

A 'Dirty' Five-Letter Word

THEOLOGY OF THE WORLD
(Twentieth in Series)

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

There may be many dirty four-letter words, but for some in the Church the nastiest five-letter word is C-R-O-S-S. It was a dirty word to Satan who three times tempted the Lord from it; it was an abomination to Peter who was willing to have a Divine Christ but not a Suffering Christ; it is a smugly word to clerics who want optional imitation of Christ and the angels; it is an unwashed word to modern Philippians: "I have told you often, and I repeat it today with tears, that there are many who are behaving as enemies of the Cross of Christ." 3/18)

The Secular City has no place for a Cross. In the twentieth century, as in the first, there are those who would cover up that empty hole on Calvary as others would push skeletons into a closet. Mortification, penance and self-denial are sometimes even deleted from Constitutions of nuns that the "world may never even suspect that we are not a part of it."

The greatest cross of all is to have no cross. Our possessions are our limitations. As Harriet Hamilton-King said, this is the only life we will ever have in which there is a Cross:

"But if impatient thou let slip thy cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again,
Nor in another; here and here alone
Is given thee to suffer for His sake.
In other worlds we shall more perfectly
Serve Him and love Him, praise Him, work
for Him,
Grow near and nearer Him with all delight;
But then we shall not anymore be called
To suffer, which is our appointment here."

The Theology of the World cannot escape answering the question: How is the Christian to bear up under the sufferings, trials, injustices, violence, confusions and abandonments felt in the world? No longer will the pious optimism of Browning console: "God's in His heaven — All's right with the world". Life with its final frustration of death confronts man.

Paradox of a Crossed-Life

The frustrations of human existence constitute the problem of evil: If God suffers, He is limited and infected with death and, therefore, is not God. But if He does not suffer and comes down into the dust of human lives, He is denied the insights which suffering brings, and therefore, is not God. Such is the paradox. It takes more than liturgy, spiritual reading, protest meetings and social concern to buttress the soul of modern man in the Secular City.

The world is in a mess. It is certainly not the way it ought to be. Man knows this, so he raises his clenched fist against heaven asking: If God is good, why is there suffering? Was God ever hungry? Did He ever live in a slum? Does He know what it is like to live under a totalitarian regime and to be a refugee from a sword? Was He ever a social outcast, living on the wrong side of the street and in a despised neighborhood? Did God ever go without food for three days or ten days? Does God know the misery of tramps who have nowhere to lay their heads? Does God know the agony that goes on in hospitals: open wounds, blood-stained faces and pierced members?

Is there no rational explanation to the problem of evil and suffering?

The closest man came to it was in the Book of Job where Satan uses this argument: If a just and good man suffered, God had to be unjust. Job could find no answer to those questions that have heaved up from millions of breasts: "Why was I ever born? Why did I ever see the light of day?" Job multiplied the queries while his comforters tried to give answers, such as: "Job, you must have done wrong".

If the Bible had been written by a Broadway dramatist, God would have appeared on the stage and answered all the questions. But in Scripture, God does appear, but instead of answering questions, He asks questions.

"Now it is my turn to ask questions and yours to inform me.

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Tell me, since you are so well informed! Who decided the dimensions of it, do you know?

Or who stretched the measuring line across it? Who supports its pillars at their bases? Who laid its cornerstone When all the stars of the morning were singing with joy?

Who pent up the sea behind closed doors — When it leapt tumultuous out of the womb?

Have you ever in your life given orders to the morning

Or sent the dawn to its post,
Telling it to grasp the earth by its edges?
Which is the way to the home of the light
And where does darkness live?" (Job, Chaps. 38, 39)

When God finished asking Job questions, he realized that the questions of God were wiser than the answers of men. Finally, Job was restored, to more than he lost. But God also told Job to offer sacrifice for those false comforters who tried to explain the problem of evil.

The Only Answer to Frustration

God came into the mess that we are in. There was a Divine Breakthrough into all of this disorder. God took His own medicine. Rather than destroy human freedom when it rebelled against Him, God came into the disorder created by human freedom as if He Himself were guilty.

When I was a boy my mother gave me castor oil. Before she would give it to me, she would taste it saying: "See, it's not bad". I knew that it was just as bad for her as it was for me, but it was her way of sharing suffering and giving an example.

