



## GLORIES OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

(For *Franciscan Herald*, from the German of P. Camillus Broell, O. M. Cap.)

### 26. MODIFICATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER

"And whosoever shall follow this rule peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." (Gal. VI, 16.)

For a period of more than six hundred years, the Rule of the Third Order had done excellent service in the Church of God. Guided by it many had ascended the heights of virtue and holiness. Many, too, filled with the spirit of this Rule, had done great things for their fellow men. In the course of time, however, circumstances had changed, and for this reason Pope Leo XIII, himself a Tertiary, decided to modify the Rule of the Third Order to suit present circumstances.

"We saw," he says in his encyclical, "that the Rule of the Third Order, which Nicholas IV, Our predecessor, approved, is not in all points suited to the present age and present customs. Hence, since the duties prescribed could not be fulfilled without excessive difficulty and inconvenience, it has hitherto been necessary to dispense with a majority of the most important rules on the petition of the associates; and that this could not be done without injury to the common discipline will be readily understood."

We shall now note the more important modifications and the reasons for making them.

In the first Rule, we find the prohibition: "The members shall not carry arms except for the defence

of their faith, the Church, and their own property." This regulation was, as we have already seen in a former chapter, of the greatest importance, whereas in our own day it has lost all significance, owing chiefly to the political changes that have taken place in the world since those days. The Church is, however, still being attacked, and in a manner perhaps more to be feared than if it were by military force—it is by the war which a wicked and hypocritical press is now continually waging against it. In perfect accordance with this new form of warfare, the Holy Father changed the above regulation of the Tertiary Rule into the following:

"Let them not allow any books or papers, from which injury to virtue can be feared, to be brought into their houses or read by those who are under their care."

It is the sacred duty, therefore, of Tertiary parents to observe this regulation of their holy Rule most conscientiously. They should never permit their children to read bad books and papers, and when they are in doubt as to whether a book or paper is good or bad, they should consult the priest. Tertiaries should also be very careful in regard to book agents, lest they buy some book or paper which appears to be good, but in reality is not permissible to read. Our holy Mother the

Church has very good reasons for forbidding certain books and papers to her children, and a person would be a very poor Tertiary indeed, if he would be negligent in obeying this precept. Of such disobedient children, Holy Church could well speak in the words of the Prophet: "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me!" (Is. I, 2.)

☩ But what is to be said of the ordinary daily press? May a Tertiary read these publications? Tertiaries will be very careful about reading such publications, for they are often veritable wolves in sheep's clothing. They contain deadly poison, which the unwary reader imbibes almost unconsciously until his whole system is filled with it. Under the guise of non-sectarianism, they advocate indifferentism in religion, which is a godless system and leads to infidelity.

Tertiaries should support, to the utmost of their power, the good press. This they can do by contributing themselves to its columns, and especially by gaining subscribers for Catholic publications. Indeed, it should be a point of honor for the Tertiaries to crush in this manner the evil press of our day. "Charity begins at home," as the proverb says. Hence Tertiaries should take a special interest in their own press. In families where one or more members are Tertiaries, there certainly books and papers relating to the Third Order should not be wanting. In fact, Tertiaries should take pride in giving their unstinted support to the Third Order press, and should not rest until it takes rank with the best in the land. To encourage Tertiaries in their support of the press, let us hear what Pope Pius X says of the importance of the Catholic press.

"We do not as yet grasp the im-

portance of the press. Neither the clergy nor the laity occupy themselves with it as much as they should. Old people say 'That is something new, and formerly many souls were saved without bothering about newspapers.' That is easily said 'formerly, formerly.' But they do not stop to consider that formerly the poison of an anti-Christian press was not spread as it is now, and that consequently the antidote of the Christian press was not so necessary as it is now. We have nothing to do with 'formerly' but with 'now.' It is a fact that to-day our Christian people are deceived, poisoned, and ruined by publications hostile to religion. In vain will you build churches, found missions, open schools, and do other good works: all your endeavors will amount to nothing, if you do not know how to use the Christian press both as a defensive and as an offensive weapon."

May all Tertiaries take these words of their great and saintly fellow Tertiary well to heart. The Catholic press is a lasting bond of unity between the clergy and the laity; the constructor of Catholic thought and Catholic opinion in regard to questions of interest for Catholics; an organ of appeal and defence; the exponent and defendant of Catholic doctrine and practices; the monitor against the dangers to faith and morals; the voice crying to Catholics to defend their rights; the mirror of Catholic life; the powerful pillar of the pulpit and the supplement of the parochial school; the antidote for the poison of the evil press; the destroyer of non-Catholic slanders and prejudices; the blessing of clean, wholesome Christian reading for the home.

To continue with the changes made in the rule of the Third Order. The original severity was mitigated in several points. Formerly, many

fast days were prescribed, whereas at present there are only two fast days. Likewise the Office was reduced to twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glories. Why these changes? Pope Leo XIII says in his encyclical, "In our days the zeal of Christians has decreased. Hence it was necessary to mitigate the original austerity of the Third Order."

In regard to the former indulgences granted to Tertiaries, much confusion had arisen. For this reason Pope Leo XIII abolished all the old indulgences, and granted new and richer favors and indulgences to the members of the Third Order.

It would lead us too far to con-

sider all the changes in detail. What has been said, proves clearly that His Holiness, Leo XIII rightly deserves the title "Reformer of the Third Order."

Since the former rigor of the Tertiary Rule has been mitigated so much, Tertiaries should be all the more zealous in its perfect observance. Those who faithfully follow its precepts, and exercise as far as they can the apostolate of the Catholic press according to the intention of the Holy Father, will realize the truth of the words of St. Paul: "Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

*(To be said by order of His Holiness Pope Benedict XV on March 21.)*

Dismayed by the horrors of a war which is bringing ruin to peoples and nations, we turn, O Jesus, to Thy most loving Heart as to our last hope. O God of Mercy, with tears we invoke Thee to end this fearful scourge; O King of Peace, we humbly implore the peace for which we long. From Thy Sacred Heart Thou didst shed forth over the world divine Charity, so that discord might end and love alone might reign among men. During Thy life on earth Thy heart beat with tender compassion for the sorrows of men; in this hour made terrible with burning hate, with bloodshed and with slaughter, once more may Thy divine Heart be moved to pity. Pity the countless mothers in anguish for the fate of their sons; pity Europe over which broods such havoc and disaster. Do Thou inspire rulers and peoples with counsels of meekness, do Thou heal the discords that tear the nations asunder; Thou Who didst shed Thy Precious Blood that they might live as brothers, bring men together once more in loving harmony. And as once before to the cry of the Apostle Peter: *Save us, Lord, we perish* Thou didst answer with words of mercy and didst still the raging waves, so now deign to hear our trustful prayer, and give back to the world peace and tranquillity.

And do thou, O most holy Virgin, as in other times of sore distress, be now our help, our protection, and our safeguard. Amen.

