

God's World

20th Century Style for Nuns

By DENNIS J. GEANEY, O.S.A.

I bounced into her office and there she was in a new outfit that left me breathless. I have never attempted to describe women's garb and I am not about to begin.

I have seen changes in nun's garb that amounted to taking up the hem line, pushing back the binders, or letting a little hair poke through the veil, but this experience was different. I was no longer greeting a nun who was a friend, but a woman who was also a nun. The shock was embarrassing to her as well as myself. I found myself confused.

This new garb was destroying an old relationship and I was not sure whether I wanted a new relationship with this nun who had changed clothes and became a woman.

I quizzed her about the new garb that made her look younger and more attractive. This was one of a half dozen outfits that nuns of her community were wearing on an experimental basis. Unlike most changes, and what shocked me, was that the change did not go from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth but from the eighteenth to the twentieth.

It is not a patch-up job of an old model, but a distinctive religious garb of a woman of this century. Now that I have recovered from my trauma, I hope her community will permit her to continue wearing modern religious garb and permit her to have a little variety in her wardrobe.

I asked her about the feedback she was getting. She has an office job in a big city, dealing with an adult community as a peer and is well accepted as such in her new garb. The waitresses in the nearby restaurant have gone out of their way to compliment her. But this is not the typical environment of a nun. A nun, to me, was someone who taught the first graders about the baby Jesus and had the same angelic look as the children they prepared for Holy Communion.

In my childhood, the nun was a sacred object, like medals and holy water, that was treated with reverence. Sister Anna, who was the first grade teacher for decades, continued to live in the convent long after her retirement. If your mother sent a note and told her that Uncle Charlie was sick, she would pray for him. She was a symbol of consecrated dedication and holiness.

The priests did not seem to evoke this same response. When you begin to toy around with changes in Sister's habits, you are toying with the emotions of the Catholic immigrant and his sons and daughters of which I am one. And, don't forget it!

Father Finks Named Vicar for Inner City

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"The solution to this problem is not to be found in ignoring personal dignity. Nor is the solution to be found in trying to rally congregations into old boundaries for stained glass windows are apt to becloud our vision of poverty and distress. Neither is the Church to be an ivory tower outside of the Inner City. The Church must be where the problems are, where hunger is, where rooms are cold and where difficult decisions have to be made.

"The mission of the Church is to participate in Christ's sufferings in the world, and to have even a kind of a lovers' quarrel with those members who would not feel the pain of the gripes on the backs of others.

"My soul is so anguished by this dehumanization of our humanity that I propose to take a very unusual step. In order that our help and our collaboration with all other groups of goodwill will not be fragmented, fissioned, and departmentalized, I am invoking a new office set up by Vatican Council II, namely an Episcopal Vicar, men-

Mañy avant-garde writers have poked fun at the nuns being taken to the ball-park for an outing. In the past, it has always made good copy for the secular of ducesan paper to show a nun teaching students to swing a golf club, rowing a boat, ride the flying-horses at the amusement parks on a school outing. A candid camera might even catch one of them eating a hot dog. Sisters are getting tired of this kind of treatment as holy innocents. In every convent there are nuns, flexing their muscles, or whatever the appropriate feminine image is, modern women who have adult feelings and opinions on the issues of the day.

Who is stopping them? I would say that their students of twenty, thirty, or forty years ago would like them to remain the way they are. The Catholic woman who graduated from our Catholic grade and high schools had before her for eight or twelve years the model on which she was to build her life as a Catholic. It is true that the married graduate could not completely identify with her as a family woman, but she could make her home a cloister and keep out of the affairs of the world of men.

Her husband could tell her how to vote like some patronizing local politician could tell the nuns.

I am sure that many times a day she idealizes the nun's life as a complete escape from the decisions that she does have to make as a wife and mother. She could be so much more pure and holy if she did not have a husband. Besides, nuns close down shop after the last child is out of the school. What a happy thought for a harassed mother whose hectic life takes on another orbit stage at 3:30 in the afternoon.

