House of God

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IT IS ELEVEN o'clock on Sunday morning. The bells are ringing from the towers of granite and marble calling the multitude to the House of God, and they flock forth: Mother, Daddy, Junior, little Sister, and the Pontiac with the new wide track. This is a good Christian family highly respected for their participation in church activities and now practicing the spirit of togetherness on Sunday morning. They have been especially stimulated in their desire for togetherness from this year’s subscription to the family church magazine *Humility*. It is a photographic magazine featuring some of the most beautiful photography on any of the newsstands. This month’s issue is devoted entirely to pictures and suggestions of family fun for a summer vacation in the mountains. Incidentally this church obtained a 100% subscription this year and won a large gold-plated plaque to hang by the main entrance.

The family arrives in time for Sunday School. Junior has a large atlas tucked under his arm for his fourth grade class which is now studying the geography of India. Little sister is carrying her apron, made last month in her second grade class, to be used in finger painting for this Sunday. Mother trots upstairs, after smoothing the feathers on her new hat, to the Merry Mothers class. They are currently studying the problems of juvenile delinquency in Europe. Mrs. McElroy had suggested they do a Bible study, but the group voted to search into an area of social concern where they might be able to do some good. Mrs. Henry, the chairman, is absent, and although they all know her older boy had been picked up for breaking out street lights Friday night, and her youngest daughter was starting her fifth week in the hospital, they considerately refrain from even mentioning her name. Father
goes to the Do-It-Yourself men's class which had dropped the study, after one week, of Paul Tilich's book *The Courage To Be* to form a credit union sponsored by the church. This morning they are exploring the possibility of printing a catalog containing the interest rates.

After Sunday School the family take their respective places for the church service; Dad in back as an usher—greeter, Mom in the choir, Junior with a couple of his friends in the balcony, and little Sister in the nursery. The minister reads the call to worship and the congregation stands for the first hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy," also number one in the hymnal, and the choir marches in step down the middle aisle and takes seats in front of the altar, each making a final adjustment of his robe. They repeat the Lord's Prayer followed by thirty seconds of silent prayer — the worship leader keeps a watch with a second hand on the lectern to time it. The scripture is read giving an opportunity for many people to read the announcements in the bulletin and then the choir rises and sings the morning anthem, an anthology of some of the late popular hits including "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," "I Believe," and "Somebody Upstairs Loves Me." The reostat lights are dimmed during the pastoral prayer giving the sanctuary a much greater spiritual atmosphere. The ushers march stoutly, proudly, and promptly in a style reminiscent of Hitler's storm troopers to the altar with the brightly polished collection plates. They are sufficiently blessed and then half the ushers pass the plates while the other half collect the pink attendance cards. The attendance will be announced right before the benediction because this is all-out-to-church month, and this church is leading the Province. Last's weeks offering and attendance can be read from the plaque next to the pulpit.

There is a short prayer for the minister and his message, allowing the ushers to find their seats in the congregation, and then the sermon begins. This is the second year in this pulpit for the minister. He had been chosen by the Pastoral Committee of the Board of Deacons who were highly impressed with his brilliant speech voice and joke collection. The Reverend Swartz is a graduate of Seneca
Theological School, as are the district superintendent, the conference chairman, the bishop, and most of the other clergymen in high places in the South Iowa Province, showing the high quality of the school.

The sermon is entitled “The Signs of a Christian,” and the Reverend Swartz outlines four main characteristics defining the Christian: happiness, thrift, honesty, and a glowing personality. He elaborates on the four main ideas with several subpoints, such as how you can recognize a fellow Christian across the street by the smile on his face; and that honesty is not only a unique Christian virtue, but it also pays in the end and will bring better business profits.

After the benediction the minister stands in the back of the church, shakes hands as the people leave and greets each with a cycle of “good to see you,” “beautiful day,” and “see you next Sunday.” The greetings are returned with the usual, “I certainly enjoyed your sermon and the service this morning.” The family reunites at the parked car. Mom and Dad have that good feeling that makes this another enjoyable Sunday like all other Sundays.

Dick Moothart, Sci. & H. Sr.

Warm Autumn

The russet crispness of the autumn evening
Embraced the stubble of the harvest earth,
And we walked in the shadows of the bright land,
And we stood by a spectre oak, watching
A sullen moon caught in the dark branches.
It was the phoenix death of verdant summer,
And the residue of that greener season
Resisted the inevitable burning,
While your residual smile flickered, failed,
Leaving an expression of warm ashes.
It was the time of love and season keening,
As the leaves shuffled over the cooling earth,
Impatient for the ashen snow to blanch
The russet crispness of the autumn evening.

Albert Jensen, Sc. & H. Sr.