

ST. PAUL'S PLAN FOR MAKING CONVERTS

By R. CAMERON, O.S.A., B.A., M.Sc.

Idealism

As G. K. Chesterton says, "For the man of action there is nothing but idealism." Down through the ages there has never lived a great man who was not an idealist. It is idealism which can muster all our human energies, tap all our resources, and direct all our inner drives towards some great accomplishment. St. Paul was an idealist.

The most ardent man who ever lived was this great Apostle of the Gentiles. With a burning zeal that was a force invincible, he went forth to preach Christ in every corner of the then known world. All through his apostolic life the source of his abounding ardour was in Christ. He himself said that it was the love of Jesus that pressed him on. His high ideal was Christ.

Entirely captivated by his own profound knowledge of Christ and enslaved to his divine Ideal, the Apostle pressed on always, doing all things for Christ and for His Church. Never before had there been a man so motivated by such mighty ideas. It has been truthfully said that powerful ideas have arms and legs that force us into action. Paul was thus forced into action.

His Great Idea

So Paul's great idea was that of the Mystical Body of Christ. His burning ambition was to strengthen and build up the Body of Christ, to extend the divine life of Jesus down through humanity to every man on earth. That was his goal, his great objective. He worked not merely for the Jews but for the Gentiles also, pushing back the borders of Palestine to embrace the whole world. He knew no horizons in Christ. On fire with a limitless love of Jesus and steeped in an exceedingly profound knowledge of Christ, he poured forth all his human resources and sacrificed his life for the sake of spreading this knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is the key to an understanding of St. Paul's apostolic mentality. This doctrine runs like a golden thread through the pattern of all his Epistles. It is his ever recurring theme, the very hub of his thought, the explanation of his attitude towards almost everything. This was his mighty doctrine, so simple and yet so very profound; so beautiful and yet so mightily powerful.

The Mystical Body

So close and so complete is the union of Catholics with Christ that St. Paul calls the Church the "Body of Christ". Just as all the different parts of a human body are united and share in the life of one body, so also are the Catholics united with Christ. We all share in the Life of Jesus and form one living Body with Him.

The Mystical Body, therefore, is simply the Church. We Catholics are so completely united to Christ that we form one Body with Him. By our Baptism we are born into the Mystical Body and, when those clear Baptismal waters flow, the life of Jesus floods into our souls. It is at that mighty moment that we become members of the Mystical Body of Jesus which is His Church. We are baptized into Christ.

In his Epistles, St. Paul uses the expression: "In Christ Jesus" or its equivalent over one hundred and fifty times. We need not wonder at this, for the expression bears a deep significance. A person is said to be "In Christ" when, by Baptism, he has become a member of Christ in His Mystical Body. It is a marvellous thing, therefore, to be a Catholic. Perhaps the best definition of a Catholic is simply this: "A Catholic is a person in Christ."

By falling into heresy, apostasy, or schism, we Catholics can cut ourselves off from the Mystical Body. The Pope has the power to cut members off, by a decree of excommunication. Not all excommunications however, have this dire effect, since the severity of the penalty depends on the intention of the Pontiff in each case.

Mortal sin will not cut a Catholic from the Body unless, of course, it is a sin of heresy, apostasy, or schism. When a Catholic is in mortal sin he is like a corrupt member of the Body, but he is still a member. By a good confession he can have his sins forgiven and the life of Jesus will flood his soul again.

Love of Humanity

Everybody loves a lover and even a most casual acquaintance with this doctrine of the Mystical Body is enough to let us see that it is a doctrine of tremendous love. It gives us an entirely new outlook on humanity by investing humble human beings with the dignity of Christ. In the eyes of our fellow men we see the deep, clear eyes of Jesus and in their faces we recognise a countenance that is divine. For the love of Christ we are inspired to pour forth our love towards all the people. It is this love of Christ and this love of the people in Christ that is the secret of St. Paul's great social dynamism. He preaches a doctrine that is meant for all the people. Never before was there such a boon to humanity. The Mystical Body is a worldwide union of all humanity in love.

