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BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

INSTRUCTIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE

CIRCULARS

No. 207

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MAY 24, 1937

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STATEMENT CONCERNING CATHOLIC ACTION



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ROME — 202, VIA AURELIA  
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† FR. ALFONSUS C. DE ROMANIS, EP. Porphyreonen.,  
*Vic. Gen. Civitatis Vaticanae*

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TIPOGRAFIA POLIGLOTTA VATICANA

J. M. J.  
J.-B

Rome, May 24, 1937

*On the Feast of the Holy Founder  
37th Annivers. of his canonization*

INSTRUCTIVE  
AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
CIRCULARS

No. 297

STATEMENT CONCERNING  
CATHOLIC ACTION



MY VERY DEAR BROTHERS,

MAY THE GRACE AND THE PEACE OF OUR LORD JESUS  
CHRIST BE ALWAYS WITH US!

The retreat called the Retreat for Superiors ended, as it did in previous years, with the reading and discussion of a paper prepared by one of our dear Brothers Visitor General.

This paper, studied first by the Regime and then submitted for appraisal to our dear Brothers Retreatants, was finally looked into by a theologian, who affirms that it is completely in harmony with the views and recommendations of our Holy Father.

In this fine bit of work you will find a serious and fully documented development of a topic to which the Holy Father has many times already drawn the attention of the Pastors of the faithful, and of religious educators in particular.

The educator who wishes to do a worth-while job must be ready continually to improve his methods by taking into account the experiences of those about him, but above

all by heeding the recommendations coming from that authority we all hold to be supreme. Now the Sovereign Pontiff, who is placed by God at the pinnacle of that eminence whence he dominates the world, cries out in alarm and sends forth an order for general mobilization, with a view to making sure that every activity of the army of Christ be concentrated on a measure at once providential and necessary: the Apostolate within one's own environment through Catholic Action.

This Apostolate, re-enlivened by the activity of the Holy Father is so important that an authoritative interpreter has seen fit to affirm that "Catholic Action is not merely a social program, but a *sensus Christi*, and it is, to employ a synthetical expression, the Third Order of the Church itself." (Count DELLA TORRE, *Course in Catholic Action at the University of Milan*, 1930).

No Christian can, without really transgressing, draw away from this conquering undertaking; and every educator should from now on establish within his school, within his class, a sort of novitiate for Catholic Action. The pages that follow are meant to help our Brothers in this work.

The author of the paper presents neither a summary nor a manual of Catholic Action; he means to give his Brothers a precise theoretical and practical knowledge of Catholic Action in so far as it applies to our school and post-school activities. The considerations he presents repose upon the granite stone of the definition set forth by His Holiness Pope PIUS XI and are made clear in the generous light that comes to us from the Vatican. These considerations summarize the data derived from an inquiry made throughout the Districts of the Institute. May these considerations cause the thought of the Head of the Church to be understood in its true meaning; may they cause any inexact or false ideas to be revised; may they stimulate our good-will and tend to make us still more worthy of the paternal affection of the great Pontiff, who on October 27th last, thinking of

the entire Society of the Brothers of the Christian Schools represented by the members of the elective commission, gave from his heart this spontaneous and encouraging testimony: "I give you my greatest blessing, which you so well merit."

The present circular shall be read publicly in the community; but we do not desire that the Brothers limit themselves to this simple reading: we wish that in every retreat-center a talk be given, say on the eighth day, on Catholic Action and on the means to make it lively and effective in the district. Brother Visitor should take in hand himself the preparation of this talk, or he should designate well-beforehand a Brother to do the work with much care and attention.

We are, with the most religious affection in Our Lord Jesus Christ, our very dear Brothers,  
Your very humble and devoted servant,

Brother JUNIEN-VICTOR.

### CATHOLIC ACTION

All the writings of His Holiness Pope PIUS XI, as well as his radio messages come back to this theme, which seems to dominate the thought of our venerable Pontiff: the theme of Catholic Action.

The Pope never tires of repeating that Catholic Action is dear to him "ut pupillam oculi"; and for now more than fifteen years the august old man with extraordinary pertinacity "ceases not to present *Catholic Action* to the Christian world as the great duty of the present day and the principal preoccupation of his pontificate." To the episcopate, to religious superiors, to laymen of influence, he reiterates: Organize Catholic Action, Enter into Catholic Action, Propagate Catholic Action.

As true sons of Saint John Baptist DE LA SALLE, let us be extremely attentive to this instruction of our Holy Father, the Pope, and let us endeavor thoroughly to understand his thought upon this important subject. Let us discover how we can in our vocation as religious educators carry out this appeal, which is addressed in common to all the faithful.

Catholic Action can be studied from a theoretical point of view. That will be the concern of the *first part* of this paper. We shall consider the nature, the necessity and the organization of Catholic Action in the light of pontifical documents and the experiments that have been carried out in several parts of the world. In the *second part* of the paper we shall study Catholic Action from the practical point of view; that is, we shall examine in what manner Catholic Action should be understood and applied by the teaching religious.

## FIRST PART

### CATHOLIC ACTION IN GENERAL

#### I - Nature of Catholic Action

Beginning with his first encyclical *Ubi arcano Dei*, of December 23rd, 1922, regarded as the fundamental program of the great pontificate of PIVS XI, His Holiness defined Catholic Action as "the participation of laymen in the apostolate of the hierarchy." This concise formula has a marvellous depth of meaning; the Pope himself has declared that he should not have discovered it without the assistance of an inspiration from Heaven. Here again is how he defines Catholic Action in a letter addressed to the President of the International Union of Catholic Women: "Catholic Action, such as we desire it and such as we have defined it in several instances, is the participation of lay people in the

apostolate of the hierarchy, for the purpose of defending religious and moral principles and developing a wholesome social action, under the direction of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, outside of and above all political parties, in order that Catholic life be re-established in the family, and in society."

As we very well perceive, the apostolate urged upon the faithful in general is not an independent action, but rather a participation in an action already divinely established. In instituting His Church, Our Lord confided to Pastors only the care of conducting souls to their supernatural end. It is only to St. Peter and to the Apostles, and consequently to their successors, the Pope and the Bishops, that He gave the command to go throughout the world to preach and to teach.

The warrant for anything pertaining to the apostolate comes first, then, from the hierarchy. It amounts to this, that from the sanctuary one is to take and carry abroad, the treasure of the Faith confided to the Church. In matters pertaining to the Church there can be nothing accomplished without legitimate authorisation.

But on the other hand, as stated by Bishop FONTENELLE, people have come too often to think that the role of the faithful is merely passive, and that on the Pastors solely, there devolves the business of fighting and of conquering. They would imagine that the Church, the great army of Christ the King, sends only its leaders into the fight and allows the troops to remain in idle repose. We must remember that the Faithful form part of the Church and that the Church is not the hierarchy solely. Yes, emphatically, Catholic Action is the business of lay folk—the expression is from Bishop PIZZARDO.

The Christian, incorporated in Christ by Baptism, should exercise a ministry, in the larger sense of that word. His Holiness Pope Pius XI says as much, in a letter to Cardinal

Van Roey: "Let the Faithful," he declares, "be well persuaded that it is by a special grace of God that they are called to this work of the Apostolate, so similar to the priest's work."

Making his thought very precise by giving it the form of a theological argument, the Head of the Church writes this to the Cardinal Archbishop of Lisbon in January, 1934: "The Apostolate is one of the duties inherent in the Christian Life. As a matter of fact, if we look at the matter sharply, it is the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation themselves that impose among other obligations, the obligation of the Apostolate, that is, the duty of rendering spiritual help to the neighbor. In truth, by Confirmation one becomes a soldier of Jesus Christ. Now who does not perceive that the soldier is expected to face fatigue and struggle, less for himself than for others? And, although in a manner less obvious to the profane, Baptism also imposes the duty of the Apostolate, since it is by Baptism that we become members of the Church, that is to say, of the Mystical Body of Christ. Among the members of this body, as indeed it is the same for the members of any other organism, there must be a solidarity of interests, a reciprocal communication of life: *Multi unum corpus sumus in Christo, singuli autem alter alterius membra* (Rom. XII, 5). One member must aid the others; none may remain inactive: each one receives, each in turn must give.

"Again, every Christian receives the supernatural life which circulates in the veins of the mystical body of Christ, that abundant life which Christ came to bring upon the earth, as He Himself declared: *Veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant* (Joan., X, 10). It follows that every Christian should transmit this life to others who may not possess it or who may possess it in too small a measure or only in appearance. We do not doubt that once the Faithful will have considered these fundamental truths of the Faith, a new spirit will take possession of their hearts, giving birth to intense action."

