

Books Received

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Recommends many books: novels, history, about saints, social teachings of the Church. Singles out a book for teaching children about God and one about Martin de Porres. (DDLW #678).

“A book is a window by which one escapes,” Julian Green says, “Spiritual reading is the oil which keeps the lamp burning.”

A new series of paper-covered books, Image books, published by Doubleday, provides windows aplenty and the oil to keep the lamp burning when it is night or the day is dim. We cannot praise this series enough. They are all reprints which have gone out of print and books which people have borrowed and never returned, perhaps because they kept passing them on.

“**THE DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST**” is one of them, by George Bernanos. The movie made from the book could never do justice to it. His discussion of poverty, of war, are unforgettable.

“**DAMIEN THE LEPER**,” by John Farrow. When one of the women in St. Joseph’s house read this book she wanted to set right off for Molokai. **OUR LADY OF FATIMA**, by William Thomas Walsh. An unforgettable scene is that of the children in prison. **A POPULAR HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH** by Fr. Philip Hughes. Peter Maurin used to say that the best way to study history is to study the history of the Church. **THE SPIRIT OF CATHOLICISM**, by Fr. Karl Adam. The first serious book I read as a convert to the Church. I’ve given it to countless prospective converts since, and now this cheap price, 75c means everyone can have it. **PEACE OF SOUL**, by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. A message of hope, that most sinned against of all virtues. Dom Chapman says the most important work in the spiritual life is to achieve peace of soul. “First keep thyself in peace and then thou wilt be able to bring others to peace,” reads the Imitation. **THE CHURCH SPEAKS TO THE MODERN WORLD**, the social teachings of Leo XIII, with an introduction by Etienne Gibson, and this is an Image book original. Here is a book so rich, so full of meat, so encyclopedic, that it alone could educate a man.

The prices are different on each book. The last named is 95c; The others are 65, 75, and 85c and we hope they are well sold on every book stand in every bus station and railroad terminal and corner candy store in the country.

And oh, yes, here is another one at the bottom of the heap, for fifty cents

MR. BLUE, by Myles Connolly, an old favorite, a little work of genius. It is not much more than a long short story, but when Peter Maurin read it he dashed off a letter, back in 1932, asking Myles Connolly to be the editor of **THE CATHOLIC WORKER**, but since the paper had not even started yet, and Myles had a good job in Hollywood, it is easy to be seen why he is not now living on Chrystie street.

We and Our Children (Molding the child in Christian living) by Mary Reed Newland, P.J. Kenedy and Sons. \$3.50. 267 pages and a bibliography. Here is a book which every mother and grandmother will enjoy and refer to, and they will not only learn how to teach their own children, but they will be planning themselves and reopen their own spiritual lives. Remembering how my own grandchild said last Christmas that he was bigger than God since God was a little baby, I was delighted to read how Mary Newland taught her children under four about the Trinity. "After much thinking and struggling, we have hit on a way, inadequate at best, of trying to explain the three-Persons-in-one God by comparing it to their own human father. At home, among the children, he is known as Daddy and his role is that of father. At work among his fellow workers, he is known as Mr. Newland and his role is that of wage earner. To Mother he is known as Bill and his role is husband. He is the same man but he has three different roles to play. Very roughly it draws a parallel to the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity. God the Father we think of as Creator, God the Son as Redeemer and God the Holy Ghost we think of as Divine Love."

I skipped all over the book, finding each part delightful and then passed it on to my daughter who will enjoy it as she always has, Mrs. Newland's articles in Integrity. I'm only praying she does not die of envy at the idea of the fourteen-room house for the Newland ménage of ten people, not too large at all, for a growing family. On the other hand a small house with small children, when there is an attic and basement, can be a comfort too, easy to heat and easy to keep an eye on the children in.

Mrs. Newland lectures all over New England as well as writes, and one can see that her writing is an outgrowth of her living. It is all tried and true stuff.

And here is a beautiful book to give a child for Christmas, **Martin de Porres Hero**, by Clair Huchet Bishop, illustrated by Jean Charlo. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. \$2.50. Martin de Porres is one of our favorites and many of the Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality have been named after him. On Mott street, when Ade de Bethune was drawing murals, she made a big one of the

Blessed Martin, kneeling by the bed of an irascible sick man, feeding him with a big spoon, from a big dish of beans which some of the men in the house pointed out as very indigestible for a sick man. That picture and that saint made an impression on the men who came in to eat with us every day on the bread line. Only recently one of them came in and told me that years ago, when he had two broken arms, he came to the Catholic Worker and was spoon-fed just as that sick man was. Again we find a saint devoting much time to the sick, serving as an assistant to a doctor before he became a lay brother in the Dominican order, and afterwards showing even profligacy in taking in everyone in need, so that every extra room and corridor of the convent was filled. Martin is a New World St. Francis in his love of birds and beasts and the descriptions of his encounters with them are beautiful. The story I like best in the book is how Martin came across some poor children hiding up in a fig tree, so they would not be caught stealing fruit, and how he found a piece of unclaimed land for them and got fig tree saplings and helped them plant an orchard for themselves which became the orchard of the poor children of Lima for years to come. Why didn't we do that with our Puerto Rican children this summer when the neighbors complained about them stealing fruit? Oh, the opportunities we miss!

This book is so good, and the illustrations in it so charming, that I am sure our readers will want all the other books of Clare Bishop for their children's libraries.