

The Church: 1970

Father Berrigan
A 'Fanatic'

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



There is a certain social movement which claims that society is corrupt and immoral, that it is necessary to destroy "the system" and that civil discourse and electoral politics have become irrelevant. Because of their superior moral commitment and because of the degeneracy of the judicial system, the members of this movement claim they have the right to break up meetings, disrupt law courts, and destroy the peace of the university classroom. Those who interfere with them are legitimate targets for intimidation.

The movement rejects reason and rationality as motivations for political action. It insists rather on the righteousness of raw emotional commitment. The movement sees its greater enemy as the "liberal" who thinks that the "system" can be "reformed" from within. The movement knows that there are all kinds of conspiracies in the press, and the police, and governmental agencies against it, and sees one group of human beings as "pigs," and blames this group for much of its problems and indeed for much of the corruption in the society.

You say I am describing the New Left of the 1970s? But, no, as those who have read Stephen Kellman's "Push Comes to Shove" know, I am talking about the Nazi party in Germany in the 1930s. Obviously, no historical parallel is perfect but if the similarity between the Nazis and the New Left does not scare most Americans it is because the New Left is only a tiny portion of the population at the present time and has, with its marvelous self-destructive instincts, succeeded in alienating even those who could have been its potential allies.

There isn't much doubt from the various press conferences Father Daniel Berrigan participated in before the FBI finally hunted him down that he denies the legitimacy of American society and is calling for its destruction. He does not yet advocate violence though there certainly is a progression in his thought in that direction. But the logic leading towards violence in Berrigan's thinking is inevitable.

If the society is as corrupt and immoral as he says it is, and if it is resolutely resisting reforms as he says it is, then it is but one step to the solution of the Mark Rudds, the Angela Daveses, the Bobby Seales and the snipers who take seriously the battle cry, "Kill the pig!"

But let's be clear about what society it is that has in Father Berrigan's judgment lost its legitimacy. It is certainly a society with grave social problems; a society containing within itself a good deal of evil; a society urgently in need of drastic reform. Nevertheless, given its size, the complexity of its population, the speed with which it was put together, it is still the most free and the most just society the world has ever known.

Father Berrigan and his supporters wish to replace that society with another one, one in which virtue will rule, and indeed, virtue will necessarily rule as a tyranny, since the majority of us do not want to see the society destroyed and do not question its legitimacy.

I have no trouble understanding Father Berrigan's position. Self-righteous fanatics at the head of revolutionary movements are not a new phenomenon in history.

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What I do have a hard time understanding is the undeviating support he receives from Catholic "liberals." Daniel Callahan dedicates his most rational and civil book on abortion to a man who glorifies in irrationality and uncivility. Sidney Callahan devotes her column, usually a model of balance and restraint, to a man who deliberately pursues a cause of immoderation. "The National Catholic Reporter" presents an account of the arrest of Father Berrigan that sounds like a theme from the Garden of Olives and its editor shivers with delight as he describes the FBI mistaking him for Daniel Berrigan. When I dare to break with the party line by expressing some reservations about the Berrigan goal and tactic, I am subjected to vicious character assassination in the pages of the "NCR" and the "Commonweal"—and even more vicious in the private channels of communication at the disposal of Catholic liberals.

Try as I might I do not understand why the Callahans, the Hoyts, the Wills, the Deedys have aligned themselves with those who in the name of virtue stand ready to take away the freedoms of American society. Make no mistake about it. The self-righteous moralism displayed in the Berrigan interviews simply will not tolerate the immorality of those who dare to disagree with him. If Daniel Berrigan was in power, I would be in jail—and not for destroying government property either, but because I was immoral.

I can understand the younger Catholic "liberals"—the Steinfelses, the Grays, the Nobilises—for like most of their generation they haven't yet got around to standing for anything positive; but the Berrigan position is diametrically opposed to everything the older "liberals" ever stood for—intellectual and moral humility, respect for people and the democratic processes, insistence on civility and rationality, a refusal to indulge in moral perfectionism.

Surely the "liberals" do not believe that the only response to the war is to deny the legitimacy of a society and thereby open the floodgates for violence and disorder. The war is coming to an end, not because of the Daniel Berrigans (quite the contrary, the research suggests that the Berrigans and the rest of the protesting rabble may have prolonged the war) but despite them, because the members of a free and open society have, however belatedly, made it impossible for the government to continue to wage the war.

Be it noted that this is the first time in the history of the human race that a major power has been forced out of a war simply because its people do not approve of it, and this from a society which Father Berrigan and his supporters think is immoral and corrupt, whose legitimacy ought to be denied, and whose peace and order ought to be disturbed even if an inevitable conclusion of that disturbance is violence.

I am sure this column will bring even more of their (the "liberals'") wrath down upon my head. Long ago I stopped caring (and indeed even stopped reading their wrath). It became clear to me that I was either going to think for myself or have the "liberals" for my friends; they will not tolerate any deviation from their own rigid party line.

John XXIII enjoyed his memories of his home and childhood. In his Diary of a Soul, he often recalls his home. It was a home of piety and cheerfulness; of hard work and simple pleasures; of unaffected love and family prayer. It was a home of Our Blessed Mother's rosary.

Pope John's encyclical on the rosary is aptly entitled, "GRATEFUL MEMORY." Between the words we enter his home in Bergamo to see his folks living the love of Our Lady. In the encyclical, the Pope wrote:

"The rosary is an excellent means of prayer and meditation in the form of a mystical crown in which the prayers, Pater Noster, Ave Maria and Gloria are intertwined with meditation on the great mysteries of faith. They present to the mind, like pictures, the drama of the Incarnation of Our Lord and the Redemption."

