



The Carmelite News

FEBRUARY 1992



THE NEW YEAR

Well, doesn't time fly! We hardly seem to have put the decorations up before it is time to take them down again; and the "new" year is already well under way, bringing the usual mixture of good things and not so good things. I suppose it is all the hype in the media as the calendar changes that makes us think of the future more at this time of year than we usually do most of the time. In our weaker moments we tend to scan the horizon with some apprehension and foreboding. Certainly the new year we have entered *will* have its share of

anxious hours, hours of sickness, perhaps death; friendless, lonely hours; moments when the lump in our throat swells and the tear in our eye refuses to be concealed; hours when our troubles seem greater even than our God, when our enemies seem closer than our Saviour. But as the people of God redeemed by the precious blood of Christ we can put our hand in his and go courageously forward. For if our faith is firmly grounded in his Word then when the days of sickness come to us in the year that lies ahead we shall hear his voice whisper the comforting

assurance: "I am the Lord that heals you" (Ex.15:26). If the wings of the angel of death be heard about our home before this year comes to a close, we shall hear the voice of him who sent the angel proclaiming: "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me shall never die." (Jn.11:25-26). When that friendless, lonely hour comes to us as the year stretches before us we shall feel his loving arm about us and his cheering voice saying: "I will never leave you or forsake you." (Dt.31:6&8) "Lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world." (Mt.28:20) In any trial we will be fortified by the eternal promise: "When he calls to me, I will answer; in time of trouble I will be with him." (Ps.91:15).

So in your prayers tell him what you would like done about your problem, then trust him and pray that his will be done.

LEFT FROM LAST YEAR

We are awash with anniversaries at the moment. Last year it was the Metric System (1791), Mozart died (1791), St. John of the Cross died (1591). This year it is Rossini born (1792), Galileo invented the first primitive thermometer (the thermoscope) (1592), and the Carmelites arrived in England (1242 - 750 years ago!). But I couldn't let 1991 go without saying something - a bit late, but there was no room in last year's Newsletters without making the print even smaller (which heaven forbid, you say) - about it being the 100th anniversary of a



In CLASSIFIED ADS:

Kittens, £1 each. Call Ben.

Kittens free. Call Ben's mum.

very, very important Catholic document: the encyclical letter "The Condition of Labour" (official Latin title "Rerum Novarum") issued in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII. It proved to be so important that later popes chose its 40th, 70th, 80th, 90th and 100th anniversaries to issue encyclicals stressing and developing its message. Six other major documents from the popes, the documents of the 2nd Vatican Council, the 1971 Synod of Bishops took up its themes. Obviously I cannot cover 100 years of Catholic social teaching in this letter, but it is instructive to list the topics touched upon in these historic documents:

Rights of workers; just remuneration; the dignity of work; unions; Role of private property; responsible ownership; Duties of workers and employers; labour and capital; Capitalism and Socialism.

Role of public authority. Role of the Church. International trade; economic planning; international cooperation; international action on justice and peace; the gap between rich and poor nations. International relations. The Common Good. Human dignity and aspirations; respect for families; care for the poor; option for the poor. Justice and peace; structural injustice; education for justice. Political activities. Ecological concern. Universal and local churches; role of local churches; duties of individual Christians.

I think it may surprise you that the Catholic Church has had anything at all to say to the faithful and to the world about most of these topics. Indeed the Church's social teaching of this last 100 years has been called our best kept secret! One reason at least for this is that the official documents themselves are written in a difficult and abstract style and make pretty heavy reading. It is often difficult


as you struggle to understand what they say to feel that you are reading about the real world you and I live in. But another reason is that many of us are lagging a long way behind the Church in our thinking.

The Age of Enlightenment (the 18th Century) rejected many traditional social and political ideas, demeaned religious belief and put its faith in rationalism - the use of human reason alone - to solve all our problems. Unfortunately the events of world history have dashed those hopes that secular society, based on human reason severed from religious faith, could lead to unending progress. Instead, along with the progress there undoubtedly has been, it seems to have unleashed forces which threatened to destroy the world.

