

Not So Golden Years

By DENNIS J. GEANEY, O.S.A.

"Don't let anyone tell you that old age is the golden years of your life." The speaker was a whisper of a woman hobbling to open the door to let me out after bringing monthly communion to her and her aged sister. Their symptoms of old age were the common ones.

One sister was becoming forgetful and confused. She was a constant care and worry to one whose sight was failing and who could hardly care for herself. As bad as the situation was, one provided relief for the other. Each could focus on the feelings and needs of the other rather than bathe in unrelieved self-pity.

The conversation was on doctors, fittings for glasses and the like. Interests were narrowing to the topics dealing with sheer survival. Weather had ceased to be a topic of conversation. Some day the topic of conversation will be nursing homes. The decline will continue and there will be the sheer inability to get from bedroom to bathroom to kitchen. It will be the transfer from one depressing situation to another.

Not every communion call is depressing. There is the well-preserved and well-kept woman in her eighties or nineties who sits in her rocking chair with an ever cheerful smile. She has

little to say; she does not try to remember; she is satisfied to receive with gratitude the care of a widowed daughter who keeps the apartment spotless, which is not characteristic of the dwellings of the elderly. Her declining years are graceful, there is no pain; there is serenity and the quiet acceptance of the downhill journey to death.

The Fiery Type

Then there is the woman who sits in her chair and speaks with great effort in a muttering fashion in an Irish brogue. If I am late, I catch what is left of a once fiery Irish temper. She must have been an active

woman with a strong personality. She is fighting old age. She tries to light the candle with a shaking hand and scares the life out of me.

From the first month we almost had a knock-down, drag-out fight over my not taking money for the visit. It was an Irish custom she was not giving up while there was a spark of life left. We compromised and I take the money as a Mass offering. Our conversation is quite limited. Every month I say, "How are you?" and every month the reply is "Not good."

In another home, Mildred an aged woman is propped up in a bed in the middle of a living room. I had visited her before she was a bed patient. She took it hard for a while, always talking about her loss of memory and being confined and hoping she would get better. Now there is resignation. Her memory will not come back and she will not rise again this side of eternity.

The price of acceptance and resignation is lack of interest in life. I am attracted to the people who fight back. Life is worth fighting for. It is not a golden life, but it is better than letting one's self become a vegetable.

Ann is in her eighties, a shut-in, always cheerful and in good health. Now she is slipping fast. Loss of memory and occasional confusion are the salient embarrassing. Yet, there is serenity about it. She is thankful for the happy family life she has had. She thanks God for it in her feeble way. She seems to grow in beauty. Some day I'll receive a call about funeral arrangements.

Last of a Breed

Women seem to dominate communion lists, but Bill is an on-and-offer. He recovers for a little while, or is a hospital patient, but when I bring him communion he reacts to me a prayer to God asking blessing upon all priests and especially me. It is a long prayer which he has memorized and inserts the name of the priest present. He has a box full of prayers which he works at all day long. He is the last of a breed. It is becoming increasingly difficult to buy a box of assorted prayers and novena booklets in a religious goods store.

Faith in the promises of God and faith in the eternal endurance of the things for which I lived, suffered and died, must grow as my body declines and my memory lapses.

Joseph Breig

A 'Piggyback' Catholic Press?

The young Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, has come up with something new in journalism—a "piggyback" diocesan newspaper which is published as a supplement of, and delivered with, the local secular newspaper.

Inevitably, this novel event has caused at least a few people to ask whether something of the sort couldn't be done with all diocesan newspapers.

Before anybody starts lining up behind such a notion, let's look at it realistically. The majority of Catholics live in the metropolitan areas. Let us therefore take for an example one such diocese with which I am particularly familiar.

Within the diocesan boundaries there are 10 daily newspapers. The diocesan weekly is a publication of 12 to 24 pages, depending upon the flow of news and advertising.

