

AT OUR HOUSE

Never Carry Sad News

By Mary Tinely Daly



In a jolly little "hands across the mules" gesture, we are all asked periodically to "take time from a very busy schedule" and report to Alms Mater on what's new with us and our families.

Going along with James Boswell on "That favorite subject, Myself," we take time from a schedule not nearly as busy as they think, sit down and tell all. Well, if we do set forth in what at the time seems a becomingly modest manner the "highlights" of our current lives.

This tale ends up, inevitably, in the college "Alumnae Notes."

As we blushing read our own account, three or four months after its first draft was wittily dispatched, our effusion makes for a surprise, if not a pleasant, little lurch.

Did we write that? We did.

Like our contemporaries, we "were presented with a darling little new grandchild." We take top billing, though it was the baby who was born,

our daughter or daughter-in-law who had the baby. And whoever heard of a newborn who was not darling, little—and new?

We also report such unusual health items, with their coyly philosophical addenda, that we "had a bout with the flu, find our arthritis rather painful but these are the penalties one must bear for growing older"—never old, mind you.

Upward and Onward!

We read of the travels, the achievements, the honors that come to our classmates, their husbands, children and grandchildren.

And we marvel.

None ever fails to get a raise in salary. Nobody is ever disheartened, disenchanted, discouraged, fat, balding or broke.

Everybody else's offspring graduate with top honors, win scholarships and fellowships, foreign and domestic. At completion of brilliant ac-

ademic careers, these young people find companies lined up, vying for their services. ("But we think Jim made a wise choice, vindicating the faith we have always had in him, as we have in all our children.")

Don't any but ours ever squeak by with a C average, have the dickens of a time passing college boards or being accepted by a college not "of your first choice?" Or, having finished school, pound the pavements in search of a job that will have real meaning?

Seemingly not. Come to think of it, over the years we've followed the same pattern in reporting to Alumnae Notes; perhaps that's why our contributions are as scanty as they are trite.

As to being "whisked away for a glorious summer visiting Europe and having a private audience with His Holiness," it's hard to say what idyllic prose such a trip would elicit on our part had we ever been so whisked. (We recall our own euphoric alumnae-noted account of two weeks spent in Vermont, summer-before-last, our "highlight" at the time.

Like the sundial motto, "I mark only the shining hours," Alumni and Alumnae Notes give a lift to the spirit. Though the jaundiced eye of age views them with cynicism, what is the first thing you turn to in your own alumnae magazine?

Me too!

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Some Advice for a Worried Nun

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Dear Sister,

Thank you for your letter and your confidence. Can I solve your difficulties? No, I do not think so. Thirty years ago my venerable pastor, Father Curtin remarked: "Every-

You say that you are having a dark night of the soul this past year; your Sisters do not seem open with you; your life seems to have become less relevant and meaningful; you are disturbed by the apathy in the Church; you almost resent the plodding progress in your convent to implement Vatican II.

I am glad that you add with such nice grace: "I have no thought of leaving the religious life. I wear the ring which is the sign of my espousal to Christ, and I intend to be faithful to my death. But sometimes it is hard."

I suppose most people have periods of restlessness and doubt. Certainly married couples do. Some of them endure until the darkness passes; some endure for the sake of the children. But it takes faith, hope and strength to endure during these periods. Thank God most good people do. Those who do not are very often filled with second thoughts when it is too late.

Did you read in the papers last week that Monica Baldwin who wrote the best seller, "I Leapt Over the

Wall" some 25 years ago, describing her life in the convent in England, now announces that she made a great mistake?

That your Sisters are not "open" with you may be a fact or it may not. If it is so, it may be a fault, or it may be a virtue. "Openness" seems to have many meanings. I must confess that the most vocal of the "open" people I have met seem to mean: "Listen to what I have to say, and agree with me."

A confrere asked by opinion about the people holding the bread in their hands for consecration at Mass: "as is done in parts of Holland." I ventured the reply: "We do not live in Holland. We are here. Whatever the merits of the matter may be—and I can see some—under our present conditions I would consider it ill advised and disobedient." He replied: "The trouble with you is you have a closed mind." I did not contest the assertion.

