

The Church: 1970

On Discovering The Ethnics

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



Five or six years ago my colleague, Peter Rossi, and I began to wander around the offices of government and private funding agencies saying that somebody ought to be studying American ethnic groups. The project officers were polite and courteous, but one could catch the look of bafflement in their eyes. Obviously, the two of us had flipped (in fact, Rossi had flipped when he starting hanging around with a Catholic priest). Everyone knew that American ethnic groups were rapidly vanishing from the scene and that they had no pertinence at all to the social life of the country.

At this point, my crafty Florentine ally and I are enjoying the marvelous irony of the situation. For now the funding agencies are demanding that someone come up with "programs" to cope with the "white ethnic problem."

Alas, nobody has the information necessary to root such programs in sound sociological knowledge. This will not, of course, prevent the programs from coming into existence; it will just substantially lower the plausibility of them being effective.

Americans who identify with one of the ethnic nationality groups are, I suspect, a little baffled at their sudden rediscovery by the liberal and academic elites of the country, and they are properly ambivalent about this rediscovery. It is flattering to know that people recognize that you exist, but it is considerably less than flattering to be told that you are a "social problem."

Most of the children and grandchildren of immigrants do not think of themselves as a social problem and have enough memory of what it was like when they first came to this country to know that being a social problem is not a good thing; it means that all sorts of well meaning liberal do-gooders will descend upon you with moralistic gleams in their eyes and elaborate programs for your social improvement. The Americans of ethnic background rather properly do not think that they are an appropriate object for such missionary zeal, and they are quite convinced that the last thing they need is social improvement.

They also are, I suspect, rather offended by the fact that they are thought of as "blue collar ethnics" or "working

class ethnics" or even as "hard hat ethnics." As much of a surprise as it may be to those who have suddenly rediscovered the Poles, the Italians, the Germans, the Irish, the French, the Scandinavians, a very considerable number of these groups are college-educated professionals and do not relish being thought of as "blue collar" or as "hard hat" much less being stigmatized with the title, "white ethnic racist."

The logical thing to do is to discover another "oppressed" group that needs their leadership. The approach would be hilariously funny if it was not so pathetic and so potentially harmful. One uses the same perspective, the same rhetorical style, and the same set of programs that one used with the blacks, the Mexicans, and the Puerto Ricans, only now one changes the words and uses "white ethnics" instead of black.

"Ethnos", the new newsletter of the Urban Taskforce of the United States Catholic Conference, is a classic example of the style of white-ethnic-as-social-problem; and, if one is to judge by the "New York Times" account of the recent Urban Taskforce conference on white ethnic groups, much of the atmosphere of that conference was of the same sort.

Indeed, the comment of a participant in the conference that in a couple of years white ethnics would have the same kind of ethnic self-consciousness as blacks must certainly rate as one of the all-time fatuous statements of the century—nicely calculated to offend everyone. Blacks could legitimately be angry at the thought that there are other groups in American society to "have to catch up" with them, and white ethnics could be every bit as much offended at the thought that they do not have any self-consciousness or pride. They have had it for a long, long time and they do not need the Urban Taskforce of the United States Catholic Conference to discover it for them.

I happen to think that ethnic identification, ethnic loyalty, is not a social problem at all but a social asset; a means for integrating the social structure of the city instead of tearing it apart. I happen to think that middle class Poles and middle class blacks have far more in common with one another than they realize or the mass media and the liberal messiahs are willing to let them know.

On The Right Side

Rochester In Fiji

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



In August 1966, the late Father John LeVeque of St. John of Rochester Church, in Perinton, near Rochester, telephoned Father Joseph Gaynor, my gifted assistant at Clyde. He said: "I have Father Jim Dutton, a missionary from the Fiji Islands. His bishop sent him to the States to raise funds for their mission work. He's staying with me and I'd like you to meet him." "Fine. Come for lunch."

So Providence gave me the privilege of meeting another of the many fine priests I know whose passion is first, last and always, Jesus Christ, His Catholic Church and all God's children.

This is Father Dutton's history. He is English, and was an airman in the RAF (Royal Air Force) during WWII. One assignment was in the Fiji Islands. He was an ordinary practicing Catholic. However the work of the missionaries, and their utter dedication to the conversion of those natives who knew not Christ, and the edification of those baptized who did, begat an admiration.

There was one missionary, a

Frenchman, I think, ragged, rugged, ascetic, quietly on fire for souls, who fascinated him. Airman James Dutton made a retreat under this missionary in his rectory that was a shack in the bush. He was the only retreatant. Result: when he was discharged from the RAF, he studied for the priesthood, and returned to the Fiji Islands. He continues with the same quiet fire which comes from a man in love with God and man.

Thanks to this meeting, I have kept in touch with Father Dutton. I learned he is in the States again, for needed funds, so wrote to him at the Little Sisters of the Poor, 17550 Southfield Road, Detroit, 48235. His response may be of diocesan interest. He wrote:

Dear Father Paul: It was good to hear from you and to receive the Courier Journal article which I always read with great interest. Your letters too give me a balanced view of the "happenings" in your diocese.

I often tell people how impressed I was on my previous visits to the Rochester Diocese to see the link of fraternal in-

terest and concern there was amongst the priests and how they impressed me by showing that they cared about one another. I always look for an opportunity to come up to Rochester but I doubt that I shall be able to do so this time. I am assigned all over the place each Sunday and am also eager to return to the Fiji Mission.

Thank you for your Mass offerings which are such a wonderful help. They are scarce and so many of the missionaries in Fiji ask me for help this way. Usually I am able to keep them fairly supplied — but not this year.

