

God's Church Is But One Family

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The original disciples of Christ did not flock to him because they were interested in what he did or what he taught. Rather he called them, unlikely men for the most part, rugged fishermen or shady tax collectors, to be the beginning and the nucleus of what became the Church. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."

These men began with little unity of purpose. They quarreled about who would be greatest and there is some evidence that they tried to build up loyalty to themselves rather than to Christ. They were made one by the terrible and glorious events of the crucifixion and resurrection of their Lord. Even then, being human, they continued to quarrel and to fail, yet underneath their divisions was a God-created unity that bound them as one family.

Ever since, Christians have been far more a chosen people than a choosing people. Most denominations practice infant baptism, bringing children into the Church long before they have any choice in the matter or are aware of what is happening to them.

Even the Churches that practice and teach adult, or believers, baptism take care to include the children of believers within the fellowship during the crucial years when lifelong attitudes are being formed and choices made, consciously or unconsciously. And the Churches which lay great emphasis upon the need of genuine conversion and of accepting Christ as personal Saviour are apt to base their stand upon the words of our Lord to the Pharisee Nicodemus, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Even the shattering, life-changing experience of what has sometimes been called the second birth is compared to entrance into a family.

No matter how carefully we weigh our beliefs, or make decisions about joining the Church, we know that in the end we have been far more sought than the seeking. Regardless of denomination any honest Christian realizes that God has sought him far more than he has sought God, that faith and love are gifts rather than achievements.

Irrevocable Membership
Furthermore, there is an irrevocable quality in Church membership that suggests a family far more than a club. We may drift away from the Church, we may abandon our beliefs, or change them drastically, but nothing can ever erase the effect of what has happened to us within the community of the Church any more than we can obliterate our experiences as children and adults in our immediate families. This is one reason why the early Church regarded apostasy as one of the most deadly of sins.

We can belong to many clubs, but you can belong to only one family, and the Church can be but one family. Like all large families the Church will have divisions, even battles, but the battles are not rivalries of separate clubs.

A healthy family is not one where all the members like the same things or act in the same way or feel the need to be together all the time, or talk in a phony manner of "togetherness," but underneath the differences in such a family there lies unity, love, loyalty and a willingness to accept and forgive. Such a family the Church is called to be. We need not all worship the same way, or express our beliefs in the same way. In fact, we need not agree about what we believe, except

for a very few vital essentials. Yet family unity in the Church implies a willingness to listen to each other enough to eat and drink together at the sacramental table of Christ.

In addition to the family analogy in describing the Church the Bible also uses a direct marriage analogy. In the Old Testament God is the husband and the wooer of the people of Israel and in the New Testament the Church is called the bride of Christ. And today a man and a woman about to enter marriage are reminded that this relationship signifies "unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church."

Thus the love of God for mankind is compared with the love that a man has for a woman. And it is very hard to believe that God could be a polygamist and that the separate Churches could be like separate wives each living in her own house and raising separate families, and that Christians are only half-sisters and half-brothers to each other.

The New Testament goes even beyond the family analogy in describing the Church as the body of Christ. This is precisely how St. Paul addressed the Christians in Corinth and Rome—churches that did not contain many wise people, or well-born people, or strong people, churches in which the morals of many of its members left much to be desired. What could be further from the concept of club than that of body? To call the Church the body of Christ means that the God who needs nothing uses us as his instruments, that he acts through us just as he acted through Jesus of Nazareth twenty centuries ago. The very word "body" suggests strength and beauty; it also suggests awkwardness, indignity, decay and death, and yet we make up the body of Christ.

In the words of a discerning Swiss Christian Suzanne de Dietrich, "We are not called to serve an imaginary ideal Church. We are required to be involved in the visible Church with all its grandeur and with all its misery."

A body cannot be divided. And because we all belong to one body we are all bound together and must work together if that body is to function and we ourselves are not to wither and die. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together."

Wounded, Not Dead
The divided condition of the

Freedom For Others

Madrid — (RNS) — Long-awaited legislation granting considerable religious freedom to Spain's non-Catholic minorities—largely Protestant—is expected to be submitted for final approval to the Cortes (parliament) in December.

This was predicted in well-informed circles here as a committee of experts headed by Antonio Garrigues y Diaz Canabate, Spanish Ambassador to the Vatican, completed a draft of the law which is to be presented to the Cabinet when it meets July 15.

The draft, according to the informed sources, is much wider and more "liberal" than the one submitted to the Cabinet in September, 1964. That document was criticized as falling to match up adequately with the statement in favor of religious liberty made by Generalissimo Franco in his New Year's address to the nation.



Ecumenical Tour in Seneca Falls

Father Raymond Ringwood, curate at St. Patrick's Church, Seneca Falls, welcomed Episcopal priest Father Robert Shackles and visitors during "open house" tour of village churches there recently.



Visitors to St. Patrick's Church, Seneca Falls, hear explanation of Roman Catholic baptismal rite during ecumenical tour of churches. Father Henry Atwell, baptist editor, spoke at luncheon which followed.

Church today might properly be compared with a man who has been dreadfully injured in an accident and brought to the hospital almost at the point of death. An arm and a leg hang by slender threads and many bones are broken and out of joint. Yet somehow skillful physicians and surgeons not only succeed in keeping the man alive for a long time, but even enable him to function productively and creatively while his wounds slowly heal.

Over and over again in history the life of the Church has been tragically ruptured. We have continued to function only because Christ the physician has brought his healing gifts to

bear upon our weak and painful condition. Now, after many hundreds of years, we hope that he will speed up the healing process and make us more nearly whole again.

