

# VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE Better Understanding of Family

By Father James McHugh

The Bishops of the United States in their pastoral letter, "Human Life in Our Day," issued in November, stated that family spirituality must proceed from a better understanding of the Church's teachings on the Sacrament of Matrimony.

They commend "the work of those theologians who are preparing a modern and valid ascetical theology of marriage" and "the spiritual emphasis" in many family-life programs whose primary focus of concern has been the theology of the Christian family. This concern of the bishops re-echoes one of the major points of the position paper of the National Association of Laymen which states that "there is an urgent need within the Church for the development of a new theology of marriage and family life."

Throughout the past two years a very productive dialogue has been taking place that has brought together theologians, scholars and married couples. It should be noted at this point that the term "theology of marriage" does not mean a discussion of birth control or other questions of sexual morality.

I make this point because there have been instances when loyalty to the Church has been adjudged almost solely on one's thinking on the question of birth control, and this is neither honest nor just.

At any rate, in this article I hope to call attention to some of the themes that are a part of this de-

veloping theology of marriage, themes that have their roots in the documents of Vatican II. Parenthetically, it is important to remember that a council or a pastoral is not meant to terminate discussion, but to give new impetus and insight to an already existing dialogue.

Christian family life has its basis in the sacrament of marriage. Just as, "by her relationship to Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind," so also, marriage proclaims the unity of the spouses to one another and to God. Christian spouses, by reason of the marriage covenant, signify and partake of that unity and love that exists between Christ and the Church.

Indeed, God made mankind "male and female," and established the marital community as a lasting witness to the love-relationship that He holds with His people. In fact, just as God made Himself present to mankind through His covenant of love and fidelity in the Old Testament, so now Christ the Lord comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony.

The marriage of Christians also has a prophetic quality. In the ordinary circumstances of their daily lives, God's people give living testimony by their actions to the presence of Christ in the world. It is in the Christian family that "husband and wife find their proper vocation in being witness to one another and to their children of faith in Christ and love for Him. The Christian family loudly proclaims the present virtues of the kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come."

A noteworthy facet of our investigation of the theology of marriage has to do with the charismatic element in the Church. Christian spouses, by virtue of the marriage sacrament, are singled out as recipients of special gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts, usually quite ordinary, are given to various members of God's people to make them fit and ready to play their part in the renewal of the Church.

On a more practical level, the Council pointed to the value and strength of conjugal love. This love, eminently human in its origin, is capable of transcending the natural and is caught up into divine love

in such a way that it is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church.

The Decree on the Laity also calls on the family to put forth some organized effort with other men in the exercise of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Indeed, such activity is itself a form of apostolate.

The Decree on the Liturgy suggests many points of consideration for the renewal of the marriage rite and for a deeper understanding of marriage-as-worship. Perhaps one of the more dangerous tendencies of the moment is to limit the meaning of liturgical renewal to the revision of rites, thereby distracting ourselves from seeing the intrinsic link between our total faith-commitment and the best external celebration of the sacred mysteries.

This overview is only meant to call attention to the implications of present theological thinking on marriage. We cannot expect ready answers to all the questions of Christian married life, but that the dialogue now underway promises a clearer perspective from which to approach



"IT'LL RUIN YOU THIRTY-SEVEN-FIFTY TO HALT THE GREAT FLOOD AND ANOTHER THIRTY BUCKS FOR THE PARTING OF THE WATERS!"

## COMMENTARY

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### A LAYMAN'S VIEW

#### Paper, Pen and a 6-Cent Stamp

By Arthur P. Farren

What would you do if you were editor of a diocesan newspaper?

We'd like to project a challenge here... and if you're reading this sentence we hope you'll "stay with us" for the remainder of the column.

Each February our publications mark "Catholic Press Month." Editors take "inventory" of human budget limitations, admit shortcomings and ineptitudes, and resolve to "try harder."

No one in an editor's chair has felt or will feel that a particular newspaper edition was just about perfect—that nothing could have been done to make it better. Compare him to a golfer or bowler: he continually resolves, week after week, that next week he'll correct some of those mistakes and come up with a better score.

The Courier-Journal is read every week by literally tens of thousands of persons, religious and lay, in 12 counties from Monroe to Cayuga to Chemung. Some read every line, some pick and choose, others merely skim. But not enough people write to us.

Our point here is that among these thousands of readers are many potential "editors"—persons who, if they were editing the paper, would in-

clude "more" of this and "less" of that.