In a Divine way, God took upon Himself violence, hatred, muck, headaches, sickening dupli-

cities, malicious mendacities, homelessness, the stinging dryness of thirst, taunting shrieks, the smell of untended wounds, flesh-hanging like purple rags, mouth too dry to hold its spittle and the company of sadistic, psychopathic, depraved, perverted mobs and hangers-on.

As God, He could not suffer and absorb the loneliness and the heartaches of man. So He asked a woman to give Him a body. Then He could take the worst that man could visit upon Him. The worst thing that man can do is not to bomb cities and strangle little children; it is to kill goodness. Being defeated in that, evil would never be victorious again. As God, His sufferings would have infinite value. As Man, He would be sharing our lot. Never again could man shriek: "Does God know what it is like to suffer?"

Lawrence of Arabia once said: "No man would lead the Arabs except if he ate the rank's food, wore their clothes, lived level with them and yet appeared better in himself". Our Lord stood among men, as Humanity or "the Son of Man"; refused to call on twelve legions of angels which an agonizing mortal could not do, in order that He might level with man. And yet He was different; enough like us to be an Example; enough unlike us to be our Savior.

The words of Eugene Debs, of Socialist fame, echo the cross: "Years ago I recognized my kinship with all human beings and I made up my mind that I was not one whit better than the meanest of the earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am of it, while there is a criminal class, I am of it, while there is a soul in prison, I am not free".

This identification with humanity has its basis in the enfleshment of the Word of God. Suffering love alone is redemptive. An unfaithful husband, who had made his wife's devotion a kind of hell, decided one day to tell her of his wretched life. As he unfolded his tale, she turned pale and staggered against the wall, tears streaming down her cheeks. Stretching her arms wide to welcome him back, he understood that her pure love was being tortured on the cross of his sin. For the first time, as she resembled Christ pinned to a tree, he understood the meaning of the Crucifixion.

As C. S. Lewis once put it so strikingly: "As the flash of the volcano discloses for a few hours the elemental fires at the earth's center, so the light on Calvary was the bursting forth through historical conditions of the very nature of the Everlasting. There was a cross in the Heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside of Jerusalem". God was not above all pain, but in His Son, Made Man, suffered what man deserved.

C. E. Rolt, in his *The World's Redemption*, expressed it: "Inwards, at the very center of the world, the cries of man strike upon the ear of God Who hears them with an infinite grief; for at the inmost center of things there is no mere creative mind of vital force; there is a Human Heart, and that Heart is broken".

It is the very nature of God that He cannot eternally let things go wrong. William Blake dared to say: "Till our grief has fled and gone, He doth sit by us and moan."

The Cross is a "dirty" word to two groups in the Church: to those who live only by "involvement" and those who breathe only by "detachment". The first practice love of neighbor without love of Christ Crucified; the second proclaim love of Christ Crucified without love of neighbor.

Involvement: My Neighbor, Not Christ!

For the secularists, to blaspheme against "involvement" is more serious than blasphemy against the Spirit; it is the unforgivable sin. What is there in the doctrine of "involvement" with the world, which makes so many called to be Christ's, so detached from Him Crucified? Why must the price paid for defense of social justice be the loss of spirituality? Why does "involvement" with the foul conditions of the Inner City so often make them spurn the Cross, as they write it as a dirty word on the walls of the Secular City? It was not so with Vincent de Paul; it is not so with Sister Theresa of India, nor with Cardinal Leger among the lepers.

Most love of social justice be founded on contempt of individual righteousness before God? Why must the legitimate desire to get the Church "involved" in the cause of the depressed make its exponents so humorless, critical and contemptuous of the spiritual? Why does one so often find that the repudiation of the Magisterium of the Church, the Real Presence, and other articles of the Creed, go hand in hand with the fanatic's "involvement"? Certainly, the Good Samaritan who really was involved with the wounded, did not attack any Samaritan or Jewish beliefs in his errand of mercy.

The worldly man doing good for the world does not ordinarily develop this critical, anti-Church, anti-Cross attitude. But a few called to be Christ's do. Does their divorce of Christ and His Cross beget a self-hatred, as it did in Judas, which comes out in negation? It should not be so, for the "being for other" is best served with "being for Christ". When "involvement" alone is the rule of life, the priest or the nun never does any good for humanity beyond that which any pagan, humanist or communist can do. He may wear the collar and she the habit, but they are like Gehazi who carried the staff of Elisha but was unable to bring back life to the dead child. (2 Kings 4/29) The same externals, the same techniques, the same sociological acuteness as the world uses, are only bread until the consecrating words: "This is My Body" are breathed over them. The true "involvement" takes place when one offers up his life in service for his fellow man because he owes his own life to Christ Crucified.

