



33 Years a Missionary

Millis, Mass. — (RNS) — Father Georges Dominic Moreau, O.P., who for 33 years was a missionary in the Congo and escaped a massacre of his co-workers there, celebrated his 50th anniversary as a priest at a ceremony in the convent of the Dominican Sisters of Bethany, Millis, Mass., where he now serves as chaplain. A native of Belgium, Father Moreau was ordained in 1917 by the famed Desire Joseph Cardinal Mercier. During his missionary career the Dominican priest solicited funds in the U.S. for the construction of St. Albert the Great Seminary in Nicaragua. The seminary's alumni include Bishop James Ball of Buta and some 40 other Congolese priests.

Priests for Tomorrow



How Much Freedom

By FATHER LOUIS J. HOHMAN Diocesan Director of Vocations

Just as parents of every age have been bothered by the problem of how much freedom to give to their children and at what relative stage of their development, so the seminarians must make the same decisions relative to aspirants to the priesthood. Recently seminarians have given substantially more freedom to students than in the past.

As a result many people have become very disturbed and wonder what will become of seminarian training as well as of the young men themselves. If one were to make judgment on the basis of headlines which proclaim the irrational behavior of some "free" young people, the disturbance is easy to understand. But what about all those who have used their freedom wisely?

The advantages of freedom at the earliest possible stage of life are fairly obvious. Freedom to make rational choices is the principal mark of humanness. We are human precisely in proportion as we choose the right courses of action. It follows that the earlier this is possible for a human being the better. Then, too, each individual has a certain potential, greater or less, for initiative and creativity. Without freedom these cannot develop, and as a matter of fact, tend to atrophy.

In the past, personal freedoms have been restricted drastically in seminaries for several reasons. The first is the obvious one that if a person is restricted the chances of his doing wrong or going wrong are drastically reduced. It is only a guess, but I suspect that a follow-up on this was the supposition that if a person did the right thing for a long enough period of time, even though he was not choosing with freedom, that once he was made free he would remain good.

The second reason was a much more valid one. All human beings labor under the effects of original sin, and restriction of freedom was a way to curb self-will and submerge rebellious animal instincts. Certainly there was some substantial validity to this position. But the question immediately comes to mind — would not the advantages of such restriction be outweighed by the advantages of a carefully cultivated freedom?

Today we think the answer very definitely is "Yes." The proper exercise of freedom, the freedom of the sons of God, is the choice of God's will, freely made, out of love for him (there is no true love without true freedom). There are three requirements for the proper exercise: an informed conscience, a disciplined nature, and motivation.

For the Christian, the latter must be supplied by faith, a living dynamic faith in Jesus Christ. From him comes man's hope for a full life with the vision of immortality. In him is love which Paul says we must make the root and foundation of our lives.

The informed conscience can come only from years of learning from many sources, experience included, so that one eventually comes to make relatively objective practical judgments as to what is and is not the will of God. Educators in home, school and Church have their work cut out for them in

trying to form in youth a mature Christian conscience. Considering the multitude of doubts cast on the objective moral law these days, it is positively frightening. But without a mature conscience there is no true freedom, so the acquisition is worth the price.

The third prerequisite for freedom is a disciplined nature. Where the passions and appetites are not under control, there is only slavery to animal nature. Only a person capable of rising above the instincts, the seven sources of sin, can truly make his own choices.

The problem then arises — at what stage in this threefold training process can freedom be reasonably given? To wait until the young man has reached his mid-twenties we think to be no solution at all. Rather it is somewhat like our present efforts to reach the moon. Our knowledge of the moon and how to get there is carefully explored in a series of trials which accompany the theoretical research and supplement it. From time to time we must test the relative strength of our programs and findings, so that when the final effort is made we will be as certain as possible of success.

We think that the same approach may be used validly in the training of future priests. Instruction and guidance in the faith is given intensely on a daily basis, through the Liturgy (Homily) and conferences, both groups and personal. The same means are used to develop a mature Christian conscience, with more emphasis on personal instruction. In the meantime, serious daily meditation is urged in seasons and out of season. Self-control is inculcated especially through the careful performance of daily duty, both academic and spiritual.

