

Adult Religious Literacy Deserves High Priority

Under the headline, "Vatican II alive—but anonymous," the National Catholic Reporter carried an incredible story in its March 26 issue. The story reports that a survey conducted in the Catholic Diocese of Worcester, Mass., established that 43 percent of the Catholics interviewed said they had never heard of an event called the Second Vatican Council!

Worcester, Mass. can hardly be described as the backwoods of the world, yet a religious event which most certainly will be recorded as one of the turning points in world religious history and which took giant steps to bring the Catholic Church into the modern world is unknown to 43 percent of Worcester Catholics!

This should speak volumes to Catholic Christians about the need for a new look at our priorities in religious education. A typical Rochester response might be: "That couldn't be true in Rochester." We lived in that kind of complacency regarding the racial crisis — but woke up one morning in 1964 to find out how wrong we were.

This is a plea to Catholics in the Rochester Diocese to begin the long, difficult and painful process of re-examining our priorities in religious education. A proper understanding of and respect for the intelligence and the role of all of the people of God demands that we all speak and be heard.

In so many parishes the parochial school represents such a high priority that other educational activities such as religious education for children attending public schools and adult education are relegated to second or third class status at best. Considering the tremendous strain the school places on parish resources, this is an understandable posture — but is it an acceptable posture for modern day Christians?

I suggest that we all have an obligation to re-examine the philosophical bases which underlie our support of the parochial school (at the expense of other programs) and to take a realistic look at the practical aspects of the problem; namely, finances.

A priest-theologian friend has pointed out to me that Christ spent his teaching years instructing adults, not children. Can the Christian Church today do less and be true to its founder and its mission? In the absence of adult religious education, adults can elect to remain religious illiterates or find a way to educate themselves.

Neither of these alternatives is desirable; the first should be totally unacceptable to any live Christian and the second is lacking in discipline and thus may become like the mustard seed which fell on rocky ground.

We are fortunate in the Rochester Diocese to have available to us an outstanding adult religious education program conducted by the Capuchin Fathers of Geneva. This diocesan-wide program offers all of us an opportunity to become literate, adult Christians. For many, however, these courses may be inappropriate or inconvenient.

Parish councils, where they exist, should consider establishing regular programs of significant religious education for adults in their own parishes, or in cooperation with neighboring parishes. (It is possible that, had such programs existed in recent months, much of the misunderstanding regarding sex education might have been eliminated.) Perhaps this would require employing a full-time, qualified religious educator. This would cost money and we return again, therefore, to the question of priorities. Isn't adult religious literacy worth the cost?

—Paul W. Brayer, Rochester.

NOW HEAR THIS ... Cardinals Still Flourishing

By Father Richard Torney

Many analysts of the post-Council Church have predicted that Cardinals would soon be as extinct as the mastodon.

The pilgrim Family of God would have to retire its Princes and pack away the scarlet robes and broad prelatial hats, they claimed, because such medieval imperialism was incongruous in this democratic age.

Collegiality, making the 2,400 Bishops of the Church a consultative and executive body dialoguing frequently with the Pope through their national conferences, would be the end of the useless structure of the Cardinals' college, the prophets declared.

But last week Pope Paul again confounded the seers who have tried twice before — on birth control and celibacy — to predict what he would do in renewing the Church. The Holy Father put new life in the College by naming 33 new Cardinals, raising its roster to 134 prelates — the highest ever.

A cardinal, according to an old Roman riddle, is a "whim of the Pope." Although the most privileged and most powerful cleric in the Church, he promises absolute obedience to the will of the Holy Father. His stature is honorary and ceremonial, but he works.

He advises the Pope when asked to, may head offices in the sprawling Vatican bureaucracy, serve as papal representative to foreign governments or in liaison with national hierarchies. When the Pope dies he meets in closed session with his colleagues and as honorary pastor of a church in the city of Rome chooses the new Bishop of Rome.

Vatican-watchers speculated on reasons and trends which the latest listing of new Cardinals suggested. Between now and their formal acceptance of the red hat late this month public guesses will surely cover the following:

1. Internationalization of the papal

council — The 33 new cardinals come from 19 countries and only 8 are Italians. A total of 48 nations now have representatives in this College. The long-standing preponderance of conservative Italian influence has been further unbalanced by the recent death of a half dozen elderly Italian prelates who had long service as Cardinals.

The Holy Father is recognizing the growth of the Church in far off countries (New Zealand, the Congo, Korea and Malagasy, or Madagascar, got their first Cardinals) and also trying to bring new viewpoints into his council but calling several more Africans, Latin Americans, another Indian, renowned scholars and some career-men of the Vatican diplomatic service.

2. Emphasis on pastoral experience — Twenty-four of the new Cardinals are heads of dioceses whose chief everyday concern is the priestly work of serving clergy and laity.

3. Concern for developing countries — Our last three Popes have shown

increasing zeal for the problems, both economic and social as well as religious, of the new and struggling nations in the Orient, Africa, and South America. The "developing" countries got 11 new Cardinals in this list to join some 15 others who represent the underprivileged nations of the world at the Vatican.

