

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

In Praise of Rectory Housekeepers

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



One practical reason for a married clergy is to have someone to take care of the rectory and priests. But since priests commit themselves to the celibate life, this duty evolves upon those loyal and faithful women, the priests' housekeepers.

There is no such thing as "Julie, the typical priests' housekeeper." In fact, they are probably as individualistic as any group in any profession excepting actresses. Yet they do have two qualities in common, a real dedication to their work, and a loyal devotion in caring for their charges, namely, the pastor and his assistants.

There are some variants, as you might expect. Occasionally a housekeeper's concern is almost exclusively for the pastor. Whether this is because he gives the paycheck or whether it's just a throwback to an ancient hierarchical deference, who knows? The assistants have three alternatives: to endure in debilitating self-pity, to sanctify their souls by accepting the cross, or to Christianize the woman.

On the other hand, the mother instinct in some housekeepers at times reaches out to specialize in care for the Benjamins of the rectory. The protection of the young and defenseless is a God-given female instinct.

Most housekeepers I've known — and they are many — are impartial,

admirable, and they enjoy taking care of their priestly charges. Their work is a real vocation.

What is an ideal rectory housekeeper? In the order of qualities, these seem most needed.

1. A gracious disposition. A cheerful, gracious woman brightens the atmosphere. If Julie is a complainer, the rectory suffers from her blues. The parish also suffers, since she often answers the phone and the doorbell, and reflects her discontent, to people to have enough troubles of their own.

2. A controlled tongue. Rectories are not like ordinary homes. Priests' commitments involve them in people's sorrows and intimacies. Since much of this is confidential, Julie must preserve her soul in silence.

3. An adaptability to unpredictable circumstances. Priests' families are their fellow priests. These frequently drop in without much advance notice. A friend said to one delightful and ancient Julie: "You always surprise me, because you are never flustered when a couple of priests drop in unexpectedly." She replied: "I always cook enough for more. The food doesn't go to waste. It comes back the next day, usually in a different form."

Need Julie be an outstanding cook and a peerless housekeeper? For

most priests, no. The first housekeeper I served under was a woman of great virtue, and the worst cook in the diocese. So famous was her cooking that Bishop Kearney's secretary, on the occasion of coming to the parish for some function, phoned: "Don't expect us for supper. We always avoid the meals at your place." Yet the pastor and I were devoted to her. She was cheerful, uncomplicated, and absolutely dependable. She kept silent about confidential things and was startlingly informative about inconsequential things. I recall her answering the phone: "No. Father's in the bathroom, shaving."

Many rectories have no housekeeper at all. The priests eat out, which is expensive and not satisfactory, or get their own meals which is even less satisfactory. They worry because at times the rectory is not adequately covered.

Many women hesitate to answer the ads: "Wanted, housekeeper for Catholic rectory," because of an aura of mystery with which their imagination shrouds the life of the priest. But if they can answer yes to the questions: "Am I cheerful, adaptable, and able to keep confidences," they can find a happy and satisfying life.

To paraphrase Ecclesiasticus: "A faithful housekeeper is a strong defense, and he who has found one has found a treasure."

Bishops Favor Financial Disclosure

New York — (NC) — A majority of 27 U.S. Catholic bishops queried by the publishers of a business newsletter said they favor full financial disclosure by the Church and 84% favored taxation of Church-owned property used for secular purposes.

A personnel shortage is the "most urgent problem" cited by the bishops, followed by such matters as inadequate finances; innovations in doctrinal teaching and liturgical practices; religious growth; and vocations.

Sixty-four per cent of the bishops believe that clerical departures are a critical issue in the Church, but 50% of them also believe these departures will decrease. Some 83% of the bishops view former priests as "psychologically unsettled," and 91% blame their defections on neglect of prayer.

These and other statistics appear in the September 17, 1969, issue of the Gallagher Presidents' Report, a business newsletter published here. The newsletter said its survey of Catholic bishops revealed "Church administrator faces problems similar to corporation executive."

The newsletter contacted what it termed a "scientific sampling" of 27 bishops in a geographic cross-section of U.S. dioceses. It said the bishops in the study represent 13.4 million American Catholics (27.9% of the total 48 million Catholic population) and oversee 11,494 priests (30.1% of the total 37,454 diocesan priests).

The newsletter noted that while the bishops surveyed rank celibacy relatively low as a reason for clerical departures, this contrasted with opinion of former and active priests who

ranked it first in two surveys conducted earlier this year by The Gallagher Presidents' Report.

Among the other findings of the survey:

- One hundred per cent of the bishops said "No" when asked if the Church should abandon the parochial school system. Forty-five per cent said they would first eliminate the secondary school grades in the event of a forced cutback, while 40% said they would begin with the primary grades (1-4), and 15% the elementary grades.
- All the bishops said affluent living is the major problem in fostering vocations. Some bishops checked more than one item on this question, however, and the second highest total (41.7%) went to "lack of challenge."



