

Bishop Shannon... One Year Later

Minneapolis — (RNS) — One year after he married and was automatically excommunicated, former Catholic Bishop James P. Shannon says he discovered "a new and unexpected ministry" to persons seeking his help.

The former auxiliary bishop of the St. Paul-Minneapolis archdiocese said the past 12 months also brought him "a new and joyful life with a woman who has been for me each day an occasion of grace."

The "heaviest burden," he wrote in his weekly column in the Minneapolis Tribune, is "that by my own action I am barred from Communion in a Church I dearly love."

"The Eucharist is Christ's greatest gift to His followers. It is extremely difficult for persons who consider themselves His followers to live without this living sign of their bond with Him and with their brothers."

Since leaving the archdiocese, Dr. Shannon has been serving as a tutor and vice-president of St. John's College, Santa Fe, N.M. He resigned that position and will prepare for a law career starting in September at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

"As a result of my deliberate decision to discontinue my public priestly ministry and to marry, I have injured beyond repair a legion of friendships and loyalties which I still treasure dearly," he declared.

"Every week in the past 52 has brought to my desk at least one letter, and often several, from ministers, priests, nuns or laymen, asking my response to their description of a problem of faith, morality, canonical discipline or personal decision.

"One common question in these letters is whether to continue a commitment to a pastoral or religious vocation. In every instance I have urged persons in a religious vocation to continue in it. However, in most instances the writer has later acted contrary to my counsel.

"My purpose in counseling such persons to stay in the Church, to keep their vows, and to work for renewal within the Church structure is that I honestly believe that concerned persons have a better chance to renew the Church from within than from without.

"The fact is, however, that most of my correspondents in the year just past have decided that they can no longer act on this premise. Life and work within the existing structure, according to the traditional ground-rules of ecclesiastical polity and good taste, are no longer viable options for these persons.

"To say all this is not to subscribe to the cheap and easy fallacy that 'most good men are leaving.' Such an allegation is the phoniest kind of straw man, useful only for quickie-columnists and amateur sociologists more interested in writing than in solving the current dilemma of the Church.

"But my mail also demonstrates beyond question that many good men, for a host of good reasons, can no longer live and function well as leaders in the Church under the

NEW CREIGHTON HEAD

Omaha, Neb. — (NC) — Father Joseph J. Labaj, S.J., has been selected as Creighton University's 29th president. Father Labaj, 49, served as principal of Creighton Prep and has been superintendent of education at Holy Rosary Indian Mission.

Courier-Journal

Prelate Silent In Controversy On 'Calcutta'

current expectations of their congregations, their superiors and the requirements of their ecclesiastical bodies," Dr. Shannon said, adding:

"There is a growing number of such persons in our society. They are deeply committed to their vocations as ministers to the people of God, but they must find new ways of fulfilling this ministry. Very few of them are ready or willing to fight the Church or to defy its discipline."

Such persons cannot leave the Church. They may give up their public ministry. But they continue to love the Church and her mission.

"Somehow the institutional Church must come to terms with such persons. Most of them are able and eager to serve their brothers in new modes of ministry, but not in the old modes. What are the new modes, and who will be their sponsor? Will they come from church leaders? Or must they be forced on the Church?"

London — (RNS) — A member of the Greater London Council has criticized Dr. A. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, for declining to attend or criticize the play "Oh, Calcutta."

Frank Smith wanted the Anglican prelate to condemn the show, which has received wide attention for its nudity and treatment of sexual themes.

"It is unlikely that Dr. Ramsey will be going to 'Oh, Calcutta,' a church official said after the archbishop had received an invitation, "and I do not think he will be making any public statement."

Smith called the show "the shame of London" and said "the leader of the Christian church in England" should have spoken out against it as "an affront to all Christians."

"But he leads a sheltered life behind the walls of Lambeth palace," Smith asserted.

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