

THE HOLY FATHER Reflections on Space Flight

The space undertaking of the astronauts of "Apollo 10" was the starting point of Paul VI's meditation addressed to the faithful in the course of the General Audience that was held in St. Peter's on Wednesday, May 21st.

Beloved Sons and Daughters:

We are all so engrossed by the pictures, the news, the event of the space journey that we cannot refrain from making it the subject of our brief meditation today.

The eyes or, rather, the thoughts of the world are following once more, but perhaps with more intense interest this time, the amazing itinerary of the astronauts, who are going at unimaginable speed to explore from close by the satellite of our earth, the moon; the quiet friend of our nights, with its changeable, cold and silvery face. People are watching, admiring, thinking, hoping, praying.

The horizon is becoming astronomical, and not only on account of the observation of our senses, but because of the broadening of our mental outlook. Astronomy has always been a great master of thought, which the scanty and empirical com-

mon notions, borrowed, moreover, from the doctrines of others, filled with fantastical images, improbable dreams, hypothetical and questionable scientific systems, innumerable superstitions, to such an extent that it can be said that in ordinary culture the science of the heavens is practically forgotten and reduced to common and elementary notions.

The ancients knew more than we do, if not about astronomy, certainly about astrology. One of the obstacles to understanding the Divine Comedy, for example, are the continual references to the phenomena of the heavenly horizon that Dante intermingles in his sublime poem.

Our modern scientists certainly know marvelous things about the sky, the cosmos, its chronological and mathematical structures, and today, more than ever, its physical composition and its dynamic evolution. But in comparison with society they are the initiated, studying, speaking, living by themselves. Man's interests turn more than ever to the earth, to the tiny span of our days and to the bustling events of our immediate experience.

And now, as if a window were opened in the room of our usual life,

we are invited to look outside, into space, into the heavens, into the cosmos. And as this is a human phenomenon, which has the sky as its stage, our usual thoughts are almost stopped and fixed in the emptiness in front of us. We are not charmed, or amused; we are troubled.

An immense, mysterious reality, which we thought we could forget, because it was far away from us non-astronomers, unreachable, beyond our experience, is now, on the contrary, in front of us. The range of vision goes beyond measure, extends into the depths of space, the universe tells us at least that it exists.

We must admire and admire. Who is man, capable of such works? Of conceiving them, organizing them, carrying them out, adapting them to the disproportionate difficulties they present, and to the small stature of his own being, tiny, limited and vulnerable?

How does he possess such capacity for study, knowledge, scientific and technical dominion over things, over the world? And how, weak and conditioned as he is, does he find the courage to venture on similar undertakings? Even more than the face

of the moon, man's face is illuminated before us.

No other being known to us, no animal, even stronger and more perfect in its vital instincts, can be compared with the wonderful beings that we men are.

There is something in man that goes beyond man; there is a mysterious kind of reflection, that has something divine about it. The words, well known to our conversation with God, come to our lips spontaneously: "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy hands (O Lord), the moon and the stars which thou hast established, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than the Angels, and dost crown him with glory and honour. Thou has given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

But how? But why? The delightful psalmody answers again: "Thou hast spread the light of thy countenance upon us, O Lord! That is: man bears the reflection of God within him. He was created in his image: 'God created man in his own image—male and female he created them.'"



'An immense, mysterious reality.'

This divine origin, this dominating power of man is clearly revealed to our minds, we should say, in the light of facts; these facts we are contemplating these days, which add not so much to the pride as to the dignity of man. They do not make him proud as a self-causing principle, but they magnify him as the masterpiece and as the collaborator of God (cf. I Cor. 3, 9). We must always remember this.

The other path of our admiration is God himself. If we are really intelligent, if, that is, we do not limit our attention to the physical screen of things, to their scientific descrip-

tion, but read inside them, in their ultra-physical (that is metaphysical) secret and try to understand something of what they are, we will at once grasp an evident truth: they are not the cause of themselves!

How, then, do they exist? How are they so big, so well-ordered, so beautiful, so united? A compelling rationality forces us to arrive on the threshold of that supreme wisdom that we call religion. A natural revelation, and today, in an hour of scientific triumph, brings us back to the Source of everything, to the necessary One, to the creating Principle, to the living God.

COMMENTARY

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Father's Day -- 1969



At Home

A young son mimics his father and joins him in a harmonica duet in this scene typical of the relaxed mood in which most American families will spend Father's Day. (RNS)



Vietnam

This Montagnard will probably spend the day with his child on guard duty at a hilltop outpost in South Vietnam's Central Highlands. In most permanent outposts, a soldier's family lives with him and endures the same dangers. (RNS)

A LAYMAN'S VIEW

What Youth Needs from Us

By CARMEN VIGLUCCI

Newspapers have long borne the criticism that they print only the tawdry news about our young people — high-speed auto accidents, vandalism, dope use and worse.

Their defense has been generally two-fold: 1. the good things people do are usually of such pedestrian routine they don't merit space; 2. bad news is more interesting (sells more newspapers).

