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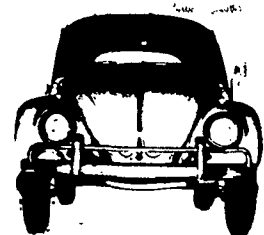
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'Cracks In Steeple' Breaks 'Em Up

Sister had just concluded her lesson and wanted to make sure she had made her point. She said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you obtain forgiveness of sin?"

There was a short interval of silence and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up and yelled, "Sin!"

Well, how about the one about the man who reached heaven and was permitted a glimpse of hades by St. Peter.

To the man's astonishment, down below the sinners were enjoying champagne and caviar and dancing gaily to the rhythm of big-name bands.

"Why can't we have a name band up here in heaven?" he asked.

St. Peter responded, "For four people?"

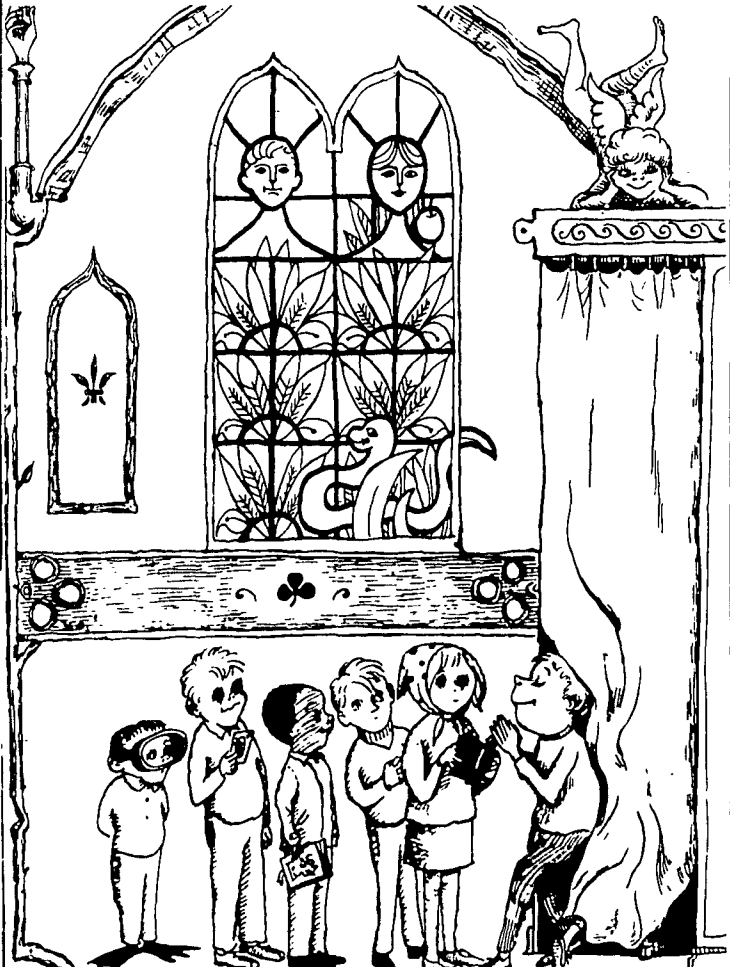
Should you ever be at a loss for a Catholic joke — to tell, to laugh at, or to ridicule — almost 300 of them have been rounded up for a collection

Young children take Biblical stories quite literally, as was revealed when a nun asked her class to draw a picture illustrating something from the Bible and Tommy handed in a drawing showing a big car. An old man, with long whiskers flying the breeze, was driving. A man and a woman were seated in the back of the car. When asked to explain it, Tommy replied:

"Why, that is God. He is driving Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden."

Another youngster, according to another story in Mrs. Blumenfeld's collection, had a complaint for his father: "Sister was reading the Bible to us — all about the children of Israel building the temple, the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel making sacrifices. Didn't the grownups do anything?"