Image shattering is risky business. When a comic strip "On Stage" featured a Negro in a major role rather than the stereotype servant, cartoonist, Leonard Starr, lost four newspapers — three in the South and one in the North. The funnies, at times, are not so funny.

tioned in No. 27 of the Decree, Christus Dominus, and also No. 144 of Ecclesiae Sanctae.

"I hereby name you ad nutum episcopi as Episcopal Vicar of Urban Ministry for the Diocese.

"As collaborator with the Bishop, your area of responsibility will be the so-called Inner City. You will enjoy vicarious power only in the specified part of the Diocese already mentioned and only with problems of the Inner City, such as housing, education, employment, health, social justice, equality and the sharing of the common heritage of American well-being and Christian civilization. It is understood that all this will be done in concert with other Diocesan organizations and agencies. This appointment will become effective on January 25, 1967.

"This is the first official appointment that I have made as the Bishop of Rochester, and may you take it not only as an evidence of my own sweet impatience to serve those who are most in need, but also a token of my own confidence in you as a worthy priest of Christ."



Pope Inspects Flood Damage

Florence, Italy — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI inspects Cimabue's famed "Crucifixion" at the Boboli Gardens behind the Pitti Palace in Florence during his Christmas visit to the flood-damaged city. The Pope celebrated Midnight Mass in Florence's water-damaged St. Mary of the Flowers Cathedral to demonstrate his concern and love for flood victims.

The Council's Author and Aims

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conversion. In other words, the Council was not the idea of man, but the inspiration of God. Himself, God, not man, stirred the waters.

The Council opened on the Feast of the Maternity of Our Lady. A happy choice indeed for who better could guide the Council than the Mother of the Church—the child usually first learns the three R's at its mother's knees. And the Council aimed at Renewal, Reform, and Reunion. Renewal of the Church through Reform ultimately leading to Reunion of all the Christian churches.

Pope John expressed the aim of the Council by the Italian word agglomeramento: updating the Church, adapting her to the modern world. Here was a departure. All the other Councils of the Church, wrote Albert Outler of Southern Methodist, took the Church for granted and focussed their energies on one or another challenge to her teaching or unity. Vatican II, however, was an unprecedented venture in ecumenological self-examination and self-understanding.

De-mything Causes Dip

The Hague — (NC) — The Dutch Catholic weekly Trumpet has fallen into circulation troubles, dropping below 10,000 point that its sponsor considers a minimum for survival.

The Dominican-backed Trumpet aroused much controversy here by articles in which the Virgin Birth was "demythologized," and the Resurrection was interpreted in such a way that the dead body of Christ was not considered essential to the event. The existence of life after death was questioned in another article.

Church authorities in the Netherlands and Belgium, as well as Rome, protested the views. The Rome headquarters of the Dominican Fathers sent word to the order's Dutch provincial superior to suspend the four-man staff. Since then the weekly has been operating with part-time editors.

Lutheran At Fordham

New York — (RNS) — Fordham University, a Roman Catholic school operated by the Jesuits, has announced appointment of a Lutheran theologian as a full professor in its department of theology.

He is Dr. Robert L. Wilkin, 30, now professor of the history of early Christianity at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pa., a Lutheran Church in America institution. Next September Dr. Wilkin will become professor of patristic theology at Fordham.

Once this adaptation had been made, then the Church could say to her separated brethren in the words of Pope John: "See, this is what the Church is, what she does, what she looks like. Come, here the way lies open for meeting and for homecoming; come, take, or resume, that place which is yours, which for many years was your fathers' place."

The achievements of the Council found expression in sixteen documents: nine decrees, four constitutions, and three declarations. The decrees are documents with practical significance; they belong more to the realm of things to do, for instance, in matters regarding Christian unity. They differ from the four Constitutions; these are documents expressive of broad theological views; they deal with fundamentals, with the warp and woof of such things as the Church, her liturgy and so on. The decrees also differ from the three Declarations, which are statements of particular principles in such matters, for instance, as education and freedom.

These sixteen documents might be grouped around three headings: (1) the Church; its nature and objectives; (2) the Church and the world; both secular and religious; and (3) the ways and means to achieve its objectives or its institutions and functions.

