

The Pros and Cons of Openness

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

An open person means one who is open to others. It means to be aware of the other, to be responsive to the other, to catch the feelings of the other, to be joy or anguish.

It is relatively easy to be open to people who are almost total strangers to us. Once we find this nameless person is warm, human, and sensitive to us, we can unload. Many people prefer to go to confession to the priests in the downtown churches or the visiting clergyman. One can talk freely to a bartender or a stranger at the bar and clam up when he gets home.

Intimacy can be a barrier to openness, or rather the fear of intimacy can be very threatening to a relationship. I knew of one rectory that was like one big happy family. You could say what you like and talk back to the pastor when the spirit moved you. It was a no-holds barred relationship. Yet one assistant asked out. It was too much for him. He would prefer a rectory in which the relations were formal. He feared and was uncomfortable with the fraternal love of an open rectory.

Marriages can be the same. Partners can agree to a working arrangement where neither partner gets too close to the other. They use each other by agreement to fulfill all their basic needs except love for which they feel no need or are incapable of sharing. In such marriages there need not be bickering, but a dullness they both learn to mask from relatives and friends.

The open person often finds himself under attack when he is himself with closed people. The open person is a continual threat to the closed person's security. The closed person is protecting himself and might feel he must be aggressive and

attack the open person at every point.

If the open person is really mature and understanding, he listens to the attacks of the others without defending himself. If he stops to defend himself, he will never be able to accept the person. He becomes closed himself.

When his spouse, employer, fellow employee, or neighbor attacks verbally, he is not so much interested in the charges made against himself but the feelings that motivate the other to say things that are meant to hurt. There is often no connection between the accusations and what really bugs—the accuser, but if we keep cool and do not try to take them literally, we might get clues.

The Risk of Openness

To be open is to be vulnerable. We close doors, we cover jars, use safety deposit boxes

and a thousand devices during of life together without real the day to protect things. We do the same thing in conversation. We deal in clichés and platitudes to avoid expressing our feelings in conversation. We are deft at changing the conversation when the subject seems to lead to what is threatening. Why? To be open is to be vulnerable.

Everyone who has tried to be open has been hurt. The stakes are high and one should realize the risks. The one who chooses not to take the risks of openness must let a part of himself die. He must repress his feelings so that they will not betray him again. He must steer clear of any thing or any one that might awaken these feelings.

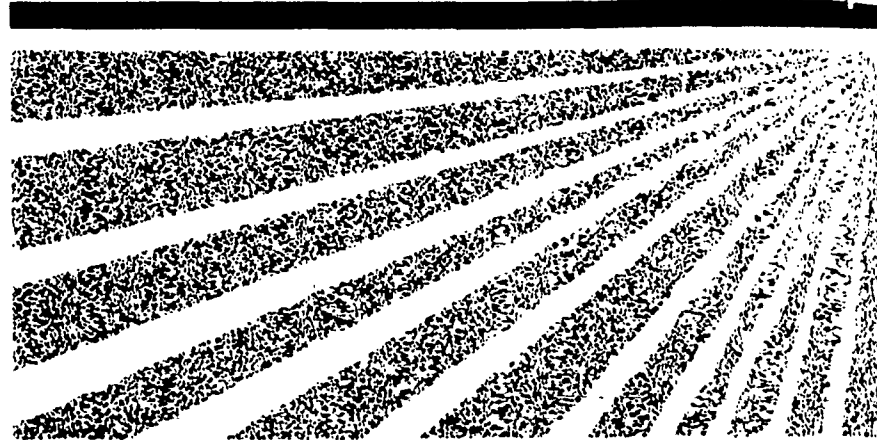
Instead of making friends he will try to find people who are congenial and who like to do the things he likes to do.

They can relieve the boredom contact with one another. The relationship would encourage one to pray for an early death.

To be open means to receive the other. It is a form of communion. Since this communion or openness is love and since love is from God, then it is truly a form of holy communion.

Eucharistic communion heightens and deepens and makes sacred this human form of holy communion. Eucharistic communion is meant to ritualize, consecrate, and confirm in grace the countless communions the open person will have with people through the day or week from Eucharistic communion to Eucharistic communion.