Pope Issues Warning

Pope Paul VI reaches for welcoming handshakes from pilgrims during a general audience at his Summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. (Religious News Service)

THE POPE SPEAKS

The Necessity of Prayer Today

Following are excerpts from a talk on "Prayer in Modern Life" given by Pope Paul VI at a recent general audience at Castel Gandolfo.

How can modern man be induced to pray? And even prior to prayer, to feel the sense — vague perhaps, though profound, mysterious and stimulating — of God, which is the premise of prayer?

Prayer is conversation; a conversation between our truly conscious personality with Him, with the Invisible Interlocutor (though sensed as present), the Living Holy One who fills us with awe and love, the Ineffable Divine One whom Christ taught us to call Father; that is to say, the necessary and loving source of our life, invisible and immense as the sky, as the universe, where He is, all creative, all penetrating and continually operating.

How to reawaken this basic religious sense, in which our small voice alone — though filled with meaning, filled with spirit — finds its outlet, and, in lamentation or in song, may express its filial word: Our Father, who art in heaven?

Because we note the enormous and increased difficulty which people find today in speaking with God, the religious sense has become as though enfeebled, spent, vanished. At least it would seem so.

Call this phenomenon what you will: demythologization, secularization, rationalism, self-sufficiency, atheism, anti-theism, materialism. It appears to indicate a new era, without religion, without faith, without God.

Religion sustains us and makes us experience a very rich range of sentiments, the wonder of being alive, the

joy and the responsibility of living. We are very sure of this.

Our ministry is essentially pledged to that and suffers in observing how our generation finds it difficult to preserve and nourish this sublime and indispensable religious sense.

Let us pose a case which, we could say, is everyone's case: that of the fascinating image of the movies and television. It absorbs to a great extent the inner life of man, especially that of the young.

This multimodal image is stamped on the memory and then on the mind; if assiduously sought, and at times with obsession, it replaces speculative thinking, it fills the mind with vain fantasy (cf. Sap. 4, 12), stimulates it toward imitation, it exteriorizes the mind and lowers it to the level of the world of the senses.

How can spiritual life, prayer, dependence on the first Principle, which is God, find a place in a conscience cluttered up with this habitual panorama of images, often futile and harmful?

It is necessary to introduce into this awareness, a moment of pause, of reflection and of criticism. A well-guided film-forum can be a first recovery of an autonomy freed from the suggestive power of the image.

Thought floats on a fanciful dream; an opinion is formed and, if this is not restricted to measuring the impressions received by means of the technical and aesthetical yardstick, but instead compares them with the idea of man, with moral life, there may perhaps be possible (in fact it may perhaps be stronger) an effort to reach higher-up, in other words, toward the spiritual sphere and then, at given moments, toward the properly-called religious sphere.

We must travel uphill the road of perceptible experience, which by its attraction and its object, leads us to live on a downward slope.

We must put a remedy to "recreation" in a Pascalian sense (Penses, 11), in other words distraction which takes us outside of ourselves and often into unwholesome experience, by means of a return to our inner self and of a wait there for the invigorating and ineffable religious encounter.

We might consider another example, that of industrial and office work, which reduces man to "a single dimension": one limited, uniform, mechanized, often purely physical, inhuman and attenuated.

After such work man is exhausted, empty. How could he have a sense of himself and of God, of which we are speaking?

Therapy is needed to uplift him: silence, friendship, love of family, contact with nature, the exercise of thought and of goodness. Then prayer is easy and alive. No one else is a better candidate than the worker, if his secret need and his pained attitude are aided by the offering of a religious, intelligent and friendly moment: the little sweet prayer within the family and the festal Mass can be of valid support.

Life thus regains its dignity; the heart regains its capacity to love and to enjoy. This is the big problem of religious aid to the modern working classes.

However, each one can find his own way to solve it: the main road is that of plunging oneself for an hour into the ecclesial community where the Word of God calls our own word of supplication and praise and where the sacramental Presence of Christ saturates us in faith, hope and love.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

State of Exhaustion or Vice Versa

By Sarah Child

"How about the Corning Glass Center?" I asked at the breakfast table on the last day of our vacation.

We'd just returned from several days just outside of New York City visiting a sister and I wasn't in the mood to get back to thinking about the laundry, dust balls, etc.

"I've always wanted to see it," I added but then noted, "of course, if we do go, we'll have to move to another state."

My husband, heretofore content to let my soliloquy remain just that, looked up in half interest.

"Well," I said, "we've seen everything else in New York State or at least everything we've wanted to. We've exhausted the home territory for sight seeing attractions."

I began to list them:

"Niagara Falls."

"Three times," he interjected.

"You name it, we've been there — from New York and Tarrytown to the South, Lake Placid and White Face

Mountain in the North, Rock City and Kinzua in the Southern Tier."

"Kinzua Dam is in Pennsylvania," he reminded me.

