



The Making Of a Priest

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It would seem worthwhile in discussing the priest of tomorrow to give some attention to the training and formation of the young men who, as priests, will be the principal heirs of Vatican II.

There are still some people who think that training for the priesthood consists in learning how to say Mass. But at least since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century the Church has paid scrupulous attention to the education of men for the priesthood.

In the days preceding the Protestant Reformation, training for the priesthood more often than not was slipshod and in cases practically non-existent. That the generally low quality of priests in that time was a major contributing cause to the Reformation itself no one seems to deny. In fact the Council of Trent placed the formation of priests high on its agenda as a means of restoring the Church counter to the Reformation.

To accomplish this goal, the Council of Trent established seminaries as we have known them. A seminary is a "seed bed" in which the initial desire of young men for the priesthood was to be fostered and developed to fruition. Previous to that time, education toward the priesthood had no really set form.

The first priests, of course, were trained by Christ himself. They lived very close to him throughout his public life and he gave them very special attention. For many years thereafter, training to priesthood was on a very individual basis, and was usually carried out by the bishop himself. Through the years we have a variety of methods employed — close association with the bishop and his men in cathedral colleges by the monks in monasteries in the great medieval universities.

But there were no specific standards to cover all cases and the net result was a wide variety of outcomes.

That is why the Council of Trent became so very specific about standards and methods. The philosophy of Trent (which held good for some four hundred years thereafter) was to take young boys around the time of puberty and remove them from the contaminations of the world in a more or less monastic environment. During this time they would receive intensive spiritual training as well as academic. The spiritual training would make them highly disciplined, totally obedient, and God-oriented. They would eventually be in the world but not of the world, only minimally subject to its wiles and contamination. They would, in short, be thoroughly spiritual men.

There were to be two seminaries — the minor embracing what we know as the four years of high school and the first two years of college, and the major seminary covering the last two years of college and four years of graduate study in theology. (The actual number of years in each section was subject to minor variations from place to place).

No one can quarrel with the success of this system. It worked admirably and was to a large measure responsible for the rapid recovery of the Church from the effects of the Reformation. Saintly priests multiplied and as a result the Rock of Peter became more stable than ever. On the basis of such a priesthood, the Roman Catholic Church far outdistanced Protestantism in solidity and strength.

The seminary system also proved to be the bulwark of the missionary Church in America. A large percentage of the people were translated Europeans and the European type seminary fitted in very well. It was only when the American Church began to stand on its own two feet that any doubts about the applicability of the seminary sys-

tem to this place were raised. The record of the American priesthood in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century is a proud one. It is no wonder that subsequent talk about bringing our seminary system up to date met with such verbal violence from many quarters.

But after World War II there were many previously non-existing problems which bishops and seminary officials had to face up to, and the coming on the scene of John XXIII and the aggiornamento merely brought them to a head.

What were some of these changes which precipitated the reexamination of the seminary system? First of all there was the change in young people themselves. They were becoming more knowledgeable about the world and what was going on far earlier in life than their parents had. Amid all the technological changes they became enchanted with the possibilities of the future. Because of growing up in a society which constantly sang the praises of freedom and the philosophy of existentialism which seeped down to the grass roots, they became very jealous of their personal freedom, their mobility, their individuality. To submerge all that in a seminary at an early age became less and less palatable.

There was also that other social phenomenon — the new drive toward community on all the levels of society — among nations; among nationalities; among religious groups. There was that shrinking of the world which made men more aware of one another, more eager to help, more involved, and anxious to overcome all kinds of bigotry, prejudice, and "ghetto situations."

To many old-timers words like involvement, relevance, and love for the other, have an unreal sound. But to the youth of our time they are part and parcel of their world. Woe be to the Church and the priesthood if we simply ignore what they are and what they aspire to be.



Seminarian Recovers

Cleveland—(RNS)—Maryknoll Father Paul O'Brien and Luis Chambl, 15-year-old seminarian from Puno, Peru, like what they see after Luis' operation at Cleveland Clinic to repair damage suffered years ago in an accident. Luis can now blink his eye and doctors say there will be marked improvement in appearance over the next six months. He will leave Maryknoll House in Cleveland to return to studies at the Peruvian diocesan seminary maintained by the Maryknoll Fathers.



