

Priests for Tomorrow



Parents and Vocations

By FATHER LOUIS J. HOHMAN
Diocesan Director of Vocations

From our very earliest years we are taught to obey our parents in all that is not sinful. But there is one other important area in which parents may not make a legitimate command or even a request, and that is in the matter of vocational choice. Each individual's life is his or her own and therefore determinable only by the individual.

Past experience however has shown a good deal of interference by parents especially relative to religious vocations.

A few years back it was mostly pressure toward a boy becoming a priest. From the time of his birth, mother dreamed of Johnny as a priest. Her desire was so ardent that, perhaps without even knowing it herself, she began a subtle program of brainwashing. From the time Johnny was first able to understand, fortunately, more often than not this program didn't work, because when Johnny began to stand on his own two feet he realized that it was mother's vocation and not his at all.

The more common type of pressure toward the priesthood occurs when Johnny decides on his own to enter the seminary, and the parents in their delight assume that he will be ordained. Later on when he begins to question his vocation, his first problem is, "How will mother react?" She has given the impression all along that the thought of Johnny quitting the seminary is quite unbearable.

Deep filial love will probably make him delay his decision year after year. To the detriment of all concerned, especially the Church, he may never make the decision at all. Seminary officials are always on the alert to ferret out such a problem.

Today the reverse of this situation is much more likely to occur. The number of parents who try to pressure young men out of the priesthood or more commonly young women out of the convent is considerable, although obviously not reducible to a statistic. If a boy or girl has any question at all about a vocation, this parental attitude can be the decisive factor.

Generally it is not an overt refusal to let a boy go to the seminary or a girl to the convent. Rather it is a delaying tac-

I suppose age is sometimes a factor in the case of young people who have been overprotected and therefore seriously lag in growth toward maturity. But the thing many parents forget (deliberately or otherwise) is that when a boy chooses the minor seminary at age 14, or a girl chooses the convent right after high school, it is not a final and irrevocable decision. It is rather a highly tentative one, a testing of desire and capability under the watchful eyes of people familiar with the process of vocational choice as well as the religious life.

Let me dispel right now any fear that guidance people in seminaries or convents try to keep anyone with pressure tactics. Not only would this be wrong morally but also very shortsighted. The only thing a spiritual director or directress wants from the young person is a rational personal choice, over which there will be no regrets. A young man or woman who wanted to leave but was dissuaded by any pressure would find ways of being dismissed.

WHAT THEN, should a parent do when told by a child of the desire to enter the seminary or convent. First of all the parents should lay the groundwork by informing the young person that the final decision in the matter must be his and his alone; that they, the parents can help him to come to that decision by giving him the benefit of their experience and maturity; that this is a very important and serious decision and must be approached prayerfully; that any vocational choice involves the exclusion of all other choices and so they should try to be aware of these; that they should talk over their desire with a priest or nun experienced in the religious life. Parents can give advice and guidance but must keep hands off the decision itself.

It is a matter of experience that nearly all religious vocations come from homes where there is a deep respect for spiritual values; where the parents discipline their children and teach them obedience and humility; where children are given a sense of service to others as an ideal, carried out practically by giving them work and responsibility in the governing of the home; where consideration for others is exemplified in the parents' spirit of helpfulness toward those in need; where prayer is an essential part of family life.

The responsibility of parents in regard to vocations is a frightening one. Those who have deprived a child of a vocation or obstructed his choice will someday have to answer for that. We can only hope that more and more they will have the vision of a religious vocation as a beautiful way of life, a shining crown to their role as parents.

tic. "You're too young to make a decision now. Wait a few years." Or it may run, "Look around for a while, then go in." Or the young person may simply be made to feel like a very ungrateful child because he is not following in dad's footsteps or carrying on the family name.

To the inexperienced these may sound like very unusual situations, but any vocation director knows that they are all too common.

It is difficult to know why parents oppose vocations, simply because they rarely express them directly or publicly. One of the principal reasons is a lack of faith — an inability to see value in a life devoted to religion, or overattachment to material values. Think of all that Junior or Sister would be giving up."

Another problem with parents is a refusal to let their children make important decisions, because they still think of them as little children quite incapable of making a rational decision.

Motherhouse Near Rome

Rome — (RNS) — American Archbishop Martin J. O'Connor, Papal Nuncio to Malta, solemnly dedicated the new motherhouse here of the School Sisters of Notre Dame situated on 14 acres of highland five miles west of the Vatican.

Among those welcomed to the ceremony by Mother Mary Amrosia Roeklein, Superior General of the 12,000-member order, were 124 parents and friends of the Sisters who flew from the United States for the occasion.

