

Monks Continue Psych Experiment

By JAIME FONSECA (NC News Service)

The closing of the Benedictine monastery near Cuernavaca, Mexico, after most of the monks left to pursue further experiments in psychoanalysis, raises many questions. Among them are: who owns the buildings and what is the future of the head of the monastic psychoanalytic experiment, Benedictine Father Gregoire Lemerrier?

Another is whether the new Emmaus Psychoanalytical Center will succeed in its attempt to form what Father Lemerrier describes as "an ecumenical family united by faith in man and by a common trust in the techniques of psychoanalysis."

The former Benedictine priest said that his move does not mean "a break" with the Catholic Church on his part.

"For the purpose of my present work at Emmaus I consider it best that I perform my duties as a lay person," he told NC News Service. "I simply asked to be dispensed from my priestly duties, a decision accepted in Rome."

Twenty-one of the 24 monks that originally formed the Benedictine community at Nuestra Señora de la Resurreccion in the hills near Cuernavaca joined the priest in asking the Holy See to be dispensed of their religious vows. All except Father Lemerrier have received the dispensation. "My case is still pending," he stated.

On Sept. 4 the apostolic delegation in Mexico City released a decree, issued earlier in Rome by the abbot primate of the Benedictine Confederation, Benno Cardinal Gut, ordering the closing of the Benedictine monastery.

At the time of the decree only three of the 24 monks had remained in the community. They have sought monastic quarters elsewhere.

The decree climaxed a two-year investigation and canonical process as complex as the issue of psychiatry in religious life itself. Church authorities frowned on the Cuernavaca abbot's attempts to use psychoanalysis in the religious guidance of novices and monks, after undergoing treatment himself six years ago.

On May 18 of this year a three-cardinal commission revoked a Doctrinal Congregation decree of October, 1965, which recalled Father Lemerrier to his native Belgium and prepared the closing of the monastery. The commission, however, prohibited the abbot, under pain of being suspended from his priestly rights, to defend the theory and practice of psychoanalysis ever again.

Father Lemerrier was at the time in Rome, under an eight-day suspension. Shortly after, he returned to Cuernavaca and announced to a widely publicized press interview that he and a majority of the monks were asking Rome for dispensation from their vows and forming a new monastic community open to all faiths and conditions in life.

(Press reports asserting that the closing decree also "excommunicated" all the monks involved in the experiment have been denied at the Rome headquarters of the Benedictine Confederation. An official there said that no specific excommunications have been issued. He added, however, that a public rebellion against earlier decisions of the Holy See could automatically carry such censure, particularly in the case of Father Lemerrier.)

"I have no comment on the decree," the former abbot said in his interview with NC News Service. "In regard to my own situation, it is simply a cessation of a bilateral agreement between the Church authorities and myself. This does not mean a diminishing of my quality as a believer and Christian. I have continued receiving the sacraments."

Then, referring to having been branded as a "rebel" by some Mexican papers, he added: "I am not against the Vatican. I only regret some feelings and words of the part of some officials. I feel compassion, but no bitterness. We have taken the right course in my opinion, and I am calm and serene."

Of his new Emmaus group, headed by Psychoanalysts Gustavo Quevedo, Frida Zmud and Jose Luis Gonzalez, Father Lemerrier said: "We are doing very well. In the last three months since the center opened 11 new members

joined the original 33. We had to stop accepting new ones for lack of space." The priest refused to elaborate on the ownership of the buildings composing the monastery facilities and the additions built for the center, except to say that "a private group" owned the property.

The Center for Social Communications (CENCO), a Church-run information office in Mexico City, confirmed that under Mexican law religious denominations, including the Catholic Church, cannot own or administer property.

The Benedictine decree closing the monastery implies technical ownership of the Cuernavaca buildings, a display of modern architecture set against a hilly area of 30 acres. The first building was started by the monks in 1950, helped by contributions.

Father Lemerrier said the private owners consider the possibility of donating part of the property to an orphanage in the same locality. The orphanage is run by Father William Wasson, a U.S. citizen.

The new center supports itself partially from growing avocados and from the sale of artworks made by the members, considered outstanding works of modern art.