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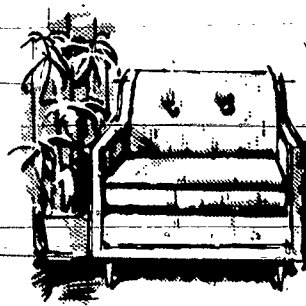


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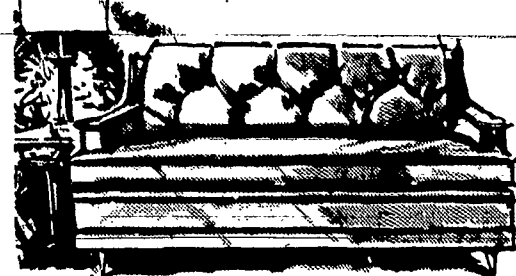
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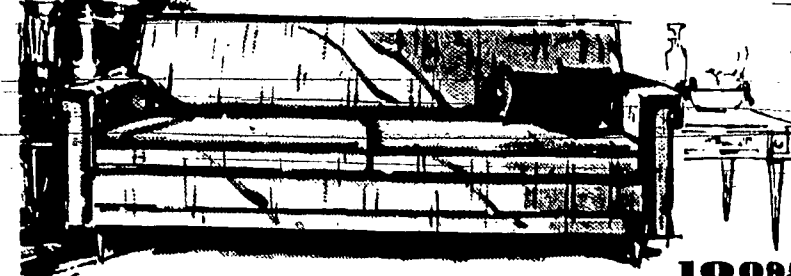
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LOVESEAT convertible sofa opens to a comfortable 33" bed. Shown: The "Stratford".



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TWIN SIZE convertible sofa converts to a bed 39" in width. Shown: The "Bristol".



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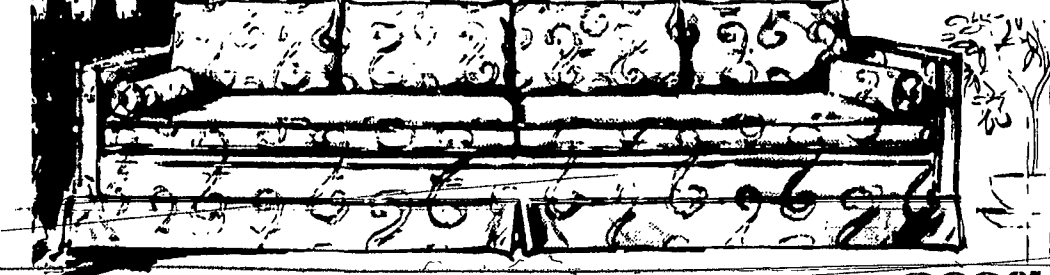
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FULL SIZE convertible sofa opens to a superbly comfortable 52" wide bed for 2. Shown: The "New Yorker".



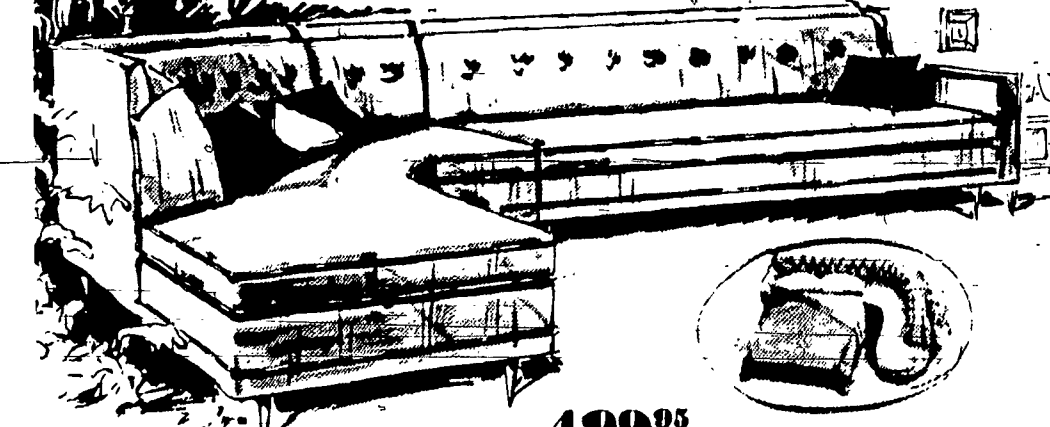
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