

Catholic Spirit

It is very easy to profess the truths of Catholicism and yet not possess the true Catholic spirit. To really profit by our adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Faith, it is necessary to embrace it with more than just the intellect. The Faith must be embraced with all one's soul. Although it is an excellent thing to possess the true Faith, it is a great misfortune to practice the right religion wrongly or at least inadequately. But this is precisely what it will be if we merely submit our judgment to the truths of the faith without striving to have our whole life guided by the spirit of faith. The spirit in which a man lives is his instinctive attitude of soul or disposition of mind and affects his manner of judging, viewing, weighing, estimating, and reacting to all the events of life. It affects and colors all his sympathies, decisions and actions.

Without any serious misgivings, we allow ourselves to be more or less comfortably swept along in the current of everyday life and by the spirit of the modern world. True, we hold to certain definite religious truths or doctrines and we tenaciously cling to certain traditional Catholic practices. But apart from actions that are specifically religious, such as reception of the Sacraments and attendance at Mass, the life of the ordinary routine Catholic is very similar to, if not exactly the same as, those who have not even the slightest trace of Christian principles. Their views, their aims, their worldly ambitions, their judgments, their tastes, their interests, their fashions, their amusements, their pursuits, present no striking contrast with those who profess some false religion or no religion at all. This is not true of everyone, of course. But the number of those for whom it is not true is so small as to be inconsiderable. For the most of us, there is no clear line of demarcation between our manner of reacting, dealing, and viewing everyday life and that of the disciples of this world. Little by little, the Catholic Faith is ceasing to influence our ideas, judgments and decisions. This is a great catastrophe. Indeed, it is a great chastisement, worse than any physical kind of chastisement that we could suffer. The life of even a "good" Catholic is compartmentalized, that is, religion is kept in its own tightly sealed compartment. Attached to this compartment are these instructions: "Break glass in case of emergency, otherwise open only on Sunday mornings and then immediately close again." This is the endemic pattern of thought that has infected many Catholics in the practical order: to calmly act as if religion had no place in everyday life. Thus, the Catholic Faith, so beautiful and rich, rapidly becomes a thing of mere tradition and routine and not something which is looked upon as the secret source of a deeply soul-satisfying interior life, a life that is really life. □