Giving the piggyback idea every possible advantage, let's say that if the diocesan paper (which pays its own way) were discontinued, its essential news, interpretations and comment could somehow be compacted into four pages, to be inserted in the dailies. That's a big assumption, but let's make it.

The total cost of buying four pages once a week in each of the 10 dailies would be roughly between \$500,000 and \$800,000 a year—and this before one cent was invested in paying reporters, editors and columnists;

in subscribing to news and photo services; in providing office space, and so on. And all the money would be going out; there would be no income except from diocesan subsidy—that is, from church collection baskets.

But why not buy space in just one daily—perhaps the biggest? Aside from the fact that even such a procedure would be very expensive, the answer is obvious. The Church would be put in the position of favoring one daily, and discriminating against the others; also of using the donations of all Catholics of the diocese to publish the diocesan paper in a daily which many or most of them did not read.

Financial realities alone, therefore, make the piggyback idea wildly impracticable except in a few rare rural situations. But there are other problems in addition. Here are some of them:

1. Nobody needs to pay the dailies to publish the "big" religious news which interests great numbers of readers. With respect to such news, the function of the Catholic press is to present it in greater depth and background, and more interpretatively for better understanding.

2. The presence of the "diocesan paper" section in the daily would seem to imply or suggest some sort of approval of the daily as a whole, including (for instance) its political

judgments and preferences; tawdry news accounts, photos and advertising, especially on the entertainment pages; positions at variance with Catholic social doctrine; articles favoring or condoning divorce, abortion, moral subjectivism and laxity, and the like.

3. The "supplementary" character of the diocesan-paper section would tend to contribute to the notion of religion as being of trivial importance in the affairs of the community and of the world.

4. The Church as a paying client, would find itself giving constant financial and prestige support to an institution which not infrequently, in various respects, is at odds with the spirituality which the Church strives to instill and foster, and with the spiritual mission of the Church generally.

5. Readers would tend to feel that the diocesan-paper section was hardly worth their time, because it would be appearing in a paper which would have editorially decided that this particular news was not important enough to carry, but rather fell into the category of advertising. (And in this connection, let it be noted that the most significant news can end up in the wastebasket. After all, it does make a difference whether an editor is judging from the viewpoint of this world—or in the light of this world as being ultimately meaningful only in relation to the world to come.)

There are, of course, some major questions as to whether the proposed constitution as a whole is good and whether it is genuinely in the best long-term interests of the people. My personal opinions on those matters are beyond the scope of this letter, but this brings me to my most important point:

The position of Catholic leaders in general on this issue is rooted in Catholic self-interest without regard for the greater good for the majority of the people of our state. Their position reflects the selfishness that permeates our society today, rather than the selfless generosity upon which our religion is based.

I refer, of course, to the fact that a vote in favor of the proposed constitution is far more than a vote to repeal the Blaine amendment. It is a vote in favor of several other issues which are highly debatable. Perhaps above all, it is a vote of confidence in the work of the Constitutional Convention—and there are serious questions about whether that work merited the confidence of the people.

Yet, with these unresolved issues before us, we find church leadership urging us to vote in favor of the proposed constitution—without reference to these issues or the need for the Catholic voter to come to an informed decision on each of them before making his decision on how to vote.

How much more Christian—and more noble—if our Catholic leadership had stood up with a statement more like this:

"Before and during the deliberations of the Constitutional Convention, the Church worked hard and justifiably for repeal of the Blaine Amendment. We still are undeniably in favor of repeal. However, since the issue now has been combined with others in a proposed constitution being presented on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, we urge every Catholic to study each and every one of these issues before concluding how he should vote."

—Owen J. Crumb, Rochester

Donald Hollender

I have had the privilege of being on the Aquinas Institute faculty since 1947 and some of the happiest memories concern Major Donald Hollender who gave his life for his country recently.

Blessed with a great sense of humor Donald was a "leader among boys" as he completed his freshman year at the Aquinas Annex in 1948.

