

Father Gerald Vann, O.P.:

1906-1963

GERALD VANN was a preacher, lecturer, broadcaster and writer of international fame; yet the most vivid memory he leaves is of a deeply loving person. For all his great success in the public eye he cultivated no personality, projected no image; he was simply himself, Father Gerald. In this respect he lived what he preached: What you are is more important than what you do. He received his Dominican training in the context of the humanism of the twenties (*On Being Human* was the title of his first book published before he was 30). It is scarcely surprising that the sinewy character of his thought was concealed in a gentleness that sprang from a lifelong attempt to display the goodness of God's human creatures. And when he became the centre of controversy it was from the same cause: the desire to find the reflection of the Maker in His image, and to feel something of the tenderness of Christ towards sinners.

The readers of *BLACKFRIARS* will be familiar enough with his thought and style both as writer and preacher. I wonder if it is widely known that for twenty years he wrote his books, lectures, sermons during an extremely arduous life of school teaching. Twenty-five classes a week, innumerable 'preps' to correct and all the usual routine chores of a schoolmaster: out of this came *The Heart of Man*, *The Divine Pity*, etc.

He was a true son of St Dominic in that he never spared himself and was always alive to the needs of others. He who wrote so eloquently of pain suffered bitterly in his last months and grew even sweeter. Only shortly before he died he apologised to the young priest who had to change his bandages: 'I thought I should have been dead before you had to do this.' He died in his Priory cared for by his brethren. If that priory seems emptier for his death so does the English Province which has lost not so much a teacher and preacher as a loving brother. May God give peace to his gentle soul.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.