The idea that the Christian Life implies an apostolate is however not new. "Catholic Action," says Pope Pius XI, "is not a novelty of the present time; it is really as old as the Church." "It would be a great error" he says elsewhere, "to think that Catholic Action is a discovery of these latter times... No, there is nothing older. The thought is found expressed in Holy Scripture and in all the pages of ecclesiastical history."

In August, 1926, Pope Pius, receiving in audience the people of the parish of Saint Camillus, said to them: "From the time of the Apostles there existed collaboration in the Apostolate. It is the Apostles themselves who in their writings point out for the admiration and imitation of all the ages to come, who these collaborators were." Likewise the oldest traditions of the Church equally show us lay people devoting themselves to the work of evangelisation. And in modern times there is not a nation but can draw up its honor list of lay apostles whose approved and intelligent cooperation the Church has put to use.

Hence, *nil novi sub sole*, nothing new under the Sun of Truth, nothing new in the history and life of the Church, nothing new in the teachings and directions of the Pontiffs. "We ought carefully to guard ourselves from believing," says Leo XIII, "that it is forbidden to private persons to cooperate in the Apostolate, above all when it is a question of men to whom God has confided the gifts of intelligence. Let everybody remember then that he can and ought to propagate the Catholic Faith."

Pope Pius X, in his first encyclical, urges the episcopate and the clergy to "restore all things in Christ." Then he adds: "It is not only men clothed with Holy Orders, but all the Faithful without exception who should devote themselves to the interests of God and of souls; not of course each one to the fancy of his own views and tendencies but always under the direction of the Bishops."

In his turn Pope Benedict XV recommends Catholic

Action for the rechristianizing of the masses. In 1916 he writes to the Archbishop of Bogota: "It is not irrelevant to recommend to you the study of those institutions which taken together, bear the name of Catholic Action... It is not sufficient that the clerics and the lay people friendly to Catholic Action go among the multitudes and group them; they require further to penetrate these multitudes with the truths of Faith, so that each one may know his duties and conduct himself accordingly."

But the Pope whom posterity will call the Pontiff of Catholic Action is Pius XI. His acts in this matter are innumerable; everything constitutes an occasion for him to recommend "his beloved Catholic Action." The reason is that in our day the apostolate of men among their equals has become an indispensable condition for Christian vitality.

## II - The necessity of Catholic Action

In the encyclical program *Ubi Arcano Dei* His Holiness Pope Pius XI explains that Catholic Action is indissolubly linked with the restoration of the kingdom of Christ: "Remind your Faithful of the laity," he says, "that when they are united to their Bishops and their Priests and when they participate in the work of the apostolate, they are more than ever just what they ought to be: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." Catholic Action is then necessary for the Church with the necessity of divine command, and not solely of ecclesiastical origin; it is decreed by the Founder of the Church Himself.

The importance of the apostolate of the faithful among the faithful explains the urgency of the organization at this time.

To begin with, priests are all too few. In certain countries the clergy has been decimated by war or by persecution and its recruitment has been hampered by a diminution of the Christian spirit within the family. The word of the

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priest can no longer reach all the sheep of the flock, whose perseverance, so much in jeopardy yesterday, is today more and more threatened, for "the average Catholic is not sufficiently strong to safeguard his faith and his virtue, within the morbid atmosphere of atheism into which he has been thrust." Pastors then are absolutely in need of alert and zealous auxiliaries, in need really of lay missionaries, who will cause the work of the priest to be broadened and who will "speak to hearts in a spirit of fraternal charity." It is Catholic Action that will give to the clergy, now too few in number, these indispensable collaborators. "The lay apostolate is then complementary to the sacerdotal apostolate, complementary because different, complementary because dependant, complementary because auxiliary in the true sense of the word."

Elsewhere, that is to say, in the favored countries, where the clergy are numerous and zealous, there are nevertheless certain social strata found to be systematically closed to the religious action of the priest. Excessive industrialization delivers over to the disintegrating activity of materialism and of communism the working masses over whom the Church has lost much influence. "That is the greatest scandal of the nineteenth century!" exclaims the Sovereign Pontiff in speaking to Canon CARDIJN, the founder of the Catholic Working Youth of Belgium. "In most of the industrial regions the priest sees himself in a situation where it is practically impossible to induce the workers to enter his church. A malevolent propaganda puts the conviction anchor-like into the mind of the people, that the Catholic religion is the subservient and perpetual ally of Capitalism. So the apostolate for the worker shall be undertaken by the worker or else it will not be undertaken at all. The Pope is aware of that and consequently wishes that everybody be an apostle, and that the organized laity give freely an active and disinterested cooperation to the work of reviving the religious spirit. In the Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, the

Pope says, "The immediate apostles for the workers must themselves be workers; and the apostles for the industrial and commercial world must themselves be industrialists and business men!"

Canon **TIBERGHIEN** of Lille has modernized the necessity of Catholic Action in the light of what has been said, in these terms: "The priest directs Catholic Action inasmuch as by the directions he offers he animates it; the laity direct Catholic Action in so far as through the directions given they organize it in those sections to which the priest has no access.

Catholic Action under the form extolled by the Sovereign Pontiffs comes at a good time to continue and develop the apostolic work because it can turn to profit the need of activity which characterizes this generation, and can utilize the spirit of youth, audacity and conquest which has appeared and has grown. This movement is not designed to bring ruin on the works of the past; rather it is intended to collect and give point to that work, and to give it a new life. Thus Catholic Action in its actual aspect is, according to the firm expression of Bishop Luigi **CIVARDI**, *sicut castrorum acies ordinata*, an army for peace, with its hierarchy, its laws, its objectives, and its distinctive signs; it is the organization of this army that we are now going to study.

### III—Organization of Catholic Action

Catholic Action is not to be confounded with any other social activity, "however beneficial, legitimate and licit, but material and human;" it groups, under the direction of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, from whom it receives the word of command, the élite among the Catholics of each nation, of each diocese, and of each parish. It sees to the working out of parochial, diocesan and national plans, receiving meanwhile from the hierarchy, which is the regulating center for all, the necessary unity of direction; "like

the blood distributed by a propelling center and reaching even the most distant capillary veins." (PIUS XI, May 16, 1926).

Besides the unity of direction, which is the essential characteristic of Catholic Action, the Organization has another attribute, namely *specialization*, which renders the movement adaptable to the various environments in the midst of which the apostolic mission of the Church evolves. In issuing this command: "Let each militant member of Catholic Action endeavor to bring to Christ his own particular neighborhood... Let the apostles among workmen be workmen themselves; apostles among peasants be peasants; the apostles among business men be business men...", the Head of the Church gave a practical formula for Catholic Action, which is: In order to win, it is necessary to specialize. Specialization is inevitable, for each milieu has its own particular mentality.

The militant member who hopes to achieve something concrete, who wishes to arrive at something immediately practicable, must vary his method and adapt what has been generally commanded to the particular environment that he plans to christianize; for the reactions of a University man are not identically those of a working man, the religious and social problems of the business employee are not those of the laborer. That was the understanding that the pioneers had of Catholic Action. Soon however, from within the homogeneous group of militant members specialized movements originated using appropriate means for conquering particular spheres that have to be brought back to Christ.

The first in date of these "specialized movements" and the one which has served as a model for all the others is Jocism, or the J. O. C., from the initial letters of the French term *Jouissance Ouvrière Chrétienne*. The Jocistes who are for the most part apprentices and young workmen, have gone boldly forward to the winning over of the working

man's world. Our Catholic reviews have recounted the chivalry of these noble young men in the face of the raillery and jeering of sectarian workers. When 1200 of these valiant young men were received in audience at the Vatican during the summer of 1931 they had the happiness of hearing the Holy Father declare to them: "You are splendidly representative of Catholic Action in what it has most active and authentic: that is, the apostolate, the aid given to the hierarchy..., there, where the need is most urgent..., there, where priests could penetrate only with difficulty."

And two years before that, in September 1929, 1500 Jocistes received similarly this assurance: "We cannot hesitate to tell you that our heart receives immense consolation and that a magnificent vision opens up before us... We can promise ourselves great things for the salvation of souls and the glory of God and for the triumph of Christ the King..."

Following the J. O. C. there appeared in certain sections the Catholic Student Youth, the Catholic Agricultural Youth, the Christian Maritime Youth... Each of these activities has become in time fruitful, and as a specialized movement it provoked in turn new specializations, such as the Christian Workingmen Leagues, an extension of the J. O. C. into the sphere of the adult workingmen.

This diversity of groups has however a unity; the unity of instruction and direction received from the Central Council of Catholic Action, a unity truly objective, which consists in causing the penetrating Life of Christ to shine forth, the Life which through Grace transforms souls.