My own thought about "openness" is that it is a qualified good. Why the qualifications? Derived from a respect for an individual's freedom; a fierce demand for guarding confidential matters; and in some cases from the experience that many people simply lack comprehension, even in the simplest dialogue.

Ecclesiastical records: "Be at peace with many, but let one in a thousand be your counsellor. If you would get a friend, try him before you take him, and do not credit him easily. For there is a friend for his own occasion, and he will not abide in the

day of trouble. And there is a friend that turns to enmity; and there is a friend that will disclose hatred and strife and reproaches. And there is a friend-companion at the table, and he will not abide in the day of distress. A friend if he continue steadfast shall be to you as yourself, and shall act with confidence among them of your household. . . . A faithful friend is a strong defence, and he who has found him, has found a treasure." (Ecc. VI—6 sqq.)

There is apathy in the Church, of course. Sloth is the seventh Capital sin—or do you remember that there are those seven capital sins: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth? We are all the sons of Adam, and some of us more so.

I have listened to enthusiastic priests who want "the people of God" to get off their seats and move on in the great evolution to perfection. To one I asked with an unchristian exasperation: "You are constantly carping about the inertia of the Church, of the People of God! Have you worked to change your own mother and father, your sisters and brothers? They are people of God, too. Do you accuse them of irrelevant living because they are 'merely' working, praying, caring for their families, and doing many good deeds on the side?"

The asperity was bad; but the challenge was not. I have never understood why the apostles of reformation want to change everyone but their own kith and kin.

This Man Knows His Answer

This article, reprinted with the permission of The Christian Century, a distinguished weekly Protestant journal, was written by the director of the Glenmary House of Studies at Maryknoll College in Glen Elyn, Ill. The Christian Century published it Feb. 7, 1968, in the belief that "it's time for testimony from a contented priest." The Courier-Journal agrees and is pleased that a Protestant publication first printed this affirmation.

I WANT TO REMAIN A CATHOLIC PRIEST

Personal Testimony in a Time of Questioning

By FATHER JOHN BARRY

Much is being said these days about priests, about discontented priests, about ex-priests. We hear that questions need to be raised, that problems need to be confronted.

Amid all the clatter and clamor of the discussion one important consideration is being neglected: the life and ministry of priests who remain priests.

At the risk of being considered defensive, I propose to present a personal apology for my priestly ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

Used in this connection, the term "apologia" may have various connotations. It may imply that there is something to be sorry for; it may sound apologetic; it may be interpreted as a response to priests who have left the ministry. What follows is, in fact, none of these.

It is simply the personal testimony of a priest who has been happy in the ten years of his ministry. I am a Roman Catholic priest who wants to remain in the priesthood, to remain celibate, and who is committed to the ministry of the organized church.

Living the Word

Serving in the priesthood means ministering to God's people in the name of Christ. It means relating and living the revealed Word of God. It means leading my fellow men in worship. It means the ministry of service—just plain Christian or humanistic service, if you will. To me it means commitment in dedicated celibacy as a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

What is said and written today about the ministry seems to be subject to one of the other of two emphases: (1) on the spiritual ministry, the ministry of Word and worship, an emphasis which places the priest in a prophesying and sacramental

position; (2) on the ministry of service, the diakonia.

Both these elements—the sacred and the secular, the transcendent and the terrestrial—are integrated in the priestly ministry.

To speak about the message of salvation, whether in Sunday worship, on the local radio station, or at a coffee session in a Main street cafe is to me extremely meaningful. To plan and execute a Sunday worship service with the members of a congregation means much to me, because it means much to them and to God.

To visit a shut-in senior citizen, to bring him the sacrament if he wishes it, to chat about the weather the watermelon patch or the war is important. To be with a bereaved family—not necessarily saying anything, just being there—makes the theology of faith, fellowship and charisma come to life. To some readers this may sound extremely naive; it may set me up for a broadside from the secular theologians.

