

PERPLEXED

by a Parish Priest

I am an average priest, a much misunderstood individual. People suspect me of being a little more than human, but continue to invite me to eat their dinners and drink their wine. If I partake of the latter, they call me a "dear" and a "good fellow". If I refuse they can claim to be edified.

They expect me to have no faults, but keep on searching for them, and having discovered a few—well!

When I have not prepared my sermon and my mind is cloudy and my ideas chaotic, they say I am too deep; but when I have labored with zeal, and memorized my sermon they say I am superficial.

When through "money talks" I meet my parish obligations, I am a "money grubber"; but when I do not plead

for money and my parish goes into debt, I am a "poor business man."

When my liver is out of order and I am physically ill and mentally tired, they say I look pious and saintly. When I am well and bubbling over with zeal, they say I am frivolous.

They think I should love everyone in the parish; and when I make a fairly good bluff at doing so they call me a hypocrite, but when I admit there are some I am not crazy about they call me a snob.

My wealthy parishioners find fault with me if I do not call upon them; the poor ones if I do call on the rich.

Some people, in my presence, pretend to be keenly interested in all things per-

taining to religion. They minimize my intelligence and exaggerate their own histrionic ability.

The stingy people who contribute a very, very small proportion of their income to the Church pity me because I have such a hard time, raising funds. Those who contribute generously think I have a very nice job.

Some wonder what I do with all my time, others pity me because I have so much to do.

They want me to be more of a layman and to represent them in civil activities, but they are forever praising Father So-and-So because he is so "quiet and retiring. He is such a holy man." If I use forceful and catchy phrases in my sermons they say I am sensational. If I don't they

will not come to hear me. Many seem to think I am a millionaire; canvassers think I am easy; tramps know I am.

Now I want to tell the world: That my Roman collar changes not my human nature. I am quite the same as other men. That I enjoy a good time just as they do, but I prefer to choose my own kind of sport. That a long time ago I got sick of "apple sauce" and "soft soap". That I have grown immune to knocks and criticism. That I appreciate honest praise and want no man's pity. That I am giving the best that is in me to my work and believe that God will reward me. That I want no favor and seek only the opportunity to show that I am a real man and try to be a real priest. So there you are.

PARTING SHOT

One of his parishioners met the priest as he was leaving for a new parish. "Oh Father," she said, "how we will miss your wonderful sermons."

Slightly flattered, the priest replied: "Never fear, the Bishop will send you another good preacher."

"Yes," answered the parishioner, unconsolated and slightly abstracted, "that's what they all say, but the last five have been getting worse and worse."