"Within the framework of Catholic Action," writes Cardinal PACELLI, under date of January 29, 1937, to the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, "these groupings constitute a complete and homogeneous whole, which continually perfects itself, which unfolds into a number of strictly harmonized organizations, and which takes account of the work done in the

specialized apostolate." In the midst of this enthusiasm of "the common front" of Christianity for the conquest of a world thrown back largely into paganism, is there a place, is there a role for the religious educator? The second part of the present paper will furnish the answer to that question.

## SECOND PART

### CATHOLIC ACTION AND THE TEACHING RELIGIOUS

The teaching religious is under obligation to enter into the movement of Catholic Action, not only by acquiring a theoretical knowledge of this doctrine of the apostolate, but also by applying himself to the work of introducing his pupils to the methods of Catholic Action; this training should find place at the very outset of the program of every Christian educator. The Christian School furnishes the Church Militant with soldiers and with leaders; hence, declares the Sovereign Pontiff Pope Pius XI "in order that your pupil be tomorrow ready to advance into the territory that awaits him it is fitting that he undertake the first steps while today he is with you. To teach him how to walk (/) make him walk."

And in numerous documents the Holy Father renders his teaching more precise. Here, for example, are a few lines from the letter *Quamvis nostra* addressed on November 25, 1935, to the Episcopate of Brazil: "In their work the religious of both sexes should from the earliest stage take the boys and girls placed in their schools and colleges and develop in them first of all a feeling for the apostolate and then direct them towards the organizations of Catholic Action... We may say that there is no period better than the period of studies, no place better adapted than the school, for rearing the youth of Catholic Action."

That text of the Holy Father's is at once a command and a program, above all for the Brother who has meditated upon the prologue of his Rule: "The end of this Institute is to give a Christian Education to children." Since Christian Education implies a progressive introduction to the apostolate of Catholic Action, let us follow in our study the steps pointed out by the Holy Father:

1. The Christian Educator shall prepare his pupils for Catholic Action from the earliest years, that is, in the primary classes and in the lower classes of the secondary schools.

2. This preparation is to be extended into the colleges and into the technical schools.

3. The ordinary post-school activities should be given direction through Catholic Action.

4. In order that directions be given in a profitable manner, the educator should receive an appropriate training.

Such are the four divisions of the second part of this paper.

#### **I - The preparation for Catholic Action in Elementary Classes and in the Lower Classes of the Secondary Schools**

Catholic Action being essentially an apostolate of equal to equal, the preparation for Catholic Action in the elementary classes does not appear as a novelty to the educator conscious of his mission. The Christian teacher has always exhorted his good pupils to do good to their comrades. By intensifying this practice, which is as old as Christian Education itself, and by introducing it into the general plan of the modern apostolate that the Holy Father traces out for us, the Brothers of the Christian Schools will become workers in the cause of Catholic Action.

Few adolescents are likely spontaneously to take the initiative in the apostolate within the sphere of the school. The leaders, the apostles, are not distinguishable at first sight. We must look about for them, but giving first of

all to the general group of the pupils a training at once theoretical and practical.

The teacher should speak of the obligations contracted in Baptism and in Confirmation; he should set forth the duty of solidarity implied in the dogma of the Communion of Saints; he should explain the evangelical maxims: "He who saves the soul of his brother saves his own." "As brethren you did it to me." In keeping to the practical by means of concrete examples taken from school and family life, he will stress these teachings and he will prove to the boy that life in school can be transformed into life in the apostolate.

In dealing with his pupils he will emphasize the two factors which guarantee the efficaciousness of every apostolate: the personal influence of the apostle and the blessing of God. Personal influence is a factor of the first order in every apostolate, for to win the confidence of one's equals one has to command great respect in regard to human, professional and religious values.

It is when the grace of God energizes a group possessed of fine talents that the dominion over souls is profound and lasting. The educator then will strive to furnish the young apostles with religious convictions that are proper to their age. Since the efficacious energy in a man is nothing more than love transformed, he will put into the heart of the young apostle an ardent love for our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence prayers will be well said, the sacraments will be frequented, there will be many sacrifices they will accept or seek after for the love of God. There you have the true consummation of the young apostle's training; in a spirit of generosity his soul will accept the suggestions that will be given him, and Grace coming to assist, he will manifest an apostolic initiative.

The field open to his zeal is varied, as may be judged by the following examples: he can in spirit of docility to his teacher bring into the class an enthusiasm for straightfor-

wardness and fair-dealing. With two or three of his fellows he can begin to popularize the watchword: no dishonesty in competitive class assignments, no illegitimate helping of others, no lack of fair-play in recreational matters. Little by little the group increases and succeeds finally in having its watchword accepted. Another leader manages to group about himself those of good-will who hold out for language that is clean: "No coarseness and no joking that is dirty."

A child of ten may bring to Sunday Mass one of his neighbors whose family are indifferent in regard to religion. Another boy persuades his parents not to allow a bad periodical to enter the home. It is not rare to find a first communicant bringing to the Holy Table a father or mother forgetful of the duties of religion, or causing a crucifix or a pious picture to be in a place of honor in the home.

Here is a boy who writes: "Three of us from the same school happened to meet one another at the same sea-side resort. Together we went to confession and to Holy Communion every Sunday." It is readily surmised that one of the three was a leader, an apostle. Another boy organizes games in his home for comrades, with a view to keeping them from the motion-picture theatre (the only one in their town and known for its corrupting tendencies). There are two very suggestive good books that explain ideas of this order: *New Crusades of Young Workers*, by Abbé F. KLEIN, Paris, and the *Catholic Student Youth and the Primary School*, published in Montreal. Both contain many stories that paint in lively colors the enterprising spirit of youthful soldiers in the service of Our Lord.

We will terminate these considerations and these examples by giving here the announcement contained in the "Code" which presents the ideal Christian life to the aspirant to the Italian Youth of Catholic Action.

1. The aspirant to Catholic Action strives to be among the first in everything for the honor of Christ the King.

2. He lives by means of Jesus in order to cause Him to be known and served.

3. He is prompt in the matter of obedience.

4. He is loyal. He is then an enemy of human respect, and he proves this by wearing his insignia outwardly and publicly.

5. He is pure in his thoughts, and words, and actions; because he is accustomed daily to perform some voluntary acts of mortification.

6. He is an apostle among his comrades, and with this end in view he makes it a duty to perform each day at least one good action.

7. He is always joyful and happy.

It would seem that this "Rule" summarizes the ends and the methods which characterize the modern groupings which under the name of "Eucharistic Crusade"<sup>1</sup>, and "Christian Scouting" have come to reinvigorate and enlarge the activity of our traditional Marian sodalities.

#### The Confraternities and other Pious Associations

It is in grouping the élite as in a confraternity that an enthusiasm for an active apostolate receives an added impetus. But too often the confraternity remains but a group of well-behaved children who come together at the appointed hour to listen to a pious exhortation and to draw up resolutions that concern the individual solely. This does not produce much in regard to Catholic Action; it has but slight influence upon the little family that is the school. In order to affect the general body the passive submission of the élite is futile. Conquest demands wills

<sup>1</sup> In several countries many Bishops, making use of the authority of the words of Our Holy Father, who calls the Eucharistic Crusade "The Primary School of Catholic Action" have decreed that the Crusade be in their dioceses, the first step in the ladder of Organisations of Catholic Action." *The Catholic Student Youth and the Primary School.*

that are active and that spontaneously organize themselves and keep in view a common struggle.

The merely pious association must undergo a change of physiognomy and become a real center for action: it should cease to be passive and become militant; the group must transform itself into a sort of headquarters in which plans are drawn up to be put into execution a little later by the organizers themselves. "If so many children have failed to persevere for any length of time and have later completely turned themselves against religion," declares M. Guibert, "is it not because they were too accustomed to submit to the influence of others without bringing thereto the activity of their own wills?"

As a matter of fact our great educators have always sought to give to confraternities and sodalities an apostolic and active training. These educators have carried out Catholic Action within the school.

Listen to the indefatigable Brother GABRIEL OF THE CROSS speaking to his sodalists: "Young men, pray, pray to the Heart of Jesus to fire you with that zeal which wins souls for Him. The will of a young apostle, if it be holy, becomes magnetized in contact with those it has to win over: it brings souls together in order to turn them to God... Beg the Sacred Heart through the intercession of Mary to give you that fire which spreads itself ever more and more and which can so enter other hearts that they in turn begin truly to burn. Go then among your fellows and fire them with the love of Jesus Christ..." That is Catholic Action, and fully fifty years before the pontifical appeal.

