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Living With The Negro

By Rev. Benedict Kuzma

(The racial problem is nearing the explosion point in America. Before the war is finished we may have an internal war of our own on our hands. This week I present an article by a leader in the front lines where this racial war is acute. It is by the Baroness Catherine de Hueck, who is one of the four or five Catholics in America that really know what's what about the black race amongst us.)

The strangest thing about Catholic America is that one should have to write an article about "Living with Negroes." If America were a Democracy in the fullest sense of the word, if Catholics in America were really CATHOLIC, there would be no need to write an article like this. For no one would understand why it was being written, as everyone would be living with Negroes.

Everyone would have Negro neighbors. Go to school with Negro children. All schools, public, parochial, private high colleges, and universities. Everyone would be working side by side with Negroes in hospitals, in Courts, in business. That is the way it is today in Catholic countries. That is the way it was yesterday when the world was Catholic.

But in America, in the Year of Grace, 1941, there seems to be plenty of topics for an article on Living with Negroes, as if one were writing about living in the wilds of Borneo with a tribe of unknown aborigines.

Living with the Negroes? Well, those of us who do, like it, for the Negro is pleasant to live with. But they and we both live behind THE VEIL.

Yes, behind THE VEIL. A strange, ancient Veil that falls in thick, grotesque shapes over all the Harlems in America. An opaque Veil that gets out from under. A grasping Veil that suffocates and enfolds all those who want to lift it and pass beyond its light-killing darkness.

True, it is powerless against us who live with Negroes and who have stepped beyond it to share the twilight of the Negro life in the Harlems of America. We have the magic formula that makes it vanish... WE ARE WHITE... And we are sorrowful, too. For we cannot share the burden of Harlems. To help Harlems tear the Veil away. And we find it hard to see that our identification with the Negro is not complete... sorry to see that we have the Pass-Key, through the thick folds of the Veil... WE ARE WHITE... we can stay and we can go... THE NEGRO CAN'T.

And yet, living with the Negro means, LIVING, FEELING, FIGHTING THE VEIL.

Negro youth, thirsty for knowledge, throngs what schools and colleges it can get in. Fighting gigantic battles for that knowledge. Each Negro graduate a saga of Victory. And when the goal is reached and the parchment obtained, at the price of souls, health... the Veil enfolds that Negro Youth in its killing embrace... and whispers... THOU SHALT NOT PASS!

Negro Manhood and Womanhood is eager to work. Keen brains. Trained brains. Good brains are ready to serve humanity - America, the World. Talents hidden deep in minds and souls, cry out for release. Poetry dies unborn. Songs before they are sung. Muso weeps unrecorded. The Veil, like a Moloch, kills and smothers... THOU SHALT NOT PASS!

Negro Mothers and Fathers in love and joy begot their children. Straight-backed, long-limbed, smiling children with eager eyes, sturdy bodies. Slowly eagerness fades. Limbs shrink. Disease creeps in. Bad housing, bad food, lack of air and sunlight, take their toll. Fathers and Mothers strain. Work harder. Kill themselves working. The Veil whispers... WHAT IS THE USE? YOU SHALL NOT PASS.

Living with the Negro means watching the Negro's search for happiness. Means looking at him laugh and joke and seek escape in many things. And watch some more, and see laughter die, or become harsh and discordant... Perhaps to cover up unshed tears... for happiness means freedom. And the Veil bars freedom, and with it, happiness.

In Washington lies the Parchment of the Constitution... yellow with age. Millions come to read and rejoice at the words on the Parchment.

ALL MEN ARE BORN EQUAL BEFORE GOD. ALL MEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE. ALL MEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO WORK. ALL MEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

The Parchment lists many other rights. The Veil laughs, refolds itself into thicker folds, and whispers "DON'T READ... DON'T DREAM... DON'T HOPE. NEGRO THE PARCHMENT IS NOT FOR YOU."

In the Catholic Churches of America, Priests read the Gospel to attentive White Catholic Folks. Softly the words of Eternal Life fall on their eyes... "I am the Vine and you the Branches... Love God and your neighbor. That is the Law... Whatever you do to the least of My Brethren, you do to me."

