

# FATHER LORD'S His Passion Forever

## Bill Seeks Vote For Cloistered Nuns

St. Paul, Minn. — (RNS) — A bill designed to permit cloistered nuns of Visitation convent here to vote by absentee ballot was recommended for passage by the Minnesota Senate Elections Committee.

The measure was supported by the Minnesota Jewish Council, which pointed out that use of the absentee ballot "for religious reasons" also would be helpful to members of the Jewish faith who are unable to vote when a religious holiday coincides with election day.

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Deliberately they twist life's drama into tragedy, to the undoing of the world.

God's plot called for a gay comedy closing on a happy curtain.

Man's rewrite of the plot, his ridiculous marplot, man's misreading of his lines and reckless destruction of the scenery turn the comedy into tragedy and drop the final curtain on a stage strewn with characters dead in their sin.

The world drama has become through man's constant rewrite a plot based on treason to his King. It is the fearful story of a son's frightful ingratitude toward a devoted Father. Here is sinister betrayal of a Friend by a friend, the fratricidal struggle of brother against a God who would be brother.

The falling action of the drama is the record of a wrecked world. Sin and stupidity seem to struggle for the greater motivation. The characters, which are man and woman, sweep downward, the more tragic in their ruin because of the godlike powers that were theirs.

Yet even in a plot grown monotonous with constant repetition of terror and ruin, there can be climaxes of appalling horror and moments when tragedy teaches the last heights of terror and the lowest depths of ruin.

That was the case when mankind mounted the stage of Calvary. Tragedy reached the pinnacle of the drama of Good Friday in the death of the world's lowliest Hero.

The setting for that scene was suitably perfect in artistry.

A wind-swept hill, bare of shrubbery and baked to a hard, white smoothness, rises like a blanched skull of some prehistoric giant against a blood-red sky. The backdrop is angry storm clouds whipping dull draperies before the dying sun. Darkness is the prevailing color tone, darkness shot through with the stabbing of steel lightning. The canonade of thunder, echoing the endless senseless battles that men had fought to no good purpose and in the silliest of causes, charges with dread the atmosphere already heavy with tragedy and death.

On stage a chorus chants a grim threnody.

Out of the wings surges the mob, moving to the awful rhythm of its perverted litaney: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Antiphonally the chorus repeats another rhythm: "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" His blood be on us all and on the heads of those who call us parents!

The cast of characters is amazingly complete.

The Villains

New villainy that is so eternally old walks in the person of the priests, suave villains immaculate, dressed, rubbing their hands—as Iago was later to do—when they see their thin plot rush forward to the triumph of murder.

The Thief at the left of the Hero adds the blasphemous lines of articulate evil. The soldiers drive home the nails with the loud sound effects of a mallet that echoes the louder cruelty of their contemptuous laughter. Pilate and Herod and the rich concessionaires of the Temple smile happily as a final lance at last rids them of the petty annoyance of this religious revolutionary.

The Apostles, not present on stage, speak like wan voices from the wings.

The holy women standing in tears about the unflinching figure of Mary, heroine of the drama, and John, the brave juvenile, lend new and melodious chorus to the scene.

The surprise characters speak in the voices of the Good Thief and Longinus.

And there was on stage . . . myself. Late is my entrance and contemptible the part I play. But I am there. . . I was there. As audience and actor I was very much part of plot and speech and action.

The plot of that first Good Friday drama seems merely a light glimmering of the same weary plot that had looked mankind in endless conflict with its Creator.

Evil had surged against dear beauty and shining truth.

Against God

Man and Devil had formed their league against God.

But there was one great difference in the first Good Friday drama: for once the villains

seemed to triumph. Man's stupidity seemed to have risen in victory over God's wisdom. The basest of men had slain the purest of men. Rude cruelty had killed the world's kindest benefactor.

In a moment of strangely-twisted victory the sons of men had lifted the Son of God and of man upon a cross . . . and then in flight and terror had plunged themselves down Calvary's steep hill.

One element in the drama of the first Good Friday was blessedly the same as in all the other dramas.

The Hero was as always the same.

The glorious Hero of Calvary, like the splendid hero of life's long drama, is God Himself. He is as always and ever it is God who is constantly attacked, constantly beaten, constantly thwarted, constantly betrayed.

Only this time God the Hero wears the costume of a man.

He has disguised Himself as a slave yet even as a slave He shines forth as the loveliest Hero that ever yoked the hearts of followers to enthusiasm and stirred by very goodness the ceaseless souls of the evil and the lustful to envy Him and murder Him. God is held captive by the plot that men have rewritten. He had sought to give mankind the greatest joy; He is the victim of mankind's most evil plot. On the movement of His own creatures He is rushed along into the tragedy of ruined mankind.

The Tragedy

This, then, is what we call the tragedy of Calvary.

It is the dramatic climax of man's sad history as it nails the Hero to the cross and sees the villains triumph in their bacchanal at the foot of the gibbet.

