

NOW HEAR THIS ...

A New Role for Mary

By Father Richard Torney

Musing over the beauty of the breviary's words for the feast of the Blessed Mother last Sunday, I put down my prayer book to do some reading and thinking about the question: Aren't we losing rich values if we let devotion for Mary vanish from our private and public lives? Should an individual, or a parish or the diocese make an effort to bring her back?

No one can estimate those private prayer practices which still include the Rosary, novena tributes to Our Lady from pious pamphlets and daily devotions which never omit appeals to her for all manner of favors. Perhaps this remains stronger than I suspect.

But it is reported everywhere that public ceremonies honoring Mary have either been abandoned or are poorly attended, that her feastdays no longer bring parishioners to Mass, that the Socialites of Our Lady have died in most places, that young people are not responsive to traditions of Marian devotion in their families or schools.

The Blessed Virgin is currently in the public scene on Christmas greeting cards and Bethlehem stable-reproductions but these do little more than artistically sentimentalize a fact of history. They say nothing about Mary's true role with us or with her Son's Church.

They make her look pretty and motherly and devout, but never lead us to reflect that she is the perfect

example of what a follower of Christ should be. Christmas alone will not bring us back to Mary.

A biblical scholar, Father Bamas Abem recently observed that where Mary's role in the life of the Church is passed over there will be a tragic lessening in our devotion and love for Christ.

He wrote: "Earnestness in true devotion to Mary does something to a man's spirit. It schools him in the very attitudes he must have if he is going to approach Our Saviour. Where real love for Mary is minimized there is going to be a proportionate minimization of real love for Jesus."

The heavy words of the Vatican Council (Dogmatic Const., chap. VIII) also warn us not to lose Mary because she is the summit of all the doctrine of the Church:

"Meditating on her . . . the Church enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes ever increasingly like her spouse. For Mary reaches the greatest teachings of the Faith as she is venerated, calls the faithful to her Son and to the love of the Father."

Do many Catholics leave Mary out of their lives because she is "irrelevant," merely a far-off figure of history, thought to be more of a romanticized goddess or an alleged wonder-worker at shrines, than the Mother of the Church and its most eminent member?



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Some Intra - Family Observations

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Dear Editor:

In last week's article I mentioned the effusions of an ex-nun who seemed hung up on her notion of freedom, and took exception to the idea: "I belong to the Church." Do you recall her solution? It turned out to waking up at 2 a.m., and as she put it: "I had an epiphany. Yes, an epiphany! The thought came to me that I do not belong to the Church. The Church belongs to me!"

All week long I have been smiling at the image of a hair on a dog's tail rising up declaring: "I do not belong to the dog. The dog belongs to me!" Such charisms leave me chary of people with great confidence and faulty theology.

That's why Frank Sheed's book "Is It the Same Church," is such a blessed relief. Sheed may not be charismatic, but he is a faithful expositor of the spirit and magisterium of the Church before and after Vatican Council. And he has loyalty, which is supernatural piety.

No epiphany, but two pork sausages for lunch woke me up at 2 a.m. And during the 90 minutes tossing and turning sleeplessly, I thought: "Maybe Father Torney would be interested in some observations on the Courier Journal Commentary page. And I hope Joe Brieg returns. And wonder if Father Shamon might fit there. He's always an inspiration."

Re FATHER FINKS: Each week our Vicar pleads the cause of the ghetto and race problems well. Since that is his particular preoccupation and responsibility I think he is sometimes out of sympathy with those who have other preoccupations and responsibilities. He hardly fits Chesterton's definition: "A fanatic is a man with one idea, and he never gets off it." I'm afraid, however, that some of his friends are. In the recent plea for more Sisters to enter inner-city, I am wondering 1) is it best to destroy structures which are tested and valuable to bolster the changing structure of the Inner City and race problems? 2) I wonder will the Sisters who become involved a) remain in the work when the newness wears off, and b) will they quit the Orders to which they have committed their lives in the Service of God and man?

I feel strongly that once vows are freely taken, whether by couples in marriage or by priests and nuns and Sisters, that we should observe them

with the fidelity we promised God when we took them. "He who puts his hand to the plow and then turns back is not worthy of me" is still in all translations of Luke IX:62. So, I admire Vicar Finks' persistence; accept much that he demands, and question some.

Re FATHER TORNEY: Your allegation (12/6/68) that the Chicago riots were police riots I respectfully suggest is in error. I haven't read the report—and think many "authorities" in this matter haven't either—but I have read several analyses of the report, and find them contradictory. Isn't it true that even the author of the report and the timing can legitimately be questioned?