Big of heart and stature, this giant among men excelled in

On the Right

An Idealistic Rookie

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Perhaps one reason I am so out of sympathy with chronic critics of the Church is my novitiate in the priesthood under Father Joseph Curtin. St. Bernard's Seminary had trained us well for the needs of a generation ago. We had adequate knowledge, a loyalty to the Church, a reverence for the priesthood, and a conviction that we were ordained to serve the people through the Church.

We had a strong sense of self-discipline and of responsibility to the people. Despite a bit of good-natured griping, there was an absence of emasculating ego-pity.

A later generation thinks the cold impersonal discipline of old St. Bernard's Seminary was unchristian. Most of us, in retrospect, think it was an excellent training for men who were ordained to serve people, not infrequently under the rule of some iron-fisted pastoral Tartar whose reading of the Gospel seemed to concentrate on Luke VII: "I too am a man subject to authority, and have soldiers subject to me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Father Curtin was pastor of Clyde and Savannah from 1929 to 1961. In 1935 I was sent to

him, a green, idealistic rookie ready to change the world. In him I found all the virtues some seem to think were discovered in Vatican Council II for the first time since the death of John the Evangelist. Father Curtin's was an utter charity; a dedication to the poor; the poor in mind, the poor in grace. His vision was world-wide as well as local. No man was more concerned about the Mission Church. He expressed his concern in regular cash donations to the Propagation of the Faith and other Missions. He did not consider his mission to the parishes to be just to Catholics. He knew he was sent to everyone who lived in his parishes.

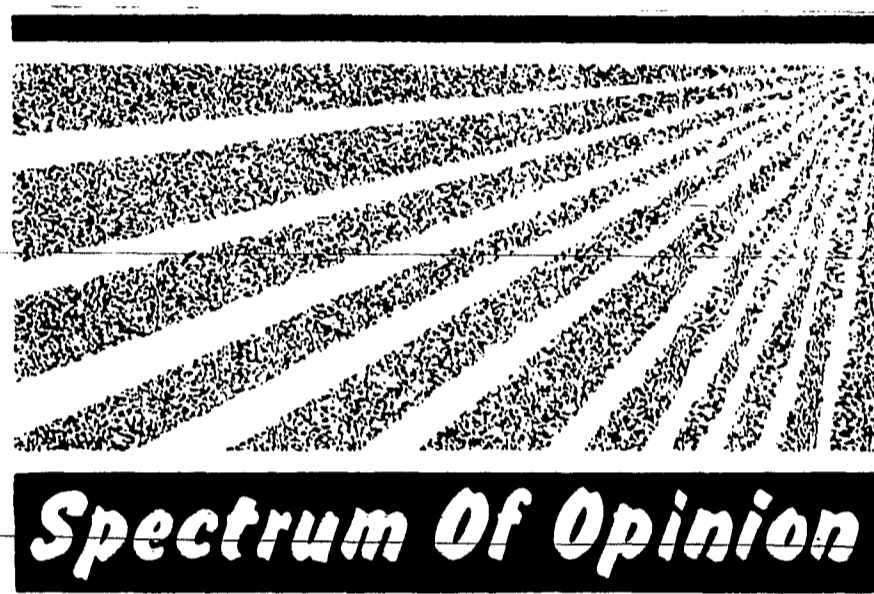
Father Curtin studied the papal encyclicals on Labor and Atheistic Communism keenly, and taught them to his people. He had little ritualistic sense; he was the worst singer in the diocese; yet he followed the liturgical developments in the Church keenly. He was less concerned about rubrical niceties but was deeply concerned that the Liturgy be expressions of Christ acting in and through His Church.

A generation ago he was a pioneer in liturgical studies. He bought and distributed dozens of one of the earliest popular books on the understanding of

the Mass, namely, "If I Be Lifted Up" by Father Paul Bussard. He studied liturgist Father Elard, S.J. thoughtfully. He knew that Christ and the Church are one; and that true Liturgy is THE great work of the Church. He lived simply, silently, prayerfully, cheerfully, actively; loyal to the Church, to his bishops and to the people. Although he was the most tolerant of men, with all his tolerance he could not stand either a liar, or a defector.

