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A System for Catholic Action

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A System For Catholic Action

His Excellency Bishop LINO R. GONZAGA

Catholic Action is a great principle and a broad program. "Laymen must take part in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church." But when, where and how? That broad program must be broken into details, into definite courses of action. A definite and detailed machinery of organization is necessary.

By experience we know what happens to broad programs of activities. We say: Restore all things in Christ — work to spread family prayers. But because we forgot to tell men where, when and how, to say how many hours a week they must devote to that work, to insist that they report to the other members of their group precisely what they have done that week, how many families they have visited, what they said to these families, what difficulties they encountered, etc., the *mañana* habit gets the better of them, and we end up the season with no family prayers spread and nothing restored in Christ.

"But," one may say, "lay apostles are not children. They need not be told where, when and how to do their work. They have enough sense of responsibility to do their work." *Quod nimis probat, nihil probat.* According to this objection, we need no organization at all. It is only necessary to preach from the pulpit that Catholic Action is a duty, and everybody will have enough responsibility to take up the

work and spend five hours a week trying to win souls for God. But will this ever happen?

"They are not children." The priest is not a child either; but the Church tells him on what precise days of the month he has to say Mass for his people, when he has to preach, on what day of the year he has to commemorate the death of Christ, how many minutes he has to spend in saying Mass, how he must place his hands when he recites the Collect. The Church does not take into consideration his "sense of responsibility" when it comes to when, where and how. She simply tells him. And in clear detail. His sense of responsibility comes into play only with regard to doing or not doing.

Teachers also are old enough to have a sense of responsibility. But they too are directed very specifically how to perform their duties.

If then, despite their maturity, the priest and the teacher are given a very definite system of work, why not the Catholic Actionist?

Definite rules to guide a definite course of action are not only for children; they are needed in all walks of life where there is work to be done.

Perhaps we are overemphasizing an obvious point, but the fact is that, in Catholic Action work, we have been accustomed to set down our "objectives"—such as a Catholic press campaign, a Sacred Heart devotion campaign, rosary recitation, etc. without much attention to when, where and how. Why? Perhaps it is because Catholic Action work is voluntary, without monetary compensation and, therefore, without the sanction of the lazy being "fired" with disastrous consequences to their family budget. So in the back of our minds, we say: "Cuando buenamente puedan. You are not salaried to do this anyway, so do it when you have extra time." And extra time, nine times out of ten, means "*mañana*".

In what would this system consist? In some definite rules on *what, why, where* and *how* to do Catholic Action. The next pages will be an attempt to state these rules.

DEFINITE RULES FOR CATHOLIC ACTION

The success of Catholic Action depends largely on the priest in charge. It is true that Catholic Action is a work of laymen, but when Pius XI entrusted the movement to ecclesiastical assistants, he quoted the words of the Psalmist: "In manibus tuis sortes meae." And in his letter to the Hierarchy of the Philippines in 1939, he said:

But now we must say another thing which Our experience, now long, has taught Us namely, that in all countries the fate of Catholic Action lies in the hands of the clergy. The members of the clergy, therefore, ought to know both the theory and the practice of this new form of apostolate which *forms a part of the sacred ministry . . .* The priests—and We are speaking also of religious—ought to *consecrate themselves* to this difficult work of the spiritual and practical preparation of the laity for Catholic Action.

Now the first thing for the priest in charge to remember is that he can never make everybody practice sustained and vigorous Catholic Action. They may participate in this or that activity, such as a general Communion, a procession, a program for the prisoners, a rally, etc., but he can never hope to make *dedicated* men out of *all*. Not that they are not good, but many of them are simply not made for it; others are so busy in their own business and profession that they have no time for Catholic Action work. Catholic Action is definitely *not only* monthly group Communions coupled with a yearly retreat, attendance at the Christ the King procession, occasional alms to the poor, etc. Catholic Action is to "restore all things in Christ." And *that* is a big order, which needs dedicated men.

