

NOW HEAR THIS ... Freedom a God-Given Right

By Father Richard Tormey

The Fourth of July doesn't take us to church. Perhaps it should.

It's a day when an occasional political address inspires a token of new patriotism in us or a fireworks display reminds us of the soaring ambitions of the 13 colonies struggling for a right to live. But it doesn't point us toward God.

It's unfortunate that the independence claimed by brave men in Philadelphia in 1776 is remembered as "rights won by men," not as "privileges granted by God." In our patriotic reminiscing we forget that our Founding Fathers were phrasing religious truth when they declared on the first Fourth of July that freedom is a God-given right worth dying for.

The Revolution's leaders, almost to a man, grew up in a strong religious atmosphere and were versed in some theology as well as statecraft. Most of the key men were practicing Christians who believed in the Providence of God: their serious words clearly called on God for approval of their challenge to tyranny.

They were convinced that any man or nation which threatens to strip away a people's rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" was immoral because such slavery was contrary to the will of God and the dignity of His children. In daring to pledge their lives, fortunes and sacred honor, without embarrassment they begged for the support of Divine Providence with full confidence that their theory of free government was rooted in the plans of God for man's happiness.

"All men are created equal," says the Declaration of Independence and on that novel premise a whole new political system was founded for the world. St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest Catholic thinkers of all time, put it this way many centuries before: "Nature made all men equal in liberty, though not in their natural perfections."

Thomas Jefferson may not have clearly known that he was reprising the ideas of Aquinas nor of a Jesuit Cardinal, St. Robert Bellarmine, when he wrote for King George III and the world to read that political rights came from the same divine source as physical life. But that truth, supporting democratic government, found support in the writings of two Catholic priest-scholars who lived several centuries before Jefferson was born.

Even while we brag that American democracy is Christian democracy, we must sadly admit it has been a slow process to help men to see that all human beings are the children of God and that therefore no matter what their color or ancestry or religion or social caste they possess a

human dignity which must be recognized and safeguarded.

In colonial days, while men kept black slaves and effigies of the Pope were burned in New England towns. Even today "the system" keeps many in deplorable slum-housing and forbids voting rights and educational equality. We have many more walls to break down before everyone in this nation finds liberty and happiness.

But the ideals of democracy and equality still ring true because they came, not from Aristotle, Plato, Aquinas or Jefferson, but most strongly from the public teachings of Jesus Christ. To men of every social class Our Divine Saviour gave the message of "the brotherhood of men under the Fatherhood of God." He taught men to care for each other and to love even strangers.

The Declaration of Independence was a political tool throwing off an oppressive government. It set forth the political rights of men and defended the principle of self-government. As such it may seem to offer small precedent for current social causes where men demand the right

to possess openly their inborn dignity as human persons.

But the "pursuit of personhood" among today's youth is a similar relentless yearning to be somebody, a driving toward a goal that has been chosen as necessary for happiness. Like the colonials who complained in 1776 about a "long train of abuses and usurpations" by the British King, today's militants cite the shortcomings of the society their elders have built and trumpet their right and their duty to provide a new frame for their kind of happiness.

Characteristic of most contemporary rebellions against the Establishment, be it civic, religious, academic or familial, is a pleading for understanding between groups, for recognition of the common welfare, for a chance to exercise personal responsibility, for an awareness of the misery of the underprivileged. God-given human dignity and conscience-freedom are frequently and sincerely invoked.

The mood of the Declaration of Independence still hangs over our land. It deserves to be reread and applied to modern issues.



"NO KIDDING, CHARLIE, YOU'LL FIND AN AWFUL LOT TO DO OUT HERE — NOW TELL ME ABOUT YOUR LITTLE CONFRONTATION WITH THE BISHOP..."

COMMENTARY

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ALL IN THE FAMILY

How a Mom Got into the Swim

By Sarah Child

There are days when I feel inadequate as a mother. Other days I feel just plain dumb.

And the incident that convinced me that Drs. Speck, Glott, and Belfheim are conspiring against me rather than with me came just the other day.

Our 4-year-old was about to begin swim lessons. As we prepared the pool, I took the opportunity to show her the pool and the small lounge next door where I and her little brother would sit while she was having her lesson.

"Why can't you sit and watch me?" was the immediate question.

"Because," I said, "if mothers stayed in the pool area, some of the children would keep looking at their mothers instead of paying attention to the teachers."

