

# Go Where the Action Is

(Continued from Page 6)

Communist at the same bar witnessing to Marx. The first is expected to have an irrelevance which the other has not. Even a beginner in tennis has little regard for the coach who constantly misses the ball to give him courage and hope. What scandalized the servant girls the night of Our Lord's trial, was that Peter was supposed to have acted in a manner to show that he had been with Christ, but he did not so act. Roger Lloyd, in his *Ferment in the Church*, says that we have gone too far when "Secular seems to be a word of praise, Worldliness a synonym of the Holy, Discipline a term of abuse, and Religion almost an enemy."

## What Is Irrelevance?

Irrelevance is union with Christ through His Spirit; it is a consciousness that one is not a representative of the slums, but the ambassador of Christ in the slums; it is dialogue with the distressed after a monologue with Him Who bore our distress on a tree; it is a making of the body and soul of others after one has made his own soul in humility and prayer; it is a taking into one's own life all the cries of agony, all the pain and hurt of the world, because in prayer one has learned that that is what God did for us. Lenin, who gave Communism to Russia, said he did not want any bad priests, for they did not know how to be dedicated to a cause.

The professionally religious, who spurn their role and their vocation, create not just a spiritual problem, but also a psychological one. By ideals, training and Divine mission, the priest or religious are prepared to go into the world without being of it. A tension sometimes arises between the ideal and the nitty-gritty world. Margareta K. Bowers, M.D. puts it in her *Conflicts of the Clergy*: "The schizophrenic clings to his ideals, to all that he feels is true to his inner world. To that end, he sacrifices the outer world of reality. The neurotic holds onto outer-worldly reality and sacrifices his devotion and his convictions."

The conservatives believe in irrelevance to the social for the sake of relevance to religion; the activists believe only in relevance to the social, with contempt for the spiritual and the doctrinal. The first seek to become "saints", but they pick up their skirts in the dirty gutters where people live; the second want to become "martyrs", and by that they mean the beautiful publicity attendant upon being arrested. Using the language of psychology, the Church until Vatican II had more schizophrenics than neurotics; today it has more neurotics than schizophrenics.

## The Ideal: Intersection

Intersection is the point where Christ and the World meet. Christ met the world in two ways: visibly and invisibly. He worked invisibly and without physical contact in some miracles such as the curing of the centurion's servant at a distance; he worked visibly and physically when He had direct contact with others, such as curing the leper by touch. Both were done by the same Person. In the Church there will be those who will work hiddenly and unseen, such as the contemplative and monastic orders; and there will be those who will explode Christ's Power and Mercy not only in Grass Roots but in Asphalt Alleys. Prayer, meditation and self-denial in the individual will be the unseen, interacting with the social uplift which is the seen.

The failure to possess this outer-action could be a scandal, as it was to Simone Weil, the French Jewess, who refused to come into the Church because of the want of spirituality in Christians. Yet she kept her contact with Christ: "My heart has been transported forever. I hope, into the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar, for since my birth I have been at the intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christian."

Intersection means that irrelevance meets relevance; contemplation prepares for action; aloneness with Christ fortifies togetherness with others. The two are like the two lenses of a field glass; one the imitation, of Christ, the other His prolongation in the secular. "Set your hearts on His Kingdom first, and on His righteousness, and all these other things will be given as well." (Matt. 6/33)

As T. S. Eliot put it in "The Dry Salvages":

To apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in lifetime's death is love,  
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender."

Those who are wholly relevant to the secular lack power of judgment and discernment, for the ocean is seen but from the shore. Immersion of the religious in social issues makes them drowning men with planks. "Social reformation is impossible without personal transformation, first in the leaders, then in the followers. But those who



have caught on fire with love of God cannot but want to spend themselves and to be spent on others.

If religion is today gradually being considered unnecessary for social life, it is because it brings nothing to the secular except what is already in it. Churches were free from taxation when they were regarded as giving spiritual motivation to society; now that so many agree that there is no salvation but social salvation, taxation is demanded. Instead of religion being a point of intersection with the world, forming a cross, it is becoming parallel or even identified with the world. Identification allows no place for a fulcrum with which to lift the earth. One cannot pack a suitcase and go into it, and one cannot make a bed if one is already in it. Christ, indeed, is to be found in the poverty of the world, but who would go there to find Christ incognito, if Christ were not already cognate in his own heart?

## Example of Intersection

Irrelevance and intersection can best be understood by studying the life of one who was never known as a "religious" man until his death. Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary-General of the United Nations was killed in a plane crash in the heart of Africa on September 17, 1961. He was never known as a God-intoxicated man, but he designed the Chapel of Contemplation for the United Nations. He was falsely accused, misunderstood and maligned, and it was not until after his death, when his *Markings* and other spiritual documents were found, that anyone knew he was ever at the Intersection of Time and Eternity. We have long-haired prophets bombing, pouring blood and burning, because they love "peace"; and some of them do it in the name of religion. But here was a man who worked harder for peace than anyone, he even suffered and died for it. His efforts were the mightier because he was not inspired by the god-Ego, but the God-Savior.

No one ever dimly guessed that this man, who presided over conflicting nations and traveled on difficult missions for the sake of peace, was a daily reader of the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas Akempis. It was the one book that he took with him on his fateful mission to the Congo; it was found on the table next to his bed in Leopoldville, where he spent his last night.

Once when he had excused himself from his international colleagues for three hours; they later found him reading his Bible. It was the day the Security Council was straining to find peace between Egypt and Israel. From his diary of that date, we know what he read: "Hold these still in the Lord, first not Thyself, else thou shalt be moved to evil." (Ps. 37/8) When the Suez crisis was resolved, he wrote: "Your own effort did not bring it to pass, only God. But rejoice if God found a use for your efforts in His work!"