4. An intention to use hand-picked counselors — The new Synod of Bishops, an elected forum of bishops established at the conclusion of the Vatican Council to meet periodically to advise the Pope, had the supposed task of providing counsel on a broader more representative basis than the College of Cardinals ever claimed. It was not supposed to be a competing agency with the College, for many prelates would have served in both. But it had been hoped by many who criticized the formalism and pomp of the Cardinals that the Synod would hasten the dissolution of that symbolic and ancient group.

The men on the new list have an average age of 61 years, 11 years be-

low the average for the 101 incumbents. Some are new to their office as Bishops, but most of the 33 have held responsible office successfully in the changing years of pre- and post-Vatican II. Many on the list are scholars as well as administrators, worldly-wise, articulate and well-travelled.

It's also striking to note, in speculating whether the Pope is building a stronger personal advisory board than the future Synod, chosen by the world's bishops, that Paul VI has himself named more than half of the College within the past four years: 51 in consistories held in '65 and '67, and 33 now.

Don't believe that Pope Paul is working toward the dissolution of the College of Cardinals. Any reshuffling of authority-roles in terms of the importance of the laity and the lower clergy in policy-setting, seems very distant right now.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

The Crucifix: A Necessary Reminder

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

In 1954 Paul Knox was a 23-year-old chaplain's assistant at Lackland Air-Force Base. He was an accomplished musician: in organ, piano and voice. He was the grandson of two Methodist ministers. He was very intelligent, rather serious and sober. He was the assistant to the Protestant chaplain at the Officer Candidate School.

Because I was the Catholic chaplain of OCS and we used the same buildings and facilities with Protestants, Paul frequently and generously gave me a hand. I shall always be grateful to him.

At OCS the Protestant Worship Service on Sunday followed the Catholic Mass. We used the same chapel, altar, and some of the same altar equipment. Among the latter was a 2-foot metal combination cross (on one side) and crucifix (on the other).

For Protestant worship, the plain cross with a Chi Rho symbol on one side was used. For the Catholic Mass the cross was turned around, so the usual cross with the corpus of Christ could be used on the altar. Paul was preparing the altar for Protestant services. He turned the cross around with the corpus facing the wall. With

a twinkle in the eye—and a grin I said: "Why Paul, you should be ashamed of yourself, turning Jesus against the wall as if He were a bad boy!" Paul flushed and quickly replied: "He has risen from the dead!"

I thought of this when I heard of a convent where the Sisters took down the crucifix from their common room "because Christ is risen." I suppose the reason is a theological emphasis that we are living in the post-crucifixion, resurrection millennium.

What man could contest the closeness of the ultra-progressives? Nevertheless I do not relinquish my own thoughts, which are shared by most of the Catholics I know. These people include the good faithful fathers and mothers and kin of these same ultra-progressives who often regard us incapable of being intelligent in theological speculations.

Christ rose from the dead, and calls us to share in His risen life. But the prelude to the Resurrection was the passion and death, commemorated in the Eucharistic canon, along with the Resurrection.

Whatever burial of the "old man" baptism did for me, I have had the daily experience all my life of strug-

gle against the inclinations of fallen nature, namely the seven capital sins: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth. While I admire the theory these ultra-progressives seem to imply, that baptism gives us freedom from these inordinances of the soul and body, I have never found this verified in any son of Adam — beginning with myself.

When a patient is restored to health after a savage siege of sickness which has required the care and skill and love and sacrifice of doctors, nurses, aides, relatives—and a whole galaxy of people who helped in the restoration, it's a poor stick of a man who forgets the pain suffered, the good rendered, the agony endured, to reach good health.

And I think this underestimating the passion and death of Jesus Christ, brought to mind by the crucifix, is a subtle ingratitude which is incongruous with gratitude, adoration and thanksgiving to the Risen Saviour.

Most of us who love the whole life of Christ will keep crucifixes on the wall, as a reminder of the cost of our salvation. "We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world!"



COMMENTARY

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CHURCH AND THE CITY

FIGHT's Positive Record Overlooked

By Father P. David Finks

The "FIGHT" group led by the FIGHT organization is raising the crucial issue of inferior education of children in the Rochester city school district.

Toward this end a number of black and white organizations led by FIGHT attended the Board of Education meeting at West High School last Thursday evening, March 27. FIGHT's leaders and education committee members had been silenced the previous week on a technicality of agenda placement. Board of Education president, Lapiolis Ashford, at that time adjourned the meeting rather than allow the FIGHT delegates to speak at the beginning of the school board session.

At this second meeting the citizen organizations were again trying to raise the issue that children especially in the ghetto, are not being educated sufficiently to compete in today's society. Furthermore parents, teachers and students are feeling that they have little effective voice in key decisions concerning curriculum content, new school placement, faculty standards and pupil discipline.

