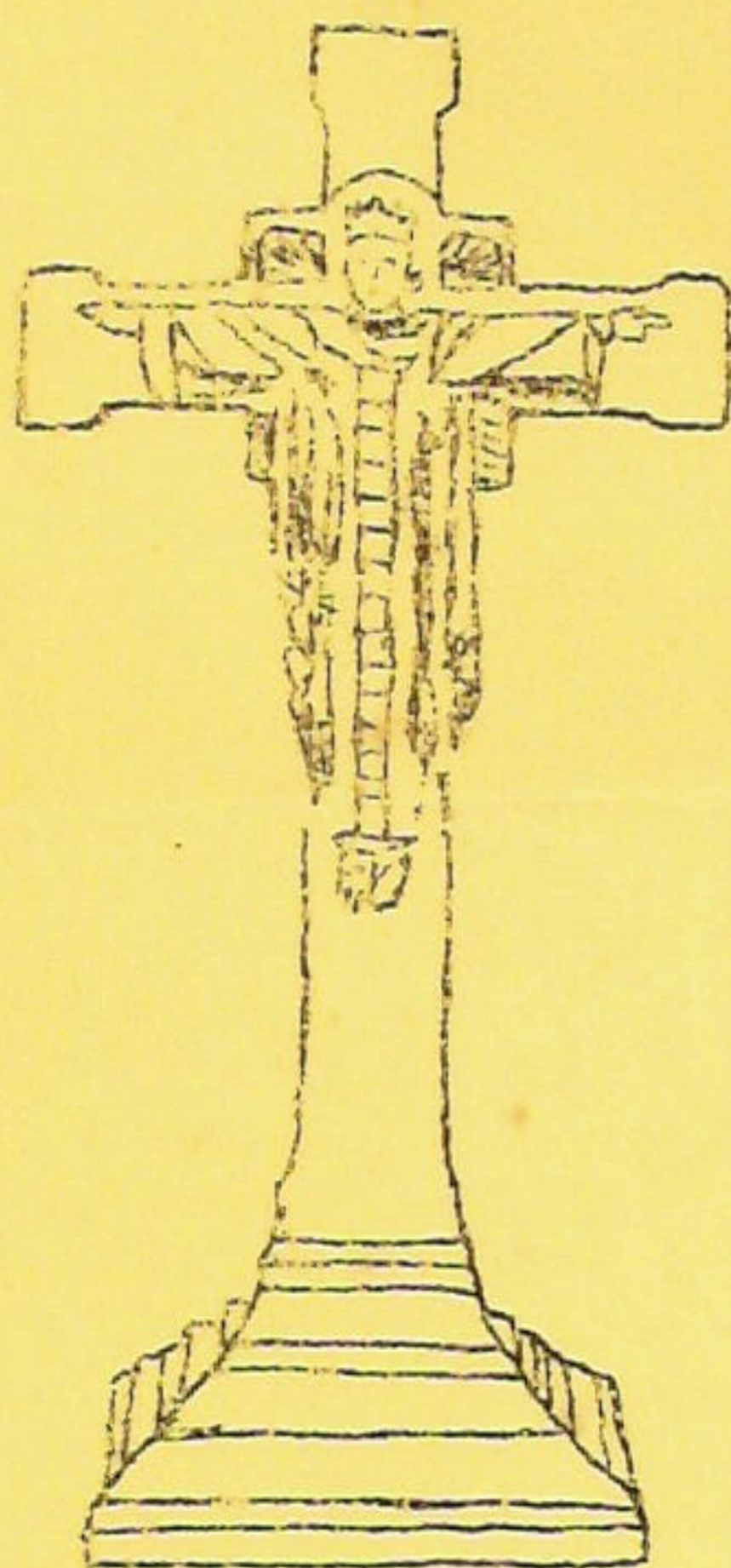


October 1938

The Sudetenland is taken by Germany between October 1 and October 10, 1938.



T E R T I A R Y T I D I N G S.

No. 3, AUTUMN NUMBER.

