

The Slot Man A Time To Pray

By Carmen Viglucci



Remember that old World War II saying "There are no atheists in foxholes"?

Last week for a time we were all in a foxhole. The great bulk of mankind stood by helplessly as three men fought for their lives in the eerie realm of space.

Pope Paul at his general audience, with audible emotion, asked the world "to raise a prayer to our Father in heaven for these men, now in danger and therefore more than ever our brothers."

He publicly prayed "that their lives may be saved."

The United States Senate adopted a resolution, put forth by Sen. George Murphy of California, asking the nation to pray collectively at the time of the crucial burn that would send the Apollo 13 crew back toward Earth.

In Timber Grove, Texas, Marilyn Lovell and her two daughters gathered for a Communion service at the Episcopal church to ask God to watch over Capt. James Lovell and his fellow crewmen.

In La Porte, Texas, a Methodist minister offered prayers for Fred W. Haise and his wife Mary, seven months pregnant with their fourth child.

In Denver, a Catholic priest led prayers in the home of Dr. and Mrs. John Swigert, parents of the bachelor member of the crew, John L. Swigert Jr.

Rabbi Abraham Gross, president of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, urged prayers for the astronauts' safe return.

Pray was all we could do and thank God we could at least do that.

What does an atheist do at such times?

Now with those payers answered and the ordeal over, lighter moments of calling for prayers are recalled.

The "ever-crucial" world of sports seems to compel many requests of our Lord, Who bombarded by so many such supplications over the years must be a sports fan Himself by now.

For instance, remember back when the Boston Braves were on their way to a National League pennant mostly on the pitching arms of Warren Spahn and Johnny Sain? "Spahn and Sain and pray for rain," was their cry.

Or how about the priest at ringside when a certain boxer kneeled to cross himself before the fight? "That ought to help him, Father," said another ringsider.

"Yes," mused the priest, "if he has a left hook."

Or the humid, sultry Sunday during a World Series in Brooklyn, when a priest mounted the pulpit to say:

"It's too hot for a sermon today, go home and pray for Gil Hodges."

Or to digress from the world of fun and games, how about the noted newspaperman H. L. Mencken, who reputedly once told a confrere:

"If someday you want to do something for me after I'm gone, wink at a homely girl."

I suppose there are many ways to reach the Lord's ear and humor must be one of them.

Letters

A Student Visits Rome

Editor:

I thought perhaps Courier-Journal readers would be interested in the impressions of a 17-year-old present in the Eternal City over the Easter holidays. Paul, our son, is at the University of Grenoble in France with the American Institute of Foreign Study for the school year and wrote to us of his memorable experience:

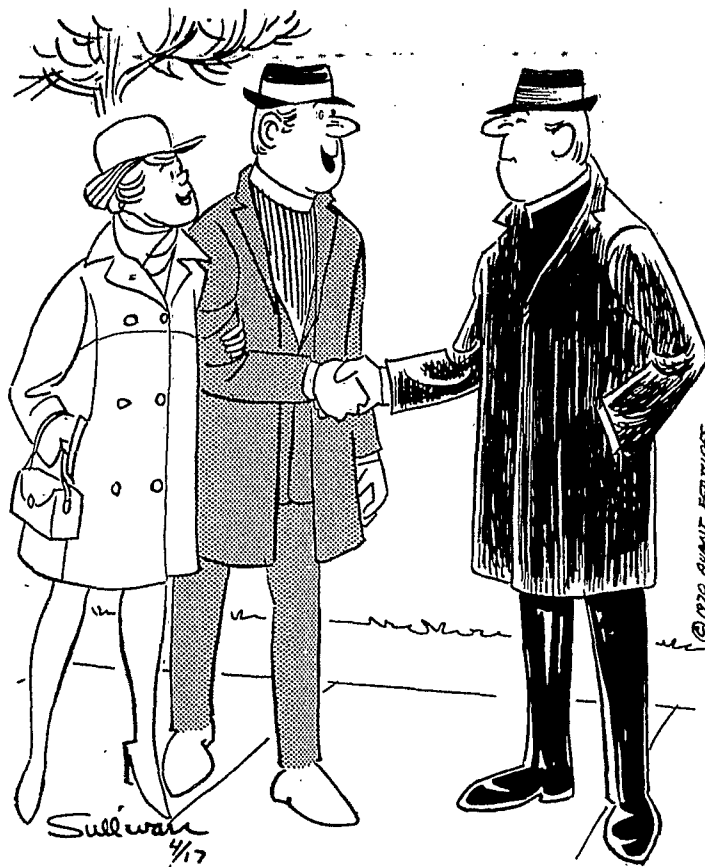
"... Rome was full of pilgrims for the holidays. They gathered on Easter Sunday morning for Mass on the steps in front of the Basilica. Pope Paul celebrated the Mass in four languages; some readings were in French and English, the Gospel was in Spanish, and the Mass Proper was in Latin.

"It was really quite a feeling to be a part of the 300,000 people assisting at that service! People united, not in nationality or language, but for a common reason — a faith in a common God. The problems of the world seemed to fall into the background.

"Sunday morning was the best of our trip. The spring foliage was out, flowers were blooming, and the air was warm. It's a small wonder, though. In the Eternal City, bad weather on Easter Sunday is impossible. And it will be quite a time before this vivid image of Rome fades from my mind.

"It seemed as if the world started from the doors of the church and spread outward into the square and beyond. But the world would always guard its place as beginning on the one side of the doors, while the beginning of the domain of God was on the other side. Yet, people were free to pass between the two..."

—Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Scheuerman
41 Harper Drive
Pittsford



"HEY LOOK! WHY DON'T YOU AND YOUR BISHOP COME OVER AND SEE US SOMETIME?"

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What Does It Mean To Be Utterly Powerless?

Case for the Ghetto

By REV. JOHN J. HEMPEL
Diocesan Director
Office of Human Concern

What does it mean to be powerless? — to be utterly incapable of obtaining the fulfillment of one's basic wants and needs? — to be victimized by one's history, tradition, lack of education, environment and background? — to be locked in by uncontrollable circumstances preventing an escape into a better world?

Daily, we at this office witness those who live in this climate of frustration — a climate so stifling that those exposed to it are driven to extremes. Then society begins to make its judgments upon the extreme manifestations heedless of the causes.

How strange that our supposedly Christianized society generally judges a person on the color of one's skin, one's dress, one's outward appearance

But would it not be more like Christ to reserve judgment depending on the internal disposition of the person? Is it not more like Christ to understand people as they are, rather than to ignore them before they can be understood? Must we always generalize our judgments?

Recently we participated as observers in an attempt by the Welfare Rights Organization to speak to state officials on the occasion of the Republican convention in Rochester. How powerless they were in presenting their frustrations to those powerful enough possibly to change their destinies!

This impasse has been prefaced by two previous trips to Albany: one by the Welfare Rights Organization itself to present their problems, especially the recent cutbacks in assistance to welfare recipients; the other trip by some of our religious to speak to the legislature about the inadequacies of the welfare system.

The results were frustration upon frustration.

And so society stands back in horror when the kindling point of man's endurance is reached, and violence once more leaves an ugly path of death and destruction.

Who is the real culprit—the one who threw the first brick or those who ignored the fact that the temperature was reaching the point of conflagration?

Every man has a point of no return — the ultimate point of frustration beyond which there is no logic, no reason—to be a consistent loser tends to destroy the human person.

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