

The History of Daily Communion at Notre Dame - III.

On the First Friday in November, 1921, the football team was scheduled to spend the morning on the train, en route to West Point. Paul Castner and Roger Kiley appealed for suggestions on how to take care of their First Friday Communion. The schedule showed a twenty-minute stop at Albany, and the boys were sent off with the assurance that accommodations would be made for them to receive Holy Communion during that wait.

A telegram to Father Charles, in Albany, resulted magnificently. A fleet of limousines met the players at the train and carried them to Farrell Institute, where Holy Communion was administered at the Grotto of Lourdes. Albany had not seen enough of the boys, so the train was held while breakfast was served. Newspapers carried the story from coast to coast, and the sporting public learned that the players thought of something besides football.

From that day till this, every football team has had an opportunity to receive daily Communion throughout the season. Interruptions of over-night trips were common, and here and there over the country, in country mission or in metropolitan cathedral, Catholics came to realize that Holy Communion is for full-blooded men. A distinguished climax was reached when the Apostolic Delegate gave the team the privilege of a chapel car, and day by day, between Notre Dame and California, and between California and Notre Dame again, Mass was said on the train.

Does it seem far-fetched to say that God has made use of Notre Dame football to spread devotion to the Blessed Sacrament? or that through the prestige that has come to Notre Dame He has called attention to the aims, ideals, and practices of Catholic education at a time when secular education is beginning to cause serious people grave worries? It seems a reasonable solution of something positively uncanny. Much crow has been eaten this fall. People who have sneered at Notre Dame as overemphasizing football have heard Notre Dame players praised as the finest body of gentlemen playing the game today; they have read one article after another praising Notre Dame's scholastic standing and her care for discipline; they have seen very definitely that Notre Dame cares more about the laws of the Church and the sacredness of marriage than she does about shadowy national championships.

There are other angles, many of them, but most of them have been liberally discussed elsewhere. The religious Report issued last spring summarized many of these points; and it was issued largely to answer hundreds of inquiries that had come at one time or another from persons interested in the methods employed here to develop the spiritual life of the students. The little pamphlets of experiences with frequent Communion, gathered from the questionnaires of the Religious Survey, have reached a circulation of nearly two hundred thousand copies. Schools use them, missionaries preach from them, retreat masters read them to nuns for their encouragement. The feeling in Catholic circles, both at home and abroad, is that if it comes from Notre Dame it is all right.

For the responsibilities that this eminence implies, we are fearful; but we have trust that the grace of God will supply for human deficiencies. For the favor that this eminence means, we are grateful; hence the Novena of thanksgiving. You are told about it because we want you, when you kneel in adoration these days, to thank God with a full heart because He has been so good to your school.

Mass of Thanksgiving Saturday.

At the close of this football season we thank God for many things. The Mass of thanksgiving will be said in the church at 6:30 tomorrow. Do your part.

PRAYERS: Henry Wurzer, Sr., '00, is quite ill. The father of Andrew Mulreany, '27, died Tuesday. John J. O'Connor, Walter Kennedy, Geo. Seolinger, and four others ask prayer for relatives ill. Light special intentions.

RELIGIOUS BULLETIN SUPPLEMENT

DECEMBER 12, 1930

Lawrence Perry's Cure For Sophistication

To Lawrence Perry, of the *New York Sun*, a non-Catholic, we are indebted for a beautiful and delicate lifting of the veil to let the world know what is behind Notre Dame football. It synchronized so well with today's *Bulletin* that we reproduce it as a supplement. It is taken from the daily newspapers served by his syndicate, under date of December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.

As the amazing narrative of that Notre Dame-Southern California game at Los Angeles came over the radio into an uptown club on Saturday, a man, who follows national football closely, and whose opinions are not only bulwarked by knowledge of the game but by broad-minded points of view, turned to a group of friends shrugging: "What is the answer to this Notre Dame football? You will say material. You will say coaching. You will say greater opportunity for extended practice sessions. All true.

"But Southern California, for instance, has no lack of the best material, has all necessary time for practice, has an excellent coach. So have other universities met and defeated by Notre Dame in the last two years. No, there is something over and above those things, something as elusive as it is irresistible—I don't know what it is. Who does?"

The writer thinks he does. That mysterious element which inspires and informs Notre Dame play is a great underlying motive, an organic impulse that transcends sport and involves all that is highest in the human soul. Notre Dame football, to be explicit, is inspired by a cause, and that cause is their religion. By this is not meant a fiery, indomitable impulse to prove that it takes a Roman Catholic football outfit to play the best football there is. Not at all. The impulse is deeper than that.

These Notre Dame football players are expressing on the football field what religion means to them individually. Every game they play is built upon a sub-structure of religious aspiration. This is an age of sophistication, so-called. So there will be many, no doubt, who will smile at the above. Well, let such as these be not too sure in their amusement.

There is a lot more in life, in football, than your sophisticate dreams of in his philosophy. There are stupendous things in human life which are not seen, which cannot be gripped and felt.

To just what saint that particular Southern California game was dedicated by Notre Dame, the writer does not know. But it was dedicated to some saint—all games are. And whether a Notre Dame player was a Roman Catholic or Protestant—they were both on this outfit, as always—made no difference. No boy, whatever his religious affiliation, can come in contact with electricity and not feel it.

In this connection there is a story told by Ray Miller, a Notre Dame grad, now district attorney in Cleveland. A player in the Notre Dame dressing room before a game in which the odds were against the Irish, suggested that they say a little prayer before going out on the field. That player was George Gipp, son of a Methodist clergyman. The prayer was offered and the boy who made it was Chet Wynne, son of a Baptist clergyman. There you have the Notre Dame idea.

Knute Rockne is a great coach—the greatest—and he has a sure knowledge of the heart of man and how to get into his soul. But it may be suspected that not even he gets to the deep underlying reasons of all that his men accomplish. Perhaps only the saintliest of priests do, those who have walked in wisdom all the years and see through the veil.

Princeton outplayed Yale after the most unsuccessful season in Nassau history; here, too, cause lay back of the game the Tigers played—tradition and everything that tradition involves. No doubt the Navy will reveal this against West Point next Saturday.

But Notre Dame is always consistent. Without fail, week after week, the players express the very best that is in them—and year after year. Did you ever see—or hear of—a Notre Dame player who played dirty football? Did you ever hear of an unsportsmanlike Notre Dame team? Did you ever see a drunken Notre Dame student in the stands? The answers inevitably lie in the negative.

Did you ever meet a Notre Dame man who was ashamed to believe in something eternally definite? Here, one thinks, may be the answer to Notre Dame football.

—LAWRENCE PERRY, in *The New York Sun*.