Conversely, Eucharistic communion is meaningless unless there is daily communion with the people we meet, at home, work, play and prayer.



Spectrum Of Opinion

Joseph Breig

The Vexing Humanity of The Church

In the process of reform, renewal and updating, we who (with Christ) make up the Church — laity, clergy, hierarchy — must resolve to hang on tenaciously to our patience and good humor.

We must remind ourselves, day in and day out, that this divine thing is also human—sometimes maddeningly so—and that its humanness is usually more conspicuous than its divineness.

We must be considerate of those who (in our judgment) want to go too fast, or too slow — and with others who want to go nowhere, or even to go backward.

Meanwhile, we must tirelessly develop the arts of civil dialog despite the irritations caused by some persons who behave or talk arrogantly or rebelliously, or with unreasonable exasperation.

We have the spectacle of Father Gommar De Pauw ordering the pope to create a Traditionalist Rite for him and his followers — or else. We have groups trying to pressure the Holy Father on contraction — as if a moral doctrine could be a matter of pleasing the crowd, rather than of humble obedience to the Holy Spirit.

If morality were a matter of majority vote, I might cast a ballot myself for certain exemptions. I find it difficult, for instance, to be patient with prejudiced people, or with those who repeat themselves endlessly. And it would be nice — very nice — to round up the writers of many of the TV commercials and herd them to an old-fashioned western lynching.

We have Father George J. Hafner in Trenton telling a Newman Club gathering that "the entire Christian Church has become corrupt," and Father James J. Kavanaugh saying to students at Notre Dame that "the institutional Church is dead and can go to hell."

One would expect more intelligence from men who have studied theology, Church history and Scripture. Surely they should know that in one sense the Church is always and inevitably corrupt — in the sense that God alone is utterly good, that all human beings are sinners and that if this weren't the case, there would be no need for the Church to exist.

On the other hand, it is also a fact that there is immense goodness in the Church today, as there has always been; and that priests and bishops, however tradition-bound some of

them may be, are in the overwhelming majority sincere, dedicated, self-sacrificing Christians.

It is a pleasure to note that Dominican Father Herbert McCabe of England, who was removed as editor of *New Blackfriars* magazine for writing that the Church is corrupt, has now explained that he selected the wrong word — that he meant the Church isn't doing all it should be doing; has "wandered from its mission."

The Church is always "wandering from its mission," because the Church is made up of people, and (to quote a ruefully humorous cynic) people are "no doggone good."

That's why the Church continually needs reform and renewal. And the renewal and reform must start with you and me, because the Church is us.

Happily, renewal does come, because the Church also is Christ, incarnate God, who will not let us rest in our sins and complacencies.

This is a very good time to remember that Jesus enjoined us to love one another despite our cussedness. That's the way people can tell that we're Christians.

Reader's Comments on Schools, Courier

Seconds Brayer Stand Editor—

The letter relative to the future of our parochial schools, from Paul Brayer, which appeared in your November 17th issue, is an extremely important one. We should all be grateful to Mr. Brayer for his temperate and clear presentation of the problem and its possible solutions.

My own conviction is that Mr. Brayer's fourth alternative, namely the eventual discontinuance of the parochial school system as it at present exists, and its replacement by a system of part-time religious education for all Catholic children, is the only one which can be financed in the days to come.

Monsignor Roche, in his letter in the same issue on the same subject, makes a good case for things as they are, or, at the least, for a policy of "wait and see." However, there is a little wishful thinking in what the Monsignor proposes.

For one thing, the Catholic laity, generally speaking, is not going to be able to increase its rate of church and school support to the extent necessary to keep our schools going much longer. If more money is allocated for school support there will be less for church support, or for the diocese, or for the missions, or for the support of the contemplatives, or for the many other activities which in the last analysis are supported in toto by the laity. Through heroic efforts the total contributions may be increased, but not enough, and not for long.

Monsignor Roche raises the possibility of support from industrial corporations. He speaks of "realistic involvement of the vast resources of industry,"

These resources are not so vast as Monsignor Roche thinks. Certainly they are not as vast as those of the Roman Catholic Church itself.