This is the moment that epitomizes all sad human history. It is less the tragedy of the Hero done to a guiltless death than the tragedy of those who murdered Him. And His murderers are all the sinful men and women who ever lived.

For all, great drama is amazingly true of everyone who sees or reads it. Each great classic play becomes the story not merely of those whose names

figure in the cast of characters but of those who sit in the audience. Comfortable or disturbed, calm or fearful, watching with unseeing eyes or purged by the passion that they watch the people in the audience are really one with the actors upon the stage.

So it is that thinking men and women have always felt a close kinship with the great figures in classic tragedy.

All have found in themselves the tragic Indolence of Hamlet. All have experienced or themselves have expressed the ingratitude whose serpent tooth stung Lear to madness.

In every human soul is weakness enough to make the downfall of Macbeth seem very possible.

Millions Famine

A million Fausta each day sell their souls to the Devil in return for an illusion and the fulfillment of a dream.

The tragedy of Calvary is never ended. It repeats itself as long as men sin and know the meaning of their sins. It is relived in every man or woman who stands and watches the ever present murder upon the hill of God's death.

Why should we continue to use the pronoun he and she? I am constantly present in the tragedy of Calvary.

I sit and watch the drama that belongs to no single age and is confined within the boundaries of no single country.

More than that: I am present and acting upon that bloody stage, playing less my personal part than the varied roles of the many other actors.

I have over and over again witnessed the happy paradise of sanctifying grace within my soul.

I have in every serious sin leagued myself with the Devil in his bitter struggle with God. I have joined the plotters who for months before the deed was accomplished schemed in the temple and counted out blood money in the executive offices of those who made money in and from the house of God.

I have refused to let God make me happy; I have run eagerly with the villains who hated God and despised their fellow men.

We Are Pilates

I have washed my hands in the very basin of water that failed to cleanse Pilate of his responsibility. I have run away, not

on the cowardly heels of the frightened, despairful Apostles. I have cried loud second to the denial of Peter and purred my lips in Judas' blasting kiss of betrayal.

If I am wise, I shall live my part, my various parts, over and over again.

The tragedy of Calvary is the world's one important drama. It is within my power, again to watch that Hero die. It is possible for me to lift to His thrilling lips the cup of love and grateful faith. To sin, even choose, write over the parts I played in times past—the roles that will be mine today.

Attentively, I shall listen to the spoken words and watch the characters as they move through their parts; I shall accept the role that best becomes me and I shall play it to the hilt.

And at times past I have played with appalling success the roles of Judas, Herod, Pilate, and the meanest scum in the mob . . . If I have chanted the bloody rhythm of the murderers and laughed with the cruel satisfaction of the priests . . . I need not stop on past performances.

For not all the characters in that tragedy were evil.

There were Mary, the heroine, and John, gallant in the face of Christ's enemies. I can and place with the holy women whose service did not end with disgrace but who followed Him to serve Him when the executioners had finished their work. I can speak with the voice of hope, uttering clearly the stumbling word of the Good Thief. I can repeat the magnificent faith of the captain of the guard, who was a Gentile and the father of the Gentiles who followed the Saviour.

Fortunately for all of us, we can change our roles in this tragic drama. We can put on the costumes of the characters we choose to be. We can, amazingly

ensure, and in this tragedy of Calvary the very happy ending that God originally wrote into the drama of mankind and now writes again in the red lettering of His blood.

For we must never forget that the final nature of each drama is not determined until the fall of the final character.

Does the play leave the leading character ruined or saved? Is he dropped deep into irreparable despair? Or does he smile into the "dawn" as he "let" or "re-decided?"

Lines ReWritten

Here as in the old Italian comedies we the characters find that we may write our own lines.

Better still . . . it is possible to recapture the plot as God had meant it to be and play the happy role that God first assigned to the sons and daughters of His love.

What part shall I play in this drama?

Almost terrified at the enormity of my possible doings, I realize that God lets me determine the ending of my sin. His drama. With His grace now won for me by Him on Calvary, I can write a happy ending and escape the ending of bloody doom.

As the divine hero plays to conclusion His glorious role, I can snatch from the apparent tragedy of Good Friday this eternal springtime: drama of Easter.

Not only can I do all this, but all this is the wish of God, the great dramatic Director.

I pause. In a moment the curtain will rise for me. I stand waiting in the wings.

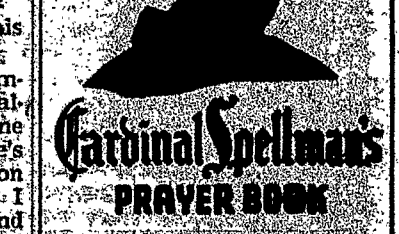
What part do I choose to play?

NEXT WEEK  
"Voices in the Wings"

## Rural Life Group Slates Convention

Covington, Ky. — (NC) — The national convention of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference will be held in Lexington from October 22 to 26. It was announced by Covington's Bishop William B. Mulloy. Father Paul J. Brinker, diocesan director of the Rural Life Program, has been named chairman.

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