The sermon of the Mass was preached by Father Edward Heston, C.S.C. — also an American —



Ecumenical Holy Land Tour

Presbyterian minister Rev. David Cull and Father Edward Zenkel will conduct an ecumenical tour to the Holy Land, Rome and Geneva, Switzerland, June 2 to 23. Visits will be made to sites of religious significance to both Catholics and Protestants. Reservations may be made by contacting either of the clergymen.

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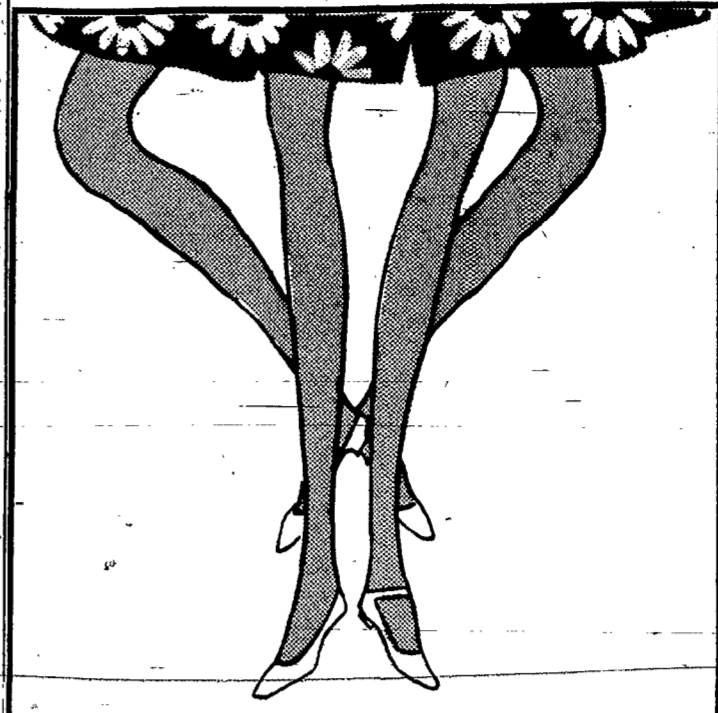
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London — (NC) — For the first time Roman Catholic observers have been invited to attend a Lambeth Conference, the international council of the Anglican

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Poor Pe

(Continued from Page 1)

ter-school desegregation. It has drained off frustration that might have erupted into violence.

Some have also credited FIGHT and its 400-member white middle-class auxiliary Friends of FIGHT, with a general rise of popular democracy in the city. Last year, seeing jobs as the key issue, FIGHT began approaching industries for set up special training programs. Xerox took on 50 trainees, but since Kodak is still the biggest power in the city with over 40,000 employees (over 1,200 Negroes) — FIGHT asked Kodak to take the lead.

A "Kodak Management Letter" of April 25, 1966, said there would be a slight shift away from the previous policy of simply employing the person best suited for the job available, to training the unqualified individual to be qualified. Minister Franklin D. R. Florence, president of FIGHT, praised the proposal and approached Kodak in September with a proposal that Kodak train 500 and 600 persons so that they would qualify for jobs. FIGHT would recruit and counsel trainees. The training would include some fundamental education, such as writing and arithmetic.

Kodak's president William S. Vaughn agreed to discuss it, and turned negotiations over to Kenneth D. Howard of the industrial relations department.

Within a week, negotiations broke down. Communication seemed impossible. According to copies of the correspondence between Florence and Vaughn from Feb. 15 to Oct. 22 (distributed by Kodak) which could not even agree on what had taken place at the meetings. Florence was insisting on the FIGHT proposal, while Kodak maintained that its usual hiring practices were already helping minority groups and that FIGHT should cooperate with these procedures. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the FIGHT negotiator did not trust Howard. The formidable Rev. Mr. Florence is quick to take offense when a white man is ill at ease in his presence, and he could not respect a man who seemed to be afraid of him. But perhaps non-union Kodak was not accustomed to bargaining with a not a "power" organization.

