

April 22, 1926

It's Spring All Right.

The number of campus communicants dropped fifty yesterday, the first warm morning we have had. The number of off-campus communicants remained stationary. The nearer the church the farther from God.

It Must Feel Funny To Be a Pagan at Notre Dame.

This is the open season for pagans at Notre Dame. Only five weeks remain before the close of the Easter Duty season, and the consciences of the pagans are beginning to stir up ructions. It always happens at this time of the year. Poor fellows who have been moping along, feeling that they can't go to the Sacraments because they can't give up some occasion of sin, too timid to ask advice or too bull-headed to knuckle down; poor wastrels of the infinite graces Christ won for them on the Cross -- hungering for the sympathy they reject, longing for the free spirit they see in their fellow students who crowd the Communion rail on Sunday morning; abject derelects of the spiritual life, their consciences begin to burn them up as the end of the Easter season approaches and they see the twilight of their Catholicity closing in upon them.

It must feel funny to be a pagan at Notre Dame, the pedestal of the Blessed Virgin, the City of the Blessed Sacrament, the beacon-light of Catholic education in America; it must feel queer to live so much apart from the very air you breathe, unable to share the deep inward spirit of the companions with whom you play and eat and study; it must make a big lump rise in the throat to watch those companions going on and on, always climbing in the path of grace while you are going down and down, always deeper in the mire of sin; it must make one feel desperate to be the only many in twenty pews when five hundred young men flock in glorious disorder to meet their God when He approaches the Communion rail.

It's hard on the nerves to be a pagan at Notre Dame. It's bad enough to withstand the loving solicitude of one's parents, dodge the pastor at home and lie to the old nuns who were so proud of you in the grades; it's harder still to fight off the well-meant nagging of your chums, to turn away your eyes from the inquiring eyes of the priest who wonders whether he may dare take you by storm; it's hard as the deuce to remain cold to sermons, missions, deaths of fellow-students, pleas for prayers for father, for mother, for relatives and friends of your friends; -- but harder than these, harder than anything else, harder than anything but the act of humility that will bring you on your knees before God's priest, is the attempt to silence the intolerable voice of conscience.

It's the voice of conscience that makes this the open season for pagans at Notre Dame. It's not what anyone else says, it's not what anyone else does, that makes the pagan do the things he does about God and sin and virtue and the Sacraments and Notre Dame. In his heart there is a voice that says "You Lie" whenever he utters a sophistry. Deep in his heart he knows that God in heaven loves him, that Holy Mother Church is holding out her arms to welcome him back home, that grace alone will solve for him the problems that are grinding away at his nerves, that the priest is waiting for him in the confessional, not to scourge him, but to clothe him with a wedding garment that will admit him to the banquet of the King of kings.

It is his conscience that makes him talk. It's the coward in a man that makes him whistle when he passes a graveyard; he whistles to keep up a waning courage. And it's the coward in the sinner that makes him rave against religion when his conscience is driving his pride to the wall. You will hear a lot of talk of that kind now for the next few weeks. Pity the poor fellow who talks that way; pray for him; be kind to him. He feels friendless and alone. It feels funny to be a pagan at Notre Dame.

Prayers.

Two special intentions are recommended to your prayers during the Novena which began this morning. Father Crumley is improving after a serious operation Tuesday night.