

## Priests, Laity Comment on Courier Editorials



An unidentified battle weary GI in Vietnam has a Rosary made of rope tucked into his helmet strap.

Editor:

Your recent editorials have been very disturbing. My first comments concern your editorial "Can a Catholic Be a Christian?" in the Dec. 30, 1966 issue of the Catholic Courier-Journal.

You say that Father Charles Davis' action in leaving the Church is somewhat comparable to the action of Cardinal John Henry Newman's becoming a Catholic just about a century ago. Ah, now, I thought Father Atwell will describe the sterling qualities of the saintly scholar Newman as opposed to the recalcitrant, disloyal, view-breaking Father Davis. The Editor of our Catholic Diocesan Newspaper will bring out clearly Father Davis' errors of judgment and of action, as not too long ago he castigated another priest (labeled "Conservative") in contrast to our beloved, faithful Monsignor Thomas Connors.

But, no. You only added more and doubt by making Father Davis' insulting question your own: "Can a Catholic Be a Christian?"

And sympathetically you carry his question further, to make it appear from the Catholic bishops' statement "that belief in God is the chief theological question of our time" that the Catholic Church herself is in doubt about the tradi-

tional God and that her traditional concepts and definitions about God and religion are outmoded and irrelevant to our modern age.

Though you probably do not intend it, your final paragraph is suggestive, to say the least, that this is but the beginning of a large-scale defection of our Catholic clergy. (And you know the great power of suggestion, especially on our young priests.) You continue: "We must at last get down to some possible solutions for a new generation." As though the Catholic Church had not given solutions in Vatican II and in her constant traditional teaching, so beautifully and clearly expressed by our present Holy Father.

Why did you not bring out

the parallel between Father Charles Davis and Father Martin Luther? Both ordained Catholic priests; both "experts" and teachers in a Catholic university; both highly gifted by God; both disavowing their celibacy to marry; and both, withal, marshaling his own private judgment against the Catholic Church as an institution divinely founded by Christ and divinely guided by the Holy Ghost till the end of time.

Father Davis says: "I have come to see that the Church (Catholic) as it exists and works at present is an obstacle." "It is not the source of values for his friends, heretics and proselytes." "Truth and concern for people are not represented by the official (Catholic) Church." "The Catholic Church is break-

ing up and some other form of Christian presence in the world is under-formation." Father Martin Luther spoke and wrote in a similar way. However, if my memory serves me correctly, Luther did not have in mind at first the formation of a new church — that came later somewhat by force of circumstances which used Luther politically. Father Davis had his new Christian church in the very beginning of his defection. Would it not be appropriate to call it Neo-Protestantism?

Father Davis' basic error, as it was the basic error of Luther and of all the heresiarchs, was denying and leaving Holy Mother Church, the ground and pillar of truth, and casting out on the waves alone. "And it was night outside." Pray God,

may the same kindly light that led Cardinal Newman to Rome and the solid rock of Peter lead Father Davis back to his holy Mother.

This editorial, coupled with your editorial of January 6, "Too Many Labels" and the general tenor of the Courier-Journal for some time now makes it necessary for me as Pastor of souls in St. Anthony's Parish, Groton, to request that you cancel all our parishioners' subscriptions to the Courier-Journal. I have come to this decision only after a much thought and prayer. I feel responsible for these souls in my parish and am convinced that the Courier-Journal tends more and more to weaken and undermine the faith of our good people.

God knows we expect the world and secular papers to cast doubt and ridicule on the Catholic Church, her doctrines and practices, but our people are not quite prepared to receive that treatment by one of their own lay sons.

However, will you please continue sending my own personal copy of the Courier-Journal and bill me for same? I feel that I should still keep posted on the "aberrations" and warn my parishioners about them as dangers to their faith and morals.

— Rev. Joseph McNamara, Groton

## Rather than Rile the Waters

I had quite a bit of free time this past Saturday to do some thinking about recent editorials which stirred up a hornet's nest of complaints. Rather than rile the waters any more I decided it would be better for the moment just to quote from some books to tide us over this time of transition.