A new Sense of Values

Once this glorious vision of humanity in Christ was emblazoned in the mind of St. Paul, he changed his entire outlook on life. His whole world was of a different colour, now that he was looking at all things through the eyes of Jesus. He completely reshuffled his sense of values. His one aim and one ambition was to draw all men to Christ and to unite all humanity into the sweet harmony and concord of one living Body. Anything that helped him towards this objective, he highly treasured. He deeply appreciated any assistance extended to him in his apostolic work, however small that assistance might be. He judged all things according as they were a help or a hindrance to Jesus Christ.

St. Paul was wholly and entirely an Apostle. Nothing in this world was of more importance to him than his apostolate. No work could conceivably be placed before this great work of extending Christ down through humanity. His exciting apostolate was not merely a hobby or something extra done on the side. It absorbed his whole life; it enlisted all his talents; it exhausted all his resources. As he himself cried out, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel." (1 Cor. 9, 17)

A complete Plan for Action

In his Epistles and by his own example, St. Paul has given us a complete plan for apostolic action. Through this great Apostle, God has revealed to us ways and means of spreading the Faith. Here we find a solution to all the major difficulties confronting us in our own apostolic work. We learn the attitudes we should take towards various things and the policies we should adopt in all sorts of circumstances. A study of St. Paul, therefore, will be most profitable to us if we, like him, hope to build up the Body of Christ and spread the Faith. He gives us a revealed plan for action.

Expressed in its briefest form, St. Paul's plan for action is simply the Mystical Body of Christ, but, in order to appreciate more fully the dynamic character of this doctrine, it would be very profitable for us to see exactly how the Apostle applied this glorious truth to various difficulties which confronted him in his apostolic life. We shall find that his problems were strikingly similar to those which are perplexing the minds of zealous Catholics in our own modern times. St. Paul will teach us how to become champions for the cause of Catholicism.

All Things to all Men

When a young man begins to move about in society, he soon begins to realize that there are some people whom he likes and some whom he intensely dislikes. A clash of personalities is quite a common occurrence, in human relationships. As a result of this, most of us tend to mix more and more with the people we like and less with the people we dislike. By no stretch of the imagination are we all things to all men. Our kindness to some even accentuates our unkindness to others. All this is obviously opposed to the idea of our loving all men in Christ and to the mind of St. Paul who says; "I became all things to all men, that I might save all." (1 Cor. 9. 22)

We must strive to overcome any natural repugnance which we feel for certain people. Keep in mind that Jesus not only loves these people, but even desires to embrace them, and unite them all as one Body with Himself. Because of our human weakness, we may try to avoid these unpleasant people, but Christ desires to draw them to Himself and to give them a share in His own divine Life. All true love tends towards union, and Jesus has loved all men. He desires to unite all humanity to Himself in one Body. We, therefore, must be all things to all men. We must be kind to those in need of kindness; sympathetic to those in need of sympathy; helpful to those in need of help. We must turn away from no man, but strive to draw all men towards Jesus Christ. Christ desires to draw all things' to Himself in love.

Service to all Men

Most of us think we have done enough *if* we merely tolerate those people whom we dislike. We regard ourselves as heroes if we suffer them in silence without being openly unkind and abusive. But this is not enough. We must not merely tolerate these people; but rather should we strive unceasingly to bring good to them by increasing Christ in them.

“To Greeks and to foreigners, to learned and unlearned I am debtor,” says St. Paul (Rom. 1, 14) We also should regard ourselves as owing a debt to all men. Every man is our creditor, for we owe him a debt in Christ. As Apostles of Jesus, it is our duty to give the gift of Christ to every man. The debt we owe is an increase in Christ. We must not be content in merely tolerating people, but rather should we strive to extend their knowledge of Jesus and deepen their love. We must present ourselves as servants to all men in order to bring them all to Christ. “I myself in all things please all men,” says St. Paul, “not seeking what is profitable to myself but to the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11, 1)

Adaptability

One of the most useful qualities that can be developed in an Apostle and one which will make his work much easier and more effective is that of adaptability. No form of activity has more variety in it than the apostolate of Christ. All sorts of situations have to be met and dealt with. A wide variety of circumstances is always affecting the activity of an apostle who comes into close contact with humanity at its best and at its worst. No two personalities are exactly the same and no two people have precisely the same outlook on life. In order to bring Christ into any environment, therefore, the Apostle needs to have developed a high degree of adaptability.

