

CHURCH AND THE CITY

'Sack-Cloth and Ashes' at Olympics

By Father P. David Finks

The United States Olympic team is coming home with a basket full of gold medals. Yet before most of the world we have lost something far more precious. Two of our super athletes, Tommy Smith and John Carlos, both Black Americans, were expelled from the Mexico games for expressing silent dissent before the world to the discriminatory racial policies still rampant in the United States.

The U.S. Olympic Committee explained its subsequent expulsion of Smith and Carlos as a penalty for their violation of the non-political character of the Olympic Games, "using this occasion to advertise their domestic political views."

Red Smith, well loved for his sports prose and humor, reacted to the pomposity of the U.S. Committee's statement in a fine column next day. In one sentence he put his finger on the real disgrace involved in the incident: "They (the Olympic Committee) are, as Mark Anthony observed on another occasion, all honorable men who consider children's games more sacred than human decency."

Many Americans can't seem to accept the historical fact that peaceful protest by people suffering injustice is far better than bloody strife to right wrongs. Carlos and Smith were squarely in the symbolic "sack-cloth and ashes" tradition of the Scripture prophets with their clenched black fists and bowed heads.

A "letter to the editor" writer in last week's "Democrat and Chronicle" had much the same problem as Red

Smith's Olympic "playground directors who can't distinguish between human rights and politics." Angered by a recent demonstration for peace at Sacred Heart Cathedral, this Rochesterian wrote: "Nuns and priests involved (in such protest) are a disgrace to the Church. Any person of the cloth should be teaching religion and taking care of the parishoners, instead of getting involved in marches, civil and political affairs."

But we have a rather long Judeo-Christian tradition, well-preserved in both Old and New Testaments, of priests and worshippers being cursed in God's name for not speaking out against injustice to people. St. Matthew in his Gospel account (23:13-39) preserves a veritable syllabus of curses attributed to Jesus and uttered against the religious leaders of His time who did nothing about injustice perpetrated against people in their community.

The particular genius of the American democratic process is that it guarantees a forum where free men can peacefully reveal hidden wrongs to its citizens so they can be righted. These public protests are meant to disturb the conscience of the community. The dissenter does not want to leave the nation, he wants his case to be heard and examined by his fellow citizens and right judgment meted out.

The Greek word for "the people" in this sense is "polis," the root of our word "political." Human interaction is always a political process. A man cannot love his neighbor in the

biblical sense without being involved in political process.

The Gospel of Jesus is not addressed to men individually wrapped in plastic bags. The pivotal commands of Jesus to "feed the hungry" and "shelter the homeless" must be carried out in the reality of the social structure in which we live. To affect institutions, customs, laws, human decisions that place destructive burdens on some of our brothers in the human family is to be involved in politics or social action.

The danger of times of social upheaval such as we live in, is the danger of wanting fast, simple solutions to complicated human problems. We don't enjoy conflict and disturbance because they disturb our peace and comfort.

Times like these encourage extremists. The conservative fundamentalist on the right wing wants to return to the past where he thinks life was more simple. Maybe it was in some ways, like childhood, but there is no going back.

The romantic liberal on the far left wants a new society by tea time tomorrow and he too is impatient with the drudgery of slow, hard wrought change.

As Christians we hope that with Christ we can "overcome the world" of easy comfort at our brothers' expense. History will probably judge the asceticism of our day, as it has the Exodus of our ancestors in the Faith, as the hard struggle of political process to free all God's children from whatever captivity.



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Needed: First Class Smiles

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Today I write from Washington, D.C., where the Catholic Chaplains' Association is running a training course. But I write only about the trip down, and my point is:

Get the most for your money.

It seems that as old ships had steerage and upper-decks, new planes have two sections, coach and first class. The first class is in the front; passengers sit two together. The coach is farther back; people sit three together. Because all coach seats had been reserved, I had to go first class. This was regretted, because I live in the theory of populism: i.e., identification with "the people."

Furthermore, I have a keen sense of economy, and the hon ton seats cost \$31.50 instead of the coach price of \$25.50. I smile as I recall the flight.

At Rochester Air Port I entered the classy section of the plane. Because it was near 6 p.m., I figured on a dinner flight, but no. The stewardess took orders for sundry kinds of liquor: bourbon, vodka, Scotch, etc., from the first-class passengers. When she came to me, whether it was the collar, which I doubt, or my facial expression, which I supposed was like most people's, she asked a bit curtly, "Do you want coffee, sir?" I wondered at the discrimination; but replied meekly, "Why yes, please."

