

Jesuit Questions Religious 'Boom'

Chicago — (RNS) — Loss of faith, conformity and loss of values are the three principal blights of American culture, despite an apparent "religious boom," the Rev. Thurston M. Davis, S.J., editor-in-chief of America, national Catholic weekly, said here.

In a lecture here, the Jesuit editor said "there seems to be very little sense about a religious boom that goes hand in hand with a moral letdown." The lecture was entitled "Culture in a Cold, Chrome World."

Father Davis said he found hope, however, in the vigor and common sense resistance to foolishness and cultural disintegration inherent in the American people, especially in rural areas and small communities.

THE REAL meaning of recent statistics showing that 80 percent of Americans are church and synagogue members, compared with only 16 percent in 1850, was questioned by the editor.

"How much of it (the religious boom) is simply the product of our year for social togetherness, of a desire to 'belong' to something, with church affiliation filling that purely human need?" he asked.

Along with growth in church membership, he said, there has been an immense growth in "moral subjectivism." He defined this as "the tendency for everyone to judge his moral duties and obligations as purely personal matters that are subject to no objective or definitive set of norms."

"Why," he asked, "if we have been moving during recent years toward an ever-widening practice of religion, should these very years be those in which major crime statistics, juvenile delinquency and the U.S. divorce rate have mounted so high?"

He also asked how "our religious fervor" could be reconciled "with the instability of our homes, the growth of alcoholism and narcotic addiction and the flooding of newsworthy and 'Confidential-type' magazines."

SPEAKING of "American religion" as "a support to national moral standards and ethical absolutes in our society," Father Davis conceded that "in origins, spirit and characteristics" this religion was dominated by American Protestantism.

"As a result," he continued, "where Protestantism has failed to maintain its limited integrity of faith, its dedication to Biblical morality and the inner cohesion it once exhibited, the effects of these failures have been felt throughout the entire structure of our society and our culture."

FATHER DAVIS said the word "togetherness" (an expression coined by McCall's Magazine) "denominates an undeniably real element in today's social and cultural climate."

Working together and praying together are fine, he said, "but all too often we attitudinize together, judge together, and take our styles, books, jargon, manners, prejudices, and tastes in entertainment out of the same bottomless bag of the current national need for 'togetherness.'"

French Priests Volunteer For Africa

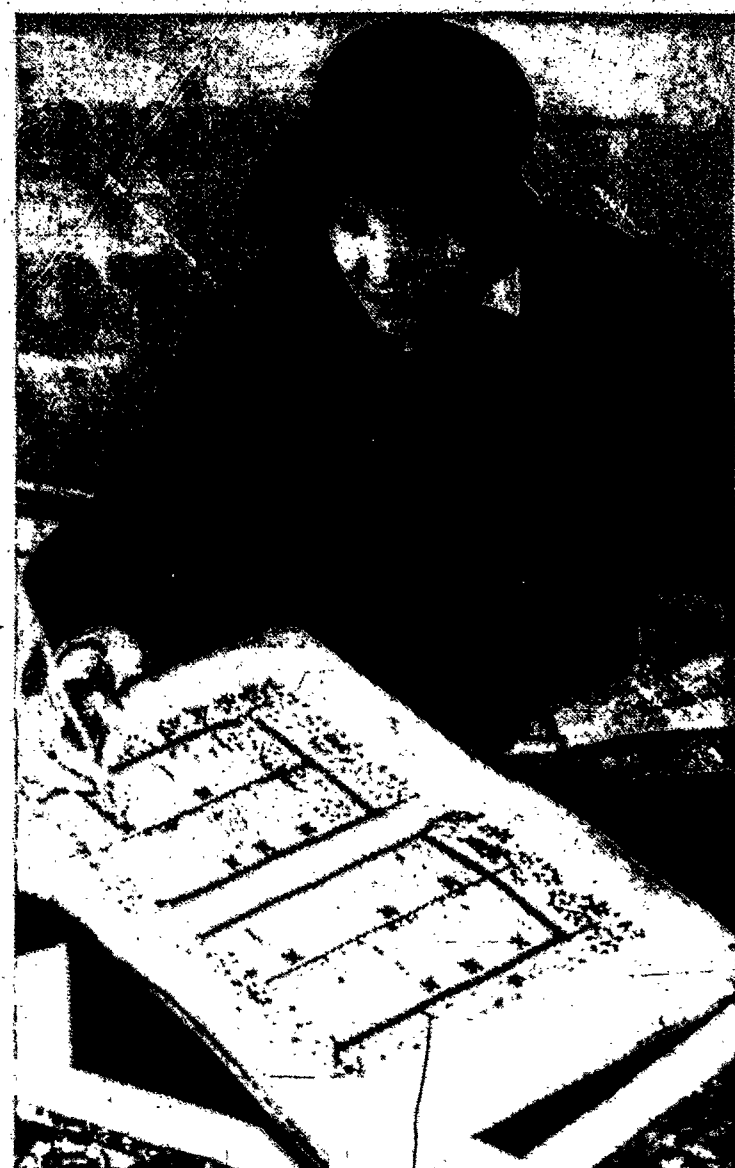
Paris — (NC) — Auxiliary Bishop Jean Villot of Paris, head of the secretariat of the French Hierarchy, announced that 75 French priests have been released from their diocesan duties to serve in Africa.