Since the aim of the Council was the Renewal of the Church, the first question Vatican II tackled was one of self-definition. In the magnificent Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Church answered the question: "What am I?" To get her answer, she went to the sources, to her origins. The Church was not bent on creating a new church in the manner of the sixteenth century reformers; rather she was intent on rediscovering the old one: she was like one trying to restore an old masterpiece that had been coated over and over again with centuries of paint. She was bent on reformation, not reformation. True reformation examines the present in the light of its origins; false reformation examines the present in the light of the present day only.

The former cuts off excrescences so that the original image may shine forth; the latter makes mere concessions to the times and modernizes in a relative sense. To truly renew herself, therefore, the Church examined her sources in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.

Once the Church had declared what she is according to the sources of revelation, it remained for her to declare why she exists. What her objectives are for those within the Church, she stated in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the Decree on the Apostolate of the

Laity. What her objectives are for those outside the Church, she spelled out in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity and the Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication.

But the Church does not exist in a vacuum. Though not of this world, she is in it. So it was logical for the Council to consider the world about herself — the world to which she is sent. In her examination, she rejected both her former defensive "embattled fortress" role and her smug, triumphalistic one. Instead she went to the world, both secular and religious, like Christ — to serve.

In fact the longest document of the Council deals with the Church's relation to the secular world, namely the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World — and the spirit of service pervades it. Though the Council devoted four documents to the religious world, all of these together are not half so long as the Pastoral Constitution. Yet the decrees On Eastern Catholics and On Ecumenism and the declarations On Religious Freedom and On the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions are also redolent with the spirit of Christ and exude His humility and meekness.

The final consideration of the Council would naturally be about the means at the Church's disposal for realizing her objectives. Once the Church had re-examined herself in the light of her sources, she had — if she would be sincere — to re-examine her various institutions and functions.

The first institution examined most closely was that of the episcopacy. Vatican I had stopped just short of the episcopacy. Vatican II picked up the unfinished business in the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church. According to Gregory Baum, this Decree will probably initiate a structural and governmental reform of the entire Catholic Church. Another institution examined was the Catholic school in the Declaration on Christian Education.

But institutions are manned by people. So the functions of offices in the Church also came under the scrutiny of the Council Fathers who recommended the restoration of a forgotten function, the diaconate. Though the decree On the Church considers bishops, priests, religious, and laity, nevertheless the Council saw fit to devote a separate decree to each in order to detail their roles more exactly. Thus the decrees On Priestly Formation, On the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, and On the Ministry and Life of Priests.

When the Council convened, some seventy schemata were proposed; sixteen survived. But these sixteen form a coherent

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Missionary. Santo Domingo, Dominica are playing principal roles in Santo Domingo. Ther Francis B. O'Hara, consulting with members ment which has been s. O'Hara was released from the community effort. Th West Warwick, R.I., who sionaries have extensive work.

Sudan Re Get New. Kinshasa, The Congo — December nine Sudanese we hood is testimony that the among the Sudanese, Msgr. Linus Tibot, apostolic administrator of the Rumbek vicariate, said in an interview. Archbishop Pietro Sigismundi, secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, ordained two Sudanese in Rome on Dec. 16. Six others were to be ordained in Uganda, and one in the Sudan. Msgr. Tibot, who is residing in exile in Aba in the north-eastern Congo, said that, although the newly ordained priests would not be able to return to the Sudan in the near future, they could work among refugees in various countries bordering the Sudan. Since the Sudan became an independent nation on Jan. 1, 1956, the government has sought to unify the Arab north with the predominantly Negro south by imposing Arabic as the national language and by promoting the Moslem religion. Guerilla warfare between Arab northerners and Negro southerners on racial and religious grounds, became widespread and troops from the north massacred thousands of southerners. Thousands of southerners fled the Sudan. Some 52,000, according to a U.N. report, sought refuge in the northeastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One of the problems of the exiled Sudanese is the education of their children. They have opened three, primary

Freedom Mass On Epiphany. Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI will offer a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6) for the return of religious freedom to Communist China, a Vatican announcement said.

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