All our prayers for union then, all our consultations, all our plans, all our hopes are attempts to realize what we already are rather than to create something that does not yet exist. Nor do we pursue this course—simply to unify—and strengthen the Church, for the Church exists not for the sake of itself but for those outside itself.

Just as Christ came not to be served but to serve, so the

Church is called not so much to serve her members as to train and use her members to serve all mankind. The Church is most like her Lord not when she guards her life but when she gives her life. Like her Lord, the Church must offer her body in death and receive it again in resurrection.

We seek for unity of the Church in order to realize the unity of all mankind. For God loved the world, not the Church, when he gave his Son. His family includes all people of the world, not simply the Church. He would be husband of the entire human race and Christ chooses that race to be his body.

Glenmary to Expand

Cincinnati — (NC) — The Glenmary Sisters, restricted from opening new houses for more than a year, plan to open "probably two new houses" in the near future.

The decision, revealed by the Glenmary superior, Mother Mary Catherine, was taken in the wake of Archbishop Karl J. Alter's letter lifting the ban on new activities imposed in September, 1965.

Mother Catherine also revealed that the community will accept new postulants next September. The Sisters accepted no postulants last September in accordance with a one-year moratorium on new members imposed at the same time as the expansion ban.

Archbishop Alter imposed the restriction on new houses Sept. 18, 1965. Auxiliary Bishop Edward A. McCarthy of Cincinnati said the directive was issued

"out of concern lest by too many new ventures the community overextend itself in personnel or finances, or commit itself to new obligations at a period while re-studying its objectives and policies."

Bishop McCarthy said, however, that the Sisters had indicated they had members ready for new assignments and it was on this basis that the restrictions were lifted in a letter dated Nov. 11, 1965.

Mother Catherine refused to comment on the reasons for the

ban or its removal. But she said the decision not to accept new postulants last fall "was a mutual one" because we wanted to give more attention to re-natal and consolidate our planning in the community."

The Glenmary Sisters, formally known as the Mission Order of America, was founded in Cincinnati in 1941 by Father W. Howard Bishop under the auspices of Archbishop Alter to work among the poor in Appalachia. They now have 98

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Greeks Warn On 'Slavery' To Vatican

Athens — (RNS) — Press reports that Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras will visit Pope Paul VI in the near future have created turmoil among members of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in Greece.

Several bishops have made public charges that the Patriarch plans to "enslave" Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism. Two of the points that caused the most disturbance were speculating reports that Patriarch Athenagoras plans to celebrate a Mass with the Pope and the fact that he has not formally consulted with other Orthodox leaders on his plans for the visit.

The Patriarch has not confirmed the reports, although he has said frequently that he hopes to visit the Pope this year.

The Holy Synod voted unanimously to send a letter to all the Greek Metropolitans, asking for their views on the subject. Several Orthodox churchmen here have said that the remarks made during sessions of the Synod represent the individual views of its members, not official views of the Church.

Several bishops oppose the anti-ecumenical and anti-Athenagoras views which have been expressed repeatedly by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Athens and all Greece and other members of the Synod.

"It is strange that the Church of Greece is the only one among the Orthodox Churches always taking a negative stand toward world inter-Christian conferences, in spite of the contrary views of the preponderance of Greek opinion."

Problems of Migrants Cited

Tucson — (NC) — Poverty and illiteracy were cited as major problems facing Mexican-American migrant farm workers and their families in testimony here before the National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty.

Father Henry Casso, episcopal vicar of urban ministry for the San Antonio, Tex., archdiocese, told a commission hearing here that all the facts about poverty in the Southwest are known to war on poverty officials, and that "action must be your course."

The number of migrants in rural areas in Texas, Father Casso said, is increasing, not decreasing—representing a reversal in national trends.

Nun Translates Rabbi's Book

Montreal — (RNS) A book written by a Toronto rabbi has been translated here by a Roman Catholic nun for use in French-language parochial schools.

Judaism, by Rabbi Stuart E. Rosenberg of Toronto's Beth Tzedec Congregation, was translated into French by Sister Marie Noelle of the Order of Notre Dame de Sion. She is associated with the M-Ca-El Center which specializes in Catholic-Jewish dialogue here.

The best history comes from the accounts of eyewitnesses. If you were working for Irish freedom in Ireland or in America in 1916, I would be most grateful to hear from you.

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Unity
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cut deep and made unresolvable from the very beginning.
But this is not true in the forty years period which followed 1517, numerous attempts were made to unify the church. While the Augsburg Diet of 1530 officially rejected the Lutheran confessions an influential group of laymen and theologians met unofficially under the leadership of John Eck and Philip Melancthon to seek unity. These conferences brought the differences on such matters as the eucharist, confession of sin, sins, the episcopate, and marriage of the clergy to possible resolutions, but Luther rejected them as impossible unless "The Pope will simply abolish the papacy."
The Divisions Harden
Other decisions for reconciliation came with the imperial diets at Hagenau (June 1540), Worms (November 1540), a Ratisbon (April to July 1541). Out of this meeting came the Ratisbon Book which contained twenty-three articles on which tentative agreement had been reached. The Pope on the other hand and Luther on the other again could not, however, come to the point of common discussion.
Personal animosity was compounded by the independence of the Lutheran princes from the emperor. It was hoped many Protestants and Catholics in the spirit of Ratisbon general council would be called to take up the issues of the Reformation, but when the council finally met at Trent it was strictly a Roman Catholic "mechanical" council. The result was to uphold papal supremacy and to pronounce anathemas on those who held to Protestant doctrine.
The immediate reaction of Protestants to the Council of Trent was doctrinal and structural hardening. The fluidity which had existed in the decades of the Reformation was gone. National churches

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