

To be or not to be Involved is the Question

Chicago — (RNS) — One of the great debates of modern religion is gathering momentum. Should clergy and laity use the church to change or reform or mold society?

A Chicago priest-sociologist and authority on Roman Catholic social teachings has misgivings about the current trend in this direction.

"When a priest in a community organization uses the power of the church for such ends, no matter how noble and good, I am uneasy in view of the nature of the church and of civil society," Father Robert A. Reicher said.

"In view of the recent involvement of many clerics in community organizations this seems like a startling conclusion," he added, "but it seems inevitable to me."

Father Reicher, assistant chaplain of the Catholic Council on Working Life, will be coming to Chicago for a forthcoming publication for priests of the archdiocese.

Another voice in the debate is that of the Rev. John Harmon, an Episcopal priest from Roxbury, Mass., who has warned of "imperialism" in the "city church" today.

There are two such currents, he told the National Catholic Social Action Conference last year. He called them "pedagogic imperialism" and "programmatic imperialism."

"The first is the conviction that the church alone has or should have the answer to any issue in society," Father Harmon explained. "The second is the conviction that the church has, as an institution, a programmatic way of responding to the issues."

"This 'pedagogic imperialism' helps shape a similar 'programmatic imperialism' he added, under which urban church bodies elaborate ambitious projects on a parochial and city-wide level in order to help people. The urban church today supports case work institutions... urban renewal planning."

When the clergy actively engage in the use of political power to bring about institutional or structural reform, we are faced with the pedagogic and programmatic imperialism feared by Father Harmon.

He continued: "Here I would be reluctant to approve the participation of clerics as officers and directors of community organizations, if this is done in the name of the church. Neither by professional training nor the power of orders are priests gifted in the field."

"This is not to say that they lack the vision of a good community life. However, such knowledge and such vision does not necessarily depend on ecclesiastical or theological orientation. . . . Again I repeat that, as a citizen, a priest does have the duty to participate and to share, but my problem arises when the priest speaks for and represents the church as a human institution."

Father Reicher believes "it would be a great failure if (the clergy's) moral consciousness was not transmitted to the laity in any parish so that the community may be formed by the laymen who are in it."

"I have attended community meetings in the recent past, and I have been disturbed by the presence of so many clergymen. This represents a failure on the part of the clergy, the church, the laity to understand the moral dimensions of their commitment to temporal society."

"Pope John XXIII clearly points out that temporal affairs are primarily the concern of the laity, and if this role is usurped by the clergy, it seems to me that the full flowering of the church's influence on the world is stifled."

"Somehow or other, the ideas, the influence, the education, the skill, the interest of lay persons must be used in the temporal society. All too often the priest, pastor, minister, rabbi

speaks without any consultation with the laity whom he represents."

The Chicago priest concluded by emphasizing that "the community possesses goodness in itself and this goodness can be developed more excellently by the people in it. Certainly, I hope in no way do I lessen the importance of the church's or the cleric's role in the social order. Rather, I look to a broader definition of the church and a different kind of role for the cleric than running the community. . . . I do believe that the community organization as such belongs to the people in the community."

"I believe I hold this position because, even though the church is obviously concerned with and about the problems of social reform, it cannot be wedded to specific solutions as the churchly solutions to social problems. A wide range of choices is available to those who seek to perfect the temporal. To commit the church to specific solutions to my mind does not fall within the scope of the institutional church. Again, this does not mean a withdrawal of the church, but a different direction."

Oratorio Profit Given For Interracial Projects

At a final report meeting of the Interracial Committee representing the sponsoring groups, the Catholic Interracial Council of Rochester and the Rochester Area Council of Churches, held at the Chamber of Commerce recently, the committee treasurer, Bernard Marsden, reported a profit of \$1,000 from the Oratorio, Handel's "Judas Maccabaeus" given in the Eastman Theatre February 18.

Proceeds were given to the President of the Religion and Race Council of Rochester, Stewart D. Moot, to be used for worthy projects toward the improvement of race relations.

Washing- ed the V-6 the front- Monsignor rick J. Ryan U.S. Army \$500-million racket is a venomous ar which "preys most chee youth."

Speaking- ily Commu- John's Col- here (April outlined his- ing the fight- HE URGE carefully authorities a- ture receive- sons and da- mails; coope- ligious civi- groups in p- lity outlets of- lications"; s- ment agency- hat the evil- form small- neighborho- keep newsta- filth.

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The theological problem, he said, centers on the question: "What is the church? As the Catholic Church reflected upon itself in the various sessions of the Ecumenical Council, it simply defined the church as the holy people of God. With this definition of the church, all the members are the church."

In concrete situations, however, the question arises as to how the holy people of God relate to the problems of the community.

He asked: "When priests and religious demonstrate in Selma, Alabama is this the church bearing witness to the message of Christ? When a group of clergymen sign a statement either opposing or supporting the rehiring of Benjamin Willis as superintendent of Chicago's schools, is this the church witnessing in the city?"

