Balancing the Books

A Comic Novel

By Father John S. Kennedy

Comic novels about things Catholic, with clerics as figures of fun? There is nothing new about the genre. We have had them for many years, in many languages. A whole generation ago, for example, there was Bruce Marshal's "Father Mal-achy's Miracle," followed by several others from the same pen, the best of these being "The World, the Flesh, and Fa-ther Smith."

Now, almost 40 years since Marshall delighted us with Father Malachy, there comes a new Marshall novel, "The Bishop" (Doubleday. \$5.95), which the jacket tells us is "a humorius novel about the modern Catholic Church and the Pill."

Marshall, who has been turning out books for longer than almost anyyone else writing today, has slowed down in his more recent output. His work has been lacking in the exuberance and lightfootedness which once characterized it. Besides,

he has repeated himself more than a little, and his typical tricks have grown so familiar as to be predictable and consequently less titillating.

The Bishop of the title seems to be Bishop Bede Jenkins, although throughout the novel, there are allusions to the certainty that Jenkins' secretary, young Father Spyers, is certain to be one day a bishop, possibly even pope.

Two other clerics are close to Bishop Jenkins. The first is his vicar general, Monsignor Basil Powell, a man of taste and with a distinguished military record. The second is Monsignor Finbar Ignatius O'-Flaherty, administrator of the cathedral, a roaring flannelmouth.

Such plot as there is, is set off by the publication of the encyclical "Humanae Vitae." This arouses lively discussion and some debate. Bishop Jenk-

ins is firm in demanding external and internal acceptance of it by his priests.

As in other Marshall novels, there are confessional scenes, and in a series of these Father Spyers requires conformity to the law by a woman whose situation is extremely difficult. There are dire, indeed tragic, consequences, which lead to a change of attitude on Father Spyers' part and his being pena-

The other main theme is Monsignor Powell's troubles with a nun, Sister Juliana, who is convinced that she made a mistake in entering the convent and asks for dispensation from her vows. Monsignor Powell is charged with persuading her to remain, but her persuasive powers are greater than his, for she induces him to leave the priesthood and also leave the Church. They do not marry, however, but go separate ways.

If this novel settles none of the problems which its people face, if it is skipping rather than probing, at least it is goodhumored, even-tempered and can be read with moderate pleasure.

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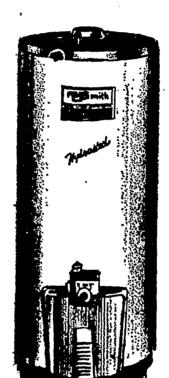
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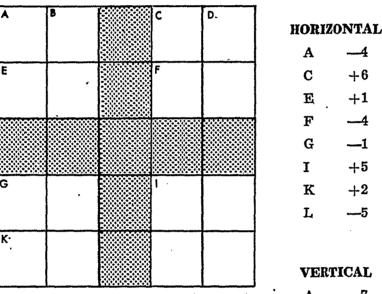
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Mini-Math

By Sam Stein

+4

+2



Answer on Page 9B

INSTRUCTIONS: Mini-Math is worked +5), etc. The same with Verticals.

like a crossword puzzle. Use numbers 1 through 5 only. For example: (A) Horizontal may call for +3 in two squares, which may be (+4 and -1), (+5 and -2), (+1 and +2), (-2 and

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