Did you know that the memorial church is going ahead in Fiji in memory of Father John LeVeque? It will be named St. John of Rochester. I had hoped that some of his friends would join us on this. I remember his friends as cheerful, zealous men, greatly dedicated to their priesthood and the Church. God bless them all.

Thank you for remembering me and our needy priests in Fiji. Every good wish and union in the prayers of the Breviary.

The Morriss Plan

Pastoral Council ... Be Wary

By Frank Morriss



The end of August will bring the first formal step that will almost certainly result, sooner or later, in formation of a national pastoral council. Representatives of various organizations have been invited by a steering committee of the U.S. Bishops to meet at Mundelein College, Chicago, for a "feasibility consultation" concerning such a council.

Since such feasibility depends upon the purposes and goals of such a council, and the possibility of fulfilling them, Catholics should first address themselves to such purposes and goals. Ultimately the only reason for such a council is to advance "communio" within the Church, that is, unity of all elements in thought and belief. The center of such unity is the Holy Father, and a pastoral council properly functioning will be a source of information for the Pope and will serve to draw Catholics of the United States closer to the pontiff as far as loyalty to what he teaches is concerned.

Unfortunately, similar pastoral councils in other nations, at least certainly in the Netherlands, have given every appearance of doing just the opposite. The pastoral council of that country, if you will recall, became the sounding board of those not only dissatisfied with what the Pope has concluded regarding priestly celibacy, but also of those who wish some most radical departures from Catholic tradition in other areas. Were it inevitable that a national pastoral council for the United States would take a similar course, then not only would such a council be unfeasible, but also improper.

It would be unduly pessimistic and negative of me to con-

clude flatly such must be the case, and therefore steps toward such a council should be ended. But on the other hand, I feel the danger is sufficiently great to dictate that I take a cautionary stance, that is, that I present certain warnings about what would contribute to a national pastoral council's being an instrument of disruption rather than communion.

The first misstep would be a misapprehension among U.S. Catholics, including the delegates to the council itself, of the nature of that body. This danger is particularly great for Americans, bred as we are to an almost idolatrous regard for democracy.

It is inevitable that a pastoral council will have all the trappings of parliamentarianism — committees, reports, recommendations, votes, resolutions, ad infinitum and probably ad nauseam. All of this will lead to such a council the aura of a truly legislative body, so much so that the American sensitivity is bound to be bruised when in the total picture the council's decisions are treated only as consultative.

The remedy for such misunderstanding is in the constant and recurring reminders from the Pope himself as to the nature of the Church structure and Church authority, particularly the point that this authority is not from the community, as some theologians are insisting, but from the Church's Founder, Pope and bishops do not have a mandate from the people but from Christ through their predecessors in office. They are not subject to the majority will but to Christ's teachings.

The first task for this na-

tional pastoral council should be a statement on its consultative nature and limitations based upon this proper Catholic teaching. Only such a statement can obviate the danger of the type of misunderstanding I have presented above.

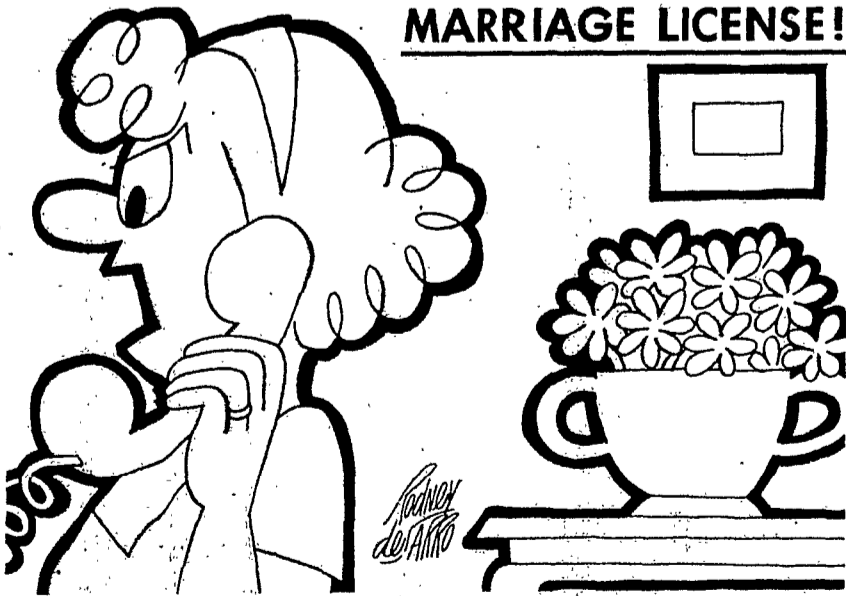
A related temptation for such a council is for it to allow itself to become a lobbying or pressure group, seeking changes that some, and quite likely a minority, think desirable. Unfortunately so-called progressivism usually goes hand-in-hand with a certain political ability, whereas more conservative or restraining thought is usually happily free of political inclination or taste. I say happily, since political ability almost always vitiates purity of thought or art.

Needless to say, it should not be the role of a national pastoral council to be a pressure group. Its task is communicative, and its tools are study, reflection, information gathering, attention focusing. Unfortunately, political adepts always tend to a method of maneuver that is not conducive to fairness.

The remedy for this danger is partly in the council's constituency. A minimum of followers should be among its delegates, for followers are ripe picking for politicians. And the leadership, of course, should honestly be balanced both as to numbers and quality between those of progressive and conservative thought.

Progressives who may be among the organizers of this council should put aside their prejudice about a lack of intellectual and theological ability on the conservative side. Believe me, it is there.

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"I want to get even with Frank for losing \$36. at poker. So, how about coming down for a month's visit, Mother?"

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