All right, you're not the editor; but you can influence him; your suggestions, your criticisms will help his thinking. Any editor is vitally interested in what the readers think and feel.

It seems to be characteristic of human nature that many persons conclude that "no one would pay much attention to my viewpoint." That's analogous to the citizen who concludes that "my vote wouldn't make much difference." He forgets that many an election has been decided by a small margin of votes.

It is the aim of the Courier-Journal to try to keep its readers informed. During the last few issues you were able to read about the following, among many other subjects:

Stories from around the world and nation; comments by Bishop Fulton Sheen; articles about Pope Paul; his encyclical, the ecumenical movement, interracial problems, religious education, liturgical changes, etc.; the complete text of the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on "Human Life in Our Day"; comments on movies, television, plays, books; parish sports, etc.

Columns appearing in most edi-



tions include: "Word for Sunday," by Father Albert Shamon; "On the Right Side," Father Paul Cuddy; "Church and City," Father P. David Fink; "Now Hear This," Father Richard Torney; "As I See It," Pat Costa; "A Layman's Viewpoint" (your reading one) and "Letters to the Editor."

Surely, with all this week to week verbiage, most readers experience reactions. "What's good?" about the Courier-Journal? What's "poor"? Your comments, commendatory or critical, would help establish guidelines toward a better diocesan newspaper.

Your cooperation could be extended in one of two ways—either a "Letter to the Editor" for publication or a personal note for the editors to study but not for publication. Remember that most everyone likes to get mail (other than the kind which notes that "this is a statement of your account to date.")

This, then, is an attempt to make "Catholic Press Month" a little more meaningful. We plead your good will—a "Letter to the Editor."

Your "involvement" would require only a bit of your time, a piece of paper, a pen or pencil—and a six-cent stamp.

### NOW HEAR THIS ...

#### Hitch Your Imagination to a Star

By Father Richard Torney

When we cease wondering about mystery around us, we have begun to stagnate. Man's most bizarre and his most useful discoveries came because he refused to stop expecting, speculating and probing mysterious of nature even when most of his neighbors told him to forget it. What is imagination better suited for?

That's the set-down feeling many people had last week when they read that a high-dosed body of U.S. scientists had announced their rejection of all those stories of flying saucers and little creatures from Mars. Several generations who have grown up on Jules Verne, science-fiction and TV serials were outraged and disappointed with the scientists; stubbornly they have refused to stop wondering or imagining about outer space, or reporting spacecraft!

Ever since man first looked into the night sky the gleaming stars over his head have been a challenge, and a prickling curiosity.

He never knew for many centuries how far away the astral planets were or what they might be made of, like or unlike his earth. Even yet he is not certain how many million-billion stars there are.

But his most persistent question has been: Is there intelligent life and civilization in outer space? Are there people like mankind, or "creatures" inhabiting those planets?

For a long time earthlings had no evidence that there were other intelligent beings on the stage of space where the earth was a mere dot of matter. But in this century a dozen lines of investigation in astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology have dramatically converged to announce: "Man is not the only intelligent being in the universe." Respected scholars now maintain that there could be anywhere from a 100 million to a 100 billion inhabited planets whirling through space.

That scientific thesis and the flight of the first sputnik, giving proof of man's ability to travel safely across millions of miles of space, have been the principal reasons for the huge crop of stories about space crafts visiting earth and strange creatures landing to explore our landscape.

Since 1947 the Air Force has doggedly investigated 12,097 sightings of "flying saucers." For years it has attempted to convince the public that Unidentified Flying Objects really aren't visitors from outer space. But hardly anyone who thrilled to the imaginative mystery of dealing with beings intelligent enough to build a space craft to cross the miles from a star to earth, would give up their speculations. The wonderment was too exciting to be cooled by cynical facts.

Finally two years ago the Air Force asked a team of University of Colorado scientists to conduct an independent study of UFO sightings. It was finished last Fall and then handed for review to the National Academy of Sciences, a prestige outfit whose word would add authority to the report. The study received unanimous approval for research and deductions. In blunt language the 1,485 page report says the 21 years of UFO stories offer no evidence that "any UFO" represent space craft visiting earth from another civilization. What a blow to science-fiction readers!

The extensive study says that 90 percent of all UFO reports "prove to be quite plausibly related to ordinary objects" such as planes, satellites, balloons, swamp fog, clouds, beacons and other purely natural phenomena. The experts said that further study of UFO's was "unjustified scientifically" and implied that it would be a waste of time and brains to discuss the question further.

