whatsoever; but they fill with horror and dismay the Christian soul, the soul of the priest, who is forever trying to gauge the void caused by the absence of God.

Bolshevism is even more anti-religious than non-religious. In former days the Commissary of Public Instruction declared that the anti-religious propaganda was not necessary in the Soviet school, that is was enough for education to be non-religious. A late decision (For Communistic Education, Aug. 4, 1937) declares that such a theory is rotten and harmful. It is not enough to be non-religious, it is necessary to be anti-religious. God is the enemy, He must be attacked, and against Him all weapons are good.

First there is the weapon of blasphemy. It is hard for us to understand the meaning of blasphemy, when it has attained such a degree of universality. So in order to have some idea of it, we must go back to the meditation on hell.

There is the fashionable blasphemy of the "professor," who "proves" that there is no God, and that science is in conflict with the Bible; there is the blasphemy of the popular heroine, the champion of parachutisme when, for example, she declares that she has not found God in the clouds; there is the coarse blasphemy of the militant atheist who draws caricatures in the "Bezbozhnik", which he thinks are amusing, but which are only impure.

Always and everywhere, the same idea: God as an enemy; the enemy of the poor, the ally of those who cheat the people; the enemy of progress, allied to those who keep the world in ignorance and misery. All this is explained to little children when they begin to go to school and is kept up all through out their education.

Then there is desecration and sacrilege. The churches are closed, destroyed or desecrated. It is useless to repeat here the history of past years, when the churches one by one were closed; useless to remind the make-believe tales told by the bolsheviks, to explain to the world that they did not mean persecution. Many churches have been converted into anti-religious museums; and barns for animals, desecration has been thor-

ough; statues, and even sacred vestments are used for shameful and anti-religious campaign.

Finally, there is persecution. Persecution of the clergy; more than one hundred priests Bishops are now under the Soviet law, most of them in concentration camps; others confined to places where life is nearly impossible. Persecution of the faithful; the introduction of the uninterrupted week, with the obligation to work on Sundays and holidays under the penalty of confiscation of wages that go to pay for the anti-religious propaganda; sentences of imprisonment, sentences of death.

Doubtless there have been in the past, blasphemies, desecrations and persecutions, but never have they been so universal as now. The world had never seen an immense country such as Russia, reject all form of worship and all religious creeds... And wherever Communism enters, we see the same phenomena changing here and there, according to the different countries, but having the same universal characteristics. Think of the bloody deeds now perpetrated in those countries, the convents and churches behind the iron curtain, desecrated, the nuns priests and bishops massacred or persecuted and with universality which afford clear proof that we are witnessing the workings of a carefully thought-out diabolical plan.

Satan has risen to drive out God. And it is appalling to see that so many people have no clear idea of what he is about. The vision of the Apocolypse, where Michael fights the

dragon and his angles, is terrible; but here the arena is the whole world. On one side the well-organized forces of international atheism, drawn together by hatred of God; all this scene strangely lighted by the fantastic mixture of smoke and fire of which St. Ignatius speaks, and which deceives so many minds that we believed were better forearmed. On the other side, the humble-spiritual forces of the Church, *Infirma munde*, ridiculed by those who believe only in human means to fight against a diabolical force, scattered like a flock of sheep surprised by a storm, "*pusillus grex*". Will this little flock ever understand that its best weapon is its great weakness? *INFIRMA MUNDI ELEGIT DEUS UT FORTIA QUAEQUE CONFUNDAT*. God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the strong.

And here, we must admire and wonder at the great mercy of God towards His Church. What treasures has He not granted Her through the devotion of the Sacred Heart applied to human society, that is, devotion to Christ the King.

It was during the 1st century that the Apostleship of Prayer was founded. Its aim is to point out the supernatural aspect of the Church's conquests at her struggle against her enemies. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, through the Apostleship of Prayer is the remedy God has given us for the great evils from which mankind is suffering.

It is a devotion for humble souls. The "Messengers of the Sacred

Heart" are not intended for a small circle; they are widely read in our Christian families, teaching them how to live humbly and in a Christian manner. Among workmen, in the peasants' homes, wherever there are Christians who pray and suffer, there is always to be found a picture of the Sacred Heart. It may be such a one as to make an artist smile, but is one which has dried many a tear and inspired many a heroic resolution. The prayers, communions, sacrifices, holy hours, all these practices of piety, which play such an important although sometimes unknown part in the history of mankind, are brought about by these little monthly pamphlets of the Apostleship of Prayer, which do not dazzle anybody, which are not even noticed by those who think themselves entrusted with destinies of the world. The program of self-sacrifice implied by the word "promoter" assures to the Apostleship of Prayer a scope of action all the more widely spread as the promoter is often chosen from among the lowly ones of the world.

The means used by the Apostleship of Prayer have a supernatural efficacy.

The daily offering teaches the members of the Apostleship of Prayer resignation. The work and suffering of every day are not a burden, but form a precious treasure which is offered every morning to the Sacred Heart. That will not prevent a Christian from fighting so necessary, against the dangers which threaten his children, his family and his coun-

try; but his fight will be the fight not of a rebel but of a crusader. Thus the soil where communism implants its doctrine of hatred and revolt will be purified anew every morning.

For, let us say it again, the essential condition for the success of communistic propoganda, is not poverty and depression although these factors have an importance not to be denied, but it is the naturalism and matericlism which have penetrated everywhere, even at times, among the clergy, who have forgotten, at least in some places, what is the meaning of evangelical poverty. If in the midst of the crisis through which some countries are passing today, those who best withstand the instigations of the "extended hand", are

precisely those workmen who are suffering under the stain of misery and want of work, is not that in itself a striking proof that poverty and misery prepare the soul for heroism as well as for revolt?

During the recent strike in France, a poor working woman who had enrolled all her co-workers in a Christian union, and in the Apostleship of Prayer, was violently threatened. The godless so terrified her companions that they no longer dared to receive the monthly pamphlets which came to remind them that they were to offer to God "the prayers, works and sufferings of the day." Is not this a proof that the Reds well understood the efficacy of this little practice?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

A SCARECROW OF A SONNET

By ESTELITA JUCO

The scarecrow stands with outstretched hands
 Beamed on by heaven's sun;
 About him flaps some tattered rags
 To make him look like man.

My country quakes with "surplus" fakes
 About which nothing's done;
 My leaders tell that all is well
 And that bribes are "just for fun".

The scarecrow and the state today
 Are much alike,—here's why:
 They think superficial display
 Can fool the public's eye.
 The real self which they conceal
 Truth's breezes time and again reveal.