In a more constructive vein, one impatient child came home from confession one day and proposed "a special line for



An express line for six sins or less — an illustration from "Cracks in the Steeple," a collection of Catholic humor. (Drawn by Kelly Oechsli)

itled "Cracks in the Steeple," put out by the World Publishing Company and subtitled "Everyman's Book of Catholic Humor."

Compiled by Gerry Blumenfeld as a sequel to a book she did on Jewish humor ("Tales from the Bagel Lancers"), "Cracks in the Steeple" contains both recent jokes and old classics, including the one about the one-word telegram Governor Al Smith sent to the Pope after losing his bid to become the first Catholic in the White House: "Unpack."

Although they may be of some historical value, a number of the jokes are obviously dated: to give his parishioners an edge over non-Catholics who attend Bingo nights, a priest explains "we call out the numbers in Latin." Others would today be regarded as ecumenically taboo, such as the one in which the priest tells a minister that there is no reason they should not be friends: "After all, we both preach the same Gospel — you in your way, and I in His."

But most of the jokes and anecdotes have a timeless humor, and some of the best of it, as with wisdom, comes from the mouths of children.

"Which virgin was Christ's mother," a confused 10-year-old wanted to know — "the Virgin Mary or the King James virgin?"

When a second-grader rushed home and requested an advance on his allowance, his mother naturally wanted to know what for.

"A real big thing, Mom. Father is leaving St. Mary's, and the kids want to give him a little momentum."

people with six sins or less."

An enterprising young priest's imagination is also recorded in the collection. After taking over a parish in a college town, he suggested on a bulletin board: "If you insist upon sit-in demonstrations, how about trying ours every Sunday?"

The book is dedicated to Pope John XXIII, "whose benevolence and humanity made it easier for people of all faiths to laugh," and some of his better one-liners are included, like his response to a question as to how many people worked in the Vatican: "About half."

Being of the Jewish faith, Mrs. Blumenfeld naturally included a selection of Catholic Jewish jokes, like the one about the two Jewish men who were driving away from a party. Let Mrs. Blumenfeld finish it:

"The driver, unfortunately had taken that one last drink for the road" and drove into an abutment. The front of the car was damaged but neither of them was badly hurt. Sam, the driver, was cut slightly on the forehead, and the blood began to flow down his cheek.

"Frightened, he thought he was bleeding to death in his anguish he cried out, 'Oh, I'm dying. Please God, help me!' and as he pleaded with God, he made the Sign of the Cross."

"Shocked, his friend admonished, 'Sam, what's the matter with you? Did you forget you're Jewish? Why did you cross yourself?'"

"Who forgot?", moaned Sam weakly. "But who has time to make a Star of David?"

(Catholic Press Features)

Papal Relief Official Returns From Egypt

Vatican City — (RNS) — Msgr. Abramo Freschi, president of the Pontifical Assistance Association, returned here briefly after a three-day tour of Egypt and left immediately for Sicily.

In Egypt, he supervised distribution of the latest shipment of relief material sent by Roman Catholic agencies for Palestinian and Egyptian refugees of the Arab-Israeli war. In Sicily, his assignment is to organize relief work for victims of an earthquake.

On his tour of Egypt, Msgr. Freschi was accompanied by officials of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Social Affairs.

He represented both the Pontifical agency and Caritas International, Catholic relief agency.

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Ordain Village Leaders To Meet Priest Shortage

Baarn, The Netherlands — (NC) — To help solve the problem of the shortage of priests, Justinus Cardinal Darmajuwana of Semarang, Indonesia, would like to ordain village heads or other prominent Catholics in areas lacking priests.

In an interview here, the cardinal, who is chairman of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, said: "In some Indonesian areas, like West-Irian, Borneo, Sumatra and Flores we ought to be able to ordain a Catholic village head or any other prominent Catholic, with the consent of his family and the Catholics of his village. He might be a married man.

"We could prepare him for his task in a course of about six months. It is not always necessary that a priest receive

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