

RICH IN PRIESTS
January 1949 Editorial

The following reflections came to Father Caffarel after reading Graham Greene's "The Power and the Glory".

You who read these lines are rich, rich in many things, RICH IN PRIESTS. Have you ever thought about it? If you have difficulty in understanding what I want to say, ask prisoners in certain countries who have been deprived of a visit from a priest for months on end. They would tell you that there is a hunger of the soul more agonizing than the body's hunger – a spiritual deprivation more difficult to bear than the deprivation of material goods. Is it only those who have had the bitter experience of poverty who can appreciate riches and privileges?

Now, riches entail responsibilities. On the last day, you will be asked: "What have you done with the talents entrusted to you? What have you done with your priests?" May you then not see rising up against you the multitude of ignorant people, unfortunate people, unbelievers, accusing you of having deprived them of the good news by confiscating the priests who should have brought it to them.

I will not speak of the thousand and one ways of monopolising priests. I only want to speak to you of your relationship with your team's chaplain. Do you think it is right that he should devote each month one or two of his evenings exclusively to the couples of your team? And is he – I will not say: duty bound – but right in responding to your call? (I know that certain priests anxiously ask themselves: "shall I go again to those who have already received so much, when so many others are waiting?").

If the priest finds in you collaborators who are bearing witness in circles to which he himself has no access, preparing the way, extending, multiplying, so to speak, his priestly ministry; then, have no fear: his presence among you is in order. If you are obsessed by the desire to offer a wider field of action to his priesthood, to arrange for him contacts with people that he could not approach by himself; if you bring to him the doubters and the seekers, you are not selfish; you are not uncaring in your riches. However... before jumping to conclusion, examine your conscience thoroughly.

Graham Greene has triggered another thought in me. I offer it to you without comment. Rich people need fine food; the beggar, for his part, eats his crust of bread with pleasure. Rich in priests, you are sometimes hard to please: you need discourses that flatter your intellectual tastes, a priest of exceptional spiritual fervour and rare qualities. Anyone who does not offer you such things, you are inclined to look down upon - it is because you do not first look for the PRIEST in the priest.

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