Mexican Catholic reaction to the monks' move is mixed.

Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca, now in Rome trying to clarify the issues involved, said in a pastoral letter at the time of Father Lemerrier's decision:

"For many years, the monastery has been a radiant center of Christian life. It has attempted to renew Benedictine monasticism. Its celebration of the liturgy foreshadowed the reforms we now enjoy. Moreover, the monks have offered the Church an example of poverty, peacemaking, labor, charity, in a word, their love and the luminous quality of their art."

The monastery was the first and only contemplative group for men in Mexico.

The national Catholic weekly, Union, has written:

"Lemerrier has the right to ask for dispensation, although his timing might be open to debate. Our readers can agree or disagree with the monastic experiment in psychoanalysis at Emmaus, but no one can tell whether it will work or fail. The whole issue does not mean that Lemerrier and his monks have broken away from the Church..."

"Even if they fail, history tells us that humankind, and for that matter the Church, would have never progressed but for the men that were willing to risk failure." The priest said for all drothothorathlithtme



Will You Help Fit Him?

Early reports on Thanksgiving clothing drive in parishes of the Diocese indicate tons of items will again be shipped to needy around the world. Photo above shows clothes from U.S. Catholics being fitted to youngsters in a Manila slum. Parish bulletins should be consulted for time and location to bring items for this month's charity appeal.

Father Haering on New Morality

Responsibility, Not Just Obedience

New York—(RNS)—Redemptorist Father Bernard Haering, noted Roman Catholic theologian, said here that the "one side key concept" of obedience toward those in authority, which has characterized much moral theology must "partially be replaced by the more fundamental concept of personal and social responsibility."

The statement was included in an address on "New Presuppositions of Christian Ethics" delivered at Union Theological Seminary where Father Haering is Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor.

"Moral theology tries to harmonize continuity and alertness with the needs of our times," he said. "Until Vatican II many Catholic moralists, especially in the U.S.A., thought it would be enough to pay attention to the new practical questions and problems and then to give answers within the old framework of principles."

"Today almost all moralists have become aware that many of the old principles which were considered as unchangeable truths have to be re-examined."

Saying that many "principles" taken to be unchangeable in past years were not at all "abstract principles" but themselves applications, he stated that all it is necessary for moralists to "review the presuppositions of moral theology and to examine the context in which Christian ethics has to fulfill its task today."

Father Haering, one of the authors of the Vatican Council's document on the Church in the Modern World, devoted a long section of the lecture to Roman Catholicism's presupposition on moral theology during the last three centuries.

He summarized by noting that the study of "natural law" which is involved in moral theology did not adequately reflect at the beginning of the modern scientific age the "modern scientific study of man's nature."

If sociology, psychology, anthropology and comparative study of cultures is ignored, he said, there is the danger of arriving at a "vicious circle" holding: "The Church was teaching that this is a doctrine of natural law; therefore, it must be an unchangeable natural law since the Church did teach this."

The second section of the address focused on "the new context of Christian ethics," which, the speaker stated, is aimed not at "total relativism" but in a society in which each individual can find fulfillment.

Other speakers included Mr. Tadao Tanaka, chairman of the Japan Artists Association; Dr. Timothy Moon, Hank Kuk Theological Seminary in Seoul; and the Rev. Denys J. Saunders of the Methodist Missionary Society in England.

A statement adopted by the conference declared: "Modern communications technology is bringing into being a new man, just as the industrial age transformed the man of the age of agriculture and handicraft. Now, at the beginning of the electronic evolution in Asia, it is imperative that the church seriously involve itself in a ministry through mass communication."

"Only through mass communication may the Word of God be communicated to the masses. To preaching, teaching and healing must be added communicating through mass media—the fourth task of the church."

The American churchman sharply criticized the mass media industries for their subservience to "the four false myths of hedonistic, mass-structured society." These he listed as:

- "We are getting better and better."
• "Happiness is the chief objective of life."
• "Man is basically good."
• "Ultimately, material things are everything."

Dr. Parker warned that there is no place "for manipulative techniques" in communications aimed at a "stable, peaceful society."

Japan Laity Plan Synod Hokkaido, Japan — (RNS)—Roman Catholic men, women and youth groups will send official representatives to the first diocesan-wide laity synod ever held on the Japanese island diocese of Hokkaido.