It may surprise you that theologians and religious writers also have opin-



ions on those galaxies and on the possible inhabitants of outer space. They hold that the more we learn about the charted planets of the universe the more we should admire the creative genius of Almighty God.

There is nothing in Christian or Hebrew theology to prove that there is or is not intelligent life on the whirling stars. But if there is life of any kind out there, theologians hold it must be accepted not only as part of God's sole creation, but as a definite feature in the vast blueprint of God's dominion over the universe.

Theologians say that it's a biological matter whether living creatures on other planets have bodies or brains even remotely like ours. But there is every reason to insist biologically that, if they exist out there at all, God created them and they have essential connections to the divine character of God just as we do.

It's exciting and yet sobering to postulate that somewhere in the universe, there could be a race of creatures still in the "state of innocence"—fulfilling a role in God's drama of creation which never called for the test of loyalty such as the Biblical Adam and Eve failed. They might exist in perfection—because God gifted them differently from our mankind—without disease, ignorance, concupiscence, old age, or death.

They might even be enjoying infused knowledge (born with intensive learning but still able to acquire more easily) which in all probability would put them far in advance of us in understanding physical laws. Way ahead of us in the exploration of the universe, for example, they might long since have been immigrating to other planets.

(Next week another speculative trip into outer space.)

## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

### The Clerical Collar Is a Sign

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Last October while in Washington I had supper with a friend who was in USO work for many years and now does youth work. She loves Our Lord, the Church and people, especially the young. She has an old-fashioned reverence for priests.

With her heart on her sleeve, she was discussing young people: their uncertainties, their generosity, their need for practical guidance. Suddenly she looked sad and asked: "Father, what do priests think they are accomplishing by discarding their clerical collars and running around in neckties? What do they have in mind?"

"Well, I'm sure there are different reasons for different priests but I think most who do discard the collar, feel that it is a barrier between the people and themselves. By discarding the collar and wearing a tie or a sport shirt they think they will relate better, especially to youngsters. I suppose it's the theory that if we're all the same, then there aren't differences standing in the way."

"Oh, how mistaken they are!" she declared. A priest is called to be a special witness to Christ in the Church. Holy Orders may well give an interior sign. But we are creatures of sense as well as spirit. We

want an exterior sign. The collar of the priest as well as the habit of the Sister, is a sign all of us know and recognize.

Why Father: Last year I was involved in a huge Catholic Youth convention in Chicago. The hall was crowded. A big crowd from X city was there, and they were raising Cain. The youngsters talked loudly, and laughed defiantly during the speaking. No one could hear. It was dreadful. One of the priests in charge was at his wits end. He said to me: "I don't know what to do. I can't get them to stop their racket. They won't pay any attention to me."

"I said to him: 'Father, take your tie off and put on your collar. Then come back.' He did. As soon as the kids saw the priest whom they recognized as a priest, they calmed down and behaved well."

I think I understand the theory of freedom of equality of sameness, of self. I have never believed that tossing off sensible symbols of identity accomplishes what some claim.

Although I recognize my own dignity as a son of God, I do not consider myself the same as a layman. There is an essential difference, thanks to the sacrament of Orders.

I do not wish to consider myself



ecclesiastically equal to Bishop Kearney or Bishop Sheen. Intellectually I should blush to consider myself the equal of brilliant professors in our seminaries and universities. In authority and responsibility I do not consider our delightful student nurses at St. James Nursing School my equal; nor would they want it so. And in pediatrics I do not consider the children the equal to our nurses and student nurses.

Responsibility brings authority. St. Paul reminds us that all lawful authority comes from God. Since we are creatures of sense, the sign of the responsibility and authority i.e., the collar, helps men to recognize a priest for what he is, and even helps to remind the priest himself of the uniqueness of his priesthood.

The "Imitation of Christ" reminds us that the habit does not make the monk, and we know that the collar does not make the priest. However, neither does a State Trooper's uniform make a Trooper; nor a pectoral cross, a bishop. But when I see a trooper's uniform in the rear-view mirror of my car, I remember what it stands for, and drive with circumspection. And when I see a pectoral cross suspended from a bishop's neck, I prefer to reverence the wearer as my brother and Bishop rather than as my brother and chum.

the difference is like

# DAY & NIGHT

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