On his side, Brother AUGUSTE-HUBERT, Director of Passy, thrusts his sodalists into that action of equal upon equal, which specialists in Catholic Action call the "horizontal apostolate." The Brother says: "You undoubtedly have requested to be admitted to the Confraternity because you have a wish to draw nearer to Jesus Christ by practicing virtue more seriously and through the Apostolate to

extend His kingdom. Any other motive on your part would be futile or even culpable. It is fitting to cause your good works to go out from you: the confraternity is not a reliquary where one's own personal virtues are deposited; it is rather a cenacle whence young apostles set out for the conquest of souls. After the attention he gives to the working out of his own salvation, the distinctive mark of a good sodalist is the eagerness to do good to souls. His recompense is to taste the joy of the apostolate, to receive its superabundant graces and to experience the strengthening of its attraction."

The more active apostolate was practiced, as it were instinctively, by Brother EXUPERIEN at the time he was a student at the boarding school of Beziers. In the necrological notice we read: "Adrian MAS, President of the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Virgin, elicited from his fellows a desire for the supernatural, and frequently gave advice that derived authority from his own high character."

The procedure of these eminent directors of Confraternities is quite according to the traditions of our Institute. Our Management defines Confraternity thus: "... the grouping of a certain number of students taken from among the élite, who submit voluntarily to a special regulation and who follow more closely than others the advice and recommendations made them, in order to increase a Christian spirit within themselves, to live a life of piety, and to undertake the practices of the Apostolate." "The Manual for a Member of the Confraternity," edited by the Archconfraternity of the Most Holy Infant Jesus, points out thus the very first end to attain in the confraternity: "The sanctification of his comrades by the apostolate of good example and by sacrifice voluntarily accepted, and even by the direct apostolate every time a favorable occasion presents itself."

In the collection of our instructive and administrative circulars we wish to point out numbers 197 and 257. Therein

our Superior Generals invite us to intensify the active apostolate in our school confraternities. Here are a few short passages: The apostolic spirit is the distinctive mark of fervent sodalists: it is proper that this spirit be created, sustained and developed by furnishing occasions for it to be exercised. There are two sources for its nourishment: first, profound convictions, and then a practical initiative linked with experience..." (Circular No. 197, January 6, 1915, on the *Apostolate of the Religious Educator*). "What is understood by quality in speaking of a sodalist is the sum of his piety and of his influence." (Too often we take account of the first only).

"The ordinary apostolate of the sodalist should consist in raising the level of what we are accustomed to call the spirit of environment..." "Invite the pupils, for example, to study some religious subject in the form of a discussion among themselves, or propose some generous theory or idea for them to defend." "Action among their fellows, or the spirit of conquest, is essential to the Confraternity. The boy is really a member of the Confraternity only in so far as he enters upon the Apostolate..." (Circular, 257, May 15, 1927, on *Confraternities in Our Schools*).

The Confraternity director who wishes to give an active apostolic bent to his group should take inspiration from the books of our Society, from the circulars of our Superiors and from the biographies of our Brothers who have exercised a profound and fruitful influence. And if already he has had experience in training the young he will appreciate the following advice, to be found in the *Chronicle* of the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel:

"First of all let us look about to discover who the boys are who have an influence over their fellows, those to whom all the others seem to turn, as by instinct, when it is a question of organizing games or giving word what to do. Let us not too easily reject such leaders who seem to leave something to be desired in their conduct. If they

are talented we should have every hope of gaining them to the Cause of Christ, if even in a little we can manage to present that Cause to them from the point of view of its being lovable and of a nature to stir generous hearts. If they are not the best, it is only too often because, like the workmen of the Gospel, 'nobody has hired them,' nobody has taken possession of their energy with a view to turning it to a grand and noble cause."

There should be a small group of these leaders. "It is absolutely necessary to begin, not with great numbers," writes His Holiness Pope Pius XI in his letter to the episcopate of Brazil, "but with small groups well prepared, which will act like an evangelical leaven for transforming the main body."

The Confraternity, made up of this small but energetic and pious group, will lead its members towards a twofold goal: to conquer self for Christ by a pure and generous life, and to bring to the same Christ one's fellows, family and environment. Thus drawn up and directed, the confraternity will establish and maintain the reign of Christ in the school. Is not that the purpose of the Christian Schools established by Saint JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE?

May this nursery of apostles produce numerous vocations already disciplined. There lies the necessary reward for this work, which at certain moments appears ungrateful enough. But how comforting this work can be at other moments when the religious educator finds in the chivalry and enterprise of his boys, a real stimulus for his own zeal and for his own sanctification.

What has just been said concerns the junior schools and should serve as an approach to a better understanding of Catholic Action and to a more complete utilization of the methods used in the work of education. But why should we hesitate to make use of some of the methods and devices of the Catholic Student Youth which we are about to discuss, provided that the age, and the spirit of initiative and generosity of the Confraternity lend themselves thereto?

And let it be known once for all that what is going to be said under the heading *Catholic Student Youth* is to be understood also of many other specialized movements. Their activity varies according to how they are recruited, as would seem natural: but their activity derives from a common inspiration and a universal ideal expressed by the motto: *Proud, pure, joyous and conquering!*

## 2 - Preparation for Catholic Action in Colleges and in Secondary Schools

In college Catholic Action adopts the specialized form called "Christian Student Youth" or the J. E. C., *Jeunesse Etudiante Chrétienne*, as it is rendered in the French tongue. Inasmuch as it is a grouping within Catholic Action it conforms to the pontifical declaration "an organization of the laity formed in the school or for the school." This organization is to have a method and constitution like those of "Christian Student Youth."

*The Methods of Christian Student Youth.*—By school we mean the period of education; but it frequently happens on the one hand that the teacher is so burdened by a multiplicity of demands which should not properly come within his sphere that he cannot adequately exercise his role of educator; on the other hand the period which we call school life does not appear to the growing boy as anything like real life; his responsibility within that life is very nearly non-existent, and in consequence he is driven frequently to play a part which is altogether passive.

The question is, How can we remove the boy from the conventionality of school life in order to enable him to lead a life actively personal? Catholic Action in its special aspect, of Christian Student Youth would lift the boy into a life which is very near to the life of general society, into one which would utilize his need for activity and which,

while initiating him into an actual apostolate within the limits of his environment, would prepare him for a future apostolate as a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Even within Catholic Colleges the Christian Student Youth movement has an environmental action to accomplish. There is not to be found there as in the so-called neutral school a pagan atmosphere to penetrate; but there is a spirit of apathy that must be roused up, a spirit somewhat worldly to conquer. Christian Student Youth will look to training capable aggressors for reforming, for improving the life of the school while at the same time they are preparing themselves for an apostolate in the near future.

The Christian Student Youth method seeks to realize a program which is at once religious, intellectual and social.

a) The religious program aims at imparting an intense interior life through the reception of the sacraments, and by prayer and reading, and by meditation and instructions on religious themes that have to do with the apostolate which every Christian is called upon to fulfil.

b) The intellectual program consists in the study of pontifical pronouncements, of the social doctrine of the Church, of the social problems of the locality, the whole arranged according to the age and the training of the pupils.

c) The technical program consists in organizing with a view to the apostolate within the school milieu, in getting to know this milieu, its desires and its enthusiasms, its false ideas and the dangers which threaten it, the comrades that should be helped, the allotting of places of responsibility, the pooling of personal experiences that ended with success or lack of success.

Later on the militant apostle is to help bring back his brothers to be Christians once more; but meanwhile he exerts an influence in the school, which is for him the novitiate of true Catholic Action. This work is not the work of an *independent soldier*; a member of the Christian Student Youth proceeds in *collaboration with his fellows*. Anything like isolation in the apostolate is for him a hin-

drance, indeed almost a danger. A necessary corollary to this is the prime importance that the religious educator should attach to the meetings of his zealous apostles.

There is a definite manner of holding the meetings of the members of Christian Student Youth. These meetings begin with a vigorous protestation of fidelity to Christ and to the Church. There follows a short commentary on the Gospels, after which a paper is read containing data collected and derived by collective enquiry. There is a discussion of the work of the group, wherein each one questions and speaks without constraint; there is a study of the facts and incidents of school life which seem to demand a typical Christian Student Youth reaction. They try to see the background of school life in its entirety and the various influences that come into play. It is judgment first and then action.

It doesn't suffice merely to have observed. It is additionally necessary to make a sound judgment upon the facts. It is just here that the action of the director begins; he points out certain revisions that are desirable, because he knows that the young men are at times exposed to make mistakes; he indicates how to judge and plan in terms of the supernatural; he makes clear the road to travel and suggests measures that are opportune. But he avoids imposing a solution or employing methods of authority when he knows that the enthusiasm should come from within the group. It is solely in a mutual manner that the souls of the young men can give clarity to one another and cause one another to be set afire with zeal: they are like torches that are lighted by catching fire from one another.