It could be that we of the newspaper profession never looked deeply enough for the kind of important things our youth have always been doing. At least I know of no newspaper that has had a "young people beat" that amounted to anything more than the superficial "school notes" type coverage.

In any case, all that is academic now as these days young people have literally grabbed front page headlines through, for example, campus demonstrations and draft protests. Whether such events are individually meritorious or detrimental, no one can deny that they cannot be ignored.

Recently during a Xerox TV program about the generation gap, a young Japanese girl calmly said she and many of her conferees aimed simply at destruction of society; that there is nothing worth saving and things are so bad that even rebuilding is out of the question.

Such thinking is not insular; we have seen evidence of it in our country, too. So it becomes even more necessary for us in the news media to publicize the concrete, constructive projects of our youth.

Two such projects were in the news here last week.

When the city held a press conference to announce its Summer Youth Opportunity Program, five black youngsters were instrumental. Taking turns in rapid-fire fashion, they expertly described each of the many projects embraced by the program.

Officially they are assistants to the youth coordinator; actually they are the cloth from which will be cut the leaders which the ghetto so desperately needs.

All are either students or graduates of Monroe Community College and each deserves mention — Linda Brown, Fred Forbes, William Alexander, Jesse Dudley and Andrew Carter.

Another local group in the news last week is the Kennedy Action Corps. It was formed after Sen. Kennedy's assassination last year and consisted originally of youths who had been working for his presidential nomination.

While seeking to enact into law some of the late senator's ideas, the group is non-partisan. Its members, about 30, meet weekly in a Clinton Avenue South storefront, whose use is donated by the local Democratic committee. Its annual speaker, however, was a Republican city councilman, Stephen May.

Pope Praises Nuns' Calling

Vatican City — (NC) — Pope Pius VI told a group of Sisters he has "faith in the validity and the beauty of the religious vocation."

Saying he wanted to give "security" to nuns, he asserted: "For those who have the grace of vocation, it is still worth embracing."

The Pope was speaking to nuns and members of secular institutes from 58 nations studying at the Pontifical Institute Regina Mundi for higher studies. His speech was an impassioned defense of the religious life in modern times.

He returned several times to the theme that the religious life was far from out of date.

He continued: "Yes, today vocation is a personal choice of the total and perennial gift of oneself to God in

Mary Lou Schwartz, a Bishop Kearney senior, says the main goals of the corps are three — to lower the voting age to 18, get passage of gun control legislation, and secure aid for victims of the Nigeria-Biafra conflict.

To reach such ends, members pass out petitions at shopping plazas. The corps also operated a booth during Youth Week at Midtown Plaza.

President of the Kennedy Action Corps is Louis Atlas of Penfield High. Secretary is Barbara Gross.

There are other plain signs of youth's drive for positive social action. You see it in political campaigns, in church activities, in a Miami, Fla., rally for decency which drew 30,000.

But seeing it is not enough; publicizing it is necessary but not enough. What is needed is that we older folks work hard at developing and nourishing the sound leadership already sprouting among youths that will enable it to squeeze out the weeds of nihilism.

generous response to the appeal of Christ our Lord, which only a few chosen ones understand and comply with. If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me."

He cautioned: "Do not believe that your total and perennial consecration to God and the various works of the apostolate will redound only to the glory of the Lord, to the benefit and honor of yourselves and your religious families, and of the persons who will benefit directly from the fruits of your life of sanctification and charitable ministry.

"On the contrary, be ever more persuaded that your life of love, of sacrifice, of vivifying crucifixion with Christ will redound to the benefit of the whole Church.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Wet or Dry, Watch That 'Plom'

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



At the Rochester Clergy conference, held in Backet Hall on May 22, I sat next to a young priest whom I had never met. When we stood after the conference, I noticed a small enamel Sacred Heart pin in his lapel. "Isn't that the Pioneer Badge?" I asked. He replied: "Yes, I'm surprised you recognize it." Indeed I do, and admire the Pioneer ideals immensely. Now that I think of it, yours is only the second I've seen in the United States. The other was on a kinsman of mine from Dublin who was visiting relatives in Syracuse. Is there a Pioneer group in Rochester?" "Yes. About 70 or 80 members." "Well, God bless you for it. Drink is a terrible problem."

Who are the Pioneers? They were founded in Ireland, and they are men who pledge themselves to total abstinence from alcohol. When you meet one at a social gathering, whom you will recognize by the Sacred Heart emblem, you don't say to him: "Have a scotch or a beer," but rather, "Have a Seven-Up or a cup of coffee." At least, that's what you should do.

I am neither a Pioneer nor a total abstainer, but often think I should be. It might give encouragement to

some who need extra help. This makes me recall a saying of Father John Guy: "Priests sometimes are like sign posts. They give the proper directions without moving themselves."

Pioneers frequently are men and women who have never had trouble with alcohol. Some have never even tasted it. Others have had problems with and from booze, and find the Pioneer pledge and badge a spiritual and psychological fortifier.

More familiar to Americans are the Alcoholics Anonymous. These groups are specifically for men and women who suffer from the disease of alcoholism. Despite the skepticism of some hard-roses, alcoholism is as much a disease as diabetes. There is a chemistry in the body of alcoholics which makes the afflicted man or woman a compulsive addict after just one drink. Like a diabetic who is compelled to control his sugar intake, the alcoholic must control that first drink — by not having it.