"Never mind, I've got lots more places that are in New York State," I retorted and began to make my point.

There was the Baseball Hall of Fame and the Fenimore House in lovely Cooperstown on Otsego Lake. On our way to Lake Placid where my husband had spent many happy summers we'd also checked off Tupper Lake, Ausable Chasm, Lake George, Fourth Lake and the rest.

On the way to Tarrytown and Washington Irving's quaint "Sunnyside" we'd stopped overnight at Hyde Park and visited the Franklin Delano Roosevelt home and library.

New York City had always been one of our favorites but when a sister moved there, it seemed to make it that much more accessible.

My husband's home town is Albany, mine in northeast Pennsylvania immediately south of the New York State line.



Visiting relatives accounted for a lot of our sight seeing tangents. The martyrs shrine at Auriesville, for example, is directly on our way to Albany, while Rock City and Allegany State Park are less than 30 miles from my hometown.

Proximity of the Finger Lakes made one-day excursions a breeze and who were we to pass up a tour of one of the wine cellars in Hammondsport?

Fort Ticonderoga, Thousand Islands and Saratoga Springs all made our list but just why escapes me for the moment.

From Watkins Glen to Taughanock Falls, Ithaca to Olean we've been there.

"See," I said, "we'll have to move to California or maybe Virginia so we can widen our weekend horizons."

"How about Alaska?" he offered drily.

"On the other hand," I countered, "there's still West Point, and the famous little art museum at Canajoharie and I haven't been on the Staten Island Ferry in 15 years . . ."

THE LAYMEN'S VIEW

Christians and the Ghetto

To the individual ghetto resident, whatever his color, there is no difference between that form of slavery which today is economic, and the real slavery shared by those who came before him. It is a refinement, if you will, a subtlety of society which saw to a change in the form but not the result.

His ability to rise above this situation is more a matter of statistics than it is of opportunity, since those that do make it out of the ghetto have not, by numbers, been sufficient to prove to old and young that they too can make it out of the ghetto.

We are told, quite truly, that a ghetto child is likely to be a health problem first due to a lack of, or improper, health care in his formative years. That, emotionally such a child is harmed through parental absence or incapacity stemming from the ugliness that is the ghetto.

The ghetto child is both victim and product of the familial and societal atmosphere. The capacity to foster love and care is limited by the fight for survival, the attitudes of despair and the results of chronic illness.

Children are "dragged up" not

brought up. Many of them see television or get a trip to the country. Result: More frustration! An impossible, even "other world" unreality is seen by the child and compared to the reality that he experiences daily.

The child reaches school age with a background of problems created by health and environment factors. He is often hungry. He lacks love. He has brothers and sisters and they have problems. He sees the people of his street and observes their behavior.

Yes, he lives with ugliness in the immediate now and sees unreachable beauty and knows before he picks up his first textbook that the world outside of now is not for him. Yet, in some there is hope, that somehow their world will not always be ugly.

To anyone that takes the trouble to look, the ghetto mentality is easily seen but difficult to understand simply because we have not experienced it. More importantly, it has been ignored because it would cause us to look at ourselves. We do not want the responsibility.

Yet, our educators are asked to cope with this problem and educate

the ghetto children. The results are chaotic. The child is behind at the entrance age level and never catches up. The law requires the child to go to school but the child cannot keep up, so we have special classes for the slow learner, a slower downgraded track or, in some instances, entire schools wherein the academic standards are reduced to a level which permits the child to stay in school.

Christians hear the words "Whatever you do for the least of My brothers, that you do unto Me." To a Christian falls the problem of working for his community, the whole community, not a selected portion. Can we work together to cure the problem of both parent and child in the ghetto? Have we the heart and will which Christ gave us to be Christian, to be brothers, to find Christ where he is, in each other?

—William Cannon, for the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen.

(This article represents a viewpoint of one theme to be covered by Msgr. James C. Donahue, director of the U.S. Bishops' Department of Education, in an address Oct. 14, at St. Agnes High School, sponsored by the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen.)

give yourself a break WITH A GENERAL ELECTRIC BUILT-IN DISHWASHER

LARGE CAPACITY

BUILT-IN EYE APPEAL

Give yourself a break from the daily drag of washing dishes. Get away from it with a G.E. Dishwasher. You'll have more free time out of the kitchen and your hands will get a break from the hot water and strong detergents. All you do is load your dishwasher, set the controls and you're done. Your dishes will be cleaned, sparkling clean, automatically.

The model shown here is a front-loading, G.E. Built-in Dishwasher with a 3-cycle control. Dial the cycle you need for any purpose. Select from Normal Wash, for everyday family dishes; Short Wash, for lightly or freshly soiled dishes; and Rinse and Dry, rinses dishes — dries them and holds them until you have a full load.

There's no need for hand rinsing or scraping thanks to a soft food disposer that liquefies soft foods and washes them away. Just tip off large or hard food scraps.

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