Here is a description of a meeting of the Christian Student Youth taken from life, and to be found in the "*Books of Religious and Social Action*:"

"The young men are treating the question of purity. That would seem to be a question of interest to the indi-

vidual only. But these young men are members of Christian Student Youth and become eager for the improvement of the general welfare. Eagerness is intensified and dominates the common work of prayer and reflection. The question for them is, not solely how to be pure, but also how to strengthen purity among others. The priest directing the meeting quickly perceives that these young apostles are not merely in the act of discovering the unique manner of being pure, but he also discovers that their eyes are lighting up with the brilliance of a victory which no purity deriving from fear or from the threat of temptation would seem able to give. Indeed these young men are building up their purity with the unique material solid enough to be permanent; they build their purity out of charity.

This Christian Student Youth assembly studies in common the social doctrine of the Church. This intellectual collaboration brings in material for making public conferences which later on can be given for the entire personnel of the school. It was thus that every week of the month of December, 1936, the committee for Catholic Action in one of our large schools gave a reading of a paper treating of Communism, the theme having been proposed by the Central Committee for the various activities of Catholic Action. These papers dealt with the following: December 1st, "The history of Communism;" December 8th "The nature of Communism;" December 15th, "The activity of Communism at the present time;" December 22nd, "The struggle against Communism."

According to the circumstances and the neighborhood wherein it is developing Christian Student Youth comes into contact with the real life of society by means of organized trips in small groups, to some industrial town, to the neighborhood maybe of seamen, to a factory, or to a hospital where one can observe the life of workmen and become informed by means of conversation of their needs, distress-

es, miseries, and even of revengeful attitudes. Our young men look about, learn, judge and later in the study group they determine or they realize how prejudices can be broken down by an hour or two of contact with the souls of the humble and the poor.

Two means of activity render the work of the Christian Student Youth group more practical and consequently more fruitful: these are the *Journal* and the *Enquiry*. The *Journal* is a small periodical gotten up by the members of the Christian Student Youth. Its articles are generally short, always lively and alert, modern in their presentation and touching on all subjects capable of interesting the group: there are instances of the Apostolate, appropriate reflections, citations from readings, reports on books or on films, and summaries of methods or instructions which are obtained from similar groups worthy of imitation.

The *Journal* is not indispensable for the Christian Student Youth group, but the *Enquiry* really is. The *Enquiry* is a pivotal thing for carrying on the work of the group. Abbé Klein qualifies the *Enquiry* as the intellectual center of the life of Christian Student Youth. The *Enquiry* gives the aggressive apostle the knowledge of his environment. But how shall the *Enquiry* be conducted in a sure and profitable manner? In order to avoid a scattering of effort and to help gather together the greatest number of facts on concrete subjects, a questionnaire is drawn up, a copy of which is put into the hands of all the members; each one of them for one or more weeks looks about him, gleans pointers that are useful, questions comrades, and provokes exchanges of point of view; then he presents his report to the group. The results of this inquiry are studied in common, whereupon a paper is written, the conclusions of which serve as new pointers for the work of the apostolate of the Christian Student Youth.

The inquiry constitutes one of the very best instruments for forming the mind and spirit of young men. For exam-

ple, here are the subjects treated in seven successive inquiries made in the Christian Student Youth group of a secondary school: making friends at school, reading, the long vacation, the conscience of a student, the employment of leisure time, the future of the student, the daily paper. The *Enquiry* which had for object the conscience of the schoolboy embraced the four points of view that follow: conscience in respect to the work of the school; conscience in the matter of frankness and openness; conscience in regard to the goods of others; conscience in the duties of charity. Each of these subdivisions, accompanied by five or six questions, enlightens the enquirer by having him concentrate his observations upon some important and practical points.

Numerous outlines for enquiries are to be found, two of them being: *Our First Enquiries* and *New Crusades for the Catholic Working Youth*, the former printed privately at Paris and the latter published by Abbé KLEN in the same city; two others are: *Travailleur Jéciste*, and the *Catholic Student Youth*, both being intended for the Catholic Student Youth, the first printed in Paris and the second in Montreal.

When the long vacation from school finally comes round, it is prepared for in the last meetings of the Christian Student Youth; each apostle draws up his program of Christian life, his plan of apostolate within the family and within the neighborhood he is going to live in. As far as it is possible to have it done, a fervent end-of-the-year retreat fortifies the will of the youth, supernaturalizes his purpose and rekindles his youthful ardor. The president of the group assigns the various tasks, foresees the notable dates and itineraries with a view to causing circular letters to reach all the members of the group, letters bringing to the dispersed apostles news of their fellow members and of incidents pertaining to the common apostolate.

Here let us summarize the work of Catholic Action in the school: its purpose is briefly to cause Christ to reign

within the school environment through the activities of the members of the Christian Student Youth, who are to conquer themselves in Christ and to undertake to conquer thus their comrades. The Christian Student Youth is then a veritably live school of apostolic education, having its center of interest deriving from the supernatural life lived and communicated. Can there be a better school of perfection?

Before going farther, a question proposes itself: Should the Catholic Student Youth group absorb the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Virgin, or might these two works co-exist in the same school? That is a question that will receive a different solution in regard to times and places. The official organ of the Marian Confraternities in May of 1932 understood the coexistence of the two groups in one and the same house. That this is normal is certain from the counsel that the Holy Father gave to the Third Orders and the Confraternities in his letter of February 14, 1934. He said then;

“There is no fear that Catholic Action will absorb or even weaken the worth-while religious associations which already are bringing the youth of both sexes into groups. On the contrary, these venerable institutions by their working at least partially towards the same end as Catholic Action, which is the establishment of the reign of Christ in souls, are to be counted among the most precious of Catholic Action, with which they will maintain themselves always in a harmonious and brotherly collaboration.”

For many of the schools and boarding schools the Christian Student Youth is a new thing which must necessarily pass through a period of adaptation and feeling the way. There will be surprises and projects more or less happy in their results. In this matter as in others is it not experience that becomes the fruit of our disillusionments? The organizer will want to proceed with caution, to use patience,

and to avoid what Saint VINCENT DE PAUL terms suggestively, treading upon the domain of Providence. One pitfall is precipitation, the temptation of immediatism.

His Holiness Pope PIUS XI in a discourse pronounced on August 21, 1931, cautions generous souls against the "beautiful and holy temptation" of impatience, which gives us the aspect of desiring to be a little ahead of the Lord. The Holy Father recommends that we proceed slowly and he cautions us not to desire to do everything at a single stroke; first of all, a good selection must be made, and secondly a good training has to be given in order later to be able to proceed with patience, prudence and perseverance.

#### The Constitution of the Christian Student Youth Group

The true Christian Student Youth group tends to form itself according to the definition of the Holy Father: it is the participation of the organized laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church.

Its constitution then depends upon the norms laid down by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, that is to say, by the Ordinary. Consequently, the organization of a section of the Christian Student Youth will find itself in one or other of these situations:

Either the diocesan Catholic Action is still in its early stages of development and nothing has been legislated concerning the effective cooperation that scholastic activities should be bringing to it;

Or the diocesan Catholic Action has incorporated a certain number of Catholic Student Youth groups which come under a ruling made by a General Committee of the Catholic Student Youth.

In the first case a thoughtful educator, anticipating the episcopal decisions will introduce the Catholic Student Youth method in the militant, Christian training that he must give to the members of the group. Such groups

are, however, not truly groups within Catholic Action, since a real participation in the hierarchical apostolate does not exist: but the spirit and the methods adopted permit the groups to be considered nuclei, that we might call pre-Christian Student Youth groups. Two monographs that we have added by way of appendices to the present paper will furnish an idea of what can be realized both in a provincial school and in a large boarding school. Under date of September 15, 1935, the *Books of Religious and Social Action* published a documented article on this same question.

When the ecclesiastical hierarchy has made an appeal to Christian educators by inviting them to form within their school environments some Catholic Student Youth groups which will be affiliated to the General Committee of Catholic Action, the program to follow is as follows: The groups which answer this call organize themselves according to the episcopal norms and bring their methods into line with the direction benevolently given by the General Committee. They then become true groups of the Christian Student Youth. Here is a general view of the organization of Christian Student Youth such as it functions within a certain European nation wherein are several hundreds of schools directed by our Brothers.

a) *Structure* - The General Committee of the Christian Student Youth named by ecclesiastical authority is composed of a chaplain, of a president and a secretary. A Jesuit father, a secular priest and a Brother of the Christian Schools form the official council of the General Committee. The country is divided into "federations" and each federation comprises a certain number of sections, each section functioning in some school or college.

b) *Vital organization*. - The student, according to age, passes through successive periods: on probation, a member of Catholic Student Youth, and Militant Member of Catholic Student Youth. The student on probation, or the *aspirant* as he can be called, must be fourteen years of age

and for the first four months or so he should be introduced by his elders to the doctrine and methods of Catholic Action. A true member of Catholic Student Youth is one who has passed successfully an examination upon the content of the course he followed while a member on probation. Finally, those who are the most ardent, the members in whom remarkable qualities of leadership have been found, are permitted to pronounce the consecration peculiar to the *militant member*. The training of the members of the section takes place in the weekly meetings, whose program is determined by the General Committee. This latter sends its inspectors or representatives occasionally to assure itself of the group's good discipline.