The AA principal is: "Don't take the first drink. If you avoid that first one, you don't have to worry about the 5th or 6th."

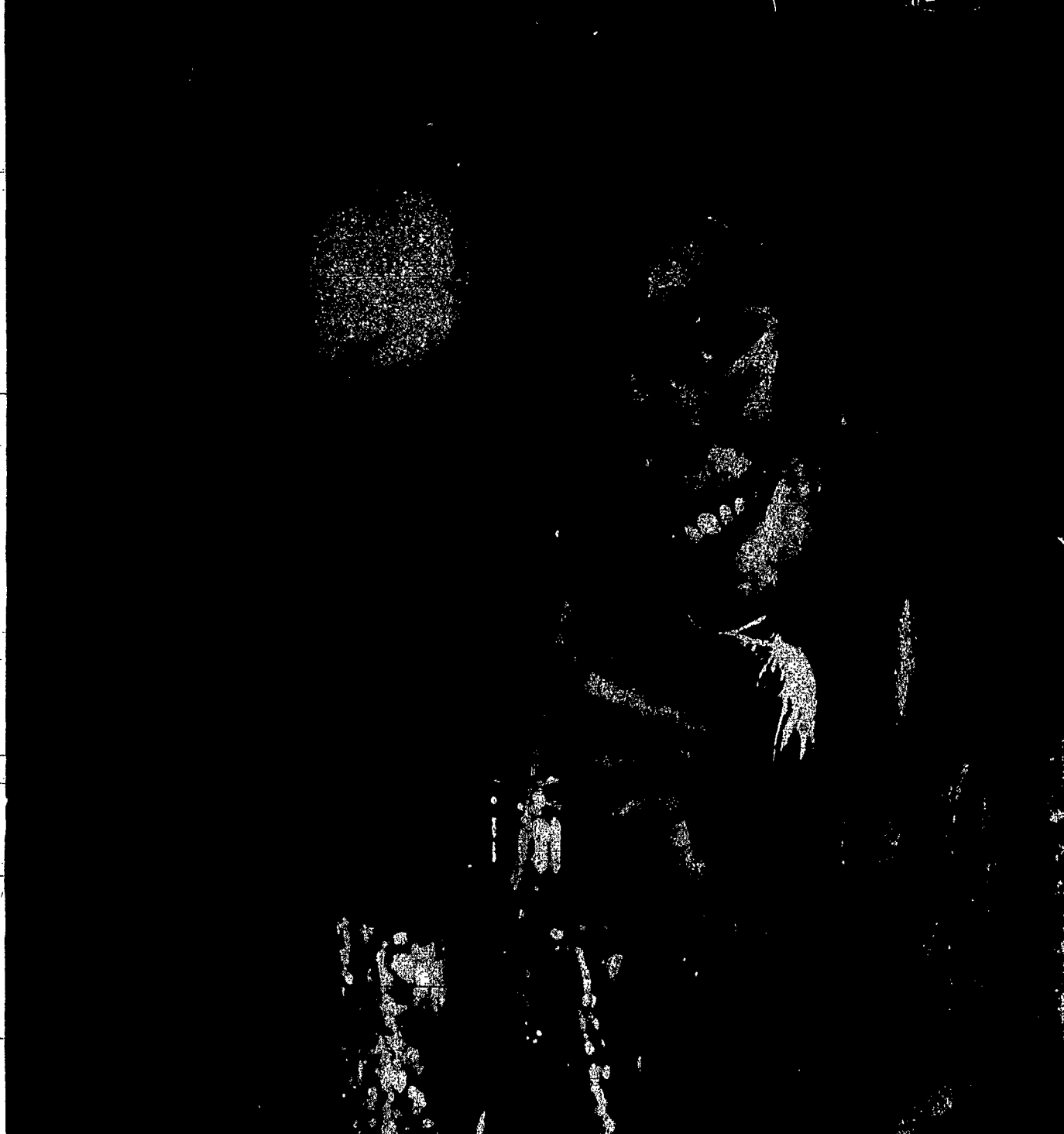
It is estimated that there are over 5 million alcoholics in the United States. Thank God, many find sobriety — and peace — in faithfully attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. A Hornell doctor recently said: "There's nothing scientific about the AA's to explain their success. But it does work — if the alcoholic is honest and on the level."

There seems to be a three-fold phenomenon with the "dry alcoholic": utter honesty; a candid insight into his own psychology — and a delicious sense of humor. Recently an AA friend said: "We have a word to describe one of our greatest troubles. It is 'plom.' It means 'poor little old me.' You know one of the most disintegrating qualities of an alcoholic is self-pity. When you're an AA, you recognize it — and when it sneaks up on you, you remember: 'This is plom.' Then you laugh at yourself."

Plom doesn't seem to be an exclusive possession of the alcoholic. But at least the AA has the grace to get rid of it by laughing at the foolishness of "poor little old me," wallowing in one's own self-pity.

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