The Church's reaction to the rationalist philosophy was to turn inward, and

isolate itself from the rest of the world. And so in that world religion came to be felt as a private affair between the individual and God, with little or nothing to say to secular society about how it should organise itself. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical "The Condition of Labour" (1891) was the first move to reassert the Christian voice in world affairs. It was prompted by the inhuman conditions that were the normal plight of workers in industrial society, (i.e. largely Europe and N. America). Slowly the later documents widened the area of comment and strengthened the claim of the Church to speak on all aspects of what has come to be called in brief **Justice & Peace**.

During this last century, but especially since the 2nd Vatican Council, we have seen the Church become once again a **world** church, speaking confidently to the whole world about




If only I might love my God and die! -
But now he bids me love him and live on,
Now when the bloom of all my life is gone,
The pleasant half of life has quite gone by.

My tree of hope is lopp'd that spread so high;
And I forget how summer glowed and shone,
While autumn grips me with its fingers wan,
And frets me with its windy sigh.

When autumn passes then must winter numb,
And winter may not pass a weary while.
But when it passes spring shall flower again:
And in that spring who weepeth now shall smile -
Yea, they shall wax who now are on the wane,
Yea, they shall sing for love when Christ shall come.

- Christina Rossetti
20th February 1865



truly world-wide issues.

Unfortunately too many of us within the Church, let alone those outside the Church, still see religion as a private matter, not as a guiding force in society. Partly, at least, this is because our own lives, our own motives, are too concerned with looking after ourselves and not with sharing the burdens of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church's call to the world to sort itself out will involve a lot of very uncomfortable change (i.e., conversion - which is what Lent is really all about) in our own individual lives.

Looking through the Church's official documents on social matters during the last century it is possible to see **ten** themes emerge and develop.

1. Religion and the social dimensions of life are linked. The human organization of the world (i.e. society) is intimately involved with the dynamism of the Kingdom of God: it is a part of God's plan. Therefore faith and justice are necessarily linked closely together.

2. The Dignity of the human person. Made in the image of God, women and men have a pre-eminent place in the social order, with inalienable rights both political and legal, social and economic. The fundamental question to ask about any social change or proposed development: what is happening to people?

3. Option for the poor. Preferential love should be shown to the poor - that is to those who are economically disadvantaged and who as a consequence of their state suffer oppression and are powerless themselves to remedy the situation - because their needs and rights are given special attention in God's eyes.

4. The link between love and justice. Charity (that is the concern

**Where there is no love put love
and you will draw out love.**

- St. John of the Cross
(in a letter)

for the good of others) must show itself in **structures** (i.e., organisation) and **actions** which respect human dignity, protect human rights and facilitate human development. Promoting justice means changing those structures and habits of thought which block the action of charity.

5. Promotion of the Common Good. We must develop those economic, political and cultural conditions of social living which make it possible for men and women readily and fully to achieve the perfection of their humanity.

6. Political participation. Democratic participation in decision making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people. The government is the instrument by which people co-operate in order to achieve the common good.

7. Economic justice. The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be equitably shared by all. Human work is the key to contemporary social questions. Labour takes precedence over both capital and technology in the production process. Just wages and the right of workers to organise (i.e., form unions) are to be respected.

8. Stewardship. All property has a "social mortgage". All people are to be respected and share the resources of the earth. By our work we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth.

9. Global solidarity. We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the development of all peoples across the world. In particular, rich nations have responsibilities towards the poor

From
The Book of the Lover
(which is the Soul)
and the Beloved
(who is Jesus)

by
Ramon Lull
(c1233-c1315)

282 The Lover builded and made a fair city wherein his Beloved might dwell. Of love, thoughts, tears, complaints and griefs he builded it; with joy, hope and devotion he adorned it; and with faith, justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance he furnished it.

342 The Lover thought upon death, and he was afraid, until he remembered the city of his Beloved, to which city love and death are the gates and the entrance.

nations, and the structures of the international order must reflect justice.

10. Promotion of peace. Peace is the fruit of justice, and is dependent upon right order among humans and among nations. The arms race must cease and progressive disarmament take place if the future is to be secure. In order to promote peace and the conditions of peace, an effective international authority (such as the United Nations) is necessary.