Quickly there was great activity. Trays were hustled to ledges fastened to seat backs. Each tray had two miniature bottles of liquor and one wide glass with two pieces of ice. Everyone had booze but me. To add to my bafflement, the stewardess didn't bring me the coffee!

The other f.c. passengers poured and sipped and looked bored. F.c. passengers usually do. I sat wondering at my abandonment. Finally, a different stewardess came, and with a challenge in her voice said: "Do you want something to drink, sir?" She handed me a menu with a heading reading: "Cheers!" and I ordered a Manhattan.

Now actually I didn't want the stuff to drink, but since I had to pay \$6

more for my f.c. seat, I wanted to take everything offered.

So I asked the stewardess cautiously: "Do I have to drink this, or may I take the bottles unopened with me?" She looked incredulous. "Of course you don't have to drink it." She whisked up the glass and two ice cubes, and disappeared. I pocketed the minatures, which I am told are worth a dollar apiece, and presented them as a gift to two holy Dominicans whom I met at the Washington Air Port.

Now the moral of this tale is multifold.



1 — Make plane reservations early if you want economy and the congeniality of "the people."

2 — Keep calm with irritated stewardesses.

3 — Travel, booze and rich foods are broadening.

4 — If you pay for a service, get your money's worth — waste nothing. This has a strong scriptural basis. After the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Jesus said: "Collect the left-overs, lest they be wasted." (John VI)

Who Is a Jew?

Jerusalem — (RNS) — Israel's Supreme Court of Justice convened here to rule on the question, "Who is a Jew?"

For the first time in the nation's 20-year history, all nine justices were on the bench. The court normally hears cases with benches of three or five.

The definition before the court is a problem which has vexed Israeli authorities for many years and once even rocked the cabinet coalition.

The present administrative rule is that a Jew is a person who, having no other religion, is born of a Jewish mother or one who is converted to Judaism.

A challenge to the rule is being made by Major Benjamin Shavit of the Israeli Navy. He has asked the Supreme Court for an injunction against the Ministry of Interior for refusing to register his two children, born of a Gentile mother, as Jews by ethnic nationality.

Because of the delicate problems involved, the full membership of the court declined to sit.

Israel's attorney general, representing the minister of interior, has asked the court to refuse the major's request. He claimed that Jewish religion and national affiliation cannot be separated.

A few years ago a Carmelite priest, Father Daniel O. Rufeisen, a converted Jew, tried in vain to be recognized as Jewish in nationality but not in religion.

The issue is not one of citizenship since non-Jews can live in Israel as fully equal citizens.

Questioned about the necessity of ethnic registration, the attorney general said a girl might well ask a young man she was dating for such information.

In retort, one justice stated: "When I went out with girls, they never asked for an identity card."

At the heart of the matter are marriage stipulations. Marriage is an exclusive concern of the religious jurisdiction in Israel. Therefore, marriages between those of different religions is made difficult.

THE PROGRESS OF PEOPLES

Time to Settle Accounts

By Barbara Ward

The United States Congress has finally passed the smallest foreign aid bill in the whole history of foreign aid. For the first time — at \$1.75 billion — it falls below the \$2 billion mark.

In the same mood of indifference or distaste for economic assistance to less fortunate lands, the Congress has simply not voted the \$60 million needed to replenish the funds of the International Development Association (IDA) — the World Bank's agency for extending loans on very easy terms. This oversight means that other governments could well follow the example of what is by far the wealthiest government in the world. In that case, another \$760 million may never reach the needy nations.

What are we, as Christians, to say of this performance? In particular, what do American Christians say, since the Congress at least claims to represent them?

The unpopularity of foreigners, particularly poverty stricken foreigners, has long been a fact. Of course, these are troubled times with a war

budget of \$70 billion and a tax surcharge and inflationary pressures. Of course, the needs at home are pressing — for the schools, for housing, for the ghettos — although those who argue this point quite often vote neither for domestic nor for international welfare.

We know all this. The difficulties were there, even before the escalation of the war in Vietnam. But now that the deescalation of the war on world poverty has reached the point where a further fall might well retire American entirely from the ranks of combatants, must we not, as Christians, ask ourselves whether this is good enough, whether the phasing out of virtually the only constructive instrument in the nation's array of international policies can really be allowed to take place with hardly a flicker of Christian interest, hardly a trace of Christian protest?

Are we quietly to accept the idea that our relations with two thirds of the human race — whose average incomes are less than a tenth of America's average income — must be based

only on the economic drives of probable "wage and investment" or on the power drives of fear and hate?

For, small as they are, the foreign aid program and America's support for international development policies (which together amount to about \$4.9 billion) are the only outward expressions of the inward grace of the American people accepting a moral commitment to the whole family of man.

