

# NOW HEAR THIS ... What Is Underground Seeking?

By Father Richard Torrey

Critical observers of the Church in the U.S. regularly jump into print in papers and magazines with sensational revelations about the "underground church."

Estimates have been published that there are some 2,000 groups, with an average membership of 20 to 50 Catholics, who meet regularly and with elaborate secrecy to worship their Lord in their own way. The critics show a horrified satisfaction that these dissidents are casually ignoring the traditions of centuries and disobeying prescriptions of the universal Church and the local Bishop.

**What is the underground searching for?**

They want a "more idiomatic liturgy", their leaders say, and united in the opinion that the "establishment church" is unresponsive to the modern tastes and needs of their segment of the laity, they have cut themselves off from parish and diocese.

Besides making their own rules for worship, they also put positive stress on ecumenical relations and giving witness to moral issues.

Their membership is usually selective, well educated and extraverted. They abhor the impersonality of parish life and long for "community."

The underground movement is not merely one more step in the liberalization of Catholicism which began when the Vatican Council convened. The challenge is far more basic. At stake is a new concept of the fundamental character of the Church, in which authority must be shared by all the people, doctrines shall be subject to private interpretation, worship must be rule-less and personalistic.

Michael Novak, himself a prolific promoter of novelty ideas, recently wrote of these rebel communities: "To the underground the most abhorred heresy is 'churchiness'. The end product of the underground church seems to be a humanism whose only distinctively Christian characteristics are a special attachment to Jesus Christ and a concern for the welfare of the church as a historical people."

I know of one experimental community, (actually aboveground), in our diocese and have heard of only a few scattered and non-continuous secretly underground groups whose desires for radical change in liturgy and viewpoint have led to revolutionary overturn of diocesan discipline. But the phenomenon cannot be ignored on the local or national scene.

Lets face three facts about our usual parish communities: size has made them impersonal and deficient in inter-group communications; leadership aims downward on the group in everything rather than arising from the people giving it occasional opportunity for self-determination; changes authorized by Vatican II and the local Bishop in liturgy, social action and theological updating are often impeded by the immobility of parish clergy.

A group of sincere Catholics who break away from their parishes because of these three handicaps to mature Christian life may eventually offer some promise to the Church. In

the very act of separation to correct these three deficiencies, they spotlight imperative goals of renewal.

They can constitute a laboratory for experimentation in worship that will only mildly embarrass the Pastoral Office because they are not sponsored by the official Church. As "prophetic deviants" they offer a forum (if outsiders will trouble to listen) for criticisms of the Church made in good will. They may even accelerate the ecumenical movement by emphasizing our common concerns with other Christians rather than our differences.

The most radical threat they offer is the separation of their worship and the Eucharist from their Bishop. Vatican II stated is thus: "Every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the Bishop. The Bishop is to be considered the high priest of his flock from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is derived and dependent. Bishops are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God just as they are the governors and guardians of the entire liturgical

life in the church committed to them."

To bypass the Bishop and to encourage their chaplain to disobey him is a mockery of the historical essential of Catholicism.

Another danger is that the inverted nature of a small, selective group which avoids and scornfully pities the larger family of the Church narrows the horizon and the heart of its members. Large-minded people can stagnate in a small group. And the more they breed their novelties refusing to test them against the minds of scholars outside, the more chaotic becomes their theology.

Finally it seems pitiful that such zealous and imaginative people as belong to the underground should shun the strength of the Church structure which, properly aimed, could do so much more for social betterment than their tiny group.



"I SPECIALIZE IN PRIVATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS!"

## COMMENTARY

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### ALL IN THE FAMILY

#### The 'No-No' Rules Linger a Long Time

By Sarah Child

The pound cake recipe I was following called for four eggs and as I broke each of them into the batter I did some mental, task-issuing over my extravagance.

Most of the cakes I bake (from mixes) need only two eggs. Here I was using four. Not until later did I do some calculation and realize that the most each egg had cost was 5 cents. And there I was fussing over a dime's worth of ingredients.

Ingrained habits are hard to forget. Born during depression years, I learned the lesson about eggs being a luxury from my grandmother.

Sometimes when I go home to visit my parents I go through my mom's cookbooks and invariably come across the recipe for one-egg chocolate cake written out in my mother's handwriting. In parentheses across from the "one egg" in the list of ingredients is the additional note "not necessary," in Grandma's round hand. (Incidentally it's a great recipe to have around when you feel like whipping up a cake and check your egg supply only to find you're fresh out.)