On the day of the first lesson she told me as we left the house that she was going to be afraid, that she would miss me.

"Nonsense," I said cheerfully, "not you. You're the one who loves story hour and the nursery sessions so much."

In the dressing room I began to take off the dress that covered her bathing suit. She clutched frantically but I got it off.

Out in the pool side she began to scream, and very inspiring. Several of the 30 or 40 other youngsters began to look doubtful.

I handed her yelling, limbs flailing, over to the teacher and departed to the black-coffee machine for R&R. At the half hour I went back in to find her playing happily in the water.

"She was fine," said the teacher.

The next session was in one way a revelation. She was worse than the first time. I, feeling a little drained this time, repeated procedure. When I went to pick her up she was laughing and if possible having even a better time than before. Somebody I concluded, grimly, was pulling somebody's leg.

Over the weekend she announced several times she wasn't going to the next lesson on Monday. I ignored her. It seemed the only thing to do. I had already reassured her several times about my proximity during the lessons and in between threatening me that she wasn't going she would report gleefully the "swimming" progress she'd made.

Monday when we began getting ready to go she began her on and off crying. I began to capitulate. Perhaps she really was afraid. Perhaps she was too young, etc., etc., etc.

She'd won, I told her, but I added

threateningly she couldn't go on vacation and she couldn't go to the pool this summer.

"And no friends over either," I yelled, losing every vestige of motherliness, temper rising.

Furious because obviously I'd handled everything wrong I slammed a few doors and then on the way to the kitchen I did a mental-about-step so fast I almost tripped.

Back at her door I spoke in a low almost controlled tone:

"You get ready. You're going swimming or I'll smack you so hard you won't be able to swim."

Guilty, ashamed, I congratulated myself for being monster mom of the year.

"Where's my suit," she interrupted brightly. Trying to avoid stepping on my lower lip I helped her dig the suit out of her bag while she chattered and grew perceptibly cheerier by the moment.

At the pool she didn't bother to see if I was behind her or not as she looked for her teacher.

On the way home we stopped at Carroll's to celebrate, my being in no hurry to get home and throw out my psychology books. I may want them for support some time — say if a table leg gives out or something.

COMMENT FROM ROME

New Image for Italian Priests

By Robert R. Holton
Courier-Journal
Special Correspondent

Turin, Italy — Many Roman Catholics in other parts of the world look on the Italian priest as the epitome of unquestioning obedience and loyalty to the hierarchy.

To the majority of non-Italians, the prototype of the Italian priest is a humble, introverted, devout servant of the Vatican who walks through the streets of cities and villages wearing a long dark cassock and a wide-brimmed black hat.

Certainly, the outsiders say, such men would never allow themselves to be identified with the upheaval among the clergy in other parts of the world today.

The Catholic Church in Italy, they presume, must be the strongest anywhere. And its clergy, so closely identified with the very headquarters of Roman Catholicism, must likewise be the strongest anywhere.

However, such is not the case. There are among the Italian clergy a goodly number of men who have cast their lot with the rebelling priests in the rest of the world.

This area of Northern Italy, particularly, has become identified with priestly revolt in the last year.

The open rebellion began with the so-called "Isolotto Case" in which a priest of Isolotto was removed from his parish last January when he refused to recall a religious instruction text he had composed with the assistance of several laymen.

In the text, Father Enzo Mazzi prescribed some religious exercises and gave some views which his Archbishop would not accept.

For several weeks the archbishop conducted a running verbal battle

with Father Mazzi and members of his tiny parish. Eventually, other clergymen stepped into the fray, some willingly, others only because it came time to stand up and declare themselves. There were Cathedral sit-ins and other forms of protest.

Up to that time, the outsider's picture of the Italian priest could have been a true one in practically all cases. But today, such is not the case.

Although the priestly demands for more freedom and a greater voice in their own destinies are far below epidemic proportions in Italy, they are growing by the week.

Speaking out as a clergyman in Italy is somewhat different from having your say in many other countries. In the United States, for instance, the demanding priest deals with his bishop and possibly even with the bishops' conference.

In Italy, however, the revolting priest is likely to find himself in a confrontation with the powerful Roman Curia, or his case a topic of discussion by the Pope himself in a special message or in a homily.

