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Are You A "Fifth-Rate" Catholic?

You won't remember much about Lillian Roth, the movie star, the entertainer, the Ziegfeld girl. Her story is interesting because she burned the candle at both ends. She got married and divorced. She wanted laughter and gaiety. Liquor seemed to help for awhile. Wanting more and more help, she drank more and more liquor -- and so became an alcoholic. By the time she was 25 she had made and lost a million dollars. She was blowsy, and disgusting -- more revolting than any man gets to be.

How can anyone get that way? Well, she didn't have what Catholics have to help her. She didn't have the eternal truths, and the centrality of God in her life. Nor did she have the Mass and the Sacraments -- as you have.

Anyway, she finally turned to Alcoholics Anonymous; and one of those who helped her was a fallen-away Catholic, Burt McGuire. He got her started on a professional comeback, and later married her.

They went to Australia for a theater engagement, and Lillian happened to hear a radio broadcast about Our Lady of Fatima. She wanted to know more about Our Lady and about the Catholic Faith. She started taking instructions. Her husband went with her, listened, and finally remarked:

"I never realized the logic in Catholic doctrine. After all, I stopped studying as a youngster. All I knew were the childhood fears of hell and damnation. I never really grew up in my religion."

Joe Breig, writing in the Ave Maria, thinks that half the Catholics in America and Europe -- maybe three-quarters of them -- could say the same thing: "I never really grew up in my religion." And that's why he calls them fifth-rate Catholics.

"The world is full of Catholic illiterates -- Catholic imbeciles, you could almost call them. They're normal about most things; but when it comes to knowing their religion, they should be wearing dunce caps. They'll study business; they'll study the stock market; they'll study boxing records, batting averages, horse-race dope sheets... They'll do a real job on almost anything except the one thing that is eternally worth doing well."

Joe Breig, of the Class of '28, jolts you when he continues: "I never really grew up in my religion! Isn't that something for a grown man or woman to be forced to admit! Are you another Burt McGuire?"

The Local Pamphlet Racks

Surely, there's little excuse for any Notre Dame man being a "fifth-rate" Catholic with all the sources of information at his disposal. So you haven't much time? Then grab a pithy treatment of any number of Catholic topics at the pamphlet racks in Dillon, or Howard, or Sorin, or Cavanaugh halls. It's no compliment to "Mr. Big" of the campus when he expatiates at length on random topics at the drop of a hat -- but shuts up like a clam when some little Michigan State co-ed asks for an explanation of Catholic belief on Purgatory. That's a sad picture indeed!

Growing up is part of your reason for being at Notre Dame. It's part of your obligation, too. And the pamphlets racks can be of great help. Use them.

PRAYERS -- Deceased: mother of Joe Muellner, '33. Ill: Joseph Leptak (Off-Campus); Bill Nelson (Off-Campus). 1 Sp. Intention. One Thanksgiving.