

FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

GERALD VANN, O.P.

THE gulf today between body and spirit, between material things and the praise of God, is widening at a pace and to an extent never known before. It would be very easy to despair. It would be very easy to despair of this civilisation of ours; very easy to despair of the future of our race; very easy to feel that, so far from marching triumphantly forward to a golden age, we are sinking rapidly into an abyss; very easy to feel that man is doomed because all the physical side, the material side of his life and his world must continue to drag him down and degrade him till the heavens are closed to him. But no; it is just at this very moment that the voice of the Church comes to him like a challenge: we are on the contrary to shout aloud our belief in the dignity and holiness of material things; we are to affirm again our faith and our hope in the future of man's flesh. The woman who stands in the heavens is the mother of men; and her glory is the guarantee of theirs.

That is why the definition of our Lady's Assumption is far from having a purely domestic interest or importance. The greatest definitions have always been defensive: defensive of some more central truth which would otherwise be in danger. But the Church is not merely concerned with the guarding and defending of her own children; she is concerned with the guarding and defending of the whole world. There is still in the world, there will always be in the world, a voice to affirm, and a power to defend, the dignity and the ultimate destiny of matter, of material things, of human flesh and blood, of the lovely mystery of human love, of the beauty which is in the work of men's hands. There is a voice which affirms, there is a power which defends, all the material things which make life worth living, and which bids us be of good heart, for we can hope in the end to achieve our own lives, full, rich, unified, free, not by escaping from the flesh, but by the healing and redeeming of the flesh.

(From a broadcast sermon)