

# Would you like your plumber to be A PARSON?

**T**HEY thought he was either a liar, a madman, or a crank. There he was in the factory pay-queue, drawing £6 10s. with the rest of the labourers. Dressed in dirty dungarees just like they were.

Living in pokey lodgings, fighting poverty just like them. Yet when his workmates, intrigued by his public school accent, queried Martyn Grubb about his background he answered truthfully that his father was a company director, that his family home was a big servant-run house, that he had been educated at Haileybury before graduating from Cambridge.

"Most of them didn't believe me," Martyn Grubb told me last night. "When they asked me why I had turned my back on luxury and wealth, I told them simply: 'Because I want to be a Christian.'"

## **To poverty**

He smiled wryly: "Nine out of ten of them decided I was either a liar, a fool, or an upper-class no-good down on his luck."

"So I decided to become a Church of England minister. Maybe then, I thought they would accept me."

That, briefly, is why Mr. Martyn Grubb is now the Rev. Martyn Grubb—the first man to be trained as a worker-priest by the Church of England.

And that's why, when he finishes his training next year,

## **ERIC SEWELL meets a minister who is going back to work in the factory**

he will put away his dog-collar, go to a Labour Exchange and take a low-paid job—any low-paid job—and return to a life of struggle and poverty among the poorest people in Britain.

He will NOT have a church. He will not have a parish. His ministry will be as unobtrusive as he hopes it will be effective.

There are only two other worker-priests in the Church of England. One is an engineer in Luton, and acts as an unpaid parson in a parish outside the town.

## **In a brewery**

The other works in London as a labourer in a brewery. He is not officially attached to any church.

Will the corps of worker-priests grow? Will the time come when the plumber who calls to mend a leak at your home, or the capstan operator at the next bench, or the shop steward in your factory, may be an ordained parson?

Next year, at the Lambeth Conference, the idea of recruiting

# BRINGING UP FATHER



The Rev. Martyn Grubb with his three children. He is looking after the family while his wife is ill in bed.

more worker-priests will be discussed. The Bishop of Southwell backs it.

Is this the answer to the church's problems? Would more men enter the ministry if they could stay at their old jobs, earning whatever salary they could, working in their spare time as unpaid part-time parsons?

## A porter

Money, however, played no part in Martyn Grubb's decision—except that he has a horror of earning too much.

In his rambling, church-provided home at Stoke Newington, where he lives with his wife and three children while he completes his training at St. Peter de Beauvoir church, he told me:

"When I came out of the Navy in 1948, I decided that, to be a Christian, I must live on the budget of a working man.

"I anticipated taking a job that fitted my education"—perhaps in the £2,000-£5,000 range which some of his old colleagues now have—"but I was prepared to give away all my earnings over about £10 a week."

"Then I realised it was use-

less trying to preach the love of God to people miserably living in appalling conditions, when the preacher himself has all the security of wealth.

"So I decided to be a personnel officer.

"I went to Cambridge to prepare myself.

"But for six months, before that, I took a job in a London factory as a trouser-examiner. In my first vacation, I worked as a goods porter in a Bristol railway yard, sharing my digs with a stoker.

"Those jobs convinced me that I couldn't be a personnel manager. I would be far too well off. I had to live and work as an ordinary workman. To get across the love of God to people I had to be one of them.

"At Cambridge I fell in love with Ann, now my wife. She was a brilliant Classics scholar. But she thought the same way as I did, and when we both graduated B.A. we got married on a capital of £100 and went to live in lodgings in Southall.

## New life

"Ann got a job as a pea-picker in a canning factory, picking out the bad peas on an endless belt for 2s. 7d. an hour. I started work as a labourer.

"We wanted our family soon and within a few months Ann

knew she was going to have a baby. That was part of our new life. Poor people don't put off having a family because of poverty.

"But our landlady didn't see this point of view. She gave us notice as a pair of irresponsible young idiots.

## Union man

"I bought a £1,600 house by borrowing on a £2,000 legacy due to me . . . another compromise I wouldn't make now. But we pretended the £1,600 was a mortgage and we gave away several pounds each week out of income—as if we were paying a building society.

"To make ends meet, Ann had to go out charring in the mornings taking the baby with her to the doctor's surgery she scrubbed out.

"I became a capstan operator in a small factory. Being by now a convinced trade unionist, I tried to organise ourselves into a shop. We all joined the A.E.U. and I was made shop steward.

"The boss sacked me. The men backed me up. They, too, were promptly sacked. I remember the boss telling me:

"All that religious stuff was so

much bunk. You're a Communist agitator."

"During the next five years I had several factory jobs ranging from £6 10s. to £12 a week. Two of our three children were born. But although we were living as Christians as we saw it, most people didn't believe me. So, we decided I should try to be ordained. Then my workmates would HAVE to believe that I was trying to live the love of God.

"I was ordained as a deacon last September, and will be ordained as a priest in March. After a year's parish work I will go back to the factories."