

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
January 25, 1954  
Lapsed Catholics

During the Church Unity Octave, you have been praying for the return of all men to the unity of "One Fold and One Shepherd" -- the selfsame intention for which Our Lord Himself prayed the night before He died. Each day we singled out a particular phase of that unity for which help is needed.

Today, the final day, we pray for the "strays" of our own -- men and women born or baptized in the Catholic Faith, who have been so influenced by the world, or the flesh, or the pride of life, as to forfeit their spiritual heritage.

Who are they? The papers are filled with the names of prominent Catholics every day -- Catholics who give up the Faith. Countless others, adjudged unworthy of headlines, close their minds and hearts to the teachings and the laws of the Church. You may know a few; but the number is legion.

We make much ado over the large number of converts here in America. Each year the figure mounts to a degree that amazes all. Now, the annual influx is far in excess of 100,000.

But the sad story -- the story no one cares to admit -- is the terrific leakage within the Church. It is the story of thousands of Catholics who turn their back on the Faith, ignore their spiritual obligations, and spurn the grace of the Sacraments.

Why? Sometimes the cause of their defection is a silly quarrel with the pastor. Sometimes it is a minor difference with the Sister at the parish school. Sometimes it is a marriage law that gets into one's path. Again, it may be nothing more than downright pride, or laziness. Sometimes it may be inconvenient to get to church. And that is reason enough to drop the whole idea.

But you can always be sure of this one fact -- No one ever left the Church to seek a holier way, or more nearly perfect manner, of life. No, it is not for sanctity that people cast the Church aside. Turning one's back on the Sacraments and the Mass never brought anyone nearer to God.

Occasionally they slip out quietly. Occasionally they go with headlines. But invariably their quest is for power, for pleasure, for wealth, for notoriety, for ease, for escape from obligations, --- but never for sanctity.

These are the ones we are to pray for today as we close the Octave because they, too, are to be brought back to the Fold whence they have strayed. Why worry about them? Because:

- 1) They are suffering complete spiritual shipwreck in their present position -- make no mistake about that!
- 2) They deserve our compassion and fervent prayers -- if Christ's story of the Prodigal Son means anything at all.

In this Marian Year pray, that She who is the Destroyer of Heresies, may fan these cold embers back to spiritual life, re-encending in them the fire of Divine Love.

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PRAYERS -- Deceased: father of Gerald Nies of Alumni; friend of Don Guertin of the Andre House; mother of Jim Stapleton of Dillon; father of James Gallagher of Badin; father of Joseph McGraw of Badin; friend of Anthony Kennedy; 2 friends of Paul Davis (Off-Campus). Ill: George Tomlinson of Morrissey; father of Joe Cassasanta (Off-Campus).