It is therefore a rule laid down by writers on Catholic Action that Catholic Actionists must be leaders, either born or made. Those who are only good followers, even if otherwise pious and willing to work, cannot qualify. Thus Father Anderl says:

The method is based upon this principle: Christianize the leader and teach him to Christianize your entire student body, shop or parish. This quality of leadership is all important. If the prospect has it and is lacking in the other qualities which go to make up a member, it is still possible that he may acquire those other qualities. But if he lacks the ability to lead others, then regardless of his piety, regardless of his willingness, he will not be good material. . .

Not all are born leaders. Many cannot be *made* such. Therefore it is necessary to select a few, organize them into a group and make that group the Catholic Action unit.

THE MEETING

The meeting is of paramount importance. To attend the meeting must be the first duty of the Catholic Actionist. Continued failure to attend meetings imposes upon the Moderator or the president the duty of dispensing with the membership of the absentee. By meeting is not meant any meeting, but *the* meeting, the official and ordinary and weekly meeting, as outlined below. And why is the meeting so all-important? For the following reasons:

a) The lay apostle has the duty to do a certain work: any of the thousand and one phases of "restaurare..." But what, why, when, where and how? The work, then, has to be analyzed, evaluated, formulated, systematized, regulated and charted. And because that work has to continue for years, the results must be measured, weighed and charted, for future reference. Work undertaken at random and according to the *bahala-na* method is seldom effective. Unless that work is a one-man affair, the only place and time to analyze it, evaluate it, etc., is at the meeting. Well-planned and concerted efforts are necessary to attack the problem of Catholic Action. The time and place to plan and unify these efforts is at the meeting.

But could not the Moderator with the officers do the evaluating, systematizing, etc. and afterwards dole out the work to the members without the need of meeting? This would be perfectly all right with puppets or slaves. But the

members must be leaders. They will want to participate in the discussion about the work and the plan.

b) In the meeting, the member makes a report of the work done during the past week. This report is a strong incentive to make him perform the work assigned for that week. Aside from spiritual motives, this human motive has been found very effective in other organizations. Those who, without a valid excuse, do not perform the work assigned to them and consequently have nothing to report in the meetings find it quite embarrassing to repeat at four or five consecutive meetings: "Sorry, I could not perform my assignment this week."

c) It is often said that man's conduct is ninety percent habit. It is necessary to create a new mode or way of life among the lay apostles, not out of nothing, but out of new habits: the habit of thinking of God's work, the habit of thinking of remedies to religious indifference, irreligious homes, godless schools, social injustice, the habit of being "dissatisfied" with the pagan atmosphere of society, with empty churches and empty Communion rails, etc., etc. We have to form among our lay apostles a mental attitude akin to that of a good priest, who cannot help but think of the problems of the parish nearly every hour of the day. The priest has the *habit* of *thinking* of those problems, and out of that habit stems his continuous activity. And thus he also acquires the *habit* of *working* on those things.

Of course, that comes from the fact that he is a priest. But are not lay apostles his co-workers? Can he not hope to have them acquire the same mental attitude through the habit of considering and working on the same things? He can try at least. In the meetings, these things are discussed. Social situations are discussed from the point of view of Catholic doctrine. The Gospel is read to study its bearing on any given problem. The Liturgy is studied to make it a part of everyday life. After the meeting, the member thinks of what has been discussed because he has an assignment to perform. Then at the next meeting he must think of the

work because he has to make the report. And this happens week after week for months and years. Will this not form in him the habit of thinking about God's work everyday of his life? And will it not form in him the habit of doing his bit in that work? There is every reason to believe it will. Repetition of acts forms habits. With these, there is produced a new man with a new way of life, that of the Catholic Actionist.

