

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
March 10, 1934

A Defense of Figures.

Some object to the use of figures as spiritual incentives.

But figures perform a real service in relation to spiritual life. St. Ignatius Loyola thoroughly understood their function.

In the formation of Religious he insisted upon Particular Examination of Conscience as an essential part of the daily religious life.

This exercise was designed to reduce the number of personal faults of the Religious. Each Religious was to decide upon a salient weakness in his character and was to set about methodically -- not in a hit-and-miss way -- to eliminate it.

Each day at a given time he would examine himself on this fault, determine the number of times he had fallen, and mark down the number on a tally slip.

After a week or two he would look back over his record, decide whether or not he had made progress. He would try to locate the causes and circumstances of his failures.

Guessing was out. The cold record in figures told the tale.

That method of character building has succeeded with all temperaments and all races of the world.

What is true of the individual in this respect, is true of the group. Figures on Holy Communion tell accurately what is going on and why. They point the way to quick and intelligent correction.

For the first eight days of this Lent, for example, an average of 1534 students received Holy Communion daily. Compared with the daily average of 1577 for the first octave of the Lent before, that was a creditable showing.

But this year along came Washington's Birthday. No. class. Long sleep, etc., etc. Snap go Lenten resolutions.

Of those who so far had received daily, 247 missed on the morning of the holiday.

And the slump continues. For the eight-day period following February 22 the daily average was 179 less than for the same number of days preceding the holiday.

And figures for today and yesterday show that 110 have not yet returned to their Lenten program.

Human nature, even when well disposed, is indolent, capricious, shiftless, when it tries for an elevated goal.

Figures, rightly interpreted and acted upon, detect and check this truancy.

Did You Begin Your Novena This Morning?

If you did not, you may begin tomorrow and carry over an extra day, ending it on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19.

Don't neglect the matter. You don't want to be held up to the boys of 1940 as a horrible example. The alumni who make a mess of things are honest enough to report the fact when they answer their questionnaire. Be wise now and yours will be one of the good ones.