These priests are the first to volunteer their services following an appeal from the French bishops to answer the call for priests for Africa sounded in the encyclical on the African missions issued by Pope Pius XII in April, 1956. Bishop Villot said the priests will serve from 5 to 10 years in the missions.

55,960 Baptized In Philippines

Manila — (NC) — Columbian missionaries in the Philippines had a record total of 55,960 baptisms in 76 parishes throughout the islands in 1957, Father William G. Hennessy, S.S.C., Columbian superior here, announced.

The 1957 figure represents an increase of more than 5,000 over the number of baptisms in 1956.



Expert in Ancient Art

New York — (NC) — A modern expert in the medieval art of illuminating religious manuscripts is Sister Mary Andrew (shown at work), a Sister of Charity on the faculty of the College of Mount St. Vincent here.

Former President Deplores Condition

Harry Truman Believes Catholic Faith Would Hurt Presidential Candidate Bid

New York — (NC) — A Catholic candidate's chances for election as President of the United States would be hurt by his religion, former President Harry S. Truman said here on a television program.

The former chief executive appeared on the "Youth Wants to Know" program, produced by Theodore Granik. The program was broadcast and televised over the National Broadcasting Company network.

Mr. Truman was questioned by 14 students from high schools



HARRY TRUMAN 'a frank answer'

and colleges in the New York area.

ONE QUESTION was: "Do you think that a presidential candidate's being Catholic, or any other religion for that matter, would have any vital bearing on his chances for election?"

Mr. Truman replied: "Yes, I do, but I think it is too bad that that is the case. I don't think it ought to happen in this country. I am giving you a frank answer to it."

The former president was asked if "we will ever get to the stage where it (a candidate's religion) doesn't make any difference."

"I hope we will," he answered. "You have had some mighty good Catholic governors right here in the State of New York and in Massachusetts also, and I don't see that they did any worse job, and maybe a better job, than anyone else would. I don't think that 'religion' ought to enter into it at all."

ONE STUDENT asked Mr. Truman if he believed "our high schools ought to teach Russian extensively the way Russian schools teach English."

"Yes, I think our high schools ought to teach all sorts of languages in the world," Mr. Truman said. "It is a wonderful thing when you understand a language. I met a man once who knew 11 languages and he got along with everybody."

Mr. Truman was asked who the man was.

"The Pope," he replied.

Free Vacations For Vocations

London, England — (NC) — About 50 English boys who feel that they may have a religious vocation will get a free week's vacation at the seashore in August.

