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The Modern Parish: My Father's Business

Review Author: Ramon J. T. Salazar

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THE MODERN PARISH

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS. By Abbé Michonneau. Translated by Edmund Gilpin. New York: Herder and Herder, 1959. 155p. \$2.95.

Enriched by long years of experience in the parish and its apostolate, the Abbé Michonneau has once again succeeded in bringing into bold relief the priest of today and his problems in a modern parish. He touches on almost the whole range of the parish priest's life—all he ought to be and what he often is; all his history, from his calling to his years of retirement.

The Abbé reminds us that the parish is a "missionary community" and that the parish priest is, in a true sense, a "missionary." This is true because the parish is the Church in a given locality, and must make its presence felt by building up a *community* where Christ's Mystical Body can grow as it should. This unity, this community, is the objective of every parish priest's "mission."

This is not a work that is to be undertaken by the priest alone. Abbé Michonneau insists that it is a task shared by the priest and his people. Pastor and flock are complementary, the priest exercising the powers of his priesthood for his people, the community cooperating in his work; the priest giving of himself, his gifts of mind, his full and rich personality—the people participating, as fully as they can, in the life of the parish. Every priest needs to understand this. If it is the priest who formulates the plans of the parish life and apostolate, it is often enough the layman who will have to put these plans into effect. Hence the double demand: a priest's selfless devotion to his mission, and the people's equally selfless devotion to the Church and the parish. Obviously, all this is a matter of mutual understanding and cooperation—plus a lot of generosity.

These are just the barest essentials of the message which the Abbé has spelled out in the pages of this little book. The book's locale is France, yet it is far from being particularly French. Its message is universal; it is valid for all priests. For the author himself points out that "the only really important thing for the priest is his priesthood, despite whatever good qualities he may have as a result of his home background and his culture."

While a Filipino priest may not be altogether familiar with the same anti-clerical atmosphere and the many areas of godlessness among the working masses that his French counterpart knows, he can still see reflected in these pages his own problems and preoccupations as well as his sentiments and his ideals.

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS is a valuable contribution to pastoral theology. Much of what is said, it is true, applies particularly to the urban milieu. For many of our priests who are more concerned with the less sophisticated barrios, the problems the Abbé presents may not be as gigantic, but they will be present in some modified form. But whether the priest be in a metropolitan area or in an unknown municipality, his job is to shape society—that part of it committed to his shepherd's staff — into a unity, to make men one even as the Church is one. This is the priest's privilege as heir to Christ's priesthood. It is also his road to sanctity. It is for this that Christ has chosen him.

RAMON J. T. SALAZAR

SCIENCE SERVING CHARITY

SOCIAL WORK IS CATHOLIC ACTION. By Thomas A. Mitchell, S.J. Manila: The Sodality of Our Lady, 1960. 36p.

This is a valuable pamphlet that might be read with profit by every Catholic, lay or cleric, to see how the Church strives to fulfill the role of the Good Samaritan in the modern world. It is an ABC of social work that pulsates with true Christian charity while it insists on a very systematic approach to this growing problem. The author's own training and years of experience bear rich fruit in this practical and readable little treatise.

Definitions are given, objections raised and answered or forestalled, examples abound. The advantages of the modern scientific approach are forcefully demonstrated with examples of the right kind as compared to the harmful or wasteful or over-lapping kind of help to the poor. Needs must be met by resources and the resources must be known, properly assessed and organized for prompt and reliable service. The parish as the center of activity, as the Church in miniature, is highlighted with all the advantages that accrue to its proper use and the proper organization of its resources. The harmony and cooperation that should exist between ecclesiastical and governmental and/or private agencies is stressed in a practical and convincing manner.

"How to Begin", "Whom to Help", "Sources of Help", are subtitles that reveal the practical approach of the author whose years of experience shine through on every page. "The Personal Qualities of the Social Worker" is a profile of the ideal that has crystallized in the author's mind, doubtless after many years of success mingled with an inevitable share of frustrations and disappointments.