The school board seemingly unwilling to hear the complaints and suggestions of this group took refuge behind its meeting agenda and the integrated delegation, about 250 strong, walked out.

The Rochester police already overburdened with extra duty were mobilized in force in and around West High School last Thursday night. As so often happens, police officers were being asked to protect the niceties of bureaucratic procedure rather than protect people with legitimate grievances.

FIGHT from its inception four years ago after the riots of '64 has developed a tactical style of raising serious concerns of its constituents, in a tough and dramatic way. The FIGHT leaders in addition to their dramatic rhetoric always provide positive programs to direct the energies of its members into non-violent and creative programs to initiate the needed community reforms.

Along with protesting lack of community participation in planning and carrying out ghetto urban renewal, FIGHT formed a non-profit housing corporation with professional architects and planners. This FIGHT-KMF Corporation will soon break ground for a 2.8 million housing development and community center called FIGHT Square. They have completed preliminary plans for innovative developments totaling more than \$15-million for large segments of the remaining Third Ward renewal area.

The move by FIGHT to involve Rochester industry in hardcore job training, met at first by the intransigence of Eastman Kodak's employment policies, has resulted in Rochester Jobs, Incorporated and more realistic entry requirements and on-the-job training by most of Rochester's main industries.

Together with the protest FIGHT developed FIGHTON, Incorporated with technical assistance and a guaranteed market for its products from the Xerox Corp. FIGHTON Inc. helped give definite direction to President Nixon's appeal for developing "black capitalism," and has been praised by the national news media for its pioneering stance.

FIGHT delegates have already ordered their executive and education committees to set up tutorial centers in four Black churches in the ghetto to bring teachers, parents and students together afternoons, evenings and during school vacations to educate the children more creatively, while continuing to press school principals and administration for reform in the public schools.

This kind of positive record has been consistently ignored in most of the local news media. The Gannett newspapers in particular seem much more interested in highlighting FIGHT's harsh rhetoric and public meeting etiquette in their editorials than treating the human needs and community crises FIGHT and other citizens groups are trying to reform.

Due, orderly process is needed in society as a part of a favorable environment for the growth and development of a citizenry which has only to turn to our founding fathers to see that order and due process may never be allowed as a cover to conceal injustices done to segments of that citizenry.

But, in the meantime, greater community control and decentralized school districts offer the best hope that the children actually in school now will learn better and rank and file teachers will be allowed to teach better.

The issue is crucial. If you can't be a part of the solution, please don't be a part of the problem. Armchair generals and Monday morning quarterbacks are experts at criticizing the tactics but they win no battles and score no touchdowns.



ST. PAUL AND LENT

Resurrection Challenges All of Us

By Peter Schindler, S.J.

(The author of the following article, the last in a series of seven Lenten meditations, has taught as a scholar in New York City high schools, and currently is in second theology at Woodstock.)

"If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless, for if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins."

—St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 15, 14-17.

A professor at a Catholic college asked the students in his philosophy class to write an essay on death. While many reasons were offered for and against life after death, in only four papers out of 150 was there any mention of Christ. Some comments were: "belief in life after death is irrational, I have outgrown such fairy tales. Heaven, hell, purgatory — it seems like a game." How strange that the resurrection of Christ and its meaning for the Christian today were scarcely mentioned.

Partially to speak to the question of the meaning of death, the apos-

tle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians at Corinth. He argues that Christ has risen, and his resurrection guarantees the bodily resurrection of those united to him by baptism.

In contrast to the prevailing Greek philosophy at Corinth, which denied a bodily resurrection, and in contrast to the popular Greek proverb, "let us eat and drink today; tomorrow we shall be dead," Paul proclaims the fact of Christ's resurrection. If Christ is not risen, there is no redemption or eternal salvation, and the Christian life becomes foolishness. Paul's own missionary life of danger would make no sense.

Just as Paul's life and the lives of the apostles were transformed by the presence of the Risen Christ, so the life of the Christian today makes sense only in view of the paschal mysteries of the death and resurrection of Christ.

His appearance to the 11 after the resurrection was the beginning of a movement that otherwise would have ended with his death on Calvary. For through the Resurrection Christ be-

comes capable of sharing his sonship with us in the Spirit. Paul tells the Romans that Christ "was delivered to death for our sins, and raised to life to justify us" (4, 25). His death and resurrection are in reality two aspects of one and the same mystery.

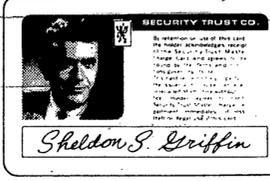
Yet the full meaning of Christ's resurrection entails a challenge for each Christian. The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church states that "each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and as a sign that God lives."

More than simply believing in the resurrection, we must prove that Christ has risen by a life of joy, hope, and love. A Christian must so live that his life is unexplainable or impossible without the strength of the risen Christ.

Easter means that the central reality is not death but life. As the Risen Christ changed the life of Paul on the road to Damascus, so our lives in witness to the Resurrection must offer hope and life to the world today.

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