

Pope Pays Bitter Price

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them. Why set yourself higher than the community of God?

This from the Old Testament has a familiar ring. Moses heard it, and saw it posted on a placard. Paul VI hears it, and reads it in the press. There was the same clamor about this protest as the one against Paul: Carnality was at stake, or what moderns would call "sex". The flesh and its appetites had to be given more recognition, the Manna less: "Think of the fish we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. Here we are wasting away, stripped of everything; there is nothing but Manna for us to look at!"

Murmuring! When the murmurer should be praying, he is murmuring against the Lord, never against himself. When we enjoy affluence, we look at the grievances which are mingled with the good, and forget the good. The Israelites remembered garlic and onions, but they forgot their intolerable slavery. When the prefigurement of the Eucharist was their's in the Manna, they despised it.

Everyone knows the punishment which was meted out to the leaders and their two hundred and fifty prominent fellowmen, and how the New Testament preserves the warning for our times (Judge 11).

Moses suffered by these rebellions among his people, crying to God as Paul VI himself might cry: "Why do you treat your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor with you, so that you load on me the weight of all these people. Was it I who conceived all these people? Was it I who gave them birth, that you should say to me: 'Carry them in your bosom, like a nurse with a baby at the breast?' . . . I am not able to carry these people alone. The weight is too much for me. If only I had found favor in Your eyes and not lived to see such misery as this" (Numbers 11/12-15).

The Thorns of Paul

I have talked with Pope Paul VI on many occasions, and when I offered him my filial loyalty and sympathy, he would invariably answer: "But there are many joys". There is joy in the midst of all of this suffering. In the center of a flame one can insert a match and draw it quickly through it without the match igniting. At that center is a point of coolness and repose. So in the midst of suffering, there is a joy.

On one occasion Pope Paul quoted St. Paul: "The language of the Cross may be illogical to those who are not on the way of salvation, but those who are on the way, see it as God's power to save" (1 Cor. 1/18). At another time, he remarked that he had an indescribable joy in being permitted to suffer for the Church. Quoting the Letter of Paul to the Colossians, he said: "It makes me happy to suffer for you, and I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that still has to be undergone by Christ for the sake of His Body the Church" (1/24).

Pope Paul once told me that at midnight he opens the day's mail. Almost every letter, he said, has in it a thorn. A few hours later, when he lays his head upon the pillow, he said that his head was crowned with thorns. Some Pontiffs are destined to proclaim love, as Pope John XXIII, but other Pontiffs, like Pope Paul VI, are destined to proclaim the agony and the suffering of Christ.

Among his joys, he mentioned a Yugoslavian pilgrimage which paid him a visit. One priest among them, who had suffered for his faith, and had been imprisoned for over twenty years, stood before him without saying a word, but with tears of joy streaming down his cheeks. The Holy Father asked him why he cried. He said: "I cry for joy at seeing the Vicar of Christ."

The tragedy is not that He must suffer so much, for one cannot be the Vicar of Christ without being scarred by Christ; rather, the tragedy is that those who are loyal to him are silent. The fires in the Church today burn downward, not upward like those which Christ came to enkindle on the earth. The Korahs get into the news; the rest of us are quiet. "I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Ps. 69/20). Would it not be well for us to put in a prominent place in the Church, an image of the Holy Father as a mark of our fidelity, a sign of our compassion and as a hope to sheep without a shepherd?

A dead body can float downstream; it takes a live body to resist it. With nuclear bombs preparing the destruction of collective life, and mechanical pharmaceutical things interrupting individual life, we should thank God that He is calling us back to piety and love that even wise pagans have cherished. "Because it is only Christian men who guard even heathen things".

If we were present in the desert and heard Korah and the 250 learned theologians protest; if we read the better protests today against Paul and his plea for honesty in love, we cannot help but say: "I would rather be wrong with Paul than right with you".

But he is not wrong! He is right! "The gates of hell shall not prevail".

Hubert J. Sheen

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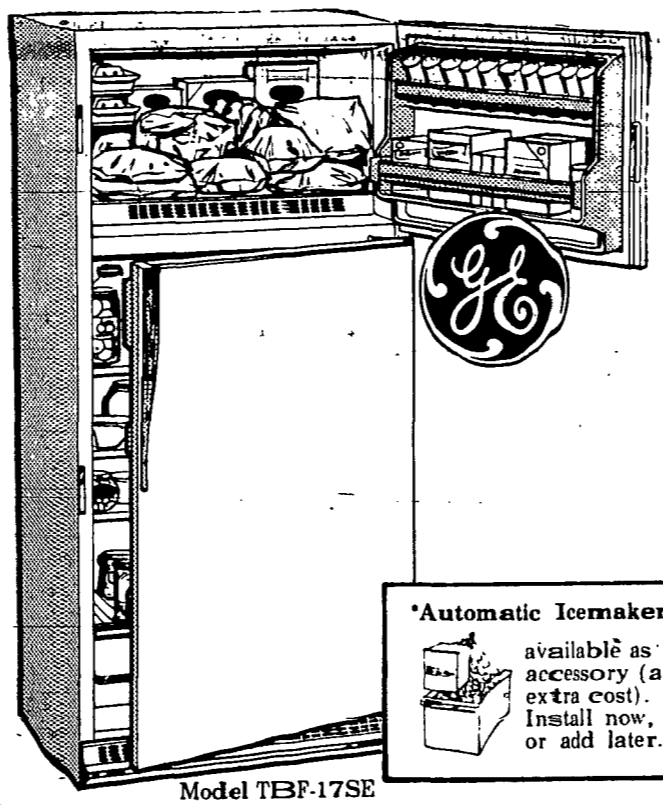
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CATHOLIC ART
Princeton, N.J. — (NC) — The Catholic Art Association will hold its 32nd annual convention Aug. 12 to 15 at Princeton Theological Seminary here. Theme of the meeting is "East West, One Heart."

INDIANS TO SING AT MARTYRS' SHRINE
Aurlesville — The Indian Choir from St. Francis Xavier Reservation, Caughawaga, Quebec, will sing at the Martyrs' Shrine Aug. 31, at Sunday noon Mass.