The section itself possesses its own committee, composed of a spiritual director (priest or religious), a president, a secretary and a treasurer. It is in the committee that all the activities of the section take their start. In order to reach and to stir up the general mass of boys, the group organizes services as it judges useful, taking into consideration the environment in which it has to work; there are, for example, the sport-supplying or scout service, the missionary service, the literary service and the service for regulating closed retreats for voluntary catechists.

The sections possess a periodical, or in the absence of that, they read and propagate the publications which come from the General Committee.

Here are concrete examples communicated by a correspondent: In one of our schools it is the Catholic Student Youth which takes charge of arranging for the celebration of the feast of Christ the King. They prepare a statue of Christ the King in the principal hall, they maintain about it a guard of honor and they organize some collective ceremony. In another school on the same occasion it is the Catholic Student Youth that organizes an entertainment for the parish.

The General Committee having given the order to begin

a campaign to promote within student environments the practice of retreats for young men and for obtaining vocations among them, the section of one of our schools puts this program completely into execution. For three years, thanks to the activity of the Catholic Student Youth group, this school has had a retreat for young men preached for three days by the general chaplain of the Catholic Student Youth; then a retreat of equal length for vocations or for orientation; finally, a retreat for the graduating class at the end of the year's work.

Again let us cite another instance of good work effected by one of our sections, and which has been very much praised in certain centers of Catholic Action. During the preceding year the General Committee had set a campaign in motion for the renewal of the Christian spirit in families; and by way of propaganda and in accordance with the purpose of the campaign this particular group gave a musical and literary soiree upon the theme. This very simple manner of causing the Christian idea to penetrate the general mass was very much applauded by a numerous public.

Evidently there must be tentative steps, trials more or less happy in results; the essential is not so much to succeed from the beginning as to work with the purpose of making landmarks, creating traditions and habituating the growing boy to a more real and effective apostolate, which he should undertake upon leaving school.



### 3 - Catholic Action and its Preparation in Post-School Activities

An army of 141,458 soldiers; such is the imposing corps that post-school undertakings are putting at the disposal of the hierarchical apostolate. (From statistics of the 31st of December, 1936). What a powerful leaven this would be for Christian people if all these seeds spread throughout sixty nations by the hand of the Divine Sower should develop and produce fruit. This efficacious coopera-

tion that our former pupils are bringing to the world wide movement of Catholic Action will cause our post-school army to be a "holy militia always ready to fight for the triumph of the King of Peace and for the consolidation and extension of His reign upon the earth." (Pope Pius XI, 1926).

Let us then give a Catholic Action training in all our post-school activities. We shall speak first of activities called *Activities of perseverance*. From the beginning, but especially during the past seventy years, our Brothers have been persuaded that the Christian School does nothing more than begin the work of religious education, which should be extended by those activities of perseverance calculated to sustain the young man in critical periods and help him until the time for marriage.

Consequently we witness that very varied and consoling flowering of post-school activities which under various names adapt themselves to the conditions of the environment and tighten the bonds of a cordial affection between the young men and their Alma Mater, strengthen their convictions, and make easier for them the fulfilment of religious duties by introducing them to the work of the apostolate.

The customary works of perseverance well conducted are not alien to the movement of Catholic Action. But because of that are they Catholic Action, as some believe them to be? The answer is NO.

The work of perseverance takes the young man from his environment and introduces him into a group where his perseverance is assured. It differs then essentially from the movement of Catholic Action, which leaves the individual in his customary environment and gives him in this very environment, through specialized arrangements, the means of protection required for perseverance.

"The work of perseverance is like a hothouse which safeguards; on the other hand Catholic Action is really a conquest and a rechristianization of the world in terms of the gospel. It is that world that Catholic Action acts

upon, which it desires to conquer. It is not simply some young men, nor is it man taken at some special hour of his life; it is not even man taken in the abstract that Catholic Action is seeking to work on. It deals with this particular man in this condition, in this or that family, in such and such a profession, with no matter what resources or blemishes he derives from heredity; it is really this man with all the facilities and all the difficulties of his very entourage. We understand perfectly well the formidable influence of environment, an influence that has grown because of the fact that modern life mixes human beings more and more, connects them one with another more and more. Hence it is truly there that Catholic Action aims at attaining to the individual." (Mgr. GONON).

Must we then abandon the works of perseverance as a conception out of date? Or does there exist a kind of formula of transition or of conciliation between these two forms of the apostolate? Yes, such a formula does exist. The work of perseverance and the work of Catholic Action, are both necessary, although they correspond to necessities quite different in kind. The young Christian adolescent may have membership at one and the same time in a work of perseverance and in a work of some specialized movement; collaboration between the two organisms appears altogether normal.

However, a delicate question arises: Can an individual be at one and the same time a directing force in a work of perseverance and a leader too in some specialized movement? All the evidence seems to indicate that it is very difficult to conduct the two activities simultaneously; so, in many cases it would be prudent to make a leader free, not so much from the work of perseverance itself, as from the absorbing activities of that work. Such a leader would render his activity in Catholic Action more fruitful. It should be noted that in the work of rechristianization extolled by the Sovereign Pontiff, a Society for Perseverance

should not endeavor to absorb the entire energy of young Christians.

The director of any work having to do with youth should consequently educate his young men in that spirit of conquest which is peculiarly the spirit of Catholic Action. He must carefully guard against allowing the group to degenerate into a simple athletic, or travel, or dramatic society or even into some sort of well-disposed club whose activities would amount to the recreation of the drawing room or the gymnasium or the social club. Then he should possess sufficient disinterestedness and enlightened zeal to turn those young men in whom he recognizes special qualities of leadership towards some specialized movements. The disinterestedness that we recommend here will be amply rewarded by the more militant spirit that the young men will bring to their work.

Moreover, this line of conduct was laid down by His Eminence, Cardinal PACELLI, in his letter to religious superiors, June 4, 1936; "The Holy Father requests that the pious associations that depend upon religious be stimulated to give their providential cooperation to Catholic Action by directing and moving towards it their own members; this applies particularly to such Institutions and Congregations that bring youth together with a view to maintaining the fruits of a Christian education."

*Volunteer catechists* is another post-school activity that should be studied in connection with Catholic Action.

The form of the apostolate for the time of school and for the time after school which corresponds best to pontifical recommendations is the organizing among pupils and former pupils groups of volunteer catechists. This apostolate is sometimes painful, above all when it is exercised in the midst of a very poor people who are devoid of the elementary notions of hygiene and politeness; but experience teaches that the young men who accept this work of mercy draw from it along with a practical understanding of the miseries

of the people, a special grace to persevere in Christian practices, which their classmates do not receive in the same degree.

Moreover, a catechist's heart opens naturally to generosity and after having sacrificed some hours of his free time, the young apostle finds himself using some of his own pocket money to provide the pupils he teaches with rosaries or medals, or pamphlets; a veritable spiritual union is established between the teacher and his audience. One is sometimes astonished at the authority that these youthful souls can exercise over the children of the people, who too often are imbued with social prejudices.

In the absence of instructive and administrative circulars giving directions for the constitution and the functioning of groups of volunteer catechists we already possess several monographs to be found in the collection of the issues of the *Bulletin des Ecoles Chrétiennes*. The volunteer catechists of Lyons and of Rheims are described in the volumes for 1907 and 1909. The catechetical works of the Brothers of Cuba are found referred to in the volume for 1926; the Catholic Association of Cincata, 1935; the work of the catechists of Turin, or the "Union of the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and of Mary Immaculate," 1936. It is that latter confraternity (a truly religious family bound by vows) that has merited letters of affiliation to our Institute, and that can be presented as a model of its kind. We have equally some pages devoted to instructions for groups of volunteer catechists in a brochure entitled "The Works of Perseverance Within the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools." (Paris, 1907).

Our groups of volunteer catechists may solicit affiliation either with our *Union of Catechists*, whose center is at Turin, 14 via delle Rosine, or to the *Archconfraternity of the Works of Catechism*, 19, rue de Varenne, Paris.

It is not part of the purpose of this study to expound the functioning of these catechistic works. Let us, however,

remark that experiments can be made within the school itself to the great advantage of the audience and of the generous teachers. Here are a few lines written on this subject at the outset of the present year by one of our Brothers who is a zealous Director of a group of Catholic Student Youth: "On the 20th of January there will be a catechism given before the whole house. The catechists will be two or three pupils of the graduating class, who according to turn will make use of projection pictures, hope thus to see our older boys become more and more enthusiastic for the Gospel and for Our Lord and prepare themselves all the more for their role of volunteer catechists."