False Detachment

If the Cross is a "dirty" word to those who want only to be "involved" with the world, it can also be a "dirty" word to those who, like Peter, confess Christ but not His Cross. Here we touch

(Continued on Page 12)

Diocese to Try Changes In Funeral Rite

More than 20 parishes in the diocese have been selected by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, in conjunction with the Diocesan Liturgy Commission, to experiment in changes in the Catholic funeral rite.

The changes, reflecting the Second Vatican Council's directive that "the rite for burial should express more clearly the paschal character of Christian death," emphasize that death is "the joyous realization of the Gospel belief in the resurrection."

Msgr. William H. Shannon, chairman of the Liturgy Commission, and professor of theology at Nazareth College, pointed out that the changed rite "is a controlled experiment which will help determine what the funeral rite will be in the future."

Priests and people, he said, will be asked to evaluate the prayers, the scriptural readings and the ceremonies of this rite to see if they are more truly expressive of a Christian understanding of death than the service traditionally used.

Persons attending the rite, he added, are invited to make known their reactions to the Liturgy Commission. Monsignor Shannon's explanation follows:

"The Christian understanding of death flows from our understanding of the meaning of the death of Christ.

"For when Our Lord died, something happened to death. His was

the first death which was in no sense a penalty for sin. His death was a pasover; his exodus, his journey to a new life. He passed from a mortal existence to an immortal, glorified life with the Father.

"When Christ died, something happened to our death. He made our death a pasover, too; a passage from a life of sin and mortality to an immortal, glorified life in Him. St. Paul reminds us of this:

"You have been taught that when we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized in His death. In other words, when we were baptized, we went into the tomb with Him and joined Him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life."

"At the Last Supper Jesus said: 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I am coming again and I shall take you to myself; that where I am, you also may be.'

"Death is not only our going to God. It is Jesus coming to us. That is why the early Christians looked forward so eagerly to the second coming of Christ. That is why the Bible ends with the exultant cry of hope: 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

"The funeral of the Roman Liturgy, as it has been celebrated, while not ignoring the aspect of Christian hope, has tended to stress an 'unduly fearsome concept of death.' So often the over-punishing theme of sin-punishment-judgment has tended to obscure the joyous realization of the Gospel belief in the resurrection.

"The purpose of the new rite is not to ignore the sorrow of the mourners or the seriousness of the moment of death, but to stress this joyful hope in the resurrection."

In the new rite, the priest meets the mourners at the door of the church and greets them with the words of Christian faith and hope.

The body of the deceased is sprinkled with holy water, and a prayer is said recalling his baptism. The coffin is covered with a white pall, bearing on it the symbols of the resurrection.

When the body is placed before the altar, the coffin no longer is surrounded by six candles; in their place is the paschal candle — the symbol of Christ's victory over death.

The readings and prayers of the Mass (a number of options are permitted) strike the note of hope and resurrection. The priest's vestments are not black or purple, but white — a color associated with the newness of life at Easter.

The church bells peal rather than toll, and the alleluia ring out in joy. Instead of the absolution at the end of Mass, there is a farewell or service of commendation — commending the deceased to God.

All is done in such a way that the consolation of faith and hope are offered to lighten the burden of believers; yet at the same time the sensibilities of those who mourn are respected.

The service at the grave also has been revised to call final attention to the paschal character of Christian death.

Superficiality Hit by Pope

Vatican City — (NC) — Pope Paul VI has accused today's "controversial reformism" of being superficial and seeking sensations.

"The Church is composed of imperfect, limited men," he said at a general audience this week. "It is a sacred institution, but it is constructed with human material, ever inadequate and frail."

But in criticizing these frailties, public opinion has all too often become "superficial, malignant and anxious to discover and create sensational impressions," he said.

The Pope went on: "When obvious defects are discovered, then the critics indulge in drawing from them reason for reproaching the authority of the Church for the loss of faith of so many who, quite rightly would wish it worthy and perfect, spiritual and sublime in all aspects."

These people, he said, find it inferior to the ideal which it does not always know how to personally worthy, find in this a pretext and, indeed at times, a merit for professing their own kind of Christianity."

The Pope said there are those who maintain that "if religion is extinguished, if the Church is deserted, the fault lies with the structures, the obstacle lies with the structures."