FATHER ANTONY'S MESSAGE.

In Francis-tide a greeting to you one and all, which I should have liked to send severally, but when Sister Mary Francesca sent me the "copy" for this issue I was in the chaotic throes of evacuating our School. Although the evacuation did not, in the event, take place, I am still buried in the debris of dislocation and arrears. For that reason the TIDINGS will seem a little out of date, and I fear I must have strained the charity of Sister Mary considerably by my delay.

In regard to our Custody Meetings, I fear that we must lay these by for awhile, as we shall shortly be moving St. Mary-of-the-Angels Song School into temporary quarters near the new School estate, near Addlestone, Weybridge, on which we hope to start building soon. This little paper will become increasingly of value, until I can gather you all together for a Custody Meeting in the new place.

For the moment, our old address stands. GOD BLESS YOU.

Antony, T.S.F.

E D I T O R I A L.

St. Francis-tide dawns upon a troubled world. On every side the nations are aggressive, menacing, obsessed by fear which is the antithesis of love. Hatred is generally considered to be that, but surely fear is the creator of hatred and many other foul growths of our national life? But during the week of great anxiety through which we have just passed many must have been struck by the extraordinary appropriateness of the gospel appointed for Monday's Mass (Feast of St. Januarius and his Comps. M.M.) "When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled, neither let thoughts arise in your hearts (thoughts of fear, distrust and discord). "Nation shall rise against nation --but the end is not yet". What that end may be none can say, but at least two salient facts seem emerging from the welter. First, that practically no civilized nation desires war, and secondly, that in England, and doubtless in other countries also, there is an increasing belief in the power of prayer to control our destinies. The last is surely an immense spiritual gain, and I do beg you all to do everything in your power to foster this spirit, both in yourselves and others.

But at this joyful Franciscan season we must not allow ourselves to be entirely dominated by the thought of war, not even for the purpose of combating it. I think you may all like, but specially those among you who have not yet had the privilege of visiting the sacred places of our Order in Italy, to read some short accounts of them, abridged from an account I wrote some years ago describing the ceremonies of the Septcentenary of St. Francis in 1926. For this number I select an account of the ceremonies at La Verna, the place where our Seraphic Father received the Stigmata.

ALVERNA, THE MOUNT OF GOD.

It is away up in the mountains, half a day's journey from Florence; a wonderful place, where one seems to be on the very roof of Italy, a solitude where one can commune with the stars and the sunrise, where none but a few devout peasants and pilgrims disturb the peace which the brown-frosted brothers share with the birds and wild things of the woods. That was how I had known it before the Centenary, and I feared it would not be the same now that it was the centre of Catholic Christendom. But those fears were unfounded. Though the crowds were great, though there was a new motor road with buses running twice daily from Rassina, though there was a grand new hotel to supplement the Padres' ready, if homely, hospitality - Alverna triumphed over them all. The monastery itself and its surroundings, the "Sacro bosco" and the dizzying precipices of St. Francis' "Mount of God" - these can never change, for they are rooted in things eternal.

For the whole of the week preceding the Feast of the Stigmata the monastery kept high festival and received a succession of exalted guests, the Bishop of the diocese, two cardinals, and for the Feast itself, the Cardinal Nuncio of America, who was to represent the Pope at the ceremonies. Before the wonderful night arrived we were all almost worn out with ceremonies, with crowds and music, incense and eloquence, and it is difficult to detach much particular experience. But one thing stands out ever at La Verna, the daily and nightly Procession to the Chapel of the Stigmata. The night procession is of course barred to any but guests staying at the monastery, but the day procession I have often taken part in, and it never fails to thrill one. The long line of dark-frosted Friars, headed by a young novice carrying a heavy cross, and followed by a motley crowd of peasants, guests and pilgrims. They pass slowly along the sun-steeped colonnade on which are depicted frescoes of the life of St. Francis, pause for a moment at the great crucifix which hangs at the far end, and turning to the right pass through the Chapel of the Cross, where St. Francis and his falcon smile a welcome, and find themselves in the holy of holies - the Chapel of the Stigmata. It is but a tiny place - this Chapel of sacred memories. Just a little square building, with choir stalls of beautiful intarsia work, representing some of the early Franciscans, and above