Then, too, the use of these resources by industry is not entirely without control or limitation. The earnings and all the other funds of an industrial corporation are, in the last analysis, the property of the corporation's shareholders, and only a portion of these are Catholics. The non-Catholic who would object to his tax dollars being used for the support of parochial schools would, as a shareholder, almost certainly object just as much to the use of his corporation dollars for the same purpose. He might

We Love Your Letters!

The Courier editors are elated that our readers are beginning to write in and express their views. However, may we ask for greater brevity?

We suggest that a limit of 350 words would not prevent a letter-writer from getting across his main idea. It's also a stern discipline in self-editing.

So, keep on writing, but if you run over 350 words in the future, you will probably get your letter back with a request for an abbreviated version.

If you think you have a special case—e.g., a quoted reference that can't be cut too short, you are welcome to state your brief. But in general, that's going to be the rule—brief!

—The Editors

even be joined, in his objection, by an occasional Catholic shareholder.

Corporations, it is true, have contributed generously at times to Catholic colleges and to Catholic charitable projects. But this is quite different from the support of a parochial school system which parallels a public school system potentially capable of meeting the entire demand.

Our parochial schools have a glorious record in this country; they filled a pressing need in the days when the public schools were operated really as an adjunct of the Protestant Christian "establishment" and Catholics were second class citizens. Now times have changed. More important, standards are higher, costs have risen and will rise almost geometrically. The tax bite is great, and will be greater.

To call upon the layman for still more "sacrifices" will not solve our problem.

—Joseph P. Garen
Rochester

Likes Courier Diet Editor—

Father Henry Atwell changed the flavor of the Courier-Journal from a bland pudding to much more adult fare.

In doing so, some digestions were obviously upset, but the majority of us thrive and grow stronger on such food.

As any mother knows, once a child has tasted meat and potatoes, he just won't swallow Pabulum any more.

I hope the new editor of the Courier will continue to follow the tradition established by Father Atwell.

—Mrs. W. D. Walker

On 'Working Priests'

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

On November 15 a speaker at a well advertised debate at Nazareth College was asked: "What do you think the Church of the future will be like?"

The reply included: a changed ritual in the Mass and probably a change of material different from the traditional bread and wine; a married clergy; a greatly changed ecclesiastical structure; finally a WORKING CLERGY. The idea of a "working priesthood" spontaneously struck the risibilities of about half the audience.

I thought to myself: "Well. Here are the fruits of five years barrage of anti-clericalism in the ultra-liberal Catholic press. Most of these hand-clappers are in many ways the cream of the Church of Rochester. Yet see how they manifest their subconscious hostility. Their applause spells: 'Our priests are the drons of society. Let them get to work!'"

I had all I could do to refrain from a biting comment: "Working priesthood? Look at the priests right before your eyes in this audience: a cross section of pastors, assistants, teachers, retreat masters, spiritual directors, administrators. What do you think they do all day?"

"I will give you some idea of 'non-work.' These priests pray. They pray their breviary, their rosary beads—they pray their private prayers and meditation. And God help you as well as them if these prayers were neglected. They offer Holy Mass—their greatest privilege and yours. But this is just the start.

They instruct children and adults; they care for the sick. They counsel. While they may not spend as many hours as professional psychologists or psychiatrists, listening to solvable and unsolvable problems, this does consume hours on hours in a great charity. (There is no fee attached to it.) Just the ridicule of smug critics!)

These 'non-working' priests are involved in practical financial and social programs for the Christian community to which YOU belong — and you think

them drones! Have you ever written a sermon? If you think that is not work, and takes no time, sit down and write one — and send it on to me. I'd love to read it. 'Non-workers' indeed!"

The speaker of course, was not referring to the work of the ministry. He meant, priests with secular jobs to support themselves and their families.

This led me to:

A Fantasy: The Priest Of 1984

The phone rings at the home of priest, Brother Pita Hotep. Mrs. Hotep answers. "Hello, Tomar Hotep speaking . . . Oh Zimba. How are you? O come, Zimbia, why the formal 'Mrs.'? We're adli sisters in the Lord."

"No. Pitle won't be back until six o'clock. He's driving a truck for that new bakery, and works long hours."