Scheduled for mid-January, the synod was arranged by Maryknoll priests serving the area, with the support of Bishop Benedict Tomizawa of Hokkaido, which has the largest area of any other Catholic diocese in Japan.

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He called for a "natural law doctrine" fully linked to "man's growth and development" and one understanding man's "personalistic and existential" dimensions.

The fundamental problem of Christian ethics, Father Haering concluded, is the question "What is man?" This question, he added, must be "studied in a Christocentric perspective... and in great openness toward the new possibilities and needs of men."

The implications of a "renewed self-understanding of the church as a community of love, gathered by the rallying call of Christ" may produce the "ability to speak to those modern men who reject the legalistic and all too institutional understanding of the church that reflected itself in so many manuals of Catholic moral theology of the past century," he told the audience.

Modern life, he said, contains a "deep desire for integration." "The all too many dead issues of theology in the past constitute one of the reasons for the apparent and often striking separation between religion and life."

Two distinct tasks are involved, he stated, in showing the relation of the Christian to the modern secular world: "To understand more fully the commitment of the Christian to the secular world, to peace and justice, honesty and dignity in the world, to culture and progress; his being in the world of today as a Christian and as a 'modern man.'"

"To present Christians in a way that a bridge of understanding is built between a genuine Christian morality... and what is good, just and honest in the morality of those secular men who do not share our faith in Christ."

To accomplish the latter, the theologian said that a new approach is needed to the doctrine of "grace and nature."

He quoted the Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: "The human race has passed a rather static concept of reality to a

dynamic, evolutionary one. "This is one of the most striking new presuppositions. No meaningful theology is possible without full awareness of this fact. Therefore, one of the chief tasks of Christian ethics is a fuller elaboration of the synthesis between continuity of life and dynamism of evolution on all levels."

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Laymen In Pulpits

Montevideo — (RNS)—Leading Roman Catholic laymen participated in a month-long "Operation Testimony" during which they spoke to congregations in parish churches throughout Uruguay.

The mission was designed to help inform the laity—men and women—of the greater church role urged upon them by Vatican Council directives.

One result of the effort was the formation of a number of small study groups which will plan increased church activities by the laity.

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Post-Religious Era in Japan

Seoul, Korea — (RNS)—A Japanese Christian theologian declared here that Asia has entered "a post-religious era" which is developing a new type of man, "the secular man in contrast to his predecessors who were pagans, Jews or Christians."

Speaking at a Consultation on Mass Media, Dr. Yoshinobu Kamuzawa of the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary said that the only way the Churches can reach the masses of secular men is through mass media.

The meeting was sponsored by the East Asia Christian Conference and was attended by delegates from 12 nations.

One of the featured speakers was Dr. Everett C. Parker, director of the Office of Communication, United Church of Christ (USA).

"The objective of Christian communication is not to tell the other person something he needs to know," Dr. Parker said, "but to confront him with himself and God, so he must discover the truth."

The American churchman sharply criticized the mass media industries for their subservience to "the four false myths of hedonistic, mass-structured society." These he listed as:

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How S

By HAROLD SCH... Special Correspondent

Vatican City — (RNS)—The first world Synod of Catholic Bishops has already there are several opinions on plishments.

The pessimistic so high-level debating so which Pope Paul VI on those points of view in making vital decisions on his own.

More positive regard it as an encour



Free

United Nations — Progress in the UN debate on religious so painfully slow suits so open to interpretations the purpose of the dition, now in its preparation, has tgered.

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Russian and Itali were locked in a d whether religion w mental element" in conception of life.

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Italy's delegate remarks "regretta that such a concept was taught "where disseminated." It "s to see means used atheism.

The Committee is sure to adopt a doc could be support greatest possible n countries. If signed by the required n Declaration on Re erance would event to an international ject to individual exceptions and int

So far, the comm ed without dissen paragraph of the article Convention.

It reads: "Cons one of the basic tions is that of the equality inherent i beings, and that al bers have pledged to take joint and tion in cooperati Organization (U.N. and encourage u spect for and of human rights and freedoms for all.