"The Catholic Church, after John XXIII, can never be the same again. A new era of church history started with him, an era of new life, of new freedom, of new hope. His last wish on his death-bed was that the Council might continue and bring forth fruit abundantly. Of course there will be fresh opposition and fresh difficulties in the way of his programme. But the Catholic Church will continue along the road that John XXIII has opened up. His programme — the renewal of the Church and reunion with separated Christians — has not only a pope, but the Lord of the Church Himself behind it."

— Father Hans Kueng in The Changing Church.

"The reality of the world in which we live and which we call our own is broad and deep like the sea; it cannot be divided up into impersonal formulas and laws. Of course, these are indispensable: just as a sailor cannot navigate without getting his orientation from the sun and stars, but how well he sails depends on that particular sea and the situation on board. This image fits our lives very well, for each day we encounter situations in which we have to arrive at a personal point of view, at our own decision in conscience."

— Bishop Wilhelms Bekkers in God's People on the March.

"Waters passing through a valley soon make little channels which, in turn, become deep river-beds. The same happens to the stream of thought: it eventually gets into a rut. Philosophy and theology for example, after filtering through one text after another for centuries, harden and congeal into patterns. Then phrases and formulas take the place of thinking. Theology has passed through four periods in the course of Christian history, during which time it became frozen. . . In this new era, if theology and philosophy are to take on new life, they will have to pass, like sunlight, through different prisms. One of these prisms will be enlightened theologians and philosophers, but the two new prisms will be the missionaries who will interpret theology in terms of the religious aspirations of the world and the laity who will develop its unchanging principles out of the problems of the modern world."

— Bishop Fulton J. Sheen in the preface to Jean Guilton's book *Feminine Fulfillment*.

"When you grow to be a big boy you are tempted about the Church. Shall you measure the temptation? Is it bigger than you think? Is it only imagination? Certainly I find in myself not the slightest inclination to 'be' anything but Catholic. Any further questions of other institutions, other organizations, appears to me to be totally ludicrous. I believe in the Church. I am in the place where Christ has put me. Amen. On the other hand, I wish I had more charity. I wish I were less resentful of dead immobility — the ponderous, inert, inhuman pressure of power bearing down on everyone to keep every beak from opening and every wing from moving. A authority sitting in its office, with all the windows open, trying to hold down, with both hands, all the important papers and briefs, all the bits of red tape, all the documents on all the members of the Body of Christ. I wish I could stop hoping the whole mess would blow away."

— Thomas Merton in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.

"Every man is a potential adversary, even those whom we love. Only through dialogue are we saved from this enmity toward one another. Dialogue is to love, what blood is to the body. When the flow of blood stops, the body dies. When dialogue stops, love dies and resentment and hate are born. But dialogue can restore a dead relationship. Indeed this is the miracle of dialogue: it can bring relationship into being, and it can bring into being once again a relationship that has died. There is only one qualification to these claims for dialogue: it must be mutual and proceed from both sides, and the parties to it must persist relentlessly."

— Reuel L. Howe in *The Miracle of Dialogue*.

Standing naked  
Where they have placed me,  
Nailed to the target  
By their first arrows.

Again a bow is drawn,  
Again an arrow flies,  
— and misses.

Are they pretending?  
Did a hand shake,  
Or was it the wind?

What have I to fear?  
If their arrows hit,  
If their arrows kill,  
What is there in that  
To cry about?

Others have gone before,  
Others will follow.

— Dag Hammarskjöld in *Markings*.

These various excerpts seemed to express my own thoughts. I thought they might prove interesting to you too.

— Father Henry A. Atwell

Editor:

As a priest of seven years who considers himself a good friend of Father Paul Cuddy of Clyde (on his own recent admission to that effect), I have been very interested in the recent dialogue between Father Cuddy and Father Atwell, editor of the Courier.

I haven't always agreed with my friend, Father Paul, as he well knows, and yet I admire his courage to speak out on this issue. I know that this courage is inspired by his great love for the church of Our Lord. Perhaps it is some of this courage which has imparted to me that prompts me to write this open letter to him. For this I am indebted to him.