St. Paul’s adaptability was most striking. He himself says. “I have learned to be self sufficing in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to live humbly and I know how to live in abundance. I have been schooled in every place and in every condition.” (Phil. 4, 11)

In the “Acts of the Apostles” we see St. Paul in action and setting us an example for our imitation. It is very remarkable to notice how he adapts himself to the various circumstances in which he finds himself. When preaching to the Israelites, he began by referring to the glorious Patriarchs of Israel and from that starting point, he led their thoughts to Jesus Christ. When preaching at Athens, he began by referring to the Athenians as extremely religious men, and he went on to direct their attention to the “Unknown God”, for in the city he had seen an altar bearing that inscription. He preached about this Unknown God and finally led their thoughts to Jesus Christ. The Apostle invariably adapted himself to his audience.

This policy of adaptation does not mean that we should always try to be very nice and gentle. Effeminate sweetness seems out of place in an Apostle. We must strive to flood the whole world with the kindness of Christ and honeycomb all human life with this love, but we must never stoop to sickly sentimentality. In some circumstances firmness and harsh words are called for, as for example when Paul met Elymas on the island of Cyprus. Elymas had been trying to turn away the proconsul from the path. Paul gazed at him and said, “O full of all guile and of all deceit, son of the devil, enemy of all justice, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind.” (Acts 13, 10) At that moment Elymas was struck blind!

When we see the Apostle making such ferocious attacks on the enemies of Christ, our own reaction might be a mixture of fear and awe. In the attack St. Paul was a most desperate and ferocious man. His words came forth like peals of thunder. By the violence of his approach he smashed rank paganism to pieces and, like a flash of lightning he struck from east to west and set the whole world on fire with the love of Christ. It is really true that Paul set the world on fire. But when in the company of women, Paul adapted himself perfectly to their gentler nature. He himself was the most masculine of men, but he fully appreciated the softer side of life. He could adapt himself to anything. One day, during his stay in the city of Philippi, Paul took a walk outside the gates of the city down to the banks of the river. There was a group of women there, so Paul sat down to converse with them. After a short while, of course, the Apostle had introduced Jesus Christ into the conversation and one of the women, whose name was Lydia, was converted to the Faith. Lydia then invited Paul and his friends to stay at her home and accept her hospitality during their stay at Philippi. Paul was reluctant to accept the invitation, but was unable to resist Lydia’s demands. As he himself

says, "She insisted upon our coming." (Acts 16, 15) So Lydia had her way. Even the mighty Apostle to the Gentiles could not have his own way with women.

A burning zeal

Without a burning zeal it is impossible to do great things for the cause of Christ. As St. Paul says, "Our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12, 29) Writing to Timothy, he exhorts him ever to increase his zeal for Christ. "Preach the word," he says. "Be urgent in season and out of season." (2 Tim. 4, 2) Once our hearts are truly inflamed with the love of Jesus, then we can hardly help but be zealous. Seeing Christ in others, we will be inspired to undertake great things for His sake. "The love of Christ presses us on," says St. Paul. (2 Cor. 3, 14) And we will not be continually postponing our works of zeal. We will not leave off till tomorrow the good that we can do today. Realizing that life is only too short, we will immediately set about doing things for the love of Christ. "While we yet have time," says St. Paul, "let us do good to all men." (Gal. 6, 10)

Confidence

The mainspring of zeal is the love of Christ and a perfect confidence in Him. Christ is a leader who will not let us down. So long as we are faithful to Him we can be sure of eventual triumph. "Thanks be to God," says St. Paul, "who always leads us in triumph in Christ Jesus." (2 Cor. 2, 14) Supported in our work by the tremendous power of Jesus living on in us, we can look forward to inevitable victory, for Christ overcomes the world. Our confidence is in Christ.

