



"POEAS ARE MADE BY FOOLS LIKE ME, BUT ONLY GOD CAN MAKE A TREE..."

The Church: 1970

## Bishops Acting Wisely in Study

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



"Why have you acquiesced," said the questioner, "to the decision to suppress the dreary data uncovered in your study of the priesthood?"

Even granting that the hate-charged questions on the Catholic lecture circuit have grown worse in the past few years, this one was still a real winner. It was kind of three strikes thrown in one pitch. I had acquiesced; suppression had occurred; and the data were dreary, all according to the one question.

The facts were quite different, of course, but against the power of the Big Lie facts are rather unimportant.

The study isn't finished, the bishops have never suggested suppressing the data, and "dreary" is not an accurate word to describe the preliminary findings. However, since the very beginning of the American hierarchy's multi-disciplinary study of the priesthood, reports that facts would either be destroyed or repressed have persisted. Certain priests, for reasons of their own, have tried to cast a priori doubt on the scholarly project.

I have been critical of some of the things the bishops have done in the past, and probably will be in the future, but on the question of preparation for the synod on the priesthood next fall, they must be given credit for extraordinarily intelligent and foresighted behavior. They will have at their disposal studies of the theology, sociology, spirituality, psychology, history and pastoral dimensions of such scope and detail that will make them the best prepared hierarchy in the world.

It is hardly likely that the Catholic liberal press will give them any credit for this; just the same they deserve credit. As one who has participated in the project I can say that at no time has there been the slightest attempt on the part of the bishops on the committee to violate in any way the professional integrity of the scholars. Quite the contrary, the bishops have bent over backward to respect the integrity of the study.

But while the professional priest-politicians sharpen their knives to tear apart the report, it might be well to make some observations about the relationship between a social researcher and his client. Given the fact that there is going to be a lot more social research in American Catholicism and that many priests and religious are totally ignorant of the ethics of research, it is becoming increasingly necessary to suggest that standard procedures be explained.

The contract between the

bishops and National Opinion Research Center is as good an example as any as to how these things are done.

First of all, let me stress that the bishops did not receive any special treatment. The basic outlines of their contract with NORC are no different than the contract with any other client. The bishops own the final report; as in every client-sponsored project, they are legally within their right to withhold the report. Other clients have on occasion done that. I am unaware of any research center in the country which requires the client to guarantee the center that the report be published.

But if the client owns the final report, he does not exercise control of the data. After a certain time — the time limit is not set so much for the purpose of the client as so the researchers can use the data for their own professional purposes — the research center, as a matter of policy, makes the data available to competent and reputable scholars for use in analysis that will appear in scholarly publications. NORC and not the client determines who will receive the data and who will not; if the truth be told, the major problem in most projects is that vast quantities of data go unanalyzed because no one appears on the scene to use it.

Again, to give the American bishops due credit, they accepted these conditions of "normal academic procedure" without protest when the reasons for such conditions were explained. Quite different was the behavior of one priest who insisted that the data be turned over to someone he would designate so that they could be analyzed "from the viewpoint of the priests." Since the bishops were the sponsors of the study, he took it as a matter of course that the report would be written from the "bishops' viewpoint." In other words, professional researchers would sell their souls to their clients.

I do not know when or whether the bishops will release the report. I hope they do, if only because nothing can be kept secret in our day and a distorted version of research is the likely result of a report which escapes to the press through "leaking."

I do know, however, that when NORC's own research interests above and beyond the final report, are finished, it will, as an academic research center, respond to legitimate requests from reputable scholars. But it will determine who is reputable; and, as in every other research project, it will not make our data available to those who seek them for propaganda purposes.

On The Right Side

## Joy to the World

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



On Oct. 12, I was explaining the nature of humor to a class of charming students at our Nursing School. "Chesterton said that humor is based on the incongruous. What makes us laugh? What gives us a spontaneous reaction to a funny situation or person? Chesterton illustrated by saying that if we see a man slip on a banana peel, his feet shooting out from under him, we instinctively laugh. It's the incongruity of the situation which gives the humor."

The students' blank faces indicated they were missing a cog. With the intuition of a sensitive teacher, I marshaled possibilities of the broken link of communication and thought: "For heaven's sake! What's missing?" I quickly asked the class: "Do you know what incongruous means?" Ah! there was the missing cog. No one had any idea what incongruous meant.

If you have read this far, maybe you aren't quite sure what incongruous means, either. The dictionary says: "incongruous — not congruous." Well, that's not much help. However, the dictionary does better without the negative prefix. Thus: "congruous — in accordance to what is proper or reasonable." From this we must deduce that incongruous presents a situation which is improper or unreasonable.

To put it simply, incongruous means: whacky. If you are a literary purist, you may wince at such a word. It is slang

(U.S.). The dictionary says whacky means crazy or screwy. A literary purist might well congeal at a word like "screwy". Nevertheless, the dictionary records it, viz. an adjective, slang (U.S.) for: crack-brained, fantastically absurd.

The instruction on humor had its own humor. Wasn't it incongruous (whacky) that a teacher (myself) should use a term which was as meaningless to the puzzled auditors (freshmen) as a word like pdepcmjlgous. Lest you waste your time looking it up, pdepcmjlgous is a non-word, but can make for an interesting exercise in phonetics.