This is fortified by a constant urging of generous service to others in the community and various apostolic works, always in a spirit of self-forgetfulness. Most important of all in the overall picture is the daily contact with the Eucharist, Christ, in communion and in the tabernacle.

In the meantime a large measure of freedom is given to the students. There are no halls, few house rules, and wide freedom of movement in free time. The students are, of course being observed in their attitudes and use of freedom, and whenever a sense of responsibility seems lacking, the individual is instructed and admonished. On a daily basis the students are proving their right to freedom by a mature use of it.

We have found that the students, with few exceptions (and these are not long for the seminary), tend to be eager to prove their maturity by a responsible use of freedom.

The road is admittedly a rough one and for those in charge it is much more difficult than running a restricted community. But the results have appeared to be well worth it. Openness, generosity, zeal, and a higher level of maturity have marked those who have given wholeheartedly to the program. The few who have not are inevitably dropouts or dismissed. But maybe even they have a deeper understanding of the dimensions of nature's freedom. That in itself is no small benefit.

The Religious State

By REV. ALBERT SHAMON St. Patrick's, Victor (Twelfth in a Series)

It is significant that the Council Fathers put the chapter on religion after the chapter on the call to holiness. Why? Did they intend this to mean only religious are holy? By no means. Why, then, this position? Recall that the holiness of the Church involves two things: separation from the world of the profane and transfer to the world of the holy, namely, God's world. Recall, too, that the Church is to be the sign of God's presence in this world — the sign that, like God, she is other-worldly.

HOW CAN she show this eschatological characteristic in the daily lives of her members. The answer is by the religious state — the life of a priest, monk, brother or nun.

The religious state is objectively greater than the lay state, not because it is a holier state. Holiness is not the prerogative of religious. Some of the Church's greatest saints were lay persons. St. Thomas More would probably never have become a saint in the religious state. In fact, he deliberately avoided this state because he felt he could be a good lay person whereas he had serious misgivings about being a good religious. "Better to be a good lay person," mused Thomas, "than a bad religious."

Celibacy Decree 'Not Imminent'

Vatican City — (NC) — Without affirming or denying that a papal document on celibacy is in preparation, competent Vatican sources said it was "unlikely" that any such document would be published in the near future.

The statement referred to published rumors that a major document reaffirming the traditional prohibition in the discipline of the Western Church against married clergy was "imminent."

The sources said the Congregation of the Council, the competent curial body in matters of clerical discipline, had as of that date "received no orders" to prepare such a document.

Religious life is possible without becoming a religious. Christian love can impregnate that is human, transforming the straw of human activity, Rumpelstiltskinlike, into the gold that purchases kingdom. A cup of cold water given in Christ's name shall have its reward — regardless whether the giver is a religious or a lay person.

Nor is the religious a lofty state because it is the more difficult state. All that is difficult is not necessarily virtue. The duffer finds golf more difficult than the professional; yet the "pro" plays the better game.

Nor is the religious state superior because it makes one freer to serve God. Vows are a renunciation like death. Death is not a surrender of life so that one can work better. Death is the right in which no man can work. Christian death is a surrender of life so that God might save: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"; "Lord, remember me

when thou comest into thy kingdom." So too the vows: they are empty, a surrendering of daily life to God, so that He might save. They point to the coming saving action of Christ.

THEN WHY is the religious state greater than the lay?

It is because the religious state better signifies the nature of the Church. The Church is the sign of God's presence in the world; yet her destiny is beyond this world. She is by nature eschatological, and hence essentially a pilgrim Church. The lay state cannot fully signify this. For the laity is inextricably involved in the world. All the lay state can signify is that the supernatural is not unnatural, that grace is compatible with living in the world. It shows God so loves the world that one does not have to leave it to serve Him.

But how can the true nature of the Church be shown? Its eschatological nature? That it is a Church waiting for the second coming of Christ? That it is not of this world? That we have not here a lasting city but look for one that is to come? She shows this side of herself by her sacramental life. Baptism proclaims that divine life comes from God, not men "who were born out of blood... but of God." The Eucharist celebrates the death of the Lord "until he comes."