"Of course the pay is good . . . Oh, didn't you know? He was taking those long hauls for Red Star and was away from home so much I said to him:

"Pitle: You've simply got to change jobs. Four times this week you've missed the evening Liturgy and fellowship. The Community is beginning to complain. In fact, Millie Nako said her boys have decided to join the bowling team which is at the same time as the Liturgy — and you know teen age boys. They said they're tired talking about the Coming, and they want to talk about basket ball and dancing . . ."

"What's that? The sick in the district? Come, Millie. Surely you don't expect Pitle to get involved in that. He has his truck job and the bakery company expects him to take care of minor repairs. That takes a lot of time. And he does have to shower and eat supper before the

Liturgy. Besides Millie, he DOES have a wife and children . . ."

"You don't say! Bobo Smalt in jail again! I'm not surprised Pitle says that if he were married to a nagger like Bobo's wife, he'd take to drink too."

"No, Pitle can't very well get to the jail. His bread route keeps him busy. Anyway priests can't spring anyone from jail any more. All excepting Bishop Lumenierie."

"Pardon? Could the Bishop call on Bobo in the jail? Oh, dear no! Ever since they turned the old churches into social centers he's been busy visiting — I might say INTERFERING — with all the Communities."

"Do you know what he wants now? A collection for the Bulgarian brothers. Imagine! He says that no one is concerned about the Bulgarians and we have to do something about it."

"Pardon? Oh, your cookies are burning? Well, Millie, do call again soon. I have a new recipe called 'Colibates' De-light." Pitle found it in one of those Medieval books, and seems to prefer it to anything else. In fact all his priest friends love it . . ."

"Well, good by, Zimba, and the Lord be with you."

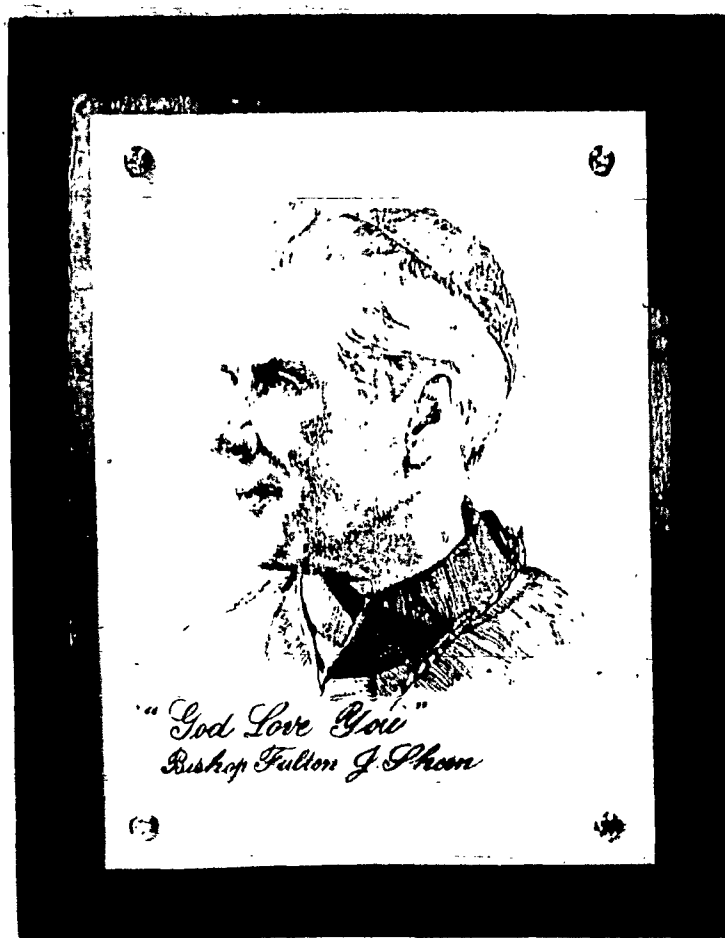
Just then the fantasy faded. My phone and door bell rang simultaneously. On the phone: "This is the hospital. Will you come right away? Serious accident."

And the housekeeper called from the front door: "It's Mr. Burke. Tommy fell off the roof of their garage yesterday and the mother is all upset. Mr. Burke wants you to talk to her — but not until after nine o'clock."

May God forgive me, but as I got into the car to head for the hospital with the holy oils, I found myself thinking: "That bread truck route sounds like a cozy job — except for Zimbia."

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