To recapitulate, humor is based on the opposite of what normally ought to be. Why is a clown funny? Because he acts as reasonable men shouldn't act. Why is a slapstick movie funny? Because it represents an absurdity, quite incongruous with normal behavior.

In our Diocese there are four Fathers Vogt. From oldest to youngest they are: George, Joseph, Francis, all brothers; and Otto, who is kin to the three. One tells a funny story on himself that goes back three decades. "I was a young priest hearing confessions in a German parish. A man had finished his confession in the German language. My German was limited, but my zeal was great. I thought it would be fitting to say the customary concluding 'God bless you' in German. So when I finished the Latin prayer of absolution, with great earnestness I said to the as-

tonished penitent: 'Gesundheit!'

Now, Gesundheit is a German expression used after a sneeze. It means "Good health." Father Vogt chuckles as he recalls the incongruity between a resounding "Gesundheit" for an itchy nose, and a "God bless you" for a shriven soul.

When either Father Gene McFarland or Father Gus Hanna or Father Michael Hogan joins a clerical group, everyone cheers up. Father McFarland is a superb mimic. Father Hanna's sense of the ridiculous had him on the lecture tour a few years ago, with his "Philosophy of Humor." Father Hogan spots the incongruous with a spontaneity so unexpected that even the most pompous lass or lad relaxes.

Karl Rahner wrote: "Not everyone has a sense of humor. That calls for an altruistic detachment from oneself and a mysterious sympathy with others which is felt even before they open their mouths." (America: Oct. 31, 1970.)

Well placed humor is a great charity. No man is without worries, troubles, sorrows. When Saul was in the dumps, David played the harp to cheer his king's depressed soul. The man who can bring with kindness a bit of cheer to men who need cheer and hope and confidence is another David, whose harp is his heart and whose tongue sings the song and whose humor sweeps the strings, to bring comfort and joy.

On the Line

## Worst Yet For Ireland!

By Bob Considine



Headline: YIPPIE JERRY RUBIN COMES OUT FOR IRELAND.

God save Ireland! That's the worst news it's had since Cromwell.

Item: "Navy Gives 'Mickey Mouse' Dishonorable Discharge."

"Mickey Mouse," in Navy jargon, has come to mean senseless and demeaning regulations and practices — such as chipping paint for days before the admiral is piped aboard for lunch. "Mickey Mouse," come to think of it, is the politest description of traditional Navy discipline I've ever heard.

Whatever, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, who may be remembered with Farragut, has okeyed hard liquor in the officers' messes, and beer in senior enlisted men's quarters. Sailors can now let their hair grow down to their shoulders, raise a beard, encourage a mustache, and permit their sideburns to creep well below the present level — the middle of the ear lobe.

Reason? Nobody was joining the Navy any more. Boys nowadays are taking different sorts of trips.

The Russians permit women medics to sail with the Red fleet. Adm. Zumwalt says he's thinking that, too, may come in the U.S. Navy.

Far cry, let's say, from the wartime visit of King George

VI to an American man o' war. In honor of the occasion he ordered that all men aboard neighboring Royal Navy ships be given a "double tot of rum." He suggested to the American Navy brass who greeted him aboard the U.S. ship that they do the same for the American crews.

An embarrassed silence fell upon our brass. Then an admiral cleared his throat and said no alcoholic beverages were ever permitted aboard a U.S. Navy ship . . . never, never, never.

The King seemed surprised.

"Then give them a double C-C-Coke!" he stuttered.

Item: SCIENTISTS SYNTHESIZING LIVING AND REPRODUCING CELL.

That means, said the distinguished doctors at State University of New York at Buffalo, that a living body of some sort could be manufactured. Something that could be landed on Mars, a most hostile clime, and reproduce itself.

When that's accomplished, let's hope the geniuses turn their attention to building an ersatz human being who can live in peace on earth — a much nearer planet — and survive its pollution, politicians, poverty, pornographers and politricks. (Sorry, Spiro.)

Item: U.S. VOTES TO RETAIN NATIONALIST CHINA

IN UN, NOT BAR RED CHINA.

That was the first time we took that tack. Hitherto, we have cast a solid nyet and carried along with us enough friends and utter dependents to blackball Mao Tse-tung and his 700 million subjects.

We can't hold them off much longer, now that even predominantly Catholic Italy has dumped Chiang Kai-shek and diplomatically embraced his Communist rival. Pope Paul VI is expected to have some kind words for mainland China and its people when he speaks during his impending visit to Hong Kong.

The big question remains, as it has for years, would Red China join the UN if voted in, on any other stance than its own terms? It has remained cynically aloof of even its most unctuous champions.

Item: NO U.S. FATALITIES IN INDOCHINA FOR NEARLY TWO DAYS.

That hadn't happened for five years (during which more than 40,000 Americans died and nearly ten times that many were wounded.) The encouraging word reminded me of a prediction Vice President Ky once made in an interview. The war, he said, would simply peter out . . . fade away.

He was a very good sport about it. He promised to let us know when it did.