When you put it all together, even in a brief summary like this, it is no wonder that politicians get upset as the Church raises its voice and insists that the values of the Gospel are to be applied to all human society. Let us resolve in this new year that when we do our little bit to affect the future of the world (that is, when we vote) we will inspect the credentials of those who gratuitously offer to act on our behalf very carefully in the

light of the Church's **social** teaching as well as on particular points of private morality.

SAINTS OF CARMEL (5)

Blessed Baptist Spagnoli (1447-1516) was the second of eleven children born to Pietro Modover (alias Spagnoli from his country of origin) and Constanza Maggi. Pietro was High Steward in the Palace of the Marquis of Mantua, and this position allowed him to provide exceptional educational opportunities for his children, opportunities that Baptist did not waste. He studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew first at Mantua, then at Parma where at the age of 15 he wrote the Eclogues, poems on which his fame after death rested. They were remarkably sophisticated works, showing great skill and facility in composition. They were reprinted many times and held up alongside such prestigious ancient authors as Virgil, as models of Latin composition. They were in use as text-books in schools into this century! Shakespeare quotes from one in "Love's labour lost", and their influence - even some of their very words - can be found in Spencer and Milton. In 1661 Charles Hoole, then Head Master of my old school, recommended them "for afternoon lessons on Mondayes and Wednesdayes" in his book *New Discoveries in the Old Art of Teaching School*.

Having given this example of his exceptional talent with words, the next year Baptist entered the Carmelite Priory at Ferrara. He progressed rapidly through his studies, rising through profession, lectorship, Master of Theology, ordination, and Prior. He was Prior at Parma, Mantua and the new House in Rome. Eventually he was elected (six times in succession!) as Vicar-General of the

Mantuan Congregation - a group of priories united in living a "reformed" (i.e., stricter) life style, but remaining within the Carmelite Order (unlike the Discalced reform in Spain 150 years later which separated as an independent Order). Although often away on the Congregation's business (such as the new House in Rome) Mantua remained his base. He was elected Prior-General of the whole Order in 1513. He died in Mantua on 20 March 1516. He was interred first in the Carmelite Church, then re-interred in the Cathedral where his remains are today. He was declared "Blessed" in 1885. In the calendar today he is celebrated with a *Memoria* on 17th April. He was described by a contemporary as "a little man of unprepossessing appearance but of supreme genius and very great beauty of soul."

The reason he is honoured by the Carmelites with a public cult (which began in Mantua immediately after his death, such was his reputation as a preacher) is because he dedicated the fruitfulness of an uncommon literary genius to the service of his Order and of the Church. The lines just seemed to pour themselves from his pen. He is credited with 70 titles, 57 of which were published in print (some running to over 150 reprints down to the present day). Three books on the politics of the day, three books on the Virginity of Mary (running to 55,000 lines!), six more on six virgin saints, 12 books commenting on the feasts in the Roman Kalendar - including a spirited defence of the Immaculate Conception of Our

Lady, a feast the Carmelites have always promoted. In prose there were books on the religious life, the virtue of patience, and a *Defence of the Carmelite Order against Detractors*, and many more. All his works reveal his great love for his Order and for Our Lady, its Patron. But he could be firm when occasion demanded. While Vicar-General of the Mantuan Congregation he preached very plainly before the pope (so plainly that Luther quoted him with approval!) against the evils and abuses afflicting the Church in his time, and was appointed to a Committee set up to propose remedies. So on the 17th April let us each ask his intercession that God will give us the strength and determination to use whatever talent, large or small, that he has given us to build up the Kingdom and to work to establish that justice and peace which are its foreshadowing on earth.

And that is it for now. I have a holy Lent working on your conversion of heart, and a joyous Easter celebrating what you have achieved. Remember us in your prayers as we remember you in ours here at the Shrine of St. Jude - not that we consider you a hopeless case, but we all need all the prayers we can get as we go about our Father's business, don't we?

God bless you, Our Lady guard and guide you, and St. Jude intercede for you.

David J. Fox, O. Carm

FORTHCOMING NOVENAS

To St. Patrick	9th-17th March
To St. Joseph	19th-27th March
Easter Novena	11th-19th April
To St. Jude	15th-23rd May