But, the Pope said, constitutional structures of the Church must be distinguished from those derived "through historical tradition."

These traditional structures, he said, have been tested through "age-old experience," and are still capable of continuous revival.

CHURCH HUMOR



Word for Sunday

The Paraclete: Ally and Advisor

By Father Albert Shannon

What a wonderful teacher Holy Mother Church is! Have you noticed that since Easter, the Sunday Gospels have mentioned the Holy Spirit. The Church would not confront us with Pentecost without preparing our hearts and minds.

The greatest teaching about the Spirit in the New Testament is found in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John's Gospel. John has his own distinctive title for the Spirit, "the Paraclete" — "when the Paraclete comes." The fact that there are as many translations of the word as there are translators shows how hard it is to find a word or expression that conveys the wealth of meaning that is in this word. William Barclay has written a worthwhile book, *The Promise of the Spirit*. Let me adapt what he has written about the word.

"Paraclete" comes from the Greek verb *parakalein* which means to call to one's side. But called for what purpose? Called as an ally, as an advisor, to lend assistance with some great task; called as a witness in one's favor, and as an advocate in one's cause. Thus Jewish Rabbis used to say that man's every good deed would be his paraclete on Judgment Day.

Sometimes, *parakalein* can mean to comfort. "Comfort you, comfort you, my people, saith your God." (Is. 40:1). Here comfort does not mean console. Comfort is derived from the Latin *fortis*, which means brave. To comfort meant to put courage into one, enable him to cope bravely with the struggle and battle of life, to stand on his own two feet and face its exacting demands with steady eyes.

Finally, *parakalein* is regularly used for exhorting and encouraging a man going into battle. It is what the Legion of Mary calls the Allo-

cuto — the exhortation of a general before battle, putting fire and courage into his troops.

To call the Holy Spirit "the Paraclete," therefore, is to say that the Holy Spirit is the Person who enables a man to meet unflinchingly the sorrows, the struggles, the burdens of the world; He is the One who nerves the feeble for battle and makes the coward brave, who gives wise counsel and powerful help in the difficult decisions of life.

If ever man needed a paraclete, it is today. One group in particular, I think, need Him: journalists and newscasters. They, in a way, hold the fate of our country in their hands. Much of the turmoil in our cities and campuses has been laid squarely at the feet of irresponsible journalists and newscasters.

Neil Hickey in *TV Guide* has written: "The presence of TV cameras frequently transmits a potentially violent situation into an actually violent one... TV networks give too much time to the flashier and more vocal extremists whose words foster violence, and not enough to

the less theatrical but saner voices of moderate men."

The recent CNY "incident" comes to mind. There are 20,000 students at CNY. But from the news media would you have guessed all the troublemakers — number no. more than 200 — would you know that? The ratio of anarchists is about the same in practically every other university in the country.

And yet — thanks to irresponsible journalism — we see a positively astounding phenomenon. We see little of the vast majority, with truth on their side. It seems as though they were a beleaguered minority, carrying on an impossible fight.

Basically the concept is wrong. Psychologically it is calamitous. Douglas Hyde has warned that one of the steps in a Communist takeover is to create among the good a minority complex.

We certainly need to pray, "Come, Holy Spirit, Be a Paraclete to us all, especially to our journalists and newscasters."

COURIER-JOURNAL
BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN
President
Msgr. John S. Randall, Managing Editor
Rev. Richard Torrey, Editor
Anthony J. Costello, Advertising Director
Carmen J. Vigluzzi, Associate Editor
Arthur P. Farran, Associate Editor
MAIN OFFICE: 35 S. 5th St., Rochester, N. Y. 14601
SUBSCRIPTION OFFICE: 217 Johnson Bldg., Little St., RE 2-5248 or RE 2-9422
ALBANY OFFICE: 144 E. Exchange St., AL 2-4446

Five Msgr. A Pri 50 Ye

Msgr. John F. ...

Msgr. Neary ...

He was born ...

Msgr. Neary ...

After serving ...

Father Richard ...

The service at ...

CC NEWSPAPER

AD

By PINO

Because two ...

The women ar ...

A House of Co ...

But a House ...

In Seneca Fal ...

Encouraged b ...

Last August ...

In October, a ...

In January, 1 ...

Possibilities f ...

Marle Uplik ...

Last fall, un ...

"We need a ...

They had vi ...

"All the kids ...

For a year t ...

They worked ...