Of ourselves we are nothing. The enemies of Christ might be more numerous, more wealthy, more powerful than we are. But we rely, not upon our own weakness but upon the power of Christ. "The weak things of this world has God chosen to put to shame the strong," says St. Paul (1 Cor. 1, 27)

Far from being a source of discouragement, our own weakness is rather an additional reason for being more confident in the mighty power of Jesus Christ, who lives on in us. We can even glory in our helplessness. "Gladly therefore," cries St. Paul, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me. Wherefore I am satisfied, for Christ's sake, with infirmities, with insults, with hardships, with persecutions, with distress. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:9)

Patience

Without the virtue of patience, it is clearly impossible to become a great apostle of Christ. If we hope to lead others to Christ, then we must not display even the slightest touch of impatience. Regardless of how trying the situation might be, we must not be impatient or unkind, even to the slightest degree. We must be endlessly long-suffering. We must endure all things and tolerate all people. The slightest trace of impatience could ruin all our work for Christ. "We endure all things," says St. Paul, "lest we hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Cor. 9, 12)

In our apostolic work we are bound to meet with insults, injuries, and persecutions. Irreligious people will laugh at us and try to belittle us. They will offend us with the hope of seeing us retaliate. They will try to break down our resistance and undermine our composure. There is nothing that they would enjoy more than to see us give way to anger and impatience. We must endure all these things for the love of Christ and turn these trials into opportunities of showing our love of Christ. Far from hindering us in our apostolic work, these vicious attacks will be stepping stones to greater triumphs. As St. Paul says, "For those who love God, all things work unto good." (Rom. 8, 28) When we are tempted to impatience, that is the moment for us to win a new victory for Christ. We must repay unkindness with kindness. We must overcome evil with good. "To no man render evil for evil," says St. Paul, "but provide good things, not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of men. If it is possible, as far as in you lies, but at peace with all men." (Rom. 12, 16)

Patience is a virtue that can be practised almost every hour of the day. Especially is it necessary in any form of social work where we are rubbing shoulders with all humanity day by day. We must be patient with ignorance, patient with bigotry, patient with indifference, patient with levity, patient with thoughtlessness. In all things we must exhibit the patience of Christ.

"May the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind towards one another, according to Jesus Christ, that, one in spirit, you may with one voice, glorify God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 15, 5)

Peace

Some people, who are supposedly working for the cause of Christ, succeed merely in doing a lot of harm by stirring up a hornet's nest of trouble. By their indiscretion they do much more harm than good. They stir up bitter and pointless arguments which often end in shameful quarrels. They offend people and thereby turn them even further away from Christ.

"Avoid foolish and ignorant controversies, knowing that they breed quarrels," says St. Paul. (2 Tim. 2, 23) This is very true indeed, for the most of our heated arguments do accomplish very little or nothing for Christ. Usually they end in unkindness and strife.

"Follow after the things that make for peace," says St. Paul, "and let us safeguard the things that make for mutual edification." (Rom. 14, 19) It is in a peaceful atmosphere of kindness and sympathy that the Faith is most likely to make progress. We must avoid all harsh words and unseemly wrangle. As the Apostle says, "God is a God of peace and not of disorder." (1 Cor. 14, 23)

The purpose on this earth of the Mystical Body of Christ is to establish a worldwide union of love in the peace of Christ. We strive always for peace, and the methods we employ are always peaceful. Our only hope for a lasting peace in this world lies in the harmony and concord of Christ.

"May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts," says St. Paul. "Unto that peace indeed, you were called in one Body. Show yourselves thankful. Let the word of Christ abound in you abundantly." (Col. 3, 15)

Cheerfulness

A cheerful disposition is a very valuable asset to the apostle. A person with such a disposition is almost universally liked. Cheerfulness makes us more acceptable to most men. It is only the person with a very morbid mentality who does not appreciate cheerfulness in the right place. Cheerfulness, therefore, is something which we ought to cultivate.