How well anyone in authority can understand what he wrote in 1957 when severely criticized for not speaking to "the most dangerous of moral dilemmas: when we are obliged to conceal truth in order to help the truth to be victorious!"

He was a celibate so he could write about how restraint necessarily changes what is base into a jewel: "Denied any outlet, the heat transmuted the coal into diamonds." In the same vein, recognizing that he had no earthly ties of love, he wrote: "Didst Thou give me this inescapable loneliness so that it would be easier to give thee all?"



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While admitting the joys of carnal union, he felt that its surrender brought a capacity for sacrifice not otherwise possible: "The ultimate surrender of the creative act — it is the destiny of some to be brought to the threshold of his in the act of sacrifice rather than the sexual act; and they experience a thunderclap of dazzling power!"

The great moment of Intersection was Pentecost, 1961: "But at some moment I did answer 'yes' to Someone — or Something — and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal."

The primacy of the Divine came out in his line: "Not I, but God in me, I am the vessel. The draught is God's. And God is the thirsty One."

His whole life was summed up in a poem which he wrote in *Markings*:

"The road, — You shall follow it.  
"The fun, — You shall forget it.  
"The cup, — You shall empty it.  
"The pain, — You shall conceal it.  
"The truth, — You shall be told it.  
"The end, — You shall endure it."

*Hubert J. Shea*

## Deaths

### Sydney K. Wood, Priest's Father

Mass for repose of the soul of Sydney K. Wood, 85, of 40 Gardiner Ave., father of Father George S. Wood, pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows Church, was celebrated March 26 in St. Augustine's Church.

Mr. Wood, a retired air brake inspector for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, died March 22, 1969, in St. Mary's Hospital.

In the sanctuary were Bishop James E. Kearney, who gave the final blessing, and Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey. Msgr. John S. Randall delivered the homily.

Concelebrants were Father Wood, Monsignor Randall, and Fathers John E. Roach, Paul Wohlrah and Edward Tolster.

Besides Father Wood, he is survived by another son, John F. Wood, associate director of the Genesee Valley School De-

velopment Association and former associate superintendent of Greece schools; four grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

Mr. Wood was born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England, and came to Rochester in 1910. He worked for the railroad from 1914 until his retirement in 1945.

### Marguerite Lynch

Mrs. Marguerite Lynch, 69, of 32 North Main St., Geneva, died early on Mar. 25, following a brief illness. She was the widow of Willis D. Lynch.

Funeral services were from St. Francis DeSales Church. She was a member of St. Francis DeSales Church, the Rosary Society of St. Francis DeSales, and the Knights of Columbus Auxiliary.

Surviving are two daughters, Miss Mary Ellen Lynch of Geneva and Mrs. Thomas (Marguerite) Toole of Rochester; two sons, Bernard Lynch of Geneva and Daniel Lynch of Plattsburgh; 12 grandchildren; one niece and one nephew.

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- Send us your Mass intentions. The offering you make, when a missionary priest offers Mass for your intention, supports him for one day. Mass intentions are his only means of support.
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16 Courier-Journal — Friday, April 11, 1969

## Catholic Veterans Fete Children

The Catholic War Veterans and there were refreshments of Monroe County entertained about 600 children Holy Saturday — at their annual Easter party at Most Precious Blood parish.

Each child received a prize, such as Easter baskets or toys, and there were refreshments and movies.

The party has become an annual event and tickets proceeds are used for a scholarship fund and for entertainment of patients in the Canandaigua Veterans' Administration Hospital.

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## Time to

By Father R...

The keynote address of the convention of U.S. bishops in Detroit this week in Detroit was:

The Church can't get money from its parochial schools run ever get any money, until it opens public and tells it.

The speaker was worried by daily a diocese. But as of the conference in the nation, Bishop nardin is surely w the money crisis parochial schools to turn away near in the past two years.

He knows that tors are weeping gap between school day collections.

Here is his suggestion school support: all parishes and complete open access school finances to Catholic people who port our schools h information."

The Bishop's reamed primarily at tually autonomous depend totally on parishioners who s budget.

The 10,000 educ address didn't, un thousands of the parishioners who a bills.

But pastors, and boards, might re Bishop Bernardin's nothing to hide. I

# CHURCH

## Top G

By Father P.

The number one ter's ghetto commu an attempt to ch tive influence of cation upon its chil been coming in o the FIGHT organ ization, committee eral months.

They have prod develop a major about community lic schools.

The local Gamk doing their predic the issue for the papers can see or "betenore" FIGH lyn D. R. Florence, Board of Education

But the issue is In a competitive, city, the children across the United educated for faild Are lying was th of Dr. Elliott Th couple of years a

City dwellers l to suburban town tion since World I reason for this m their children in manageable school ents outside the long resisted for their schools by districts to confor living patterns.

# A LA

## Ike Ser

By JAME

It is hard to be erent public resp howver funeral ser is quite as indiffe the modern propf say.

You can hardly these days witho somebody that Go the Pentagon has lains in Vietnam t their services on th is scarcely surpris Pentagon's expansi all other fields.

Still the substiti ern age don't see factory. The trend society in America television demons occasion that it h bring the whole m on experience — all part of a sing then we find that nants of a commo

The choir at ti dral in Washingn hymn. The openin our Fathers, living all the modern d it is probably stil of the chorus, how "Faith of our Fat will be true to th (that is clearly n Americans.

Nevertheless, fo believers alike, so The political life country were base vidual was grou