

The Last Word

The women's liberation movement was in the center of two news events last week and was affected favorably and adversely, depending on how you stand (or should we say sip your tea).

First, an unmarried Manhattan girl found a place in male hearts by announcing a new women's group called Men Our Masters — MOM.

Citing such premises as "Men fight and die for us" and "Men support us so we may outlive them and inherit their money", the group projects its main purpose is to "preserve femininity for women and masterliness for men. We oppose the campaign to reduce men to household fixtures."

Before there is too much cheering of a male timbre, a look at the second event of the week on the same issue is in order.

A retired Maryland surgeon, a member of the Democratic party's Committee on National Priorities, had a verbal tiff with Rep. Patsy T. Mink of Hawaii who wants her party to make women's rights of top priority in political campaigns.

The doctor, Edgar F. Berman, disagreed, citing such hypothetical cases as a menopausal woman president making a Bay of Pigs decision or a "slightly pregnant" pilot making a difficult landing.

Before the week was out Dr. Bergman became perhaps the first national personage to be forced out of a over the women's movement as he resigned from the committee. He doggedly stuck to his argument, closing his resignation speech with "There is a difference. Viva la difference."

One gets the feeling he thought he had at least the last word.

That is an unfortunate conclusion for if there is any place where even men must admit that women are superior it is in the area of last words.

'Generation Gap'

Father P. David Finks, a Rochester Diocese priest now serving in Washington on the Task Force on Urban Problems of the U.S. Catholic Conference, sees national problems of the Church from a vantage point at headquarters and from wide travel. Excerpts from a recent article he published are observations on U.S. priests:

By FATHER P. DAVID FINKS

The Catholic Church these days is two Churches, and sometimes more than two. One of the keys to understanding the split in theory and practice is the broadened theory of priesthood accepted by the bishops at Vatican Council II. The practice of priesthood is inevitably following this broader concept and a generation gap is becoming more visible, and audible.

My latest experience of the "two churches" was at a pastoral conference in a medium-sized eastern diocese.

The pastors, staunch middle Americans, not too far removed from their ethnic roots, complained about activist clergy more interested in sociology than in "priestly" ministry.

The post-Vatican II priests, mostly assistants and special workers, wanted priests to lead their people into an active attack on the woes of contemporary man: war, poverty, racism.

The "older men" were reflecting their commitment to a cultic priesthood—the priesthood of the seminary training of most of us: The ministry of Christ was to be carried out by professional clergy and consisted in administering the sacraments, teaching Christian doctrine and in various pastoral conversations. The social aspects of ministry were the work of Catholic agencies.

The "junior" men were not satisfied with the pre-Vatican II model of Christian ministry. The Church they served in must respond to human needs with a ministry of service in the neighborhoods, in the urban ghettos and barrios. For them the priest was not primarily the cultic figure presiding over the administration of the sacraments.

And so it went and so it goes. The Church's ministry is still seen to be mainly the work of clergy, be they "older" or "junior" clergy. The two delineations of that ministry, the cultic and the diaconal, are based on theological and cultural grounds that are poles apart at this stage of social change and amidst the fits and starts of renewal in the Church.

Letters to the Editor

Closing Churches Unsound Idea

Editor:

The proposed elimination of several of Elmira's Catholic churches in favor of four large parochial centers strikes this reader as being unwise for several reasons: First of all, some of those slated for "closing" are architectural gems and are also in an excellent state of repair, i.e. St. Patrick's, St. Peter & Paul's and my own parish, St. Casimir's.

Granted that some consolidation of school services is necessary and cooperation in this area would be beneficial, I cannot see how this in any way should necessitate the closing of parishes and their churches, together with their societies, athletic programs and social services.

Local parish churches provide "roots" for their people—something that is sorely lacking in our society today. The loyalties generated by a feeling of "belonging" to a certain parish, far from being divisive, serve to make for better Chris-

tians, better citizens and more stable individuals. Large, impersonal parochial centers could never provide the rapport between priest and parishioner that is now being provided.

Finally, one should never think of "closing" a church as if it were just another business organization or building. Houses of God, built, embellished and maintained for decades by the sacrifices of generations of primarily poor, immigrant, God-fearing people deserve the respectful maintenance and support which I am sure their present-day members are more than willing to provide. Why should they object? They get much more in return!

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Cites Vatican II To Columnist

Editor:

It grieves me to realize that so many of today's Christians get hopelessly hung up with minutiae and trite matters, such

as minor liturgical reforms, while completely neglecting the major ideas proposed by Vatican II and the Popes John and Paul.