But our cheerfulness, like all other things, must be based on Christ. The exciting thought of being continually united as one with Christ and sharing in His life should be to us a perpetual source of joy. As St. Paul cries out, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!" (Phil. 4, 4) Our joy and our cheerfulness are in Christ.

In our relationships with other people it is very helpful if we can maintain a cheerful atmosphere in which to work. Especially in our acts of charity is it necessary to be always cheerful. A grouchy disposition seems almost incompatible with noble acts of charity. As St. Paul observes, "God loves a cheerful giver," (2 Cor. 8, 8) We might add that not only God, but men also, love a cheerful giver.

Good Example

Good example speaks louder than words. That is a very trite saying, but a very true one. In writing to his dear friend, Timothy, St. Paul exhorts him, saying, "*Be* an example to the faithful in speech, in conduct, in charity, in faith, in chastity." (1 Tim. 4, 12) The Apostle holds himself up as an example to the Corinthians, saying, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ," (1 Cor. 4, 16) Just as St. Paul was thus able to hold himself up as an example of Christlike living, so we also ought to be able to radiate the charm of Christ in this, our modern world. We too should be imitators of Christ, Not by words only, but by our example also, should we radiate Christ in love. To this world we should present an image of Christ reflected in our conduct.

Words without example are empty and useless. In modern times too much is said and far too little done. Many people talk enthusiastically about religion, but do not practise it enthusiastically. It is much better so see a sermon lived than merely to hear it preached. Good example has a tremendous influence on all those who are fortunate enough to witness it.

If we dare to call ourselves Apostles of Christ and yet do not live good Christian lives, we are hypocrites and we are unworthy to be called Apostles. Before we set about extending Christ to others we must be such that we ourselves are holding firm to Him. We should lend an attentive ear to the sound advice of St. Paul, who says, "Let your lives be worthy of the gospel of Christ." (Phil. 1, 27)

Prayer

“With all prayer and supplication pray at all times in the Spirit, and therein be vigilant in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints and for me, that when I open my mouth utterance may be granted to me fearlessly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains,” (Eph. 6, 18)

St. Paul herein makes an urgent appeal for constant prayers of the faithful, asking them to pray at all times for the success of his own apostolate.

Mortification

“I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, while I preach to others, I myself become a castaway,” (1 Cor. 9, 27)

St. Paul here lays down the necessity for mortification and penance in the life of an apostolic person. It is quite possible for us to become so absorbed in our active work for others that we neglect our own spiritual life and eventually become spiritually bankrupt. This mistake is sometimes called the “heresy of good works” and it is a rather common one in modern times, especially where apostolic work is associated with a series of social functions. Many persons have set out as apostles, but have soon degenerated into mere social playboys. They feel that their intense social activity is necessary for the success of their apostolate, and perhaps they are quite right in many instances. But all this activity must be accompanied by an intensely spiritual life of prayer and mortification.

Some mortification is necessary if we are to attain any degree of detachment from the things of this world. It is almost impossible for an unmortified soul to work very effectively for the cause of Christ. Where the heart is divided and the affections are all tied up with things of this world, the power of Christ cannot operate to the maximum. Only the mortified and detached soul can participate fully in the great apostolate of Christ. St. Paul was such a soul. From what he says in his Epistles to the Philippians we can see that he had acquired a very high detachment from the things of this world.

“But the things that were gain to me, he says, “these, for the sake of Christ, I have counted loss. Nay more, I count everything loss because of the exceeding knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and I count them as dung that I may gain Christ.” (Phil. 3, 7)

Here we have a graphic picture of a highly mortified soul, entirely detached from the things of this world, for the affections are all directed towards Christ. Such a soul is a docile instrument in the hands of God and it is therefore capable of becoming a great apostle.

Sex

In our apostolic work a disturbing fact which we have to face is the fact of sex. It is useless to try to ignore the sex problem or to dodge it. It has to be reckoned with. There are some optimistic souls who, through lack of realism, try to ignore this problem, but in time it suddenly flares up again with even greater violence than before.