Recently I read: "There is so much made of the priest who has one or other difficulty; however, not a headline is seen about the thousands of ordinary priests who have worked so hard for the good of the world. They get a few lines in the small print in the obituaries. Good gets little publicity . . ."

The well publicized defections from the Church, and the quiet unpublicized ones are a great sorrow to all of us. But courage and hope comes not only from remembering the dedicated priests of the past, but especially seeing the loyalty, love and zeal for Christ and His Church bursting out of the hearts and hands of good young priests who spend their time, not in tearing down, but in building up Christ's Body in a milieu so different from that of their older brothers in the priesthood.



The New Constitution, a Symposium, a Teacher's Tribute

A Survey

Out of curiosity I took a survey on the proposed constitution. Here are the results:

In favor 6
Opposed 74
Undecided 21

This may not be too surprising but perhaps the Catholic vote in the survey is:

In favor 4
Opposed 18
Undecided 8

It would appear, therefore that the pleas made by Catholic organizations for approval have had little effect on this group. Unsolicited comments from the Catholic element suggest that the Blaine issue is not sufficiently important to overcome objections to other parts of the constitution. Beyond that, comments were made by more than half of the Catholic vote indicating that they would favor the church's withdrawal from parochial school education. I learned also that this feeling was expressed by a recent questionnaire at a local parish.

The advertisements put forth by the CEF were subject to a very strong attack by a vast majority, the Catholics, on this issue, were considerably disturbed by the misrepresentation and sincerely hoped that this campaign would not disrupt the improving relationships between Catholics and non-Catholics. Many non-Catholics were also disturbed by the supposed Catholic approach; that is, concentrating very strongly on an issue without apparently being concerned with other provisions. It appeared to them that the Catholics are striving for passage merely to get the "Blaine Amendment" repealed.

It would be naive to conclude that this poll is representative, or even that the comments are typical, however, it would seem unwise to ignore these data completely. Perhaps what is needed now is a more complete survey of the diocese to determine the consensus of the people. Perhaps all the people should be asked if they want the parochial school system and if they are willing to support it.

—Casper C. Paprocki, Rochester

Equality in Parish

In these times, when so many loud noises are being made about "fairness to children" (Blaine Amendment), I feel it is only proper that someone speak up for the children that are really being treated unfairly. I refer, of course, to the 3% to 4% of all our Catholic children, those attending public schools. These children are given the opportunity to attend brief catechetical classes in the most part taught by well-intentioned,

though often unqualified, persons under very poor teaching conditions using out-dated materials.

During school fund drives the point is always stressed that the building is also to be a catechetical center. Somehow this fact is tragically secondary as the school is completed and all are caught up in the complicated business of educating the minority, the full-time students.

All parents in a parish contribute financially to its support. Some parents after careful consideration, feel their children can get a better, more well-rounded education in a public school. This does not mean that they only want mediocre or poor religious education for them.

Religion is the only subject Catholic children cannot receive in a public school. If we cannot afford to hire qualified teachers and provide good equipment to instruct all our Catholic children in religion (our serious obligation), then I suggest that we stop spending so much money teaching all subjects (not our obligation) to only a few of our Catholic children.

—Mrs. Fred Roy, Hilton

Wall of Ignorance

As a Candidate for the State Constitutional Convention last year, I fully supported the repeal of the Blaine Amendment. I am now, however, taking a stand that the new constitution must not be passed, regardless of the Blaine repeal, for there is more to be lost than to be gained by all the people.

Christ said: "Woe unto you lawyers, Pharisees, hypocrites for ye have placed unbearable burdens on men's shoulders for which ye raise not one finger to help them." This is the situation in which we find ourselves. Politicians and lawyers were prevalent at the convention. Statesmen were rare. Surely any stand that the Catholic church takes should be for the good of all, as well as for the good of its own membership. The Catholic church should not allow itself to be used in order to further the partisan purposes of the Speaker of the N.Y. State Assembly. The one-package deal puts all of us in a precarious position. Will our church leaders again follow the lawyers and politicians?

