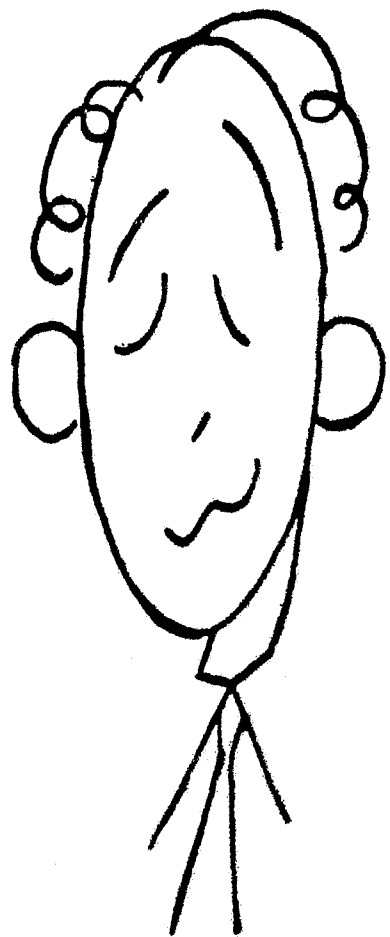


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## Philbert Learns About a New Course



Philbert

There's a course in Mysticism announced in the Syllabus of Graduate Courses for next year. Going to take it Philbert?

Take it! It seems utterly ridiculous to me that in our day of material progress and invention such a course should even be offered.

I thought so too until I talked to the Cistercian Father who is to conduct the course. Since my conversation with him, I'm convinced that I myself am supposed to be a mystic.

Insane, Stooze, insane!

Mysticism, Philbert, is open to misunderstandings and wrong interpretations. If you mean by mysticism the patter of a magician, or the science of mystification, you're right. But how do you understand St. Augustine's famous words: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are not at rest until they rest in Thee!"

Throughout all the centuries, both in the Church and outside of it, there have always been and will always be human hearts which strongly feel that they are made for God, souls which experience a capacity for more truth and happiness than they gather from created things. This tendency to an intimate communing of the soul with God is inborn but cannot be reached through natural powers. The grace of God is absolutely necessary.

Why did our Lord say, "I am come that men may have life and may have it more abundantly?" The people were alive when He came into the world, but they were living only a natural life. He came to bestow a new life upon men. That is the priceless fruit of His redemption. This higher life of sanctifying grace makes us partakers in the divine life. It makes us members of God's own family.

St. Paul speaks of the closeness of this union with Christ through sanctifying grace when he says: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? In one spirit were we all baptized into one body whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free." Therefore, the starting point of a mystical life, or of a life in intimate union with God must be sanctifying grace.

But what can an ordinary fellow do to make this life you speak about more abundant?

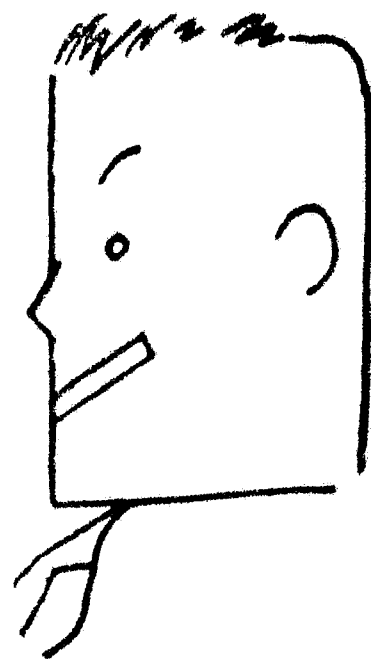
There are, of course, many stages in the mystical life, depending upon the response of the soul to divine grace and to divine impulse. The practice of asceticism is necessary on the way to mysticism. All those who are seriously striving for Christian perfection are *potential mystics*. When they are faithful in their endeavor to know God, to serve God, and to love God, God draws them closer to His heart. They are elevated to a state in which God becomes intimately present to their mind, and the mind enlightened by a special light contemplates with ineffable joy the divine essence. *This is true mysticism*. Visions, miracles, divine locutions, are of secondary importance.

You should not be surprised, Philbert, that after the long period of cold rationalism and materialism, after the catastrophe of a World War, a strong revival of mysticism appears everywhere. The better element in human nature with its longing for the highest good, for the spiritual and eternal, for true happiness, awakes stronger when forcibly suppressed for a while.

But, my dear Stooze, what would become of the world if everybody was a mystic? The only occupation would be to meditate and pray, and no work would be accomplished!

Wrong again! Mysticism is the consciousness of the life of faith and of grace in the soul of the union of love and life with God. This communion with God instills higher knowledge and increases love for Him and for our neighbor. If anyone at all has an understanding of the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, it is the mystic. Sanctifying grace does not only unite the individual soul with God but at the same time unites all those who are validly baptized, with Christ and with each other. God created us to live in society, to be mutually helpful. No one understands that better than the mystic.

No, Philbert, I still maintain that mysticism is most timely and practical, and that you and I and everybody should try to be a mystic in the real Catholic sense.



Stooze