Sex is quite a problem. We do not intend to consider the entire sex problem here, but merely those aspects of it which directly affect the activities of a person working as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

There are two major considerations which we have to deal with; firstly the weakness of fallen human nature, and secondly, the great power of Christ.

Prudence demands that, even in the performance of the most holy activities, we must never ignore the frightful weakness of our own human nature. Sometimes, even in our apostolic work we may find ourselves grievously tempted. Since ours is a fallen nature, our sexual passions can become very disorderly and usually are so unless we keep them under very firm control.

In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul describes most graphically the terrible struggle that goes on in a soul striving to lift itself above its own weakness. “I am delighted with the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.” (Rom. 7, 22)

St. Paul comes to the conclusion, therefore, that his only hope lies in the grace of God, which comes to him in

Christ. The Apostle relies, not upon the strength of his own will power, for that is exceedingly weak, but rather does he rely upon the power of Jesus Christ. His entire hope is in Christ.

While we admit the utter weakness of our human nature, we must, nonetheless, be greatly encouraged by the consideration of Jesus Christ living on in us and strengthening us in grace. The influence of Jesus over us is far more powerful than we can begin to imagine. With Him strengthening us, we can overcome all temptations. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "in Him who strengthens me."

There are, therefore, two extremes to be avoided. Firstly, there is the imprudent attitude of those who, ignoring the dangers, rush with foolish abandon into situations where angels would fear to tread. Then, on the other hand, there are those puritanical souls who, by their exaggerated circumspection, merely aggravate the problem by over-accentuating the evil aspects of sex. We ourselves must strive to steer a middle course by being neither Puritans nor libertines. We must acquire a wholesome outlook on sex by seeing in it the beauty of God's marvellous designs, but also seeing in it those dangers which, like a dormant volcano, might erupt most unexpectedly. Because of our weakness, we must never regard ourselves as strong, for even the mighty cedars of Lebanon have been known to fall.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body casts a radiant light on the entire problem of sex. The human body is a sacred thing for it is united to the Body of Jesus. Our humanity has become a new humanity for Christ. To dishonour a human body, therefore, is to dishonour Christ Himself. "Do you not know," says St. Paul, "that your bodies are members of Christ (Cor. 6, 15)

Ever mindful, therefore, of the Life of Jesus which pulsates powerfully in our souls, we should go forth in confidence to all our apostolic activities. Our confidence is entirely based upon Christ, who lives on in us and strengthens us in every time of need. Not with nervous timidity, therefore, but rather with manly confidence, should we go forth to our great apostolic adventure. In our dealings with the opposite sex we should be light-hearted and free from constant strain and worry. As St. Paul says, "I would have you free from care." (1 Cor. 7, 32) The Apostle himself had a host of women friends. He enjoyed their company and they were a bulwark of strength to him in his labours for the Gospel.

Humility

An apostle of Christ needs many virtues, but he needs some more than others. One of the most important of the virtues is humility. A proud man is usually despised and hated by his fellow man, while the humble man is loved and really admired. Christian leadership is founded, not on pride and arrogance, but rather on humility and simplicity. Only a humble man can become a Christian hero.

St. Paul was one of the humblest of men. Knowing his nothingness, he tells the Corinthians, "I am the least of the Apostles and am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace in me has not been fruitless." (1 Cor. 15, 9)

In his dealings with the ordinary faithful, Paul was never domineering. He never once abused his authority or assumed an arrogant attitude. On the contrary, he was characterized by the simple humility of Christ. "I humbled myself," he says to the Corinthians, "that you might be exalted, preaching to you the gospel of God free of charge." (2 Cor. 11, 7)

