

Lord Jesus Christ. When Luchesi-
sius returned to his home weary
and fatigued, he allowed himself a
short repose, and then betook him-
self to prayer and contemplation.
Therein consisted his recreation.—
And now, dear reader, is the time
of prayer also a recreation for you?
Are your prescribed prayers an
agreeable duty, or rather a heavy
burden?

Luchesi-
sius reached a high degree
of contemplation by chastising his
body to "bring it into subjection."
(I Cor. IX, 27) The mortification
of the senses is necessary if one
wishes to make progress in prayer.
It was in prayer that Luchesi-
sius found the strength to bear crosses
and sufferings patiently, and to pre-
serve evenness of mind in times of
adversity. No matter how painful
these were, he was wont to say,
"Blessed be my Lord Jesus Christ,
who has suffered much more for
me. Blessed be his most holy
Mother and glorious St. Francis.
For love of them I am willing to
endure even more." It would lead
too far to decribe the virtuous life
of our hero; let what has been said
suffice.

Luchesi-
sius had spent many years
in the faithful service of the Lord;
he had exhausted his strength in
works of charity, and he felt that

his end was near. His wife fell
sick. When she had received the
last sacraments, Luchesi-
sius thus spoke to her, "My dear sister, you
know that we have faithfully
served the Lord. It is therefore
permitted to ask him for the favor
of entering into glory together.
Tarry a while. I also wish to re-
ceive the last sacraments and then
to go to heaven with you." His
desire was fulfilled. Scarcely had
his wife passed to her heavenly re-
ward, when Luchesi-
sius fell grievously ill. After receiving the last
sacraments, he raised his eyes and
hands towards heaven, and
breathed forth his soul. Thus died
the first Tertiary. Truly, an edi-
fying death.

We all desire to die such a death.
Well, then, let us live as Luchesi-
sius lived. Let our labors always be
joined with prayer; let us always
bear sufferings and trials with
patience, and courageously take up
the struggle against our evil in-
clinations, so that, at the end of
our lives, we may be able to say
with St. Paul, "I have fought the
good fight, I have finished my
course, I have kept the faith. As
to the rest, there is laid up for me
a crown of justice, which the Lord
the just judge will render to me in
that day." (II Tim. IV, 7, 8.)

THE THIRD ORDER AND SOCIAL REFORM

By Fr. F. H., O.F.M.

II. The Christian Family

THE cultivation of the family-
life according to Christian
ideals is one of the most im-
portant means of combating the
evils of the present day. Rev. Al-
bert M. Weis, O. P., in his treatise
on the "Social Question" writes,
"The real school for the social

virtues is the family. From its de-
cline and corruption spring by far
the most of our social evils
the cure for these evils must come
again from the family; a reform of
society is impossible without a re-
form of the family." St. Francis
the great social reformer was well
aware of this, and his plan of re-
form was, by means of the Third

Order, to place family-life again on a firm religious basis, and thereby to overcome the many evils and vices which to-day are gnawing at the vitals of the family and of society.

The first of these evils is surely religious indifference and materialism. To be religious, the members of a family must be punctual and conscientious in fulfilling their duties, and must speak with reverence of religious things. The very first chapter of the Rule of the Third Order demands this of all its members. In fact, it is a necessary qualification for reception into the Order. "It is forbidden to receive any one as a member unless he be exact in the practice of the Catholic religion, and of tried obedience to the Roman Church and the Apostolic See."

But the mere outward respect for religion is not enough. The family itself must be a house of God, an *ecclesia domestica*, "a church in their house," as St. Paul calls it. Our churches are places of prayer. In the homes also prayers must be said, and pious practices held in common. This the Rule likewise demands: "They will never sit down to the table nor rise from it without first devoutly and gratefully invoking God. In their home life let them study to lead others by their example, to promote pious practices and all that is good." The honor of the Third Order demands that the members not only observe pious practices but also lead an exemplary and God-fearing life. The family is their destined field of labor, the scene of their activity. Deeply-rooted piety should permeate the whole family; for, that alone can exert a lasting influence on others. "A good example," says Dr. Foerster, "is as a religious picture on the way-side;

every one greets and reveres it."

