Courier-Journal-Friday, March 21, 1969

Spirituality for Our Times

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that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. (Heb. 9/22) But instead of invoking Christ's blood to wash sin away, we shed one another's blood in the dirty business of our twentieth century wars, and with a violence on streets which cries to heaven for vengeance.

Our Lord said that He came to bring the sword - not peace. (Matt. 10/34) But it was to be the sword that was thrust inward against our "egotism" and false innocence and not against the neighbor, as Peter was told to put that outward thrusting sword back into its seabbard. (Matt. 26/52)

V. Spirituality and social action involve two totally different relationships. One is related to the God of Love, the other to love of neighbor. In St. Luke two parables (Luke 10/25-42) immediately follow one another, and it is likely that the Evangelist means that they should be taken together. The moral of the Good Samaritan is the service of neighbor, regardless of his race, ereed or religion. "Go where the need is" is charity in action.

The story of Martha and Mary-is not about neighbor; it is about Christ. Is our attitude to Him on the same level as service? Certainly not, for the complaint against Martha was that in the Presence of Christ we absorb, we sit at His feet, we listen and we contemplate. In the face of the needy and the wounded, our service must be as -wide as the Love of God, and must be a deed-compassion and not a feeling-compassion. But when we are with Christ (Who is facing a Cross either in Himself or in the Church) we must not fuss and rush and prepare Thousand Island salads with a triple choice of dressing.

There are moments in life when we must decide not how to be kind to others; but how the Lord wants to be kind to us. In other words, as regards neighbor, our relationship must be that of giving; as regards Christ, our attitude must be one receiving. We receive before we give; we are passive before we are active; the earth receives the seed, then gives the wheat. That is why "If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece . . . but am without love, it will do no good whatever". (1 Cor. 13/3) First, we contemplate Christ on the mountain in the glory of the Transfiguration; then we go down to the valley with its psychoses, worries and unbelief. (Matt. 17/2) The Lord first leads me to open my wounds that He may heal them; then I can understand better the wounds of my neighbor. It costs us little to concentrate on service to others, but it hurts like hell itself to first show my ulcerous sores to the Divine Physician. And yet we know that He hurts to health and the

"The wounded surgeon plies the steel-

The world is the area of our sanctification. It does not begin with detachment from the world: it begins first Mary-like, sitting at the Feet of Christ, then serving the neighbor with that Love. The proper order of "Come" and "Go" must be kept. The first word of Our Lord's public life was "Come". "Come and see", (John 1/39) "Come take up the Cross". (Mk. 10/21) "Come to Me all you who labor and are overburdened". (Matt. 11/28) The last word of Our Lord's public Life was "Go". "Go . . . teach". (Matt. 28/19)

The false extremes are the "Go-Go's" and the "Come-Comes". The Go-Go group insist that Christ is just as present in the coffee-house as in the House of God, and that if religion is not in the world and for the world, it avails naught. The "Come-Come" group refuses to budge from their pre-Vatican practices. To them to change is to decay, and a protest to rebellion.

First, Come! Learn! Abide with Me! Receive My Body! My Blood! My Truth! My Life! Then Go! Accomplish! Mingle in the world with Jews, Greeks, barbarians, male and female, on the Hill of the Aeropagus, in the barracks of Caesar. Those who identify Christ's mission with secularization, are torches without flames; those who identify Christ's mission with isolation from the problems. of our day, are those who pass by wounded men to hurry to temple services. The Go-Go's lack love of God; the Come-Come's lack love of neighbor.

May God preserve us from the New Breed and the Old Breed and make us see the great Truth enshrined in Scripture: the Rock and the River. On the one side there is the Rock: "Upon this Rock I will build My Church. (Matt. 16/18) But out of the Rock came Rivers of Living water."

The Go-Go's want the dynamism of gushing waters without the stability of the Rock; the Come-Come's want the ontological fixity of the Rock without the dynamic adaptation of the waters. The Rock alone is incapable of growth; the waters alone without the Rock would broaden into a swamp without solidity and depth.

Any crisis of identity which exists among those called to be spiritual is due to putting the primacy on the "Go" rather than on the "Come". No person ever knows himself except indirectly. For my ego to look for my ego is like trying to get my eve to see itself. My eve sees itself only in a mirror. My ego knows itself only in Christ. As Catherine of Genoa said: "My me is God, nor do I know myself save in Him". And through Him'do I know the world is worth saving. This is cosmic spirituality.



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