The Cross on the Catholic Churches in America shines in the sun. The Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is being preached within. The Veil draws tighter. Lucifer's hand is seen rearranging its thick folds. It is hard to distinguish who laughs and shouts - Lucifer or the Veil. "The Children of Light are walking in my darkness... The Salt of the Earth is getting flat... They have forgotten to be their Negro brother's keepers... They have forgotten to practice the Law... My kingdom is growing."

Living with the Negro is bearing witness to the Veil, is living within its suffocating folds, that are thick enough to smother even the Voice of Christ, which has to pass through the souls of His children before it can be heard.

YES, IF CATHOLICS IN AMERICA WERE CATHOLIC... THERE WOULD BE NO JIM CROW IN AMERICA... AND AN ARTICLE ON "LIVING WITH THE NEGRO" WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE WRITTEN...

Read: Dark Symphony... Adams... The Tenth Man... Murphy... Royal Road... Kuhl

Always Faithful



Feast Days

Sunday, Aug. 2—ST. STEPHEN, POPE AND MARTYR. Monday, Aug. 3—THE FINDING OF ST. STEPHEN'S RELICS.

Tuesday, Aug. 4—ST. DOMINIC. Wednesday, Aug. 5—OUR LADY OF THE SNOW. Thursday, Aug. 6—THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD. Friday, Aug. 7—ST. CASSIAN. Saturday, Aug. 8—ST. CYRIL AND COMPANIONS.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 18)

equality have been accepted as the American heritage by all our citizens, for themselves and for their fellows. That liberty and equality can not continue to exist if the despoiler is to have his way. Fear that these possessions shall be withdrawn, taken from us, must always stir our hearts when the way is left open for the invading world-criminal.

Fear of war and the blood and misery and tears that go with it, can never be strong enough to lead us to accept the alternative of a future world in which fear shall be our permanent possession. Fear must not be permitted to become a steady-dweller among us.

Christ came to bring peace, to look for good will among men, to show His good-will to men. His angels bade the shepherds—"Fear not!" His spirit in the world today bids men to put away all fear. That is the goal before us now, that is the answer to the question—"What are we fighting for?"

The COURIER with its thousands of loyal readers again, thanks the men of industry who have joined with it in running this series of four patriotic and informative displays on the Four Freedoms. Our message has meant more to every recipient because of the encouragement and support of these leaders in community life whose sponsorship has made possible the appearance of these significant messages, the answer to the question—"What are we fighting for."

WHO EXALTS HIMSELF

Conceit is the vice of one who makes himself more than he is, who exalts himself. Not content to see himself on the plane where he really stands, he raises himself by his own vain imaginings to a higher one. He is so taken up with his own virtues that he does not see his vices. He likes himself!

Humility is the virtue that enables us to see ourselves as we are. It does not mean vilifying oneself, denying oneself those things which really belong. It does not mean lying about oneself, falsely stating as our faults that do not belong to us. It excludes the denial of our real faults, includes the candid confession of them.

The Pharisee was filled with conceit, with pride. There was no humility in him. His actions, his words, his very demeanor, showed that he was fully satisfied with himself. Why, then, did he approach the Lord in His temple? His prayer was not one of petition: he did not come to ask of the Lord, but to tell the Lord of his alleged goodness and to make it shine more brilliantly by contrast with the assumed wickedness of other men and particularly of the publican.

The publican was filled with humility. He knew his faults, his sins, and he came to tell the Lord he was a sinner. He prayed, he asked for what he needed, what he wanted,—pardon through God's mercy.

Humility is the way to God, to God's blessing, God's justification. If we want all this, we must follow the teaching of Christ in this Gospel; we must know that God's grace of justification will come to us when we make ourselves worthy of it by our humble confession of sin in sorrow of heart. "He who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Another Kind Of Bravery

By Rev. James M. O'Leary, C.S.P.

All in all, the greatest war in history. But there is nothing so glorious as to die for the possibility of good. Making one's theology one's excuse for not fighting. And, now General Sherman was in not hell. There is no hope in hell, not even the possibility of good in hell. That's what makes it hell, but it was there is good. The chief good—apart from the prospect of creating a new world—is the chance for the manifestation of bravery. I refer not to the heroism of the soldier, or even to the amazing courage of athletes under the banner of the all-star. At Meigs, for example, a Christian and in a lower degree, but in lower degree at London, Dover, Southampton, Plymouth and the Channel ports generally, the bravest people have shown such patience, long-suffering and self-sacrificing heroism, as might make one almost think that the war was worth fighting.