Let us take an example. Pedro knows that the Church insists on Catholic education for every son and daughter of every Catholic family. Is his individual reaction to that doctrine limited to sending his own children to Catholic schools? Or does he go further and think of it at least vaguely when he passes near a school? Does he think of it when he shakes hands with a student? Does he feel elated when he reads in the papers that a student of a Catholic school won the essay contest sponsored by such and such an organization? Does he feel sorry when he reads that the local Catholic school took last place in the test conducted by the Office of Private Education? Is he alarmed when a Freemason is appointed superintendent of his province? Does he feel proud when a product of a Catholic school tops the bar?

Any priest does. But Pedro? Is his mental attitude attuned to that of the Church? If it is, then he will make a good lay apostle, if otherwise he is a leader. If not, let him attend the meetings and see if they can induce a change.

d) Regarding repetition of acts, while it is true that love makes a man talk frequently of the thing or the person beloved, it is also true that talking frequently about something keeps that thing ever present in the mind and may engender a certain fondness for it. In the meetings members have to talk of the work of Christ week after week. And they will discover why Christ said this, why he wants this thing, why this situation is anti-Christian, etc., etc. Repeated discussion of these matters will probably make the members interested in them. If after many months, if after so many meetings, a member is still indifferent to Catholic

Action work, then it is time for him to quit. We simply cannot make him a Catholic Actionist. He is not the kind.

e) Attendance at meetings is also all-important because when a member habitually misses the meetings, he loses contact with the progress not only of the work of his group but also of the Inquiry discussions which are necessary in the thorough formation of a lay apostle. Every meeting is one big step towards the goal which the group wants to attain, be it religious instruction or formation of cooperatives or promotion of devotional practices or anything else. What has been done during the preceding week is evaluated in the meeting and the next step for the next week is planned and formulated. If a member misses that meeting he misses the spirit of the work of the next week. He did not discuss what Christ and the Church say on that particular work, he did not hear what the other members had to say about their success or their failure, about the reaction of the people contacted, about the remedies agreed upon to solve the difficulties, etc. These things form the spirit behind the actual physical work of the week; if he misses that spirit, very soon the feeling of drudgery and of emptiness will set in like gangrene. After that, his resignation from the work is only a matter of time.

f) As will be seen when the order of the meeting is analyzed further on, what makes this meeting all-important is that it is more like a round-table conference than an ordinary meeting of any other society. This meeting is a study, like the meeting of officers before a battle. It is like a workshop with plenty of participation from the floor, a weekly workshop. It is like a panel discussion of persons who are learning to be experts on the subject, with this peculiar characteristic,—that the discussion is on what to do, why to do it, when, where and how to do it, and that the doing is to be by the participants *themselves* for two hours next week. In this meeting, "the spirit is enkindled, awareness of the work to be done is generated, desire to do something is awakened and the bond of unity between the members is strengthened."

WEEKLY MEETINGS

Fixed Time And Day

The meetings must be at least weekly. From what has been said above about the importance of these meetings and what will be said below about their nature, we can see the importance of weekly meetings.

The more frequently our work is evaluated, weighed and charted, the faster will the progress of that work be. In these things one does not feel the urge to take the next step, unless the former has been analyzed, acknowledged and charted by the group, since everybody is aware that it is not a personal enterprise but a group activity. That is human nature. Now, if we can take one step forward every week, why wait two weeks or one month? But, can we really take that step every week? Will it not be too much for the members who are otherwise busy earning their daily bread? Experience with other organizations shows that it can be done.

The time of the meeting must be fixed and never altered unless for a serious reason. If a change is necessary, it must be permanent. And punctuality must be insisted upon to such a degree that at the stroke of the clock, the meeting must start even with only two or three present. It is the only way to teach the members punctuality. We need not be told how fatal it is for any society to adopt the policy of "let us wait a few minutes for Pedro." Today it is five minutes for Pedro, next week it is ten minutes for Juan, etc. The day when the members can say "they will wait for me," that is the day to begin preparations for the solemn funeral of the Catholic Action unit.

