

Today's Intention: That
Lutherns & Continental
Europe return to the Church.

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Tomorrow's Intention: That
Christians in America return
to the "Chair of Peter."

Shepherding Our Own

While the number of converts to the Church within the space of a year may startle you, you will be in for a good, tragic shock when you learn the exact amount of leakage -- the number of Catholics who give up the practice of their Faith. It isn't that these defections spring from a desire for greater holiness -- hardly! Or that erstwhile Catholics join other denominations. The defection may begin by abstaining from the Sacraments for long periods of time. Or coming late for Sunday Mass -- and then not coming for Mass at all. The vision of God grows dim, and the voice of conscience grows faint. It could even happen to some on campus -- as it has happened before.

It is tragic that, at a time when the Church despite the hindrances of atheistic enemies, is making great strides in many parts of the world and reaching out in this country a welcoming hand to those once regarded as unapproachable, there should be losses to those born into the Faith.

This much is certain: if every Catholic of every station in life lived as he should, there would not be such losses. Indeed, there should be none. Simply calling those who leave the Church "weak" Catholics is no excuse, because it is the duty of all of us to help those who are weak spiritually as well as physically.

Charity, after all, is not merely alms-giving alone -- perhaps alms-giving is the poorest and the easiest form of charity. Charity is love, and there can be no better proof of love than concern for the soul of the one loved. We are our "brother's keeper," and should try to use our good influence in spiritual matters whenever the occasion arises -- even here on campus. Often your good example will do the job; at other times, a word of encouragement. And helping a friend into heaven is obviously a work of great kindness. These are the days when we recall that it is not enough for us to keep the Faith; rather, we should share it with others.

And The Others

Here in America, there are millions of people who belong to no faith at all. Have you ever made an effort of any kind to bring Christ's Church into their lives?

A recent Catholic Digest survey disclosed that only 28% of the Catholics in the United States have ever made any effort to share their faith with others -- as compared with 59% of non-Catholics who have endeavored to win adherents for their respective denominations. And yet, the Holy Father has repeatedly pointed out that the missionary spirit and the Catholic spirit are one and the same thing. That would mean this: if you are a real Catholic, you must also be missionary minded, and use the opportunities you have to extend the kingdom of Christ among the souls of men.

"It is only through the active assistance of laymen that the Faith will be brought to millions of churchless Americans," says Father O'Brien. "A small band of priests cannot possibly reach even a fraction of our fellow-countrymen who have no religious affiliation. By bringing Christianity to these people, we shall be combatting Communism most effectively by strengthening the Christian character of American life and culture."

And bringing a soul to the knowledge and love of God may very well be your own ticket to Heaven. Hence, go heavy on the pamphlets; send them to whoever was party to a discussion. Drop them here and there -- wherever they will do some good by falling into likely hands. Use them freely, whether you leave an offering or not.

Tonight at 6:45 -- Novena to the Sorrowful Mother in Sacred Heart Church.