

circle of readers. They really are inspiring. This is the kind of book one wishes to pass on to a friend when one has read it. It is good spiritual reading with just that touch of poetry every now and again, which lights it up all along the way. 'We do not walk into heaven on our own feet, we are carried in on the shoulders of the good shepherd; we do not swim into the harbour of safety by our own strength, we are swept into it on the high tide of the merits of our saviour' (p. 43). There is an excellent chapter on what is called, after St Francis de Sales, 'the little virtues', and an even better one on the words 'If thou didst know the gift of God'. Certainly this little book can be recommended, and when read, put into the hands of others.

D.A.L.

CHRIST AT EVERY CROSSROAD. By F. Desplanques, S.J., trans. G. R. Serve. (The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland; \$2.75.)

This book could have been written only in France, a country where the youth of the Church is being renewed like the eagle's. In twenty-five meditations, Fr Desplanques explores the truths of the gospel and the mysteries of the faith with a stimulating freshness of vision. His subjects are diverse—from the circumcision to the angels, and from the dormition to a Christian burial in France. He has an intense awareness of the mystery of the incarnation, of the paradox of the eucharist, of the pain and beauty of the cross. It is these pivotal truths which give to the book its profound unity. His language is contemporary, his application penetrating, his style forceful yet often moving.

These meditations are difficult in any literary *genre*. Sometimes they are vivid commentaries on gospel scenes, sometimes they verge on poetry, with isolated lines forming a counterpoint to the main text. The writer which this brings to mind is Whitman. He is like Whitman in his use of long rhythmic lines, in the intimate relationship he establishes with the reader, in his sudden movement from prosaic statement to moments of true poetry. Unfortunately he shares some of Whitman's defects also, notably his formlessness and over-repetition. Yet where Whitman spoke for humanity in the mass bound by the spirit of friendship, Fr Desplanques speaks for humanity redeemed and bound by the spirit of love. He is a poet of the mystical body.

Outstanding is a lovely gentle meditation on our Lady's dormition, where he takes the unpromising material that nothing was said about it because 'there was nothing to say', and weaves out of this a moving commentary on 'that mysterious departure . . . when Mary was taken by her spouse'. Not all the book is up to this standard, but he can suddenly transcend a conventional discourse with an unexpected and profound conclusion. Sometimes amusing, often tender and moving,

fired by the joy of the faith, at his best Fr Desplanques is very good indeed. He possesses in a marked degree a quality not overcommon among spiritual writers—an awareness of mystery. He writes from the still centre, where Christianity is apprehended as a Person, where history and this world of time are transfigured in the vision of Christ all-in-all.

D.P.M.

THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT AND THE LOCAL CHURCH. By Alfred R. Shands. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

This little book is intended for Christians of all communions. The author, a young American Episcopalian minister, visited, in the space of a year, various liturgical centres in Europe—both Catholic and Protestant. He then settled down to write a book out of what he calls 'the jig-saw of pieces of experience which though dissimilar fitted together into one whole'. Unhappily the jig-saw pieces with their odd uncompromising edges do not fit into a single picture although he pressed them together confidently. Forcing is strictly against jig-saw rules: one is left with the impression that several puzzle packets have got mixed up. The dissimilarities of the various traditions are more important for their proper assessment than the loose generalities required to fit them together. The work of the Iona community, for example, must be understood in the context of the Scottish working class parish and the liturgical and theological traditions of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. The complexities of contemporary Anglican liturgical life receive a careless unsympathetic handling. How, for instance, can Cranmer's liturgical ideals be recommended by an adherent of the 'Parish Communion' movement? Cranmer's excision of the eucharistic offertory was the expression of a very different sort of liturgical theology than Mr Shands recommends. The very impressive liturgical-pastoral work of the Church of England (which should be of the greatest interest to English Catholics) is inevitably confused by this kind of ecumenical approach which presupposes one packet and one picture.

C.B.