My own thinking is that there was a quasi-guerrilla warfare planned, planted and executed. A lot of innocent non-guerrillas got tangled up in the tragic mess. Policemen, like bishops and editors, are not God. So they did the best they could considering the weird circumstances and the one constant we can count on: man's fallen, fallible nature. My vote is a vote of confidence in the police.

Re FATHER CUDDY: I always read him first. The first reason is because it is my own creation, and I am wondering does the article express what I really mean. It usually

does. The second reason is to see what the editor has deleted. I thank the Lord that while you may delete, you do not alter the sense of the ideas. While I understand that you must delete if an article is too long, I am bursting with curiosity at some deletions.

I am grateful to Father Atwell for his inviting me to share my convictions through "On the Right Side"; and to you for continuing the invitation. Many people in many places do stop to say: "Father, I read your article every week. I understand it. It gives me courage. It helps even to find a priest who shows in his writing that he loves people, and the Church, the Sisters and the priesthood."

I always reply: "Thank you. But it would be better if you would write to the editor, and tell him. That's where it counts." They smile. And I know they won't write. So without any mock modesty, I am informing you so.

Have courage. If I disagree with your judgments at times, I do love your theology; and as a salute to the Progressives, I love you and them too!

Keep smiling. It's a great charity!

Christianity, Fervor Said Flourishing Worldwide

Cincinnati — (NC) — A British priest-author-retreat master said here, that on a global basis the Christian religion is thriving and fervor is "rapidly increasing."

Speaking (Dec. 2) at Xavier University here, Father Bernard Bassett, S.J., whose books include "We Neuterics" and "The Noonday Devil," declared: "I often hear it said that the Church is losing its grip, that materialism has won, that people are abandoning religion by the thousands — but this has not, as yet, been my experience."

"To discredit the past, while belly-aching about the present, is to display one's ignorance and to reveal a very poor sense of history," he declared.

"True," he continued, "we have seen the passing of the little old Irish granny in her shawl, the parish mission filled with bursting, the Confraternities and the Socialites with banners and ashes, the monasteries parades on St. Patrick's Day. Such demonstrations of ardor suited an age without easy transport, suited a world of poor immigrants, often illiterate, who hardly knew the prayers that they were reciting and found it satisfying to tap out their faith with their feet."

"Much tolerance and charity will be required, a rapid improvement in Christian communications, a willingness to face reality and not the self-satisfaction of a personal point of view," he said.

A LAYMAN'S VIEW

Fasting At The Feast

By Pincer Leaven

The practice of fasting should bother us. It has been in the news lately as individuals have gone without food to draw attention to some cause or to share some tragedy. And the power for good it exerts, throughout its history, is staggering.

At a time when we Roman Catholics are loosening our belts, (the official disciplines of fasting being relaxed), others are taking up the practice to illustrate the needs for healing in our family. We should take a hard look at the actions of these individuals, and, I think, be nettled.

A fast as it is being practiced in the community, is the denial of all solid food. Drink is usually just water or an occasional glass of fruit juice.

For a person of average health, hunger pangs begin in earnest on the second or third day. The membranes in the mouth and nose can begin to dry and resistance to colds is greatly weakened. Depression comes about the fifth day and hallucinations have been reported starting on the seventh day. Ringing in the ears has been observed in longer fasts with a subsequent loss of the sense of

balance. Accompanying the weight loss, the temperature of the body rises and muscle spasms can set in.

The voluntary acceptance of such suffering to bring attention to social conditions reminds us of a passage in Isaiah exhorting the false and selfish fast of the hypocrite and continues:

"Is this not rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the bundles that oppress, let them that are broken go free, and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh." — Isaiah 58, 6-7.

Our nation has seen an extraordinary amount of racial violence (done this year, in both deed and heart. There have been crises in housing and employment and education. Martin Luther King has been torn away from us. There have been street disturbances in Washington, Chicago, Newark.

The institutions of the white power structure have been investigated and

found sorely wanting. This summer, the Kerner Report told us what we needed to hear for a long time: the real roots of inter-racial difficulty are to be found in the white community, in its actions, and in its apathy when cries for help are heard.

Our nation is becoming desperate for great and small signs of healing.

With this in mind then, as a labor to "let them that are broken go free," could we engage in a very small sign to our brothers and sisters?

For the three days before Christmas could we take no solid food and drink only water to invite our communities to a re-examination of their racial attitudes, to make a sign of solidarity to our black brothers, and to make a sign of reparation before God for the injustices we have done?