The day of the meetings must be fixed by common consent and never altered. Old Legionaries will testify that, after some months, the day of the meetings is always a marked day in their calendar. They feel uneasy while doing the ordinary chores at home that day, as they wait for the time to leave for the meeting. They know that the meeting will

start on time and they do not want to be late. Partly it is the habit of giving that day to the Legion that is at work. Why can Catholic Actionists not feel the same way about their meeting? It will be the best sign that we have at least Catholic Action present in essence.

Order Of The Meeting

(90 minutes)

1. Prayer
2. Reports: (30 minutes)
 - a) On previous meeting by the Secretary
 - a) On finances by the Treasurer
 - c) On the week's work by the members
3. Inquiry: (25 minutes)
 - a) Observe (Problem)
 - b) Judge (Attitude)
 - c) Act (Solution)
4. Prayer
5. Assignments (5 minutes)
6. Catholic Doctrine Discussion (25 minutes)
(Religious Formation)
7. Other Business (5 minutes)
8. Prayer.

Explanation Of The Order Of The Meeting

1. THE REPORTS

One of the most stimulating means of promoting apostolic action is the *report* on what has actually been done by members during the week. This enables them to see with what success last week's assignments and promises were carried out, what efforts were made by the members to influence their world, and how the section as a whole stands. Several kinds of activity, therefore, merit report.*

The report of the Secretary must not be a long story, but only a series of short sentences stating facts. Thus: Mr. Lopez contacted five families for the formation of a Barangay

* The quoted paragraphs and sentences are taken from *Technique of the Catholic Action Cell* by Father Anderl and Sister Ruth.

Rosary in barrio Ilog. Two were reluctant, three agreed. They will receive instruction for three weeks. Rosary will start the last week of October. Messrs. Gomez and Perez finished their preparations for the Farming Cooperative in barrio Tanay. The water pump has been ordered: ₱346.00. Operation will not start until November. Mr. Rodriguez contacted three families for validation of marriage. One family is putting it off. The other two will be married Thursday. Etc., etc.

The financial report of the Treasurer will merely be a reading of his book of accounts.

The reports of the members must be concise and meaty. No lengthy descriptions must be allowed. To train members to give to-the-point reports, it would be advisable to make them write their report during the first months, to consist of not more than half a page single-space, unless a special situation needs a more detailed treatment. But if the report is written, it must be read in the meeting by the member, not merely handed to the secretary.

Every member must give a report, the presiding officer included, with no exceptions. If two or more members worked together on a project, each one of them must give his own version of the work accomplished. A report stating: "I have nothing to add to what Mr. X has said" should not be admitted.

The report must cover all the work done by the member the previous week. The length of time spent in that work must be stated in each report. The Moderator and the presiding officer should see to it that the report of any member conforms to the specific assignment given him in the previous meeting, that is to say, that he has worked precisely on his assignment for two hours. While individual initiative is not discouraged, the group activity must be given priority and this cannot be accomplished if each member is given the liberty to perform the work of his own choice. Initiative, therefore, will refer more to the *way* he wants to do the work than to the *kind* of work to be done. This kind of work is discussed

and agreed upon in the Inquiry part of the meeting, and once it is decided upon, nobody should feel free to disregard it and take up another work dictated by the caprice of the moment. However, any extra work done should be appreciated and acknowledged by the group and can be a part of the report, as long as that extra work does not take time from the weekly two hours allotted to the assigned work.

As the work of Catholic Actionists will often consist of personal contact with people and in this personal contact matters concerning confidential family affairs might be involved, members must be instructed repeatedly that under no pretext should they discuss the subject matter of the reports with or in the presence of non-members. Secrecy in this regard must be insisted upon. Effectiveness of the work will be totally hampered if the Catholic Actionists come to be regarded as busybodies prying into family secrets and divulging them to the public.