So too can the rebel priest in Italy often find his case aired in the Vatican's daily newspaper — L'Osservatore Romano — or the weekly magazine published by the Holy See. The Vatican's top theologians are often enlisted to write articles for the paper critical of a rebellious stand.

All these forces constitute a formidable adversary for the parish priest who wishes to make demands beyond the scope of those that can be made through established channels.

Yet, in the face of such odds, 62 priests of the Piedmont area, which includes Turin, banded together recently to hammer out a list of demands, which include such things as the right to hold paying jobs, be active in labor unions and play major roles in politics.

Late in May they met in the Sanctuary of Oropa, one of the oldest of the sanctuaries dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in the West, dating back to the 13th Century.

During the meeting they drew up a list of complaints, demands and individual views which were conveniently leaked to the press. They called it the launching of the "Movement of Free Research."

They complained that the priest was hindered from expressing himself as a human person, has become a "transmitter of orders from above rather than a prophetic announcer of the Gospel" and is "locked within the clerical caste system and impoverished personally and obstructed from the evangelical conversion of the Church."

In short, the priests demanded the right "to think, to write, to exercise a profession, to be members of trade unions — none of which is presently possible without authorization from the hierarchy."

In several unsigned articles in L'Osservatore Romano, tantamount to official Vatican statements, the press was criticized for blowing the document out of proportion and omitting parts of it which tempered the demanding character of the clergymen.

The newspaper editorial also was critical of the clergymen who embraced the complete document and called on them to seek action on their demands through proper channels.

It is anybody's guess where the matter will go from here.

But one thing is certain: The 62 priests have forever destroyed the public image of the Italian priest prototype: the humble, introverted, devout servant of the Vatican who walks about in a long black cassock and a wide-brimmed, black satin hat.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Being and Becoming

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

A friend used to inflict on me lectures on "becoming." Now, I suppose to most good people who have to work for a living, a lecture on "becoming" would be both a head-aching bore and an experience in incomprehensibility.

Let it suffice that those who talk too much about "becoming" usually talk too little about "being."

The enthusiasm for constant evolution — (One academic nun, not of this diocese, with a degree in theology, speaks of "the evolving God" which is arrant heresy and blatant nonsense, or non-being) — fits in with the psychology of those who are uncomfortable with stability.

One day I listened to a scholarly teacher emoting about the slow process of renewal in the Church. Now, I don't know just what he meant by renewal, and I have never been able to nail down what most enthusiasts mean by renewal. So I asked: "Well, what seems to be the problem?"

He replied: "We're in the 1960's. All kinds of advances in technology have been made, and swiftly. Communications are instant. We have instant coffee. Instant many things. Why does the Church have to drag her feet in the renewal ordered by the Vatican Council?"

"Well," I commented, "it still takes nine months to produce a baby. Coffee may be instant. But human nature is a constant which cannot be equated with technology. Why not have the patience to let renewal evolve in pace with human nature, energized by the grace God gives us?"

It's downright cruelly the way some of the critics of the Church are ramming their personal whims down the throats and emotions of faithful Catholics. So many are utterly indifferent to the harm they do. They care nothing about the suffering they cause. All in the name of "renewal in love." To me it smacks of self-satisfying egotism little related to Christian love.

There is a very literate weekly which specializes in undermining Church doctrine, discipline and order. I read it nearly every week to see the influences suffered by many vociferous Catholics. After reading this week's contribution to discontent and discord I recalled a story.

A progressive professor was bringing up his seven-year-old daughter, Giulena, to be self-reliant and self-assertive. One morning at breakfast, Giulena shoved her cheerios aside and

whined: "I don't want this." The father asked: "What do you want, dear?" "I want a worm!" So the father went to the back yard, found a fat worm under a log, and set it on daughter's plate with the words: "There you are, dear." The child complained: "I want it cooked." So the worm was cooked in flour, and egg, and returned.

Then the daughter demanded of the father: "I want you to have half." The father gulped, but faithful to his principles, he cut the worm in two and swallowed half. At this, the child let out a howl: "You ate my half!"

Despite the yards of dialogue I think the Church will have to live with her critics. She has satisfied Giulenas and Giulenos. We are forbidden by God's law to shoot them. Short of a miracle, we are incapable of ever satisfying them. So we must live with them in Christ's holy charity. The famous serenity prayer will stand us in good stead:

"God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference."

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