But if we do feel a deep concern for the slow but steady draining away of any positive moral content from America's handling of its international relations, what are we to do and say? First, Christians must know the truth about the "economic strain" of which they are always being reminded. There is strain in that prices have been moving upwards — a fairly sure sign that people are trying to get more out of their economy than it is actually producing at the present time.

But what sorts of things? America's total supply of goods and services (its gross national product) has grown by \$60 billion this year, an addition not much less than the whole national income of Latin America and this comes on top of the \$763 billion already reached in 1967.

Of this addition, the tax increase has taken \$10 billion. The rest has gone into consumers' incomes and most of it has been spent. The nations' retailers and automobile manufacturers report high and steady sales — cars, boats, drinks, cosmetics, new homes, new drapes, all essential, perhaps, all pleasant, certainly — but can Christians be sure that all these purchases should have an absolute priority — above clean water in Latin America's urban slums, protein diets for Africa's undernourished children, power for India's indispensable works of irrigation, dikes and dams to keep East Pakistan's wild waters from drowning thousands of innocents?

There is a calculation to be made — between the extra cigarette and the dying child, the extra drink and the starving mother. These are not the fanciful imaginings of over-sentimental do-gooders. These are perfectly factual, simple calculations based on the way money is being used today in very wealthy, highly developed countries like America and the alternative uses to which the resources could be put in the poorer lands, on the other side of the world's tracks, below the poverty line of the Tropics of Cancer among the two-thirds of our fellow men still caught up in all the grinding realities of desperate want.

In short, it is the calculation — over old, ever new — of Davids and Lazarus. And we do not escape it because we buy cars, not camels and use dollars, not shekels. Our timeless Lord still balances the account.

Vatican Establishes Relations with Congo

Vatican City — (RNS) — The Vatican formally established diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo here as Pope Paul VI accepted the credentials of Ambassador Alfonso Sita.

The Democratic Republic, formerly the Belgian Congo, has approximately 5 million Roman Catholic citizens in a total population of 14 million.



Clown

By THE RIGHT REVEREND PAUL MOORE JR.

(Some of our readers might be surprised, or even offended, by the clown being used as a Christian symbol. But this is not new. Remember the Medieval Juggler of Notre Dame, the paintings of Rousault, and "The Parable," a movie shown at the Christian Pavilion of the New York World's Fair.)

It is too bad that the only place you can see a clown is at the circus. And people don't even go to the circus very much because the other Barnum and Bailey wonders are not wonderful anymore. But we do need clowns badly.

Clowns are a glass through which we see Christ insisting on the reality of the dream persistently sifting a world of heaven in a world of hell, walking the clown tight rope of absurdity where the two conjoin.

Clowns are great. They fall on their faces and come up smiling. You fall on your face and lie there crying. They smile because face-falling is not, to them, surprising. You cry because you do not expect even the one thousandth fall.

Clowns are sad. They know the sad world whose knives cut deep their unshielded heart. They see clear the trampling of the crocuses and each flower's crushing in their own. We are sad. We cry out when the knives press through the shields, dulled when they strike, into our own unyielding flesh. And in fear that they may strike again, we trample crocuses in escaping.

Clowns laugh as they cry. Even their tears for a brother need not rain on another, for each man has enough of his own grief to bear. How many of us would think, for charity's sake, of bearing grief alone!

We all can't be smart, or rich or saintly. But we can be clowns, we who already are clowns. All we have to do, maybe, is to admit we are clowns

and enjoy it. At least we can all be natural clowns. But real clowns, supernatural clowns, this is a deeper vocation coming only for those who dare follow the Christ clown.

We know he was the Son of God because he was a clown. How absurd for a king to smell the dung of cows with his first breath. How ridiculous to ask a full grown fisherman to catch men. How silly to fool around with water walking. What a clownish costume, the crown of thorns and reedy scepter.

The Lord of the Dance calls us to the clowning rhythm of his song. The eternal melody is inaudible and, when distorted through the microphone of time, unbearable to human ears. Unbearable — yet magnetic. Despite yourself you tap your foot, clap your hands, rise, joint the dance. You look around and all the rest are laughing or desperately trying to stop you. You can't stop now, dancing on you, go, absurd, out of tune with the other songs men sing.

Keep dancing. The children will follow you and some simple folk who know no better. And you will find joy in the darkness, laughter in the tears. And when you are tired the Lord of the Dance will turn to you and laugh.

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The football season is filled with punts and passes, blocks and tackles, wins and losses, boos and

cheers!

