



School Pals

Don Rutledge, Religious News Service photographer, caught these two little girls sharing a laugh while perched atop a wire spool at a Honolulu kindergarten. Know Your Faith is also back to school with an article about parish education on Page 5B.

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Feminists Barking

Up Wrong Tree

(Pat Costa, 2B)

DYLAN
A Poet
Of Salvation

Catholic Press Features

New York—"Bob Dylan is a mystic."
"His relevance is that, in a world which has lost faith that it is infused with godliness, he sings in a transcendent reality that makes it all make sense again."

"At most, all that any artist or prophet can hope for is to ignite our faith. Dylan, perhaps more than any other contemporary poet, is capable of the words that can ignite this faith."

To date, the only strong relationship between singer-composer Bob Dylan and religion has been the frequent use of his *Blowin' in the Wind* as a liturgical hymn, so the above quotes may come as a surprise.

But an article in *Saturday Review*, titled *Bob Dylan and the Poetry of Salvation*, may cause Dylan fans—and churchmen—to give Dylan's songs a closer listen.

"I must admit to skepticism concerning how many of Dylan's youthful followers have even the vaguest conception of what he is singing about," wrote Steven Goldberg, a longtime admirer of Dylan's who teaches sociology at City University of New York. "Many look no deeper than the level of his very fine rock music, while others are merely in the market for political slogans," such as Dylan's popular *The Times They Are A-Changin'*.

But the "basic underpinning" of Dylan's songs in the last six years, claims Goldberg, is "mystical experience." "Only the mystical experience, an experience which I believe pervades all that Dylan has written in the past six years, can overcome . . . the basic pain of our seeming separation from the One."

"Only in the life that is illuminated by the afterglow of this experience," Goldberg continues, "is there the possibility of salvation. Salvation means many things in Dylan's songs. On one level it is the conquest of guilt, ambition, impatience."

"On another it is free flight of the will. On still another it is faith, an acceptance of a transcendent, omnipresent godhead without which we are lost."

Goldberg cites several Dylan songs and record albums where Dylan "is able to give us some clues" to his mystical experience.

In *Mr. Tambourine Man*, according to Goldberg, Dylan was asking for the strength to "release his grasp on all the layers of distinctions that give us meaning, but, by virtue of their inevitably setting us apart from the life-flow, preclude our salvation."

"All such distinctions, from petty jealousies and arbitrary cultural values to the massive but ultimately irrelevant confusions engendered, by psychological problems had to be released."

Like a *Rolling Stone*, which Goldberg labels as Dylan's "finest song," is "addressed to a victim who has spent a lifetime being successfully seduced by temptations to avoid facing his own existence."

Desolation Row "is a denunciation of intellectual word-mongering as a road to salvation."

Positively 4th Street is a song expressing Dylan's bitterness over "having to face the most basic spiritual conflict: Having seen the vision, how does one either live a life which flows naturally from that vision or resign himself to the impossibility of such a life?"

This Is the Courier Second Section