The diakonia ministry meets a definite need in the church of our day. It testifies to the pre-eminence of the human person, to the dignity of humanitarian endeavors.

To me it is a reminder that nothing is beneath my dignity because no one is beneath me. I felt every bit a priest when I cooperated in the local poverty program. As a priest I feel that I should give leadership to the Christian community in the ministry of service.

The monotony of necessary but prolonged meetings and the weariness of work become to me sacramental, a sign both to God and to the people I serve. Again, the only significant explanation I can give is that it is my faith which makes the whole thing make sense.

Celibacy is a Free Choice

The pros and cons of celibacy in the Christian church have their origin in learned studies in theology, psychology and the social sciences. Here again I cannot "argue" for or against celibacy; I can only state that it is meaningful to me.

Fifteen years ago we Catholic seminarians understood that the priesthood and the celibate state were practically one and the same reality. I did realize what I was doing 15 years ago; I made my choice for positive reasons; I accepted that choice as a lifelong commitment. Today I am not only willing but happy to stand by that commitment.

Meanwhile, as an aside, I would ex-

press it as my personal opinion that priests who are unhappy should be readily dispensed, and that in the future priests should desirably be ordained from both the celibate and the married state.

I am convinced that my celibate commitment has sound biblical foundation and is psychologically valid. What Matthew and Paul say about the celibate commitment for the sake of the kingdom of God makes sense to me. Revelation, Ephesians and the Song of Songs tell me the "mystery" of the union between Christ and his bride, between the lover and his beloved. The reality of the divine, grasped in faith, is never adequately expressed in words.

Any psychological explanation would like the biblical reasoning, be difficult to express in simply a person, a human being who enters the divine in faith. Searching, existing, identity and fulfillment are just as real to me as to anyone else. My search and existence are for and in God and his people. Here too is where I find identity and fulfillment.

Existentially I know that as a committed celibate man I can help people, because I have helped them. I want to continue to help people. Even my close friends (there are ministers among them) know what I stand for, and they respect it. They cannot explain it to me any more than I can explain it to them. It's just there, in the context of the God who is and who is to come.

I can candidly say that my love life is very real although sex is not part of it. God is present to me in his church; this church is the bride of Christ, the beloved of the Song of Songs. My relationship with the people I serve has made me feel happy and fulfilled. Furthermore, I have every reason to believe that it will be this way throughout the rest of my life.

That there is no woman, that there are no children who are my own is indeed a sacrifice. Here I believe that my love is supreme. The grain of wheat bears a hundredfold only if it falls into the ground and dies. Whatever physical and emotional experience I forego is a sacrifice which I happily make.

In doing this I believe that the "pearl of great price" can be shared with many because I have sold all that I had and bought it.

Human Flaws in the Church

Aware that the organized hierarchical church is very human and that the structures in the church are much questioned, I assert my commitment to the organized church.

In reality I am dissatisfied with many practices, positions and structures in the Roman Catholic Church. Some things make me angry; I confess that at times I get sick, not just inside but all over.

Something very consoling, however, comes through to me from Vatican II's "Constitution on the Church." There are two elements in the mystery of the church, the divine and the human, the earthly and the heavenly, the hierarchical and the mystical. These "are not to be considered as two realities . . . rather they form one complex reality."

My firm belief in the mystery of God and the church prompts me to accept and even embrace the human and earthly, weak though it is. This is getting at the heart of redemption through incarnation. I see myself as part of the weak and earthly. I believe, moreover, that human weakness is itself an effective sign of God's presence with his pilgrim people.

Experiencing human weakness in bishops, other priests and lay Christians reminds me that "this world is not my home," as the gospel hymn states the reality.

Yes, the weakness of our human state makes me want to serve the institutional, hierarchical church. I want to assist, to aid, to be of service to a congregation and to a bishop. It is easy to forget that the organized church is a congregation, and that congregations are people.

This gets me back to my whole reason for being a priest and remaining a priest: to minister to God's people.

That's why I want to remain a priest.

Weekly Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a 10x10 grid and numbered squares for starting points.

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