While in the company of others, therefore, we should always be humble in our whole demeanour. Some Catholics who are trying to instruct others in the Faith, assume an attitude of intellectual superiority as though the non-Catholic were completely ignorant and misinformed. This proud attitude, of course, is quite unbecoming in a person who is supposed to represent Jesus Christ, and very often it breeds antagonism, rather than a fondness towards the Faith. We should never flaunt our learning and parade our knowledge in order to appear high and mighty. Such behaviour can accomplish nothing for the Gospel. Rather should we, as little children, be content to know Jesus and that is enough. All we need to know is Jesus Christ. If we know Him well, then we are well equipped for the apostolate, even though we may be ignorant of many other things. St. Paul, who was actually an unparalleled genius, used a very humble approach when coming to the Corinthians. "When I came to you," he says, "I did not come with pretentious speech or wisdom, announcing to you the witness of Christ. For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and m v

preaching were not in the persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might rest, not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” (1 Cor. 2, 1)

Humility, therefore, creates an atmosphere in which the apostolic spirit can take root and flourish in great profusion. It is humility that makes it easy for us to subject ourselves always to the desires of Jesus and to follow His will rather than our own. Being steeped in humility, we will be very distrustful of our own ideas about what ought to be done to spread the faith. We will be very anxious to know what Jesus Himself desires in every matter. Like St. Paul, we will humbly turn to Christ and ask with the simplicity of a child, “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” (Acts, 9, 6)

This profound humility is what distinguishes the heroes of Christ so radically from the heroes of the world. The spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ are opposed on every point. The deep humility of Jesus is a complete mystery to the pagans of this world who thrive on arrogance, pride, and self-love. “We have received, not the spirit of this world,” says St. Paul, “but the spirit that is from God.” (1 Cor. 2, 12) The spirit of Jesus is a charming humility.

Some people, engaged in apostolic work, become very jealous if they see that others have met with more success than they. This foolish jealousy is, of course, directly opposed to the spirit of humility and the spirit of Jesus. We must remember that our success in any apostolic enterprise depends much more upon the grace of God which come to us through Christ, than upon our contribution to the cause. Our contribution is quite necessary, but we must give all the glory, not to ourselves, but to Christ. If others have succeeded *in* spreading Christ, then we should rejoice. St. Paul was never jealous when he heard that Christ was being preached with success. As he himself says, “Provided only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; in that I rejoice, yes, and I shall rejoice.” (Phil. 1, 18)

A humble person, therefore, can never become jealous, for he seeks not his own glory and honour, but only the honour and glory of Christ in all things. The entire life of a truly humble man becomes quite transformed into the life of Jesus and many other virtues of Christ are soon made manifest in the humble soul. This gradual transformation into the likeness of Christ can progress to such an extent that the soul could truthfully exclaim with St. Paul, “I live now, not I but Christ lives on in me.” (Ga. 2, 20) Because of his great humility and love of Christ, the selfish side of St. Paul’s nature gradually decreased while his likeness to Jesus increased tremendously. It was this likeness to Christ that made St. Paul such a mighty Apostle of Christ.

Suffering for Christ

Every man who lives for the sake of Christ will undoubtedly be called upon to suffer for the sake of Christ. Just as Christ lives on in us, so also He suffers on in us. It is true to say that Jesus is in agony till the end of the world, for He suffers on in the members of His Body. We are the members of a thorn-crowned Head, and as St. Paul says, “The sufferings of Christ abound in us.” (2 Cor. 1, 5)

Every Apostle must expect to carry his own cross of sufferings, for how else can he resemble Jesus Christ? St. Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, was called upon to endure long and terrible sufferings in order to prove his love of Christ.

“Thrice I was scourged,” he says. “Once I was stoned, thrice I suffered ship wreck, a night and a day I was adrift on the sea; in journeyings often, in perils from floods, in perils from robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils *in* the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren; in labour and hardships, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides all those outer things, there is my daily pressing anxiety, the care of all the churches! Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I am not inflamed? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness.” (Cor. 2, 11, 25)

Such great sufferings and labours fall to the lot of every great Apostle of Jesus.