"When clergymen in community organizations support or oppose the building of a new high school, support or oppose an urban renewal project, support or oppose a youth rehabilitation center, how is the church related to these problems?"

Father Reicher made clear that he is not concerned about the clergyman who speaks out on social matters as a citizen. "Any priest is a human being before he is a priest. He brings to a problem the conscience to speak out . . . a duty to express his moral concern about those matters in which he is competent."

"Problems arise for me, when the clergyman states he is speaking in the name of the church or if he uses the church to obtain institutional or structural reform in society."

"There isn't much of a problem for me when a clergyman engages in a public demonstration such as those which occurred in Selma. There isn't much of a problem when a cleric de-

termines social evils, or elucidates principles of his denominational social teaching.

"The problem is made acute, however, when the demonstrations in Alabama are translated into a specific piece of legislation, when the problems of the aged are translated into support for a specific housing project or when the exploitation of migrant workers is removed by specific programs of training and rehabilitation.

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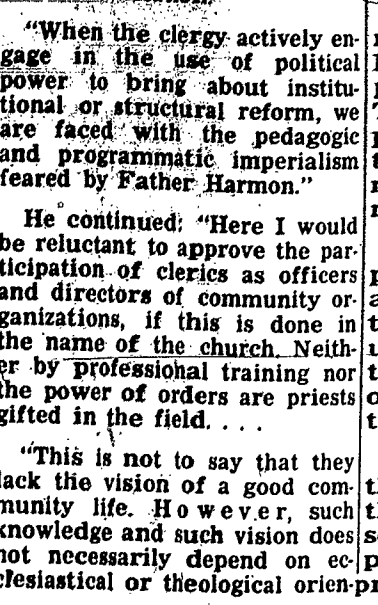
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New Mass Book for Catholics

Worcester, Mass. — (RNS) — The first Mass Book for the faithful since liturgical changes were introduced in the Mass in this country last November is being published by the Worcester, Mass. Diocesan Liturgical Commission in conjunction with the Catholic Book Publishing Co. of New York. The 576-page, hard-cover book contains the people's parts of the Mass for each day of the year, about 60 hymns, plus other liturgical features, including the settings for High Masses and sung Requiem Masses. In a forward Bishop Bernard J. Flanagan of Worcester wrote the Mass Book "is designed to promote the Church's liturgical renewal and to foster a more profound and vital Christian life among our people."

Council Agenda Nearly Complete

Vatican City — (RNS) — The Vatican Council's Central Coordinating Commission has completed its examination of final revised drafts of schemata submitted by various commissions which have been working on the documents.

Holding sessions under the presidency of Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, Vatican Secretary of State, the Commission examined the texts of the documents which await action by the bishops at the Council's fourth and last session starting Sept. 14.

The Commission also discussed the dates when the schemata will be debated and voted upon by the Council Fathers, as well as questions of procedure conducive to a smooth administration of the Council.

Commenting on the work of the Commission, the Vatican Radio said that four schemata have been "wholly or partially revised according to the expressed wishes of the Fathers during the Council's third session last year."

They were, it said, those on religious liberty, the Church in the modern world, missionary activities, and the priestly ministry.

It said that other documents

discussed by the bishops and still awaiting a final vote include those on divine revelation, apostolate of the laity, the pastoral office of bishops, the religious life, formation of the clergy, Christian education and the Church's relations with non-Christians, including the Jews.

The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, responsible for the text of the schema on relations with non-Christians, began its sessions on May 10 and had not yet concluded its work. The schema includes the Catholic-Jewish statement which abolishes the Jew of the ancient charge of deicide.

Schools Consolidated

Cincinnati — (NC) — Five parochial schools in the Cincinnati area will be consolidated with neighboring schools, the Archdiocesan School Board announced. All are located in areas where urban renewal and population shifts have sharply reduced the proportion of Catholic residents.

Movie-Set Church Given Priest-Actor

Orchid Island, Fomosa (NC) — A church built as a movie set on this tiny island off the southeast tip of Fomosa is now being used regularly as a place of worship by the aboriginal inhabitants.

A film company asked Father Alfred Giger, a young Swiss priest of the Bethlehem Mission society, to play the part of a Catholic missionary in a movie being made on the 27-square-mile island. In gratitude for his cooperation the company constructed a sturdy wood building and donated it to the priest when shooting of the film was completed.

Some 800 of the 1,600 Yami tribe aborigines of the island, 40 nautical miles from Taiwan, have been converted to Catholicism by Father Giger during the last 10 years.

The Yamis, like all aborigines of Fomosa, are of Malayan stock, and isolated on the island famed for an abundance and variety of orchids, are the most primitive. They live in semi-underground dwellings, the men wearing little more than loin cloths and the women woven skirts, and their staple food is sweet potatoes, fish and seaweed.

Father Giger commutes between Orchid Island and his mission on the coast, spending about one month in each place. Communications with the island are irregular.

ST. JOSAPHAT, Rochester. Twelve altar boys will attend Altar Boy's Convention, Stamford, Conn., May 21 to 23.

Crowning of the statue of Our Lady, Sunday, May 23, 3 p.m.

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