However, I think that what prompts me more to enter into the fray is the fairly obvious fact that my good friend has clearly missed the point on several issues, and I think that this will do more harm than anything that Father Atwell has ever said or written.

First of all, it seems to me that Father Cuddy is not aware that some of the new things which have happened in the Catholic Church during the past several years are good things, and his attempts to thwart Father Atwell's editorial policy would seem to extend this unawareness to some or to amplify it in others.

Father Atwell's editorials seem to be one of the few local opportunities many of our people have for an honest look-see onto the ever widening horizon of theological thought and discussion. How much better to have someone thinking out loud to help us to think at all than just to have the bare, cold facts of theological developments as presented in news articles. Especially when these news articles deal with, admittedly, very disturbing things. Certainly we don't want a controlled

Editor:

May I say how much I enjoy the post-conciliar Courier? It fairly gives off sparks, and I should not like to miss a copy.

I realize that statement or discussion of unusual events or ideas does not mean official approval of them by Church authorities. New life is pulsing through the practice of our religion, and this free expression is a symptom of it.

One could wish for less coverage of weddings, funerals, sports, and the like. They are well reported by the secular press. Perhaps, though, they are a carrot for the donkey to induce people to read other sections.

As for Father Davis, I grieved to hear about him, because I have read some of his scholarly articles in "America."

Please continue to carry on in the glorious tradition of a free press, and let the chips fall where they may!

— Miss Edna M. Engelhardt, Rochester

Editor:

Six years ago when we changed parishes we no longer received the Courier. We didn't request it to be delivered because frankly the sight of it in the mailbox was depressing.

A few months ago I requested that the Courier be sent to us again — I guess mainly to see what the new Bishop would be up to.

I see now that we've been missing something exceptional: Your editorials have changed the image of the Courier from a big yawn to an exciting, intelligent Catholic newspaper.

How wonderful to read your compassionate, statement-concerning the English theologian who left the Church! How different from the Courier of ten years ago!

news-policy in our Courier. Or do we?

Father Cuddy's "enraged professional woman" who canceled her subscription to the Courier on the basis of Father Atwell's editorial, "Can a Catholic Be a Christian," certainly must need some Catholic professionalism in the intellectual sphere, and some awareness of what is going on in the world, if she isn't yet equipped to handle such a piece. And how are any of our people, increasingly better educated and truly professional, going to be equipped if we do not inform them of exactly the kind of thinking that is going on, and let them know that this is the way that faith matures and stays alive in us and for the sake of others?

Father Cuddy, it seems to me, is thinking always in the cut and dried categories of cold, scholastic thought. Most of us priests who are a bit younger than he received that same kind of training, and we are grateful for the ancient truths of our faith that have been handed down to us for the sake of ourselves and others.

But, the majority of us are also aware, thanks to just such an editorial policy as Father Atwell's, which drew us to the periodicals in the Mission Library at St. Bernard's Seminary back in the 50's and early 60's, that much has happened in Catholic scholarship to break open the nuggets of ancient truth, to let them be exposed to the lights of other sciences, and thus to come to life so that they can vivify and nourish the people for whom they are intended.

The influence of personalist, existential thought, of empirical psychology, of anthropology and archeology, of special language study, of socio-economic study, of religious psychology, of pastoral theology has changed things, and the sooner we admit this and make the effort to re-learn our the-

The Rochester Diocese can be proud of its paper and, oh, I hope the windows don't close again now that the "winds of change" have blown through the editorial rooms of the Courier.

You know, there are many who share my point of view. We don't often express ourselves. Sometimes a discontented min-

istry can sound like a multitude. More often anger will drive someone to grab a pen and scream. I'm sure you get many such letters but I assure you that I write for many who are pleased with what they read in the Courier.

— Mrs. Donald L. Walker, Corning

Editor:

This is just a very short note to tell you "good work" with your paper — the Courier. We get about 6 different Catholic papers since our novices come from different dioceses. Thus we are kept up on events, as well as the NCWC releases. And you are on the right track. Now you don't need my saying this as if it were necessary but critics can ride hard and a blast from one area can divert our attention.