We would hope, by doing this, to share in the prophecy of Isaiah: "And the places that have been desolate for ages shall be built in thee; thou shalt raise up the foundations of generation and generation; and thou shalt be called the repairer of fences, turning the paths into rest." Isaiah 58, 12.



COMMENT FROM ROME

'Integrity of Revealed Message'

By Fr. R. A. Graham, S.J. Special Correspondent

Vatican City — (RNS) — Four days after the Vatican issued its 10 points critical of the Dutch catechism, Pope Paul himself gave the background to the problem and stirred speculation of more action of the kind to come.

He spoke at his usual general audience on "Catholic teaching authority and present-day didactic problems." His text was carefully prepared.

Included was a firm manifestation that the Pope has no choice but to defend with all its power "the integrity of the revealed message" of which the Catholic Church is the custodian.

"On this point," declared the pontiff, "the Catholic Church is jealous, it is severe, it is demanding, it is dogmatic."

These are fighting words from a pontiff said to be divided within himself by doubts and anguish.

In a certain way the talk was more significant than even the now-famous 10 points, because of the direct clue it offers to the Pope's reasoning. The publication of the declaration of the international commission of six cardinals was an isolated act, without a necessary sequel. It simply put on the record the revisions or "modifications" earlier proposed to the Dutch editors and presented itself as a reply to a privately published collection of confidential papers.

Its only effect was to throw the ball back to the Dutch bishops. The press has reported that the bishops propose to issue the 10 points as an appendix in future editions.

In the meantime, the Pope's own

talk clarified the Vatican's viewpoint on the theoretical issue.

The Pope introduced his remarks by pointing out how difficult it is for the Church to make herself understood. Many, he said, have undertaken the difficult mission of conveying the teaching of the Catholic Church in a way that is appealing and comprehensible to the modern mentality and yet at the same time does not sacrifice or minimize a single tenet of the faith. He did not in the least wish to discourage them.

But this laudable and meritorious work, he said, runs the danger of ambiguity and of reticences, even at the expense of the integrity of the Christian message.

The temptation arises of choosing from the treasury of revealed truth only what appeals, while leaving the rest aside, or of fashioning religious truths according to arbitrary and personal ideas not in conformity with the real meaning of those truths.

"This procedure," the pontiff said, "takes from the Word of God its one meaning and its objective authority and ends in depriving the community of believers of their adherence to an identical faith, to the one and same faith. In these circumstances, the one faith dissolves and with it the community that we all the one and true Church."

Pope Paul then touched on issues that have often been raised by defenders of the Dutch catechism. The argument is that what are called "sterile formulas" should be discarded. Allusion is not simply to traditional modes of theological speech but also to formulas of the creed or of councils through which certain key dogmas are expressed. These cannot be set aside.

"The formulas with which the

teaching of the Church has been authoritatively considered and defined cannot be abandoned," the Pope said. "In this respect the teaching authority of the Church does not compromise, even if it must bear the consequences of an unpopular negative appearance of its teaching. It cannot do otherwise."

He said further on, in the same vein, "The function of the ecclesiastical magisterium has become difficult and controversial. But it cannot fail to do its duty and must give its faithful witness, cost what it may, whenever this is necessary, in matters of faith and of the divine law."

In their terms and timing the Pope's remarks compel application to the Dutch catechism, even though no mention was made in the audience of a "catechism," Dutch or other. To strip his words of abstract generalities, the Pope finds that the catechism by its calculated omissions of key dogmas endangers the integrity of Catholic teaching and the unity of faith.

Vatican, World Council Plan June Meeting

Paris — (RNS) — A joint World Council of Churches-Roman Catholic consultation on peace will be held in June, it was announced here by officers of a Joint Committee on Society, Development and Peace. The meeting will be at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva.

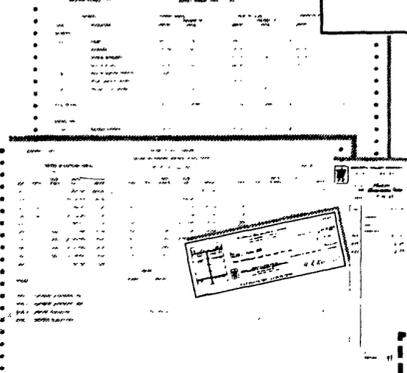
It will be organized by Dr. Anwar M. Barkat, assistant director of the institute, and Father George Dunne, S.J., secretary of the joint committee. Specific topics will be determined by a group of four WCC and four Catholic representatives in January.



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