

Where's The Hitch?

There is something radically wrong with the spiritual life of the student body this year -- something completely out of harmony with normal expectations. Notre Dame has a definite religious program which has been worked out with infinite pains to suit the needs of the present moment -- to give young men an appreciation of the state of grace as the working basis of merit for heaven and of the Sacraments as the refuge from a world of sin -- and Notre Dame has definite aspirations for the young men who come here. These aspirations have met with a strong rebuff this year.

It is not that the normal increase in the number of Holy Communions has not taken place. Through these three months an average increase of 135 a day has been maintained very evenly. The gain has been made through the week, however, and not on Sundays and First Fridays. You can notice this clearly on the graph in the basement chapel. The various hall chapels have passed through stages of fervor and desolation much as last year. Why have Sunday Communions fallen off? And why have 300 students failed to receive the Sacraments this year?

Perhaps the Saturday and Sunday dancing law has had something to do with the matter. At this time last year the impression was current that the law was no longer active; it was at Christmas time that it became known that the Bishop wished it enforced as long as it was on the statutes. It may be that there is enough weak faith parked about the school this year for it to make a difference; that is, there may be enough baptized Catholics here who prefer the arms of a dishwasher to the arms of Mother Church really to account for the loss of weekly communicants. If this is a fact, it is well to know it, to stop regrets; the loss of such woeful weaklings is a gain, not a loss, to the Church (though it is a tragic loss to the individuals).

Take a look at Corby Hall. A great nuisance was stopped when the back door was locked, but the number of communicants has lessened notably. Can it be that the extra sacrifice of walking all the way around the church is too much for juniors and seniors? or is the fact that the cafeteria is in plain view from the front porch the solution? An animal has no control over his appetites; if a dog is hungry and you show him a bone he can't resist. We have a strong animal instinct. Is our animal hunger the arbiter of our actions, and not our spiritual hunger?

What about Morrissey? Since half of its students are sophomores you expect a generous slice of sopheritis, but even this disease has its limitations, and there are usually lapses into sanity at regular intervals. Why should so many sophomores hold out all fall? And why should the proportion of junior back-sliders be almost as great as that of the sophomores? The cafeteria takes a heavy toll of good resolutions from Morrissey Hall, but when confessions are heard in the hall chapel every night one would expect the average proportion of good resolutions to start at night prayer and last all night once in a while.

The day-dogs? The case looks hopeless. Two hundred and twenty-five students have made use of the Sorin chapel accommodations; three hundred and seventy-five haven't located the place. The largest number of Communions on any one Sunday at the students' Mass in South Bend has been one hundred and fifty. You will find house after house where not a single student has received the Sacraments this fall, just as you will find house after house where every student goes daily.

Have we incurred some great loss of grace? Have we offended God in some notable way? Grace moves the soul to repentance and to love of God, though the soul can resist; but it seems rare that so many should resist the external grace of their environment and the internal graces won for them by the prayers of their fellow-students. Where's the hitch? Correspondence on this question is solicited. Why have your friends failed to come across?