Another habit so much a part of me that I never stopped to analyze it until recently is the one that admonishes me never, but never, to stand with the refrigerator door open for more than 10 seconds. In the summertime, it is five seconds.

I was putting groceries away one night after a trip to the supermarket and had stuck some frozen vegetables in the freezer when my eye caught a package of carrots on an opposite counter I'd removed from the bag and left there.

With wild abandon, I left the freezer open, made a wild dash across the kitchen for the carrots, dashed just as frantically back and almost broke my neck tripping over the box of detergent I'd left in the middle of the floor.

It was then I picked myself up and tried to imagine what terrible, unspeakable thing would happen if I left that freezer door open 20 seconds, 30 seconds, horrors of horrors, a whole minute?

Try as I would I could not imagine anything serious enough to turn me into a whirling dervish. My father taught me that particular

lesson about the refrigerator. I've remembered it well, even though I long ago forgot the rules about turning off a light when you are leaving a room, not letting the hot water run needlessly down the drain and keeping the television on just for background when no one is watching.

I wonder what our children will remember of all the things "to do" and "not to do" in later years.

It's possible that 4-year-old Johanna will never be able to open a screen door leisurely and go outside, but instead always feel the need to hurl herself out at the speed of lightning.

It's what she's required to do now so that her toddler brother will not "escape" while the screen is temporarily unlocked for her.

And 2-year-old John may grow up to discover that he can't rid himself of the habit of getting up at day-break to steal surreptitiously into the kitchen and cram himself full of sugar frosted cereal eaten directly from the box. At this point it does not seem as if our younger folks will ever remember anything but the negatives of life.



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

### On Celibacy: Part IV

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Most priests who abandon their people, slip away quietly. In this they show thoughtful delicacy. A few call in the press or sport themselves on TV variety shows. These are profitable advertising boards for those who write books against the Church. They are often quasi-clinical exhibitions of obvious neuroses.

A few others gather some conferees to expound on the righteousness of their abandonment, beating to death the phrases: "I am at peace. I now have happiness." The rest of us who are happy and peaceful wonder what all this restlessness and unhappiness is all about. Whether this apologetics is from Satan, as is the conviction of many sound Catholics, or from a deranged nervous system, as others think, I do not know. But it does seem an abnormality.

I have much admired the ex-provincial of the Jesuits who was hounded by a prurient press when he quit. He simply stated: "I left for personal reasons," which obviously was a divorce and her two young children. He gave no excuses. He placed no blame. He was a man! God speed his return.

Now to consider the havoc done by priests who leave their priesthood and their people.

1. We who love them do not cease

to love them. We are struck with a daily heaviness of heart. We continue in hopeful prayer.

2. The priesthood is gravely harmed. In anti-clerical countries priests are regarded with suspicious which have historic undertones. In the States we priests are the heirs of our predecessors whose fidelity has been beyond suspicion. The priest has been trusted and received in every household.

Our contemporary prodigal sons, whose priestly forefathers had earned the confidence of the people, squander this inheritance. On what? Personal fulfillment in marriage? Deepening personal evolution? Self-satisfaction? Freedom — to what? And the 95% of the priests who are faithful to their inheritance find themselves suspect.

A younger pastor said: "Of late I have that awful feeling that my own people look with quizzical eyes as if to say: 'I wonder if he's really on the level.'"

A newly ordained priest said: "I was visiting a classmate in another diocese and we went to a parish bazaar. I had the funny feeling that the people were mad at us, especially the young. I said to my friend: 'Is this my imagination? What's the matter with the people? They don't speak to us. They look at us mad-like.'"



"No. It's not your imagination. Two months ago the assistant ran off with a girl of the parish. The priesthood and the Church are paying for it."

3. Young priests, bubbling with energy and enthusiasm, younger seminarians who began their studies with idealism, the middle-aged laity who retain an inherited reverence for the priesthood are undergoing an insidious attack on loyalty to the Church. Assaults from outside are little compared to the damage done by those inside.