Maybe one will object that this is asking much of youth. The soul of a young man contains treasures of activity, which Holy Baptism and Confirmation have put there powerfully, treasures of Christian zeal that a wise educator can judiciously use to advantage in helping the baptized in going to the very end marked out by Baptismal grace. Let us recall to our pupils, especially to our young men that there are sins of omission; and that when it is question of certain hours of great famine or of great darkness it is nothing short of a crime to keep only for oneself one's light and one's bread.

Yes, let us ask our pupils and our former pupils to sacrifice their leisure, to make a gift of themselves to some work, to some form of the apostolate. "It is an astonishing thing," wrote a very experienced director of apostolic undertakings, "that people fear to ask too much of youth, obtaining therefore nothing; when they ask for much they always receive more than they ask." Alas! in looking over retrospectively their apostolic career how many educators are there not to admit the justice of that judgment and confess with one of our Brothers who was nevertheless a great director of souls: "I have been lacking in faith! There has been in my work too much human prudence, too much caution. I was in dread of appearing to exact

too much; I forgot that souls give only in proportion to what is asked of them." This was the lament of the late founder of the undertaking called the Franc-Bourgeois, the Most Honorable Brother JOSEPH.

The groups of volunteer catechists are not the only form the work may take; but these groups in our present-day laicized society constitute an excellent type of Catholic Action corresponding beautifully to the wishes of the Holy Father for the rechristianizing of the environment. Those vigorous workers for Catholic Action, to be had principally among our former pupils, may adopt other forms of the apostolate that are recognized and recommended by ecclesiastical authority, such as the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, presiding over works of perseverance, school groups and Catholic camps. Let us repeat, however, that these various forms of the Catholic Apostolate are auxiliary to Catholic Action and are not Catholic Action itself.

Evidently it is our schools, our works of perseverance, and our groups of former pupils which should furnish the shock-troops for Catholic Action. One of our Brothers states with a legitimate pride, "As a matter of fact the ecclesiastical authorities call upon our former pupils when they have need of devoted men. These men present themselves throughout the diocese as an élite whose service and zeal are drawn upon to a great extent."

#### 4 - Catholic Action in the Professional Training and in the Life of a Brother of the Christian Schools

From 1930 on, the Holy See has been affirming that "a knowledge of Catholic Action is indispensable to anybody occupying himself with the training of Christian youth." Numerous documents emanating from the Holy See have served to remind us of that necessity. One of the most recent is a letter that His Eminence Cardinal PACELLI

addressed on June 4, 1936, to all religious superiors. "We should now expect to see, in obedience to the counsels of the Sovereign Pontiff, special courses organized for religious in what concerns these new obligations, so that through preaching and the very many other works of zeal of religious, the faithful may be trained to the apostolate of Catholic Action."

The aspirants to our society should enter into contact with Catholic Action from the time of the Junior Novitiate, at least in a theoretical manner. The Manual of Catechism that shall be put into the hands of the Junior Novice or of the young religious should contain explanations concerning the matter of Catholic Action, either in that chapter of Dogma which treats of the ninth article of the Symbol, *I believe in the Holy Catholic Church*, or in the chapter on Worship which treats of Confirmation, the sacrament of the militant member of Catholic Action. Temporarily we could have a page printed presenting ten or twelve questions on this topic. This page could be pasted in the manner of an appendix in the volume on Dogma.

In community the Brother Director should cause Catholic Action to be understood by having certain publications coming from the committees of Catholic Action, or the mandates of Bishops on this topic, read in the refectory. He will interest his Brothers in the activities, the enterprises and the various results characterising the specialized groups which have to do with school or with post-school work. It is desirable, for example, that at the regular retreat the Brother Visitor take counsel with the Brothers Directors on the measures to be taken to intensify the Catholic movement in all our schools.

Frequently ecclesiastical authorities ask the Directors of our schools to give the use of a hall to accommodate some center of Catholic Action; or a general committee may beg hospitality of the Director of a boarding-school for several days in order to facilitate seminars of the Catholic

Student Youth, or for the delegates to a congress of Catholic Action. Not only will the intelligent Brother Director graciously acquiesce to these appeals, but he will make use of the occasion to have his community assist at the principal meetings. Our Brothers could thus introduce themselves more completely to the methods and specializations and accomplishments of the regional Catholic Action; and they would thus be better prepared to carry on Catholic Action in the school.

We have attempted to point out the main ideas concerning the duties of our Brothers in regard to Catholic Action, so dear to the Head of the Church. But let us not forget action is fated to be sterile if it is not quickened by prayer and sacrifice. (*Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.* Ps. CXXVII). This duty binds all. It is the only one that can easily be carried out by our respected old Brothers and by Brothers having charge of temporal matters. Prayer and sacrifice should be the means to enable these Brothers to conform to the repeated desires of the Holy Father: "It is absolutely necessary," he says in a letter to Cardinal SEGURA (1929), "that everybody be an apostle during this, our epoch." "Catholic Action," he writes to Card. BERTRAM, Archbishop of Breslau (1928), "should be a universal, coordinated action on the part of all Catholics regardless of age."

"In proceeding along this path all the Brothers of the Christian Schools will cause their disciples to become part of the structure of the Church. They will be thus true children of the saint who founded their Congregation, "for the preservation of youth in the way of Salvation." (Collect. of the Mass of St. John Baptist de la Salle).

## SUGGESTIONS

It would seem that the question of Catholic Action, such as the present paper has been regarding it, permits us to make a few suggestions, some of which have to do directly with our apostolate, the others having to do with our interior activity as a religious institute.

### *A) Suggestions having to do with our Apostolate*

1. We should tend to make our groups of pious youth more and more energetic by the practice of the apostolate of equal to equal, by the spirit of conquering for the love of God: within the school, the family and the social milieu, and by encouraging the training of catechists.

2. We should see to it that our works of perseverance instruct their members as to the nature, necessity and obligation of Catholic Action as well as the measures to be taken for putting it into practice.

3. We should see that the members of our post-school societies be oriented towards the apostolate: an individual apostolate bringing action to bear upon one's elders, upon the family, upon public questions and particularly questions having to do with our schools. Here it should be remarked that nothing that touches upon the interests of our schools should be alien to our former pupils, for has not our Holy Father declared in his Encyclical on Education: "Everything that the faithful do to promote and to defend the Catholic School, which is destined to take care of their children, is a religious work properly understood, and consequently it becomes an essential duty for Catholic Action."

B) *Suggestions having to do with our religious activity  
as a religious Institute*

1. A leaflet in the catechetical form of questions and answers, dealing with the topic of Catholic Action, should be added to our catechisms.

2. A heading entitled "Catholic Action" should find place in our Institute's periodical. Under that title we should insert an account of the undertakings and successes of Catholic Action; there should be summaries or citations from pontifical and episcopal documents. It would be proper to have in it reviews of books treating of Catholic Action, particularly those aspects of Catholic Action that apply to the work of education.

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## APPENDICES

*1 - The Catholic Student Youth movement as applied in a certain boarding school of secondary education*

It was in 1929 that the Catholic Student Youth group was founded at the boarding school, pretty much as it exists today. Brother Director inaugurated the work with a view to heighten piety, to introduce the older boys to an apostolate having a more supernatural background, and to promote numerous good vocations among the pupils. The beginning, truly apostolic, was very modest: three boys of the upper classes, who were models of piety and hard work, constituted themselves into a little society almost secretly. Somewhat in the style of the Gospel mustard seed, jealously closing life within itself, it turned out to be a means of exciting curiosity and awakening interest. For somewhat more than a year it was to live thus, secretly as it were, experiencing a slow but solid interior growth without any direct action on the perplexed entourage.

But after the retreat at the opening of school in October 1931, the little group reorganized, decided to lift the veil of secrecy and allow itself to be known at the boarding school during a public meeting, of course a meeting for religious propaganda where there would be no departure from the habitual procedure of Catholic Student Youth meetings. No excitement was evoked, and in place of shouting voices there was the calm measured utterance of its president. They recited the Our Father, which is the prayer of the Catholic Student Youth movement, and then they added the invocations to St. John Baptist de la Salle and to Saint Joan of Arc, the patrons of the group. Then there was an explanation of the Gospel, a discussion of a question of piety, a conference: everything going forward without striking incident or confusion.

The young conferencier excited astonishment by his composure, his engaging tone and his air of conviction. After the meeting there was an entertainment in the Catholic Student Youth style. This play which was a theme play, difficult to represent, but easy to understand, proved beautiful and affecting, and was hailed as a complete success. This was the attraction given the boys of

good-will, the recompense for their generously sustained attention. Such minds as were sympathetic became enthusiastic, those that were hostile, or probably better, those that were apathetic and dreaded and disparaged everything that surpasses or threatens them, rid themselves of some of their prejudices, although in a few rare instances they remained recalcitrant and unmoved.