Referring to Frank Morris's column "Is the War a Moral Evil?" (Courier-Journal, 7-15, 70): A man of Mr. Morris's stature certainly must have read Vatican II's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." Pope John's encyclical "Pacem in Terris", Pope Paul's "Populorum Progressio" and his Speech to the United Nations (Oct. 4, 1965).

While Mr. Morris rejects the phrase "indiscriminate killing of civilians" as "logically impertinent", he logically asserts that "in order to make the U.S.'s efforts immoral on that score it would have to be shown either that it was the policy of our military indiscriminately to kill citizens, or that our troops were so out of control that our policy against such crime was futile."

I refer him to Vatican II's statement on "Total War" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", #80):

"The horror and perversity of war is immensely magnified by the addition of scientific weapons. For acts of war involving these weapons can conflict massive and indiscriminate destruction, thus going far beyond the bounds of legitimate defense.

"All these considerations compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude. The men of our times must realize that they will have to give a somber reckoning of their deeds of war for the course of the future will depend greatly on the decisions they make today.

"Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation."

Total war, as I define it, is the lack of distinguishing between military and civilian personnel.

I ask Mr. Morris: How long can we say that "death has come, not indiscriminately, but accidentally, to some Vietnamese non-combatants"?

—Gerald Michaud,
Dearborn, Mich.

Church Urged: Disown War

Editor:

I, too, like Diane Marie Parus (7/22/70) would like to know why the Church has been so outspoken on the abortion issue (and rightly so), while it has uttered hardly a whisper on the immoral and atrocious war in Southeast Asia.

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P.S. Congratulations on your many fine editorials each week.

The Word for Sunday

Too Much Sun Wilts the Rose

By Father Albert Shamon



Through the three readings of this Sunday runs a single thought: stop complaining! Elijah says, "I've had it, Lord. Let me die." St. Paul writes, "Don't sadden the Holy Spirit. Get rid of all bitterness." And in the Gospel Jesus tells the Jews, "Stop murmuring."

Isn't that just like us? Oh, how we complain! We are never satisfied. And yet we have so little reason to complain. "This is enough, O Lord. Take my life," cried Elijah. These words were uttered soon after Elijah had brought fire down from heaven upon the 500 priests of Baal and had destroyed them. You would have thought, he would have been elated. Instead, just because Queen Jezebel was angry with him, he fell into a state of depression and discouragement.

It is God's way with us. Success is danger time. "Prosperity doth best discover vice." Continued success even for so great a prophet as Elijah was not good. Even after feeding the multitudes with bread, the crowds turned on Jesus. Too much sun withers the rose; too much rain wilts it. And so even in our lives, consolation is often followed by desolation, success by failure, spring by winter.

As regards Jezebel — when she had heard of Elijah's stupendous miracle, of how he had destroyed her priests with fire from heaven, she was furious. She had not witnessed the miracle. To her it was just one more trick of this conjurer, who alone of all Israel dared to withstand her. In volcanic anger she ordered the death of Elijah.

And what did the bold and brilliant prophet do? He ran away. Was not that a shameful way for a prophet of God to act? Why did he run? Was it not because he had taken his eyes off God? "I am no better than my fathers," Elijah cries out to God. Had he thought he was? Had success gone to his head? Perhaps.

But more likely, Elijah was just exhausted. How much the contest with the priests of Baal must have cost him? The out-

put of faith and prayer was tremendous. The strain must have been incredible.

What Elijah needed was rest. So the first thing the good God gives him to do is to get some rest. "He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree." The second thing Elijah needed was food. How grave any problem seems to an empty stomach. So God's "angel touched Elijah and ordered him to get up and eat."

Is not much of the low spirits, discouragement and distrust among Christians today due to sheer physical exhaustion, to the rush, tension, tiredness, overstrain of modern living?

Lillian Roth wrote that when she had a problem and started to cry, her mother always said, "Sleep on the problem tonight and cry tomorrow." Lillian discovered that when tomorrow was gone, "Sleep knits up the raveled sleeve of care."

So often we seek the solutions to the problems of daily living by ventilating them in peevish talk. All three readings warn us against complaining. Sometimes all we need, as Elijah, is a good rest and some good food. The good rest for the body is proper sleep; the good food for the soul is the Eucharist. In the strength of that food, we shall be able to walk to mountain of God. "If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever."

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