Enthusiasm for the Faith

Enthusiasm for the Faith always overcomes the world. We Catholics, animated by an intense love of Christ and fully appreciating the high value of our Faith, should be anxious to work without ceasing for the spread of the Gospel. We should never be, in any way, ashamed of the Faith, but rather take a justifiable pride in the fact that we are

Catholics and therefore united as one with Christ. Our treasure, indeed, is Christ and of Him we are not ashamed. As St. Paul boldly proclaims, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel.” (Rom. 1, 16)

Many modern Catholics are forever trying to conceal the fact that they are Catholics. They act as though they were, to some extent, ashamed of the Gospel. This should not be so. In our chaotic modern world, with all its madness, the Gospel of Christ is one of the very few things that stand glorious. The Gospel is our glory and our joy.

To many people, religion is a mere hobby. Their interest may become extremely intense, but it is still just a hobby, like fishing, reading detective stories, or collecting stamps. A mere diversion! These enthusiasts usually confine their interest to non-essential aspects of religion. They obviously have no real grasp on the fullness of the Faith. They gossip for hours on end about their own supposedly miraculous experiences and weary their friends with tales of their own pious practices. Some of these religious cranks even go so far as to claim having seen visions of Christ and the saints. They go about publicising the story of their own great supernatural experiences. Their gossip is mostly sheer nonsense. “Avoid foolish fables and old wives tales,” says St. Paul, “and train yourselves in Godliness.” (1 Tim. 4, 7) Let us strive to become sincere Apostles of Christ, not religious cranks.

When people come to us and inquire about the Faith, we should, in all kindness and love, open up our hearts to them in perfect frankness. Tell all men the truth. Do not colour the facts in vain attempt to make them more acceptable. “We are frank with you, O Corinthians,” says St. Paul, “and our heart is wide open to you.” (2 Cor. 6, 11)

In writing to Titus, St. Paul gives him much sound advice about his instruction of the people in the Faith. “Speak what befits the sound doctrine,” he says, “that elderly men may be reserved, honourable, prudent, sound in faith, in love, in patience, that elderly women, in like manner, be marked by holiness of behaviour, not slanderers, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is right, that they may train the younger women to be wise, to love their husbands and their children, to be discreet, chaste, domestic, gentle, obedient to their husbands, so that the word of God be not revealed. Exhort the younger men in like manner, to be self-controlled. Show thy self in all things an example of good works, in teaching, in integrity and dignity, let thy speech be sound and blameless, so that anyone opposing may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say of us. (Titus 2, 1)

Very often a Catholic will find himself in a situation where he has spiritual obligation to point out to another the evil of his ways. Most of us, naturally, tend to shirk our duty in such cases, for we are afraid of offending our friend or even losing his friendship. In such cases we must fortify ourselves in the love of Christ, and realise that, if we neglect our duty, grave spiritual harm might come to our friends. The performance of our unpleasant duty would, indeed, be an heroic act of charity, even though, at the time, our friends might resent our interference. St. Paul was very often called upon to perform such a duty and he always sacrificed his own feelings for the sake of Christ and for the spiritual safety of the faithful. As he himself says, “I will most gladly spend and be spent myself for your souls, even though loving you more I am loved the less.” (2 Cor. 12, 15) Perhaps at the time our friends might love us less when we save them from some spiritual disaster, but eventually they will appreciate our charity.

Conclusion

It has been the purpose of this short pamphlet to point out that St. Paul has given us a complete programme of apostolic activity. He has composed for us an entire plan of action, indicating, in every instance, what attitude we should take and what course of action we should adopt. The great Apostle to the Gentiles tells us and, indeed, shows us how to make converts for Christ. He went from triumph to triumph and so shall we if we follow him in his faith, in his zeal, and in his sufferings.

This pamphlet is, of course, merely a brief outline of St. Paul’s methods, touching only on those points which we have considered more important. It is true to say that the Apostle has given us an apostolic policy of action which is complete to the smallest detail. In our work for the cause of Jesus Christ, we will never meet with a problem associated with our apostolate which does not have its clear solution in St. Paul and in the glorious doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Ex Parte Ordinis.

Nihil Obstat.

Johannes L. Hanrahan, O.S.A., M.A.

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