

God, these—gleaners, gathering up the drooping sheaves that none may be lost.

A fourth class there is among our Catholic women, that one who has no responsibilities, and shudders at the thought of shouldering any. Yet would she have God repudiate His partnership with her? She has her gift to make: the gift of self. How can I give myself, asks one? I have no talents; I cannot talk, I cannot say brilliant things, I cannot write, or play, or sing, or paint, or do anything to attract others. I cannot be a nun. Marriage or motherhood is not for me. There is no one who needs me. What can I give?

Yourself. If you are blind or lame or bed-ridden you can still give yourself in prayer. If you have no one to whom you may offer your physical gifts, there are many whom you can adopt as your spiritual dependents. We are looking out upon a great world: we can help make it a good world. Youth is laughing at us: mischievous, daring, careless Youth. Tomorrow Youth will stand where we are standing now and look out as we are looking. Oh, Catholic woman, make yours a true partnership! Mother . . . friend . . . guide . . . teacher . . . or the one-who-prays—we must keep faith with Him, so that Youth will find the outlook better and continue to better it. We must teach those who are following after that they are His partners, also, and that God will divide the profits equally. All you can carry into the next world is what you have given away.

THE MODERN CATHOLIC WOMAN

DEAR GRACE,

Not long ago I attended a lecture. It was one of those "modern messages to modern women" that flourish these days on our club rostrums and shine out from the pages of our women's magazines. The delivery of the "message" was easy and graceful; I found myself looking with some favor upon the lecturer's hat—she was a lady lecturer. But despite the æsthetic thrill on this point, I was conscious, moment by moment, of a sense of restlessness, an insistent pricking of acute annoyance. There was something cloyingly familiar in the sounds that floated across the heads of the audience. It was as if I had suddenly awakened to the disturbing nature of the ticking of my mantelpiece clock.

"Now, to the modern woman—" she was saying, fixing us with an eye of determined uplift—But I heard no more; my own train of thought was started; I was happy. It was that catch phrase, "the modern woman," that set me off. How many times had I heard it in the past four, three, or two months or years? The combination of words falls on the ear with the wearisome expectedness of cant. And yet, I reflected, whether we tire of the expression, as language, or not; or whether or not we should prefer to have her called "the woman of today," by way of variation; we are bound to admit that the woman, herself, of vital flesh-and-blood and spirit, is so important in the social structure of modern life that she simply must be talked about. I am not content merely to listen; once started, it is "talk, too, or expire!" Therefore, by all means let us talk about her.

There are so many classes of her; so many heads under which she may be catalogued. I may make a brave start. There is, for example, the modern business woman, the modern professional woman, the modern home woman—but here I veer into a corner, for I realize that these are but sub-divisions of the many sub-heads to the title "The Modern Woman." But even as I stare ruefully at the converging walls, a sud-

den flash of visualization lights my confusion. It shows me a type of modern womanhood that possesses by its very nature the key to real modernity and real womanliness. This is exactly what I seek. The shadowy outlines become more distinct, the picture assumes definite form. I lean forward intently, and there before my very eyes is the image of the Ideal Modern Catholic Woman. I am glad I turned into that corner.

"But, my dear, there is no such thing as a modern Catholic woman," one of my ultra-modern acquaintances assured me airily not long ago. "The Church is essentially mediaeval, and you Catholic women who adhere closely to your Church have the viewpoint of the Dark Ages. You are—forgive me—most deliciously quaint."

"Essentially mediaeval!" This of the Church, the Mystical Bride of the eternal Christ! She, whose feet are grounded in Eternity; whose head is set serenely in Eternity; and whose living members function with the glory of the ancient, the wisdom of maturity, and the glowing strength of youth throughout all time! One instinctively recalls an old saying concerning the entrance of fools where angels dare not walk, when confronted by infantile minds who, having but recently made the astounding discovery of their mental fingers and toes, assert that "the Church is essentially mediaeval," and that "there is no such thing as a modern Catholic woman."

In justice to those who hold such statements as true, I am forced to concede that we Catholic women are not always guiltless in permitting such fallacies to gain ground in our materialistic present day world. Serene in the haven of the Creator's fair country, we are apt to let slide the duty of sharing the clear glow that illumines our own path with the many who are groping through the shadows seeking a gleam of peace.

Then there are some among us who are content to allow our sister moderns to believe fondly that if we do show any ability to cope with

That
Christmas Gift
This Year
Again

Franciscan Herald

the problems of the day, it is in spite of the Church, rather than because of it. There is a certain stock phrase which we are constantly meeting: "I'm very broad—I see good in all religions." This has crept into the jargon of some modern women who are also Catholics. On their lips it becomes, "Yes I'm a Catholic, but I'm very broad—I see good in all religions." "I am a Catholic, but—" has for a fact edged its way into the conversation of some who would be shocked to hear that they are denying their faith as surely as were those who faltered before the lash of persecution and offered incense on the altars of the pagan gods.