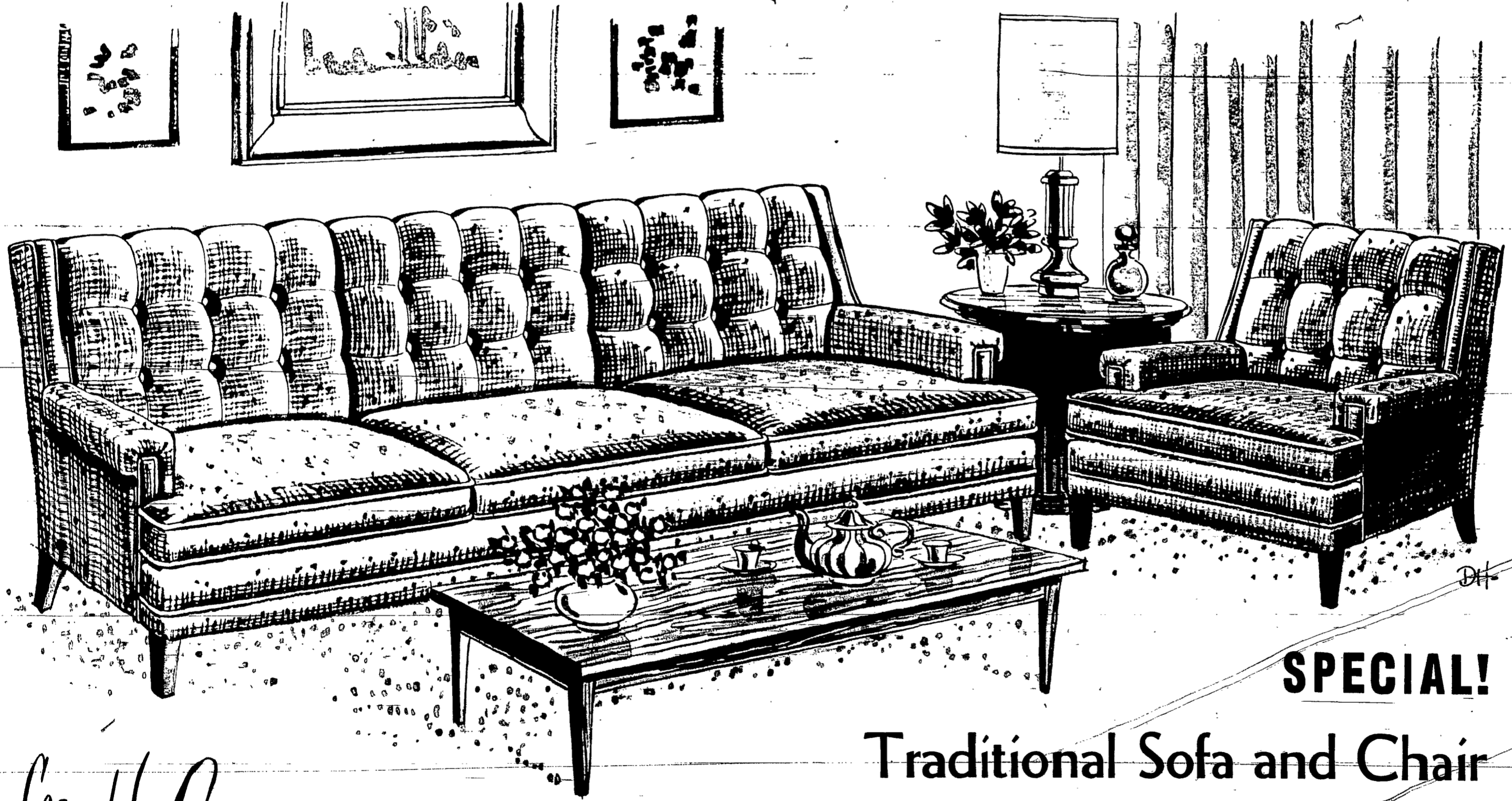
A study today of the FIGHT Kodak correspondence, along with conversations with both sides in their own offices — FIGHT's shabby storefront and Kodak's carpeted State St. tower — is ample evidence of the psychological gap between the two worlds of "black power" and executive suite.

Nevertheless, the gap was bridged in December, when personal talks were resumed in a new atmosphere between FIGHT's Rev. Marvin C. Chandler and Kodak's Asst. Vice President and Asst. General Manager of Kodak Park, John G. Mulder. When they had achieved some basis of agreement, the committee was enlarged.

On Dec. 20, Mulder and Florence signed a brief statement whereby the FIGHT organization and Kodak agreed to "an object of the recruitment and referral (to include screening and selection) of 600 unemployed people over a 24-month period, barring unforeseen economic changes affecting the Rochester community." FIGHT at its own expense, the statement added, would provide counseling for the employees selected by Kodak.

Two days later, Kodak's new president, Dr. Louis K. Eilers, disowned the agreement and said Mulder had never been authorized to sign it. Sensing how the Negro community would receive this blow, Mulder had gone personally to Chandler's home to break the news himself. To Rev. Mr. Florence, an admirer of Malcolm X, this was one more crime in the white man's long history of betraying the blacks.

On Feb. 20, I talked with Kenneth D. Howard and two Kodak public relations officials. They stressed — as Kodak had already stated in various press releases and in a two-part article — that the company cannot have an "exclusive" recruiting arrangement with any one group that it cannot commit itself to.



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