But I say that it is not the only kind of courage created or revealed by the war. There is a kind of courage in the challenge thrown to the face of public opinion by non-combatant discrimination, forbidden by their vocation to go armed or to protect themselves by any physical means. In one other great war, the outstanding example of this kind of bravery was Cardinal Mercier. During and after that war, he was recognized as the type of a brave, self-sacrificing person. His courage was greater than that of any general—Generals need not be personally brave. Greater also than that of any soldier who, in the midst of the carnage and pandemonium of the battlefield, retaining master of himself and of the situation, did some deed of outstanding courage.

Traveling in this country after the war, Cardinal Mercier insisted that a hundred other Christians, as well as magistrates, mayors, burgesses and other public officials had done in their spheres what he tried to do in his. Many of them did not live to receive the reward that was his, the personal manifestation of the admiration of the world.

In this war there are many more heroes of this sort. When, for example, the Bishops of Germany communicating with one another in some secret way, composed and signed a statement to be read in every pulpit on a certain Sunday in the one same hour, and when messengers, working with incredible skill to slide the Gestapo and carry parish priests the message, the Gestapo had composed, and when at the fateful moment all these parsons arose before the people and delivered the challenge, every one of them, Hierarchical, clergy and lay, ran the risk of accusation and of being up-braided, persecuted against all Catholics. It was a demonstration of much bravery. All who took part in it needed as much courage as the soldier on the battlefield.

Consider also among Protestants Pastor Niemöller. He has withstood the Gestapo to his face, has argued with him, rebuked him (politely but nevertheless bravely), withstood his beatings, and risked his terrible wrath.

But in my judgment, Niemöller has done a still braver deed than all these. In concentration camps, speaking to one who later was released and managed to get out of Germany, he said, "If you get away, tell the world what is happening here." "If I do, they will take vengeance on you," said Leo Stern, the refugee who tells the story. "Keep it," said Niemöller. "Tell the world the facts." They will penalize not you alone but your relatives," protested Stern. But with that possibility—my father, that certainly—in mind, Niemöller repeated that the truth must be told. "To me that kind of message is the highest and the rarest. No brave man dies for his own death. Any man who is intended a martyr will sacrifice himself without hesitation and without so much as a thought of being a martyr. Really brave men go plunging into the jaws of death and would think you were bragging, then if you expressed admiration. But when one's own bravery imperils others, comes the supreme test. May I dare I—ask others to suffer even if I am ready myself to suffer? Have I a right to do an action, noble in itself, that will probably or certainly bring a terrible penalty on those I love? There is the question that tortures a man's mind. That is the problem in conscience that causes genuine agonies."

I think that sort of question must have been in the mind of our Saviour as He came toward His tragic end. He did not hesitate about His crucifixion. But how could He ask the Apostles to suffer, when if He were in some way to be persecuted—perhaps by adultery, kidnapping, His message or by avoiding Jerusalem and remaining hidden in the hills of Galilee, He might have escaped violent death for Himself and for His companions, to say nothing of the sword of grief that was to penetrate His Mother's heart when she stood at the foot of the cross.

It is a terrible decision to be called upon to make, but when a man feels and knows that he must in conscience make it, and goes about his bravery to far and away above that of those who go out to a battlefield and die.

There are a hundred kinds of courage and way, this kind of war—brings all of them into the light. (Copyright, 1941, N. C. W. C.)

FIVE and TEN Years Ago

In the Year of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From July 29, 1937, Edition. Returned from the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin to which he led the Rochester Diocesan Pilgrimage, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Charles F. May told the CATHOLIC COURIER: "We witnessed the marked contrasts in the manifestation of the Catholic faith on our trip abroad. In Dublin we saw the sublime evidence of a people giving all in their Eucharistic King in adoration, while in Lourdes we witnessed the afflicted supplicating their God for His Mercy and relief from their suffering."

From July 29, 1937, Edition. The Eagle badge of the Boy Scouts was presented to the Rev. R. Felix White, M.S.C., at a testimonial dinner in Geneva. Later in the week, Father White was among the twenty-two outgoing married missionaries departing for the Far East.