A hard saying? Perhaps, but who can deny its truth. The genuinely broad-minded Catholic woman will say, at least in effect,

"Broad?—Well perhaps I am. You see I have the Church behind me which is universal in time as well as in place and teachings, and so I can hardly help seeing things in a clearer light than those who make no use of the wisdom which the Catholic Church has brought down for our benefit to the present day."

Staunchly Catholic, this woman realizes that we are all children of the same Infinite Father, and she accordingly loves all humanity because of that kinship. But she knows that such love in no way implies an admiration for the various conflicting systems of belief which happen to be for the moment in vogue. Neither does it place upon her the obligation of following through the mazes of scepticism those who admit no belief. She is beyond these things, why should she seek to retrograde? She sincerely wishes that every human being should know the peace and security of the Church which Christ built upon a rock, and she will pray earnestly *ut omnes unum sint*; but she will not sit in judgment upon those who have not gained the shelter of their Father's house. She will rather try by the warming brightness of her own joy, to let them know that there is a place where dark doubts melt before the light, where rough ways are made plain, and where the joy of perfect peace may be had for the asking.

Suppose we connect the terms "modern" and "Catholic" with "woman," and see whether they are incompatible when so used.

The modern woman, in the ideal conception, is one who is able to meet unflinchingly the problems of the day, who docket the danger and the safety, adjusting her course to avoid the one and take advantage of the other, all the while giving others the benefit of her experience.

The Catholic woman, also in the ideal conception, is one who is able to do all this with the aid of the most perfectly constructed organization on earth. She is confident in her security as a part of this organization which has remained essentially the same since its beginning. She is not forced to spend her strength clinging to a reed shaken in the wind. Her house of faith is built upon a rock, and the counterfeit systems that spring up mushroom-like, only to fall decaying back into the earth, do not affect that which goes on drawing strength, and giving out the vigor and goodness that comes from the most holy and strong God. In a word, the Catholic woman is of all women best adapted for meeting the problems of the day, for the very reason that she is a living part of that Society of which the Maker of the Ages is the founder and head.

As for woman, simply as woman, I stop in awe as I regard her. Through her the human race lives and grows. To her has been given the power of influencing the world by her keen intuitions, her loving clear-sightedness, and her valiant heroism. Her estate is high, for she shares to the full the honors that have been poured out upon her through the highest example of all womanhood, the Maiden, stainless and strong, Mary, the perfect woman from the hands of God.

In the face of these facts, we are surely justified in stating with certainty that the truly modern woman, the firmly Catholic woman, and the exquisitely womanly woman must perforce cream together into that most splendid and potent compound, the Modern Catholic Woman.

"What are some of the identifying qualities of the ideal modern Catholic woman?" someone asks. Before answering? I sit down for a while in

the peace of my own sunlit room and look for a moment into the serene pictured eyes of the woman who is the ideal for all times.

"First of all," I muse, remembering the mental picture with which I began this discussion, "she is modern, Catholic, and womanly. There is a smile of encompassing warmth on her lips—the smile of the home-maker. It tells, too, of a joy that all the delights of the world cannot give, nor all the sorrows of the world take away. She stands supreme as a mother, and there is a confident poise of her head that tells of her purpose to use the gifts of God to His greatest glory. Her eyes smile a heart-warming invitation to the haven of her dwelling, and one would be happy there, for her friendships are loyal and true, and her love goes out to human beings filtered through the gauze of Love Divine. She is one whose every effort would be bent toward the good of home and country, and yet she would carry into every act that simplicity which is greatest in the truly great. It is easy to imagine her laying her problems and sorrows at the foot of the cross or lifting her heart in spontaneous gratitude in her joys and blessings to the Giver of Gifts, for the heavenly light that surrounds her as I look, tells of a conversation much in Heaven. Finally, there is a certain childlike candor impressed upon that serene brow, a quality that enables her to enter into the hearts of little children with the sympathy and sweetness that can come but from the Baby Christ."

The image blurs a little, and I spring to my feet and stand laughing up into the eyes of the picture on the wall.

"Do you know, sweet mother of our Lord, that I've been describing you as the ideal modern Catholic woman? What would that club lecturer say?"

But even as I laughed, I knew that it must always be that way. For in Mary, the Virgin, the mother of Christ, is combined every quality of the perfect woman. She alone fits every period of time and must go on to the end as the Ideal Modern Catholic Woman.

Sincerely yours,
Agnes Modesta.