Despite the crucifixion of Christ's body by our departed brother priests, the words of Lacordaire reflect the faithful priesthood still:

"To live in the midst of the world with no desire for its pleasures;

To be a member of every family, yet belong to none;

To go daily from man to God to offer Him their homage and petition;

To teach and to instruct;

To pardon and to console;

To bless and to be blessed forever.

O God, what a life is yours,

O priest of Jesus Christ!"

## ROME COMMENT

### Has Cardinal Villot Abdicated Power?

By ROBERT R. HOLTON  
Courier-Journal Correspondent

Vatican City — Those who claim to know him best say Cardinal Jean Villot is a patient man who carefully weighs the possible consequences of his every act and prudently bides his time when a situation calls for it.

These are admirable qualities for a man in the super-sensitive diplomatic position he now holds — that of Vatican secretary of state.

But with Archbishop John Benelli standing in the wings as his number one assistant, the French cardinal could be doomed to oblivion unless he soon asserts himself.

It has been three months since Cardinal Villot was shifted from the leadership of the Congregation for the Clergy to the post of power which is supposed to be second only to that of the papacy in Roman Catholicism.

But the real power of that office still lies firmly in the grasp of the Tuscany-born Archbishop Benelli and some Vatican observers are openly wondering if the switch will ever come.

The 47-year-old archbishop has stepped on a great many toes since he was named substitute-secretary of state in 1967 by his longtime personal friend and sometimes mentor — Pope Paul.

Aside from the close personal relationship of 21 years — between the two men, Archbishop Benelli has had other things going for him in the comparatively brief span of years he took getting to the top.

He is a superb organizer. He lives next door to his office and works long and hard. He has a forceful and commanding personality and he knows how to get things done.

But he probably got his biggest assist in his climb to power through a default by Cardinal Emilio Cicozzani, who until last April was secretary of state.

At least two years before he retired at 87, Cardinal Cicozzani was clearly not up to the tremendous physical and other demands of the office. He confided this several times to friends last year.

"This is a job — particularly since its functions have been expanded by the Holy Father under Curia reforms — that is too much for a man of my years," he once said. "It is a job for a much younger man."

So Cardinal Cicozzani began to abdicate first one, then another, and still another of his duties of the office. And Archbishop Benelli was willing to take them on.

A number of Vatican officials who have cause to visit the private papal chambers regularly contend that the archbishop today is more in control of the secretariat than he was even under Cardinal Cicozzani.

It is common knowledge in Vatican circles today that the man to see when you want to get something before the Pope is Archbishop Benelli, not his superior, Cardinal Villot.

Since he took office Cardinal Villot has publicly centered his attentions on carrying out routine diplomatic functions which formally call for the presence or action of the Secretary of State. These functions, unfortunately, are merely the showpiece operations of the secretariat and not the real power operations.

Observers have noticed from the regular daily reports of those who visited with the Pope that not once during the first two weeks Pope Paul was vacationing at Castel Gandolfo did Cardinal Villot visit him there.

Archbishop Benelli has been called to the summer retreat several times during that period.

Being a Frenchman and the first non-Italian to hold the post for many years, might well make the cardinal suspect in the eyes of the die-hard Italian officials of the Church who resent Pope Paul's efforts to inter-

nationalize the Curia. This feeling would play right into the hands of Archbishop Benelli.

Nor is the archbishop without his genuine admirers among other than Italian Vatican functionaries. Among these are members of agencies with whose work the archbishop might identify himself.

One member of a Pontifical commission said recently he has "no difficulty getting to see Benelli whenever I wish and I usually get prompt and favorable action on my requests."

Just recently, published reports claimed that Archbishop Helder Camara of Latin America was under orders to submit all his speeches and conference texts to the substitute secretary of state for approval before using them.

The Vatican issued an official news release in which this was denied. The release said, however, that Archbishop Benelli had suggested to Archbishop Camara that he notify in advance prelates in whose territory he planned to give talks and conferences.

The release also conceded that the archbishop had submitted texts of his speeches and conferences to the substitute secretary but usually the speeches or conferences had been given before the texts reached Archbishop Benelli and that they had not been demanded nor had they been criticized or commented upon.

This leads observers to ask why Archbishop Benelli, and not the secretary of state, received the texts.

It is felt by those who claim to know him best that Cardinal Villot intends to be his own man and soon will make his move.

Others say he already made it and lost. Still others say he has not yet, and never will, make the move.

No matter what, all agree that up to the present "Benelli is still the man to see."

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