Another evil of the times is the dishonoring of the family. "The domestic circle is the cradle of the nation; if that be degenerate, this must shortly totter to ruin. Destroy the home and you take away from the ordinary man the strongest inducement to self-sacrifice and persistent energy; for in the home a man learns to forget himself in those he loves; in their presence he unfolds his simpler and noble self." (Fr. Cuthbert, *Catholic Ideals in Social Life*.) Now the stability of the family depends in the first place on conjugal fidelity, and filial piety. Both of these are fostered in a special manner by the Third Order. Through their profession in the Third Order, the single members become real religious, with this difference that, according to the will of the Founder, they are to lead a God-fearing life not in cloistered solitude, but openly before all the world. Judging their condition from the standpoint, that they are co-religious, the wife will show all the more honor and respect to her husband, and he to her; their confidence and love will be increased. The bond of matrimony uniting them will be strengthened, and in such a family, there will be no need of marriage reform, because the mutual love, forbearance, and confidence, are bound to bring forth fruit in due time, as the tree planted on the water's edge.

The children, knowing that their parents are consecrated to God, and that they therefore enjoy the special protection of God, will honor and revere them all the more. My parents belong to God, they will say, and therefore I must obey them, love them, and be careful not to offend them. Parents and children will be closely united, will assist one another to bear their crosses. Surely of such a family

will be said as of the first Christians, "See how they love one another." This union and harmony brought on by the Third Order will enable them to find in their homes and families the joy and consolation, which they would vainly seek elsewhere. Thus the Third Order encourages conjugal fidelity and filial devotion. It teaches the parents the true meaning of the marriage bond, it teaches the children obedience and respect for parents and authority in general. Laxity in morals, disobedience, contempt for authority can find no place in a true Tertiary family. Well could therefore the Bl. Cure D'Ars say of the Third Order, "The Third Order of St. Francis will accomplish the moral regeneration of parishes, and will contribute more than anything else to real sanctification."

Yet another evil of our times, and a wide-spread one, is self-indulgence—a morbid craving for amusement and excitement. It has been rightly said, "The world is amusement-mad." Forgetful of the real purpose of their life, many live as if their sole aim were to cater to the fashions, to dress according to the latest styles, no matter at what cost, to eat, drink, and be merry. It were useless to try to prove that such mode of living leads not only to the moral but also to the financial ruin of the family. In combating this evil tendency of the times, the Third Order wields perhaps its greatest influence, and confers the greatest blessing on the family and on society. The second part of the Rule is devoted to regulating the mode of life of the members. "Members of the Third

Order will refrain from excessive cost and elegance in their dress and toilet, and will observe—each according to his state of life—the rule of moderation. They will refrain with the utmost caution from dangerous stage-plays and dances, and from all revelry. They will be frugal in eating and drinking. Let them never take an oath except in case of necessity. Let them not use indecent language nor utter vulgar jokes." These are not merely good counsels intended to incite the members to fervor, but they are precepts. Although they do not bind under sin, they still impose an obligation and a responsibility, and the transgression of these rules may entail expulsion from the Order. It would lead us too far to explain these rules singly. Suffice it to say that the Third Order does by no means forbid all enjoyment but only such as is forbidden by the law of God.

This then is the influence of the Third Order on family-life. That this influence is not merely imaginary, is sufficiently proved by the history of the Third Order. It can hold up for our admiration and imitation wonderful examples of saintly families, true copies of the holy model at Nazareth. The first members of the Third Order, Bl. Luchesius and his spouse Bonadonna were known for their exemplary family life. Then there is St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, St. Elizabeth of Portugal, St. Frances of Rome, St. Louis, St. Elzear and Bl. Delphina, all models for every family. The biographies of these Saints and Blessed should be found in every Tertiary family.