2. THE INQUIRY

The Inquiry is the most important part of the meeting, more important even than the reports. The Inquiry is the *study* of this or that specific Catholic Action work: study of the situation itself as a fact, of its nature and of its remedy.

Since the apostles are being sent by the Church to Christianize their world, they must first know the actual state of affairs there Especially must they come to a deep realization of its governing principles, its worldly ideals, its deficiencies and evils — in short, all the obstacles against leading a full Catholic life. Then they will be moved to do something about it — to remove these obstacles.

But it is difficult and often almost impossible to get Christian apostles to realize that they and society at large have pagan ideas and ideals The Inquiry is that effective method by which they are led to *observe* their particular world, *judge* it in the light of Christ's ideals and principles, and *act* upon it as Christ would.

The Inquiry, therefore, has three parts:

Observe:—Investigation and diagnosis of the environment:

Judge—Is it Christian? How would Christ judge it? What is my responsibility in the light of this judgment?

Act—Make it Christian! Definite action! Attack!

a. Observe

The first act of the Inquiry is to observe. In other countries where the organization of Catholic Action is by cells, this observation is a study of the daily life of the *milieu* to which the member belongs. But the organization of Catholic Action in our country is not by cells, probably because except in the larger cities, there are only two or three big groups in each town; the farmers and their families (90 or 95%), the teachers, and in bigger towns there are high-school students. Whatever the reasons of its organizers were, the fact is that our Catholic Action is not composed of cells but of mandated organizations.

Therefore, the observations to be made by our Actionists will not be limited to the conditions of their own *milieu* but of the city or town in general, and often of districts or blocks inside the towns and barrios.

When this part of the Inquiry begins, the presiding officer must ask leading questions, the more specific, the better. It must not be only: What are the conditions in the families? but: Are prayers said in the families of such a district? How are sons disciplined? How are daughters disciplined? What is the reaction of the mother and father when the boy comes home with fruit stolen from the market stands? What is the reaction of the parents when the boy friend of the daughter proposes civil marriage? What is the average income, in definite pesos and centavos, of each farmer in such a barrio? How is the crop sharing accomplished with the landlord? What specific consequences come from such a situation?... etc., etc.

The purpose of these leading questions is to find out how these people think and react to situations and why; by what principles they are dominated and why. "Underlying all rational acts are motives. If motives are not understood, lead-

ers can never expect to expose the lack of Christianity in their way of life."

b. Judge

"Having observed the real state of affairs on a specific problem in their environment, the leaders now examine it in the light of Christian principles and form a judgment about it. This is the second step of the Inquiry. It is really an answer to the question: Is this Christian?" Is the attitude of the parents Christian when their daughter is about to wed? Is the mentality of the landlords Christian towards their tenants? Is the leisure time of the farmers Christian?

But how are the members to answer these questions? Only when they *know* what Christ and the Church teach about the matter. What did Christ say about this? What does the Church teach and why does she teach it? What effect would the *application of her doctrine* have on the lives of these people?

In this part of the Inquiry, the Moderator will have to take a more active part. Many Catholic Actionists are not products of Catholic schools; therefore, they have little intellectual religious preparation themselves. But the Moderator must not act like a teacher in a classroom nor like a lecturer. He must explain, but at the same time encourage questions. If one of the members has enough knowledge of the subject, he should be invited to explain it, instead of the Moderator. If the unit has a small library, the Moderator should tell the members in the previous meeting in what books and in what chapters they will find an adequate explanation. An extra session on Catholic doctrine about the subject would be in order.

c. Act

The final and most important act in the Inquiry is to *determine upon specific action* as a result of the observation and the judgment. This is the climax of the entire meeting.

This action is twofold: In the meeting itself the members plan for action; after the meeting, they carry out the plan they have made. . . . The action to be performed must be definite and concrete and possible at the time. Members... definitely plan their action for each coming week. This plan is written into the minutes of every meeting and forms the material for the report at the next meeting.