But how can the Church show what she truly is outside the sacraments? How can she show her eschatological nature in the daily life of her members? Only by some of her members leaving the world and entering a stable way of living for a life beyond this world. The lay state is truly Christian. But even though the layman may be living for God, his daily life does not necessarily show this. Only

when the layman steps out into the sacramental life of the Church does the supernatural aspect of his activity become visible. The religious state, on the contrary, is manifestly Christian. The religious state is a public proclamation that daily life is being lived for a life beyond this life.

It is this significance that gives the religious state its superiority.

Thus the Vatican Council Fathers wrote: "This consecration gains in perfection since by virtue of firmer and steadier bonds it serves as a better symbol of the unbreakable link between Christ and His spouse, the Church... The profession of the evangelical counsels, then, appears as a sign which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation. The People of God has no lasting city here below, but looks forward to one which is to come. This being so, the religious state by giving its members great freedom from earthly cares more adequately manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below... It foretells the resurrected state and the glory of the heavenly kingdom" (#44).

The religious state is a sign in the Church.

It is a sign that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes (#31).

It is a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work. For religious life is a life of community love and where there is love, there God abides.

It is a sign of Christ. "Through them," wrote the Council, "Christ should be shown contemplating on the mountain (the Contemplative Orders), announcing God's kingdom to the multitude (the Missionary Orders), healing the sick and the maimed (the Nursing Orders), turning sinners to wholesome fruit (the Orders dedicated to giving missions and retreats).

blessing children (the Teaching Orders), doing good to all, and always obeying the will of the Father who sent Him" (#46).

Because of the nature of the religious life, because it is a renunciation of marriage (the vow of chastity), of property (the vow of poverty), and of self-determination (the vow of obedience), and a withdrawal from the world, two attacks have been leveled against the religious state. Some charge that it stunts personality growth. Others claim that it estranges men from their brothers in the world. So credible do these allegations appear that the Council Fathers felt it necessary to answer them.

Religious life does not stunt personality growth. For a person is one who can relate to others. A man's greatness is measured by his capacity for communion with others. God is a community of Persons, and He has created man to his image. Religious life is community life; hence a series of relationships. "Only the saint is the totally fulfilled man for, set free from the bondage of self, he is able to welcome into his life both his God and his brother" (Michel Quoist, The Meaning of Success, p. 26).

When a bus is filled with people, it passes you by, no matter how long you may have been waiting for it. When man is filled up with himself, he has no time for anyone else. The spirit of the religious vows is to empty one of self and thus open him up to others — especially to God.

"No one could tell me where my soul might be. I searched for God, but God eluded me. I sought my Brother out, and found all three." (Crosby, "The Search")

Nor does religious life estrange men from their brothers in the world. Religious life unites to others rather than separates. For religious life is geared to enkindle the flame of divine love in the heart of the religious. And love is not idle. It is not a blotter that sops up. Love is dynamic, energetic, outgoing — where it exists it does great things. It fires the religious to work for the world and to pray for it. "Those who pray do more for the world than those who fight; and if the world goes from bad to worse, it is because there are more battles than prayer." (Chautard, Soul of the Apostolate, p. 30).

Advertisement for 'May and Mother' featuring a 'MADONNA STATUARY' and 'THE PRAYER BOOK you've asked for: "PRAYERS for the People of God"'. Includes contact information for TRANT'S at 96 CLINTON AVE. N. 115 FRANKLIN ST., Phone 454-1811.

Priests Decide Own Places

Camden, N.J. — (NC) — Archbishop Celestine J. Damiano, bishop of Camden, has put the issue squarely up to his priests — seeking their frank opinions of their own assignments as well as pastoral needs of the diocese.

To the more than 300 diocesan clergy, the archbishop sent a questionnaire seeking the information. He told the priests their replies would be held in confidence, and asked for candid answers and the "spirit of fraternal priestly cooperation and coordination."

Out of the project, the archbishop said, he hopes to establish a diocesan personnel board to assist him in appointments and various assignments of priests.

Advertisement for 'Legion of Mary Aciés of the Southern Tier Curia'. Includes address: ST. MARY'S CHURCH, Elmira, New York, and contact info for Rev. Albert J. Shamom.

Large advertisement for Sibley's Rochester featuring 'A TRUE CLASSIC... the Paul Revere bowl in Gorham silverplate—here at 25% savings'. Includes a table of prices for various bowl sizes and a contact form for Sibley's.