

Negro Ordained For Archdiocese

New York — (CNC) — Among 41 priests ordained in St. Patrick's Cathedral here by Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, was Father Harold Salmon, said to be the second Negro priest ordained for this archdiocese.

Others in the ordination class included Father Patrick Cahill, 43, an Irish immigrant who had spent most of his adult life as a seaman.

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Has Life In Cloister Any Value?

Interest in the life of Carmelite nuns has been heightened by the building of a new monastery in the Rochester community in Jefferson Road, Pittsford. Thousands of persons were guided through the new home last weekend and other thousands are expected to pay a similar visit this Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 6 p.m. Mother Ignatius, the community's Prioress, who entered her novitiate 43 years ago this month, explains the important role filled by the daughters of St. Teresa of Avila among the religious orders of the church in the following article, written especially for the Courier Journal.

By MOTHER IGNATIUS

(Prioress of the Rochester Carmelite Monastery)

After all these years — these many centuries, in fact — it seems strange that anyone, least of all a Catholic, should question the purposefulness of the contemplative life in the varied religious orders of Mother Church.

Time and time again the Hierarchy and particularly illustrious occupants of the Chair of St. Peter, have emphasized the need of contemplative as well as active vocations in the work of the Church.

Both groups answer God's call in parallel, but not conflicting ways, one by voluntary penance, and continual prayer in cloistered seclusion and the other by missionary or other active contact with the world — both indispensable auxiliaries of the Church Militant among men.

WHY SHOULD it be necessary at this late date to cite again the pointed example of the two sisters of Bethany, close friends of Christ Himself — Martha, "who was busy about many things" (and laudably so) and Mary, "who had chosen the best part" (St. Luke, X:42)?

A quite common non-Catholic attitude runs something like this: "Though not a member of your Faith, I can nevertheless see the usefulness of Benedictines, Dominicans or Jesuits — and of other orders devoted to study and teaching, to missionary labors and other good works."

"If can most of all esteem the life of the little Sisters of the Foot, of the Sisters of Mercy, of Charity and the like. I do not agree with their religious ways, still less with the creed they profess. Yet I consider them truly earnest people who, at the expense of self, strive to better the world in which they live according to their lights."

"But — look at the Cistercian, Carthusian, Trappist monks, or the Cistercian, Trappistine, Carmelite nuns! They are hidden away in their lives from the sight of men — perfectly useless people, mere drones in the hive. They spend all their time in prayers, fasting, labor within their enclosures, and do no good to anybody, except possibly to themselves."

"WHAT USEFUL purpose can they serve? Why don't they do something? Surely these people must admit that in the wicked world in which they turn their backs there are spiritual needs enough and to spare by which they can satisfy their utmost need. Why, then, don't they come out of their seclusion and work for God?"

This viewpoint, voiced, it must be admitted, even by some Catholics, rests on a fundamental fallacy — the unspiritual notion that there can be no rational purpose,

no usefulness, no exercise of zeal for the souls of others, no advantage to the world at large in the hiddenness of a contemplative's vocation.

It is a wholly mistaken, worldly point of view. It smacks of the selfish utilitarianism of a material age that sees little good in any endeavor which does not bring tangible benefits to humanity — and that speedily — like a new toothpaste or washing machine.

Such a spirit of the day seems occasionally to pervade even our religious life — a depreciation of any sort of effort that does not at once take shape in a new church or mission house, or society, or club, a new orphanage or school. Visible success too often seems to be the god of our time.

ADMITTING THAT no tangible advantage to the outside world accrues from the secluded religious life of a contemplative, is such a vocation a useless one? Is it an unprofitable thing to devote one's whole life, however secretly to adoring and worshipping Almighty God, to meditating upon His law and upon the life of His Divine Son, to perfecting one's soul, valued by our Lord at the infinite price of His precious blood?

Which comes first, God and His service or man and his advantage? And if God is to come first, then the worship and service of Him in our hearts and in secret come first also — and utility to man second.

There is hardly an objection against the contemplative mode of life that might not equally be urged — if one dared — against that of our Lord Himself during those long years of subjection and seclusion in the cottage at Nazareth, and up to the day He left it to begin His public life of preaching and miracles.

WE KNOW THAT He came down from heaven for the one purpose of saving the world and regenerating human life in all its phases. Of what use then, a go-getter of today might exclaim, was His lowly labor as the "Son of the carpenter" in Joseph's workshop for the rescue of a world "seated in darkness and the shadow of death?"

Of what practical service were those years of silent prayer to the Father, of voluntary obedience to His Blessed Mother and Joseph, of His hardships and self-denial? Was not the world looking for the light of His blessed countenance, and in utmost need of the saving gospel from His lips?

Why did He not come out and do something!

But Jesus went on praying, carpentering for some thirty years. He worked among men three years, at the most. And yet there still are some unthinking persons who would criticize contemplatives for taking Christ's hidden life for their model.

Such critics forget that these monks and nuns are in good company — the very best. They have a fairly safe precedent for their behavior in the practice of their Divine Master.

The true utility of anything consists in its serving the ends for which it was made. A musical instrument silent under the player's touch is useless. The test, then, of man's utility here below is the degree in which he serves the purpose of his creation.

That purpose, as every Christian should know, is that he save his soul and gain heaven by serving God in the way God calls upon him or her to serve. The apology for the contemplative is as simple as that.

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