One can readily see now that the Inquiry is not just a lesson at school. . . . The discussion *always* leads to action. Consequently, no group should take over the meeting time for study *only*. This has a degenerating effect on the whole movement. The purpose of the apostolate is to extend the Kingdom of Christ. This implies action.

d. Some Observations

There are situations or problems which cannot be thoroughly examined in only one Inquiry. The Inquiries related to that particular problem must not each stand independent of the other but must be like the chapters of the same book. There are also problems related to one another. The Inquiries regarding these related problems must be like the different volumes of one work.

When a particular problem has been thoroughly examined in several consecutive Inquiries, while the related action in the field continues, the presiding officer will try to find out whether there are any *new* aspects observed by the members meriting a new Inquiry. If not, then the Inquiries, while that *field action* lasts, can be united with religious formation to make it a *doctrinal* Inquiry. In that case the assignments will be made *after* the Christian Doctrine Discussion, not before.

But this will not happen frequently if the Moderator and the presiding officer use their powers of observation to discover new aspects of the problem or new relations with other problems deserving an Inquiry that week. Any small problem usually has a thousand and one aspects worth studying in the light of Christian ideas with the end in view of doing something about it.

It may take several weeks or more to collect accurate and detailed observations on some particular problem of the environment. If so, the entire Inquiry of Observe-Judge-Act will not be covered in one weekly meeting. In that case, the third element—*act*—will not be omitted, but might well consist in what would be termed Observation Action; that is, a continuation of the investigation relative to a *specific point* that needs further probing; or the members might decide on some action that would tend to relieve a particular need on the spiritual, social, physical or material level relative to the general problem being studied. In other words, the element of action must never be overlooked; neither must the observation and judgment be done hastily and superficially.

3. THE ASSIGNMENT

This part is only a continuation of the Inquiry. Once the action to be taken by the group is agreed upon, the presiding officer assigns to each member his allotted part. As each member must spend two hours a week in this work, the assigned task should be such that he will need at least two hours to accomplish it.

It is not necessary for *all* the members to work *simultaneously* on the same project. As the Inquiry on one problem is finished and some members are assigned to work on it, another Inquiry on another problem could be started and other members assigned to the second project. There can be as many activities as the members deem wise to undertake. But they should remember that grasping too much might spoil the effectiveness of their work.

The presiding officer should never be afraid to give a hard assignment to the members. If this is to be a real apostolate, there should be no room for *señoritas*. If men work for the cause of Christ, it will be dear to them. If that work entails sacrifices, hardships, and even tears, it will be dearer to them than any other thing in the world. That is the human element, apart from supernatural reasons.

The assignment must be definite and concrete. It will not be: "Mr. Lopez will work in Tawi district." The work

must be defined in concrete terms, and if necessary, in a definite territory. "Messrs. Perez and Gomez will try to form the Barangay Rosary in the east side of barrio Libas." "Messrs. X, Y and Z will see the butchers and try to convince them not to sell meat this coming Lent on Fridays."

4. CATHOLIC DOCTRINE DISCUSSION

The word *indoctrination* has a derogatory sense in the dictionary. And of late, after so much "thought control" imposed by dictatorial powers mainly through indoctrination, the word seems to carry with it a sinister ring. Still it has a good meaning in the dictionary too. And in that good sense, indoctrination would be the right word for this part of the meeting, which must be used to indoctrinate the members, to imbue them through repeated discussion with the teachings of Christ and His Church.

The purpose of Catholic Action being to Christianize the pagan world in which we live, it is necessary that the Actionists have a deep understanding of Christ and His ideals. And so the last part of the meeting is devoted to acquiring this. Christ is known especially from the Gospels. Here the members may study Christ and observe His conduct and learn the principles of their own apostolate.