The Claretian Fathers (Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) announced here that they have invited all altar boys aged between 11 and 16 who think they have a religious vocation to write to their headquarters at Hayes, near London.

Those selected will be invited for a vacation from August 15 to 22 at Highcliffe Castle, the society's seminary at Highcliffe-on-Sea overlooking the English south coast.

The vacation has been planned to combine business with pleasure: each morning will be dedicated to a spiritual retreat while afternoons will be spent at the beach.

Catholic Teachers Form Association

Philadelphia — (NC) — A chapter of the World Association of Christian Teachers has been organized at LaSalle College here.

The association was established in Rome at the 1956 general chapter meeting of the Christian Brothers. Catholic teachers on every educational level may join the association. It aims to deepen in Catholic educators their sense of responsibility and of the dignity of their vocation.

My In-Laws Tell Me How To Cook, How To Raise The Baby, What Can I Do?

By FATHER JOHN L. THOMAS, S.J.
Assistant Professor of Sociology at St. Louis University

How can I get my husband's parents to see that we want to lead a life of our own? He's an only child, and in the fourteen months we've been married, they have been over here most of the time they're not working. I like them, but they tend to take over. I've finally managed to get her out of the kitchen, now my problem is to keep her from trying to raise our baby. Our home is the only place they visit, so when they have nothing to do, they drive over here. What can I do?

Well, Janice, your problem is an old one, though you seem to have it in a rather acute form.

It points up the fact that "weaning" is a two-way process. It's the same whether in infancy or later life, both parent and child must accept what it implies and repattern their lives accordingly. Your husband's parents haven't grasped the full implications of his marriage. This may be a little difficult for them because he is their only child.

YOUR PROBLEM is further complicated by the fact that they enjoy such a narrow social life. This seems rather unusual in a modern urban setting, though, as you mention in your letter, they both hold full-time jobs, so this may provide some explanation.

How can you handle this situation, Janice? Let's review some of the pertinent aspects of the problem before planning a solution.

I'm happy to note that you like your husband's parents. They apparently like you, too, and that's the way it should be.

It's clear that their intentions are all right. They may be thoughtless and perhaps even inconsiderate under the circumstances, but there's no indication of ill will.

FAMILY PATTERNS differ a great deal. Among some parents and married children are very close, even to the extent of living in the same house or next door to each other.

This was rather common among some national groups, although modern living conditions tend to modify it among their second and third generation descendants. In itself, this arrangement is neither good nor bad, it depends primarily on local customs and the way people are trained.



Most young wives and mothers tend to feel somewhat insecure in their new roles and consequently are highly sensitive to outside interference. This is quite understandable.

In their first ventures at cooking and housekeeping, they are eager to prove to themselves and to others that they are capable of doing a good job, while the care of their first baby is both a challenge and a source of concern unparalleled in their previous experience.

These are some of the possible factors in your problem, Janice. Now, what should you do? First, analyze your own attitudes. Are you perhaps a little over-sensitive? Is the situation really a serious threat to your happiness, or is it an irritation you resent but can manage to live with?

Second, talk it over with your husband.

Explain how you feel about the situation, and get him to cooperate with you in working out some plan for dealing with it. This is his problem as much as

yours, for your marital happiness may be involved. Although most men are rather helpless under such circumstances, if you learn to think and plan together, no outside interference can disrupt your union.

Third, you may have to proceed slowly — weaning is a gradual process.

START OUT by building up your social life on your own as a couple. Make plans to go out together, to associate with other couples, and so forth. In this way you will keep your family life from being dominated by his parents. They may be upset or disappointed at first, but this is part of their weaning process.

Finally, don't blow your top or do anything you may later regret.

Remember, Janice, they like you and mean well. You may have to be firm on occasion, but keep your emotions in check.

Try to take a long range view of the process. After all, you've already made some progress — you've got her out of the kitchen.



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