In the new charter, I fear the bond issue approval being taken away from the people, particularly when our bonds these days run into billions of dollars. I lament the fact that not one session on ethics was put into the new charter. I worry that the new state aid formula will take more money from the localities to the state, whereas it

seems to lose its volume and comes back weaker.

The wall of color, the wall of race, and the wall of religious bigotry may be crumbling, but we will not move into the age of fairness until we knock down the most cruel wall of all—the wall of ignorance.

I know how badly the Catholics want the Blaine Amendment repealed. But in one additional year, working through the Legislature, this could be done.

—Ralph Borysewski, Rochester

Self Interest

Editor —

As a Catholic and a registered Democrat, I am appalled by the public position taken by the leadership of both my church and my party on the proposed new state constitution.

But before I explain, let me set forth some of my personal convictions and biases so that they won't cloud my main points:

I am not opposed to repeal of the Blaine Amendment.

I am heartily in favor of the Church becoming involved in public affairs such as the Blaine issue—as a means of stimulating Catholics toward greater awareness and more participation in the workings of democracy and government. I regret that on this current constitutional issue, the position of church leaders tends toward just the opposite result—in a way that may preclude the Church from ever becoming a credible force in public affairs in our state.

From our parish pulpit, I heard the congregation told that it is time for Catholics to band together and support the proposed constitution. Let's examine the implications of that statement—which pretty well summarizes the position of church leaders on this issue!

Most of us of the present voting generation have been reared to believe that we should do what we are told to do from the pulpit. The statement made by our pastor, then, is tantamount to telling the people to vote in favor of the proposed constitution or suffer, at the very least, some pangs of guilt.

The statement, therefore, offers a false sense of security to the politically apathetic or uninformed. "Since the pastor said to vote for it, the proposed constitution must be good." That is likely to be the conclusion drawn by many of those who would rather not take the time and trouble to exercise their democratic responsibility to study the whole constitution and come to an informed decision on how to vote on it.

football, baseball and basketball while at Aquinas.

He always had time to stop and chat and he was esteemed and respected by the faculty and students. We all know the glorious story he wrote at West Point and it was here that he carried on the great leadership ability that was so prevalent while he was a student at Aquinas.

He was "All American" in every respect and brought great glory to the Military Academy. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be his friends, who followed him through the years by letters and clippings, know the great work that he did which brought him the esteemed title of "Major."

Our city is saddened. We have lost a great American and Aquinas Alumnae. Major Donald Hollender well exemplifies the last words of the Aquinas Alma Mater—"Triumphant over all." May His Noble Soul Rest in Peace which he so justly deserves.

—William F. McCarthy, Member of the Aquinas Faculty

Scandalous Symposium

Editor —

May we reply to the letter of Rev. Albert P. Bartlett, S.J. in the Courier-Journal of October 20.

Fr. Bartlett has not been able to contest the accuracy of the Courier's (to us, still shocking) report that at McQuaid (1) priests, nuns, and laymen said "the Catholic Church's reasons against birth control were wrong"; (2) "No one spoke in defense of the Church's prohibition against it"; and (3) "they agreed contraception was a necessary first step" in solving population problems.

He not only, unfortunately, defends their scandalous behavior (in that farce of a dialogue with Planned Parenthood), but in effect puts his stamp of approval on their dissent from the official Catholic teaching concerning contraception. Such dissension is not disloyalty to the Church, he assures readers. Now, was it really "scholarly discipline, in responsible language" for Symposium participants to defy the Holy Father's wishes (enunciated on June 23, 1964 in a message to the Sacred College that: "Nobody should for the time being take it upon himself to pronounce himself in terms that are different from the existing rule" (banning contraception)?