When this Christian-Doctrine part of the meeting is devoted to a study of the Gospels, one member will be appointed as commentator on the section of the Gospel chosen for discussion. He will study this section and consult with the Moderator who will recommend whatever references seem necessary for a sound understanding of the passage. Not too much matter should be taken at one time.

The other members will themselves read over the passage and formulate their problems for the discussion to be held in the next meeting. In this discussion the commentator should not assume the role of teacher but rather should encourage the others to talk about Christ, to propose their questions, suggest applications.

Moreover since this discussion is directed to Catholic Action, it should always treat of Christ in terms of life, not only of personal problems, but especially of the problems that surround us in the contemporary world, and seek His solution.

It is obvious that in discussion of this kind the members, especially the commentator in his close study of the text under the guidance of the moderator, will conceive a deep personal love and admiration of Christ.

Of course, this part of the meeting must not be confined to the study of Christ as He appears in the Gospels, though this is the most important element of the indoctrination of a lay apostle. Other parts of the New Testament will also be studied: the work of St. Paul as a great Apostle, the doctrine of the Mystical Body as found in his First Letter to the Corinthians and other passages which would help to stimulate the desire of the members to be real apostles.

Aside from the New Testament, discussions must also be conducted on liturgical matters, especially the Mass, Baptism and Confirmation. Cardinal Pizzardo, the head of Catholic Action in the whole world, says:

The liturgy and Catholic Action are thus respectively the Mystical Body at prayer and sacrifice, and the Mystical Body in action upon the world. Each of these functions requires the other. True Christian formation (chiefly) by the corporate sacrifice and prayer of the liturgy is the fundamental basis of Catholic Action.

In the study of the Mass and Baptism, the members will learn "our oneness, our corporateness, our living, organic wholeness in Christ Who is our Head and, consequently, our absolute need of acting together." Confirmation has been rightly called the Sacrament of Catholic Action. A study of this sacrament will make the members more *dedicated* men.

As the work of the unit progresses and as these discussions of Catholic Doctrine are taken up week after week as a part of the meeting, some Moderators might agree with their members that 25 minutes a week are not enough for

their religious formation. Then a monthly extra session would probably solve the problem.

5. THE PRAYERS

To give a religious atmosphere to the meeting, a crucifix, or a statue either of the Sacred Heart or of the Virgin Mary must be placed on a small table in the middle of the group, the members sitting around it. Two lighted candles will be placed before the statue or the crucifix. The candles will help make the presence of the statue more conspicuous. And we know what the candles mean spiritually.

When the prayers are said, at the beginning, middle and end, the members will kneel down, that they may pray more attentively and more devoutly. Another good way, "of having prayers said well is to offer them for a special intention. The head may announce the intention, which he has jotted down when planning the meeting. The objective is to get the prayer said well."

When a member comes late, before taking his seat, he kneels down and recites the opening prayer privately.

CONCLUSION

After so many pages, the reader may ask himself: "Why so much Observe, so much Judge and Act, so much Gospel and Liturgy discussion? In many flourishing Catholic Action units, there are no such discussions. The spiritual director and the president determine what is to be done, and it is assigned to the members who accept humbly and obediently without discussion."

The answer to this is perhaps best put in the words of the Holy Father (quoted above): "Priests ought to consecrate themselves to this *difficult* work of the spiritual and *practical preparation* of the laity for Catholic Action." It is therefore necessary for the priest in charge to study ways and means of preparing the members to be good Catholic Actionists. The system outlined in these pages is the best way

of preparing them. It takes a young man at least ten years to become a priest and apostle. It should not be surprising if it takes months or even years to form lay apostles.

But others are **good** apostles without all this intellectual preparation. But the term "good" may have shades. We are training leaders, not only executors, convancers and pleaders. Hence the need of intellectual formation through the Inquiry and Catholic Doctrine discussions, that, as the members work, at the same time they may acquire habitual attitudes which insure the excellence and permanence of their efforts.

* * *