the altar a Della Robbia Crucifixion, which is notably exquisite, even in this place which owns so much of their work. Our Lady and St. John stand beneath the Cross and St. Francis kneels by Our Lady's side, his eyes fixed in adoring love on the Figure of the Crucified. Before the altar, in the middle of the tiny chapel is a rough stone carving, covered with a grating, and that is the core of this wonderful place.

On the night of the Stigmata, everyone is admitted to share in the procession and truly it was a wondrous sight as it issued from the great church on to the Piazza. The gleaming accoutrements of the Guard, the "Heralds of the Great King" in their brilliant medieval costumes, the long line of Friars with their torches, the banners and emblems, the scarlet robes and immense train of the Papal Nuncio, all lit up by the search light which turned night into day. That weird light wandered to and fro, lighting up now a group of forest trees, now a fearsome rocky abyss, now a group of praying peasants in memory of how the whole countryside was miraculously illuminated on the night of the Stigmata.

It was impracticable to get into the Chapel till the Procession had passed through and the following crowd had gone back to the big church for the Masses, which were already commencing. But when at last we were able to pass into the tiny sanctuary we found to our joy that Mass was also to be celebrated there. And so, on that day of days to all true Franciscans, we knelt and adored the Christ who on that spot had revealed himself to our Father and Founder. It was an unforgettable experience, after all the crowds, the music, the incense, lights and glory, to kneel there in the utter peace and stillness of the dawn. Truly may one say that Alverna is the heart of Franciscan Christendom.

I intend to connect this series of accounts of the holy places with the proposed series of Franciscan virtues. What is the special lesson to be drawn from Alverna? Most people would probably think it is the virtue of holy suffering, the privilege of sharing the Cross of Christ. That is of course the outstanding lesson, but I think there is another perhaps even deeper. The receiving of the Stigmata was only the culmination and seal of St. Francis' call at San Damiano, when he heard the Voice which asked of him entire self-oblation. He responded to that call with such generosity as few men have shown, and all his wonderful works and graces were but the logical development of that first self-oblation. So I think the chief lesson we can draw from Mount Alverna is that of entire dedication to whatever work or suffering we may be called of God, together with PERSEVERANCE to the end. Think that out for yourselves and see how it may be applied to our many insistent problems today.

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N O T E S & Q U E R I E S.

I have again received many interesting and appreciative letters and should like to give extracts from some of them later if space admits. But one I must find room for now, the excellent suggestion made by Novice Mary Elizabeth. She writes - "It would be nice if we Tertiaries over here could correspond with some Tertiaries in America. Do you think it is possible?". Most certainly I do, and I think it would be an excellent way to foster that spirit of fellowship with the Order in America which you know we want you to cultivate. I am putting Novice Mary Elizabeth in touch with a Professed Tertiary in America who I know will be delighted to fall in with the plan, and shall be pleased to do the same for any of you, men or women, who care to write and ask for a correspondent.

The answers to Questions in previous Nos. must again be held over and I shall have to curtail them considerably. I do want you all to write freely and constantly about these things, so that our little leaflet may really be the joint work of the Custody, but space is so limited that the answers must be brief. And please address all correspondence with regard to the paper to me, not Fr. Antony. I am responsible for the entire contents of the leaflet, though of course it is submitted as Father Provincial (i.e. the Father Minister's representative in England) for final revision, and I do not want to increase his already burdensome correspondence.

Will you all pray for me on October 10th, the day of my Religious Profession? And may this St. Francis-tide bring us all every spiritual blessing, in whatever guise of trouble or anxiety those blessings may come.

MARY FRANCESCA OBL. S.F.

Issued under the authority of the Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott,
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Small contributions towards cost will be gratefully received.

* DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR MORE COPIES. *