However, requests to be allowed to join were at first hesitating. The movement was young and remained, in spite of everything, little known. Then the argument "ad hominem," which is characteristic of egoism, suggested itself. The work began to demand a spirit of sacrifice: it required an hour of free time every Sunday; it required the writing of substantial papers and documented conferences and delivering these before a no doubt good-natured audience, but an audience not too helpful in its criticism and all that along with heavy class assignments. That program indeed was something that didn't give pleasure to a great number who were more given to appearing well and merely following rather than conquering themselves in order to live heroically. So the militant young men remained a dozen or so, a number nevertheless sufficient, since at the outset it was primarily a question of getting together an élite at once resolute and capable of impressing the general mass of pupils by piety, good spirit and application. One finds a real pleasure in thumbing the reports of this first year of work. One sees therein as it were, the first totterings of a little child vaguely conscious of its life, of its weaknesses and its hidden powers; there were moments of hesitation and error, and the advances and successes were heightened by the seriousness and impatience of the neophyte.

In October, 1932, there was a new grand meeting of propaganda, presided over this time by the chaplain for the general enterprises of the diocese and by the president of the Catholic Student Youth, and this gave a definite consecration to the local group. Here is how its existence is organized. The Catholic Student Youth at the boarding school comprises on the one hand a president, two vice-presidents, a spiritual director, a treasurer, and a librarian, that make up the administration; and on the other hand active members and affiliated members.

To enjoy the benefit of the training of Catholic Student Youth the pupil places in writing with the President at the outset of the school year his request for admission; for the meetings begin

immediately after the resumption of classes. The retreat at this period arouses serious ideas and inspires generous resolutions. These requests are looked into at the second session. The Director gives some points of information in order to cause the votes to be intelligent; then the balloting takes place. The élite being small in number, it is necessary that the candidate get half the votes in order to secure admission. If one fails to be admitted every effort is made to explain to him that he should try through added piety and hard work to merit later on the honor to which he is aspiring.

Any balloting that occurs during the year is neither less serious nor more important. A nondescript member or an unworthy member suffices sometimes to alienate some very good candidates. Moreover to vote conscientiously is an exercise of serious thinking and serves as a preparation for the fulfilment of an important rôle in later life. The ordinary meetings take place on Saturday in the evening, but sometimes they are also held at midday in order to teach the Catholic Student Youth members to sacrifice some minutes of pleasure in favor of the apostolate. Moreover every meeting presupposes the sacrifice of an hour of leisure or of study or of relaxation—a sacrifice really felt and consented to: for self-denial should be the basis of the life of every Catholic Student Youth member.

The meeting generally lasts an hour and proceeds as follows:

1. The President invites the director to recite the prayer: the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the invocations to the patrons of the group.

2. Then a reading of the minutes of the preceding meeting takes place. These minutes should be drawn up in such a manner as to give an exact record of what was said and done and what results followed upon the preceding meeting. This report is adopted, modified, or rejected according to the invitation of the president. The members may ask leave to express themselves. Words of assent and felicitation and rectification and additions constitute so many necessary actions, which if faithfully carried out will prevent the record of the meeting from becoming a pious bromide and prevent the meeting from degenerating into what is called a lay sermon by a tyro orator gravely developing some vague commonplace before a passive and weary audience.

In order to know and cherish the Holy Gospel, the members present in turn a personal commentary upon the Sacred Text.

The speaker reads the indicated page and then without the aid of notes he points out what practical and precise application can be made from the divine lesson. Then there follow various suggestions presented by the other members and once again there are friendly and judicious discussions that are to the point and calculated to impart a general moral and supernatural enrichment.

The talk or conference, really the main business, is confided to some member at the outset of the semester or the quarter. This talk tends to train the Catholic Student Youth in the art of public discourse and to develop in them, together with a spirit of initiative, a distinctive personality; it causes them to become acquainted with a number of practical facts quite necessary in the apostolate; it discreetly introduces them to the problems which are stirring minds and whose solution demands no less charity than competence. The subjects are determined by the executive bureau in such manner as to secure unity. A plan and bibliography are added, but the final choice is left with the conferencier himself. The development either read, or spoken without notes, is evaluated, discussed, completed either at the end of the reading or during the very course of the business. Catholic Student Youth being a recent specialized movement of a social nature, the subjects for discussion are naturally borrowed from religious and social questions, keeping always, however, a clearcut view of the end to be obtained, namely to serve and to conquer for Christ.

The base or the point of view whence all starts is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: His life, communicated to the soul of the Christian by means of grace and prayer and the sacraments, above all by Holy Communion. We point out here that to have truly militant members frequent Holy Communion is indispensable. The apostolate takes on a supernatural value only by means of the presence of Christ in the soul of the apostle: it is Christ alone who can enlighten and vivify and render fruitful.

One may obtain ample matter for interesting talks by requesting the members of the Catholic Student Youth to prepare their work during the vacations; for the time then is not lacking to get together a documented, lively, and varied paper. Why should they not present with modesty to their companions, who may be at first a little surprised but edified, the results of their own experiences, of their own observations and of their own youthful enterprises. They would thus become for one another so many causes

for spiritual awakening, so many subjects engaged in Christian emulation.

Finally, the director, upon being invited to say a few words a propos, endeavors to effect a more thorough orientation, and if need be, he completes some subject that he holds to be essential for the life of the group, for example, the state of grace, meditation, reparation. He, moreover, has prepared for the meeting by a heart-to-heart talk with the president, and it is soon seen that the relations between the two heads are cordial and trustful. The president concludes the meeting and maps out the program for the succeeding meeting.

It should be added that the chaplains of the establishment lend their cooperation discreetly and devotedly to the functioning of the group, whose effective work, however, derives largely from the director, who is a father of the group and closer to them. The director's authority and competence recognised and often invoked do not go beyond, however, directing and seconding the action of the president and his associates. The Catholic Student Youth thus becomes a school of leaders who know, not only how to yield and to give way to one another, but are also able to take the initiative and to assume responsibility.

The beneficent influence of the Catholic Student Youth both within and without the boarding school is incontestable. Within the boarding school it is a haven for supernatural life, for good spirit and for work. Is not that indeed what should constitute the life of the boy? The amiable and communicative piety of these good young men passes to the entire school personnel. Daily communion is held in great honor. This is true particularly of the Communion of Sunday, which takes place outside of the Mass and which consequently demands more character to receive and which brings to the Holy Table nearly all of the older boys. Moreover, the number of Communions that take place on the morning immediately after the holidays constantly increasing encourages the belief that the piety is profound and solid.

Discipline, good spirit, and a greater family bond are some of the other fruits of the Catholic Student Youth apostolate. Great order in work causes satisfaction among the professors, while great success in the final examinations goes to recompense the young men. A greater intellectual and moral discipline and the supererogatory but personal and disinterested works that they

impose upon themselves in view of the apostolate, give them a marked advance over their comrades.

For six years the group has enlarged its field of beneficent action. Upon the initiative of some of its members and with the esteemed encouragements of His Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop, it has extended its work to include the elementary schools of the neighborhood. Every Friday the pupils of the two highest classes go there accompanied by a professor to teach catechism to the poor children. The lesson to be given is prepared by all the catechists during the course of the week, but those who are to exercise their zeal on that particular day are chosen by lot. The others assist at the lessons and improve themselves by preparing a criticism.

It is unnecessary to add that the poor children and their parents appreciate and praise this Christian gesture on the part of the older pupils of the boarding school. Moreover, all the boys in the school take a practical interest in this work, which brings classes closer together. In every division of the school a "Box for Sacrifices" serves daily for collecting various desirable articles or illustrated reviews, which are the results of voluntary privation, and which the catechists are able to use for sustaining the attention and rewarding the efforts of their young listeners. And if these latter always wait impatiently for this weekly lesson in religion the catechists naturally prepare themselves to enter heart and soul into the work which is so important.

Naturally the capitally important question of the perseverance of our young Catholics presents itself again. What becomes of them individually during the long vacation period? As a general rule they make it a point of duty and of honor to be in their respective neighborhood what they have been at the boarding school. We have heard of many impressive examples in this matter since our experiment began hardly seven years ago. A boy fourteen years old, the only one to do the singing in his parish, writes: "My father is the organist and he has to do the accompanying with one finger, sometimes two. I do the best I can with the singing. On the first Sunday there were at church my father, I, and three old ladies. On the third Sunday there were more than thirty persons present." Two other Catholic Student Youth members, both brothers, are the very life of the divine office in their parish; one plays the organ, the other sings. The zeal of