Fr. Bartlett warns: "Beware of our certainties." Well, Father, we do have certainties derived from adherence to the

magisterium of the Church. Pope Paul reminded all Catholics—even scholars—of one of them on October 29, 1966 in his Address to Italian physicians: "The thought and the norm of the Church are not changed; they are those in force in the traditional teaching of the Church." This norm, "integrated by the wise instructions of the (Vatican) Council, demands faithful and generous observance. It cannot be considered as not binding as if the magisterium of the Church were in a state of doubt." It is a "norm which the law of God—far more than our authority—far more than any partial interest—makes into the best and most sacred norm for us all."

We also are certain as to what Pius XII taught concerning the "priests" of his time who possessed a "contraceptive mentality" (to use a term made current by Bishop Wright of Pittsburgh).

"We admonish, therefore, priests who hear confessions and others who have the care of souls, in virtue of Our supreme authority and in Our solicitude for the salvation of souls, not to allow the faithful entrusted to them to err regarding this most grave law of God; much more, that they keep themselves immune from such false opinions, in no way concurring in them. If any confessor or pastor of souls, which may God forbid, lead the faithful entrusted to him into these errors or should at least confirm them by approval or by guilty silence, let him be mindful of the fact that he must render a strict account to God; the Supreme Judge, for the betrayal of his sacred trust, and let him take to himself the words of Christ: 'They are blind and leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit.'" (Casti Connubii—1958—the doctrinal weight of which was duly sanctioned in a footnote to Vatican II's Decree on the Church Today, No. 51).

If the moral theology of Fr. Bartlett and his Symposium speakers is gravely deficient, his grasp of dogmatic theology is equally astonishing: "The Jesuit Cardinal, Robert Bellarmine, . . . neatly defined the Church, as those who are under one faith, the same sacraments, the same legitimate pastors, and the one Roman Pontiff. Vatican II has radically altered that concept of the Church's nature. I would therefore think it could more easily alter our concept of the Church's doctrine."

Fr. Bartlett appears unaware of the beautiful address on "The Church—A City" delivered by Pope Paul VI on May 25, 1966 wherein the Supreme

Pontiff insisted: "The Church is in fact a juridical, organized, visible perfect society. Let us recall once again the classic definition of St. Robert Bellarmine: the Church is 'the assembly of men, who profess the same Christian faith, joined together by communion in the same sacraments, under the guidance of their legitimate shepherds and especially of the Roman Pontiff.'" The Pope thus quoted with unashamed approval St. Robert's juridical definition of the Church Militant, apparently not even suspecting any fundamental discrepancy between it and Vatican II ecclesiology!

In conclusion we ask Fr. Bartlett to ponder carefully the following thoughtful analysis of Dr. Joseph Diesha, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dayton:

"Any discussion in regard to Catholic education not only must be concerned with the personal views of (an) author but also must take into account the position held by the teaching authority of the Church . . . and that no scholar or educator is allowed to neglect this primary duty in his personal or professional explorations. Unfortunately, it seems to be almost universal, in particular among the writers in the U.S.A., to debate issues pertaining to philosophy, education, theology, and morals without that regard to Church teaching which should be demanded of her members. This is a secularistic trend that today invades Catholic minds is especially noticeable since the opening of Vatican II, and it does not seem to have ceased influencing many Catholics even after the close of the Council. Examples of such behavior can be seen in the most recent public discussions on birth control, the nature of the Church, infallibility, freedom in the Church, the role of bishops in the ecclesiastical magisterium (collegially), the question on the rights of the Church to conduct Catholic schools, in particular on the college and university level, the rights of the laity in the Church, and other matters."

"One does not wish to give the impression that one is opposed to every reasonable discussion or clarification of the questions that our present-day situation proposes, as long as such a debate is conducted in a manner and spirit compatible with the basic principles and doctrine of the Catholic faith and sufficiently reveals the tradition which demands a true ecclesia—thinking and feeling with the Church" (Social Justice Review October, 1967).

—Mr. and Mrs. James Likoudis, Watkins Glen