

JOSEPH CARDINAL MERCIER ON HOW TO PREACH
(Cardinal from 1907 until his death in 1926)

"On us, priests and pastors, another duty is incumbent; we must preach the Christian Life. Christian people have a right to the fruits of our contemplation.

"... The moral of our sermons and of the confessional is too often the moral of duty, of the virtues, too little of the supernatural charity, shed abroad by the Holy Spirit in souls. ... It is Christ Whom we must give. It is Himself, His Gospel, the riches of His grace, His presence, and that of the Holy Spirit in the soul, the inward prayer of the heart, the peace of might and power in Divine union; that is what must be preached.

"But you do not preach that, or you preach it scarcely at all because that is dogma, and you seem to be afraid of dogma. And hence a generation is growing up whose ideal is an irreproachable respectability, the respectability of gentlemen retaining a few religious practices. You do not preach dogma.

"You speak of God, but it is ... the God of human reason. ... But the God of our revealed truth ... when and with what precision and what warmth do you speak of Him?

"Christ, yes, you speak of Him; that is to say, you make known the history of His life on earth; so many events which announce the foundation of the kingdom of God; but this kingdom itself which dates from Pentecost. ... His supreme Priesthood ... the manifold aspects of the glorified Christ ... what place do they occupy in your personal piety and in your pastoral preaching?

"And the Holy Spirit? How many out of the mass of Christians know Him, invoke Him, live in intimacy with Him? ... Am I wrong in saying that you do not preach dogma?" □