Father Davis' comments and statements are generally receiving benign comments from the editors — "the best" is from the Hartford Catholic newspaper, a re-run of that editorial might prove helpful to show critics that the Spirit is leading you, as He is! More eyes are being opened and therefore more aware of the need for truth and grace can come from editors. So God bless your New Year.

The real reason for writing is simply to say stay on with your paper for a while longer. Now is not the time for more priestly activity. Your service

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world beyond Clyde)? Sorry about that.

Finally, I question your understanding of what Father Atwell meant by "handy nostrums." Apparently you think he means "charity, penance, sacraments, papal social doctrine, legitimate authority." What makes you think this? This kind of imputation causes all sorts of unproductive wonderings in the minds of people.

I hope that Father Atwell continues his kind of thinking-out-loud. It is the kind of thinking that doesn't just sit there, but does something. It is the man says, "allows 'cubroom' for the mind." It is the kind of thinking that can rock, and perhaps save, a few pastors' boats which are deteriorating with dry-rot. It is the kind of thinking which can help all of us in the church, laymen and laywomen, priests, seminarians, sisters, and brothers to search realistically together with Him who is the Way and the Truth, and the Life for the reason of the faith that is in us, lest we force into a squeeze more thinking men who just cannot bear the unbearable psychological burden of going it alone.

I accept, Father Cuddy, my friend and brother priest, your characteristically kind invitation to join with you "who love the historic Catholic Church, and to work in truth and charity for its perfecting. She is a Church in pilgrimage, and needs the good heart and loyalty of every pilgrim, that God may be glorified and the people of the world fed and loved and healed and sanctified through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, living in His Church, and I'm sure that Father Atwell does too. When shall we begin?"

— Father John Gormley, Watkins Glen

to all of us is a ministry of the word and it helps each of us to become more completely a word of God to each one we meet.

No doubt some of this current may be "getting to you" and may be causing you much pain. It seems all of us today somehow are all caught up in that mystery of His suffering. A lay theologian recently said their church now is entering into Her Dark Night of the Soul and we are this Church and we are all touched by it and brought into it. Of course I could be seeing this all wrong — from a distance — but I think there is suffering involved in your work and only want to say it's redemptive. So, a thought for the year: "In suffering is concealed with extreme intensity the world's power of ascension. The whole problem is to liberate it by making it conscious of what it means and of what it can achieve." — Cardinal. Forgive the sermonizing.

— Father Timothy McGough, O.C.D., Carmelite Monastery, Waverly



Members of Aquila scene for their "Double Cross"



McQuaid students film in St. Agnes

## Film S

By SISTER THADDEU

Would you believe? That's the number of hours the average teenager has spent before a television set. Time he graduates from school, 15,000 equals 0 and nine months of two hour-a-day television counting for the number. Long films he has a reaches at least 500.

By the same stage career, the teenager has 10,800 hours in a form room. Thus, television as an easy second to but sleeping.

The statistics are from John M. Culkin, Jesuit of Fordham University, for Communication of Culkin has inaugurated unprecedented concern. age film study on the educators. Fordham's Institute in the summer awakened other educational institutions to the need for study, and stimulated application to the high classroom of those common arts already being in other leading-universities.

When teenagers are given the opportunity to watch depth movie without commercials, interesting things they are quiet. They are absorbed. The sequ flickering images and s facts encompasses them when the lights go on cinematic experience. ap be over, it isn't.

The young audience about the film to each almost unconsciously for theme. Gone with a when film was a "movie show" are the days of traction on plot alone. young viewers are neither to technique nor dominant message of a

When, as a high-school

## Day of R For Parents

Geneva — A special program planned for parents first of its kind in the Immaculate Heart Fr Third Order of St. Francis sponsoring this spirituality day on Sunday, Feb the Capuchin Seminary parents of retired churchmen the greater Geneva area, Fals, Camandagna, an ark areas. All parents invited to participate re of their religious activities.

The program will get way in the early afternoon with dinner in the Miss Margaret Buckley early working out behind the activity and is being ed by Miss Florence H Tom Kenny, Father S Falcone, O.F.M. Cap., direct the program which

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MOST REV. FULTON J. SHEEN, Ph.D., D.D. President

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