"This sweet memory of our young years has never left us with the passing of time. Nor has it weakened. . . We never fail to recite it every day in its entirety. . ."

Today there still live two generations who have similar memories. They remember families kneeling together to recite the rosary; parishioners gathered for October devotions;

attractive beads received on the occasion of First Holy Communion; a mother's hands telling the beads as her eyes showed a pondering blend of love of Mary and her own daily concerns; a father saying his beads with unsophisticated piety.

In years to come, similar memories will be treasured by many in our present youngest generation through the instruction and example of parents and Mary-loving teachers. I think the rosary will not have much mention either in CCD classes or some Catholic schoolrooms, excepting through the initiative of devoted teachers.

The fashion in such courses is hardly to encourage the rosary so loved by Ignatius and Dr. Tom Dooley; by Thomas More and Knute Rockne; by Rose Hawthorne and Sister Francesca; by the Monican Sisters Ignatia and Theresa Louise; by Father Thomas Connors and Pope John; by unsung parents who gave us the Catholic faith. Father Patrick Peyton demonstrates that the rosary is greatly lived by "The People," despite the efforts of some to obliterate it through desuetude.

Twenty years ago Father John Guy asked me: "Do you know the Pius-X method of saying the rosary?" "No. I never heard of it." He rummaged through a battered billfold,

pulled out a wrinkled sheet of print with a skeletal outline for meditation on the mysteries and explained: "The motif of the rosary is the life of Jesus and Mary. Each mystery portrays a particular aspect. The Pius X method is this: to repeat the mystery of the decade each time, after the name of Jesus. It helps devotion."

The wrinkled paper gave the example: "Of thy womb, Jesus, —born in a stable." Each meditation varies according to the devotion of the individual, but it is substantially:

1. Jesus, promised by God through Gabriel, Jesus, whose Mother's love brought them to Elizabeth, Jesus, born of Mary. Jesus, offered to His Father by Joseph and Mary. Jesus, found in the Temple.

2. Jesus, in agony in the garden. Jesus, scourged at the pillar. Jesus, crowned with thorns. Jesus, who carried His cross. Jesus, crucified for us.

3. Jesus, who rose from the dead. Jesus, who ascended into heaven. Jesus, who sent the Holy Spirit. Jesus, who assumed His Mother into heaven. Jesus, who crowned Mary Queen of Angels and of men.

I do not use the method every day, but do use it often. It is a privilege to be able to share the Pius X method which I learned from a holy priest. Take it. Try it. Teach it.

On The Right Side

A Special Way
To Say Rosary

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



The Morriss Plan
Today's Youth
Too Serious

By Frank Morriss



There is a generation gap, do not doubt it. But of course there always has been. When the fledgling learns to fly, it naturally, I suppose, thinks that it flies better than anyone has flown before; and when it first gets out of the nest it used before it gained its wings, it obviously feels almost anywhere else is better and more exciting than home.

As a high school and college debater in the dear, dead days beyond recall I was sure I knew more about international affairs than Churchill and FDR put together; intricate matters of economics were not beyond my ken. When to read my poetry and prose was painful even to myself, I simply put it aside, but I did not put aside the notion that I was capable and destined to out-Shakespeare Shakespeare and outpeep Milton.

The debate judges who ruled against my colleague and I were obviously inferiors who had been hired at a cut-rate price. The teachers who thought I might better do my homework than write prize-winning essays clearly were enemies of genius.

I don't think the syndrome is uncommon. It is the youth syndrome, and undoubtedly it is necessary and designed by the Divine Psychologist to serve some purpose despite the pain it inflicts on everyone but the youth himself. In fact some symptoms can hang on quite late, even to the grave. I am sure some will want to say that

the admissions I have made above prove that I was so heavily afflicted with that youth syndrome that I have never much recovered.

Thus I hasten to insist that what I write here I do out of love, respect, and even a great deal of hope for young people. But I write what I do because I am convinced a new and far more deadly strain of virus has entered the traditional youth Syndrome. The name of that virus is seriousness.

It goes far beyond conviction and confidence, and actually approaches a fanatical religious fervor. From this Messianic consciousness flows an exclusiveness that would be the envy of the early Christians keeping themselves aloof from the pagan world, only unlike the Christians the new young do not show any remarkable love for those outside their own cult. They more resemble the Islamic warriors of old, seeking a convivial paradise through an almost homicidal zeal.

As brash as we were in our own salad days, the thought never entered our heads that the adult world should turn the direction of things over to us. We may have had the inner feeling that we knew more than our teachers, but we would have been horrified if the teachers had suddenly abdicated and turned over the whole conduct of the school to us.

The seriousness of this mat-

ter can be seen in the fact that I am not exaggerating one whit. As I reported in an earlier column, I recently attended a study concerned with whether or not this country should have a national pastoral council. There were perhaps too few young persons at this meeting, a fact that those who were there brought petulantly to the attention of the majority. Well, bravo for them for asserting the young position.

Youth has not reached this position on its own. The virus is not natural to it, but rather has been injected. At the pastoral council study meeting, after one young lady insisted that all this talk about feasibility and methods was a bore, a more mature gentleman in his 30s agreed wholeheartedly. The gentleman, a doctor of one discipline or other, quite solemnly proposed that what should be done was to gather young people together to tell the delegates what they should do. It would take youths of vast humility and deep introspection to cast off such unbecoming flattery.

And the nun-president of the host college (Mundelein) stressed time and again that today's youths are better educated than any before, from which fact, if true, would flow the corollary that today's youths should be the teachers and anyone of more mature years should be the disciples.

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