

## Pope 'State of Church' Address

# 'Corrosive' Criticism Deplored

Vatican City—(RNS)—In his annual "State of the Church" address before the College of Cardinals, Pope Paul VI deplored "corrosive criticism" of Roman Catholic traditions and institutions by Western intellectuals.

He also expressed "an oppressive sense" of sadness over "defections of not a few priests and religious," and spoke of his "profound sadness" at the introduction of divorce in Italy.

However, the pontiff sounded notes of joy in his 3,000-word speech as he reflected on his recent journey to the Far East, and announced the 1970 recipient of the Pope John XXIII Peace Prize — Mother Theresa, superior general of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity.

He sounded mixed chords of hope and gloom as he touched on his "lowly yet persevering" efforts for peace in Indochina and the Middle East.

The Pope opened his talk with a quick review of his 10-day, 30,000 mile journey to East Asia, Australia and the Pacific. He re-emphasized its "ministerial" or apostolic character, and spoke of the "joy and edification" he had experienced in participating in the Bishops'

Conferences in Manila and in Sydney, Australia.

Referring to the crying need for development in that part of the world, the Pope exhorted Western Christians to increase their aid and assistance.

The 73-year-old pontiff then turned his attention to what he called the "corrosive criticism" of "the institutional and traditional Church."

This wave of criticism, he said, was spreading from "not a few intellectual centers of the West" into the more general area of "ecclesial public opinion, especially among the young."

He said it represented "a frame of mind" that dissolved "the certainty of faith," broke down "the organic body of ecclesiastical charity," and "weighed heavily on our heart."

Pope Paul likewise expressed apprehension at the decline in the number of priests and religious.

"Statistics of defections of not a few priests and religious fill us with an oppressive sense" of sadness, he said.

"When we see our youth, who offer such great promise for sustaining the People of

God and such an abundance of talent for the modern apostolate, taking up spiritual and social positions at odds with the unity and charity proper to the Catholic Church, then we ask ourselves:

"What would be the post-conciliar period for the Church and for society, if energies in the Church had remained faithful, instead of being squandered, growing arid and paralyzing the hoped-for renewal?"

Reiterating previous remarks, on Italy's new divorce law, he said it filled his heart with "profound sadness," and set before him "new and grave problems."

"Our sadness," he said, "is due above all to the considerable moral harm which such an innovation is destined to inflict upon the Italian people."

Recalling the Church's law and doctrine on marriage which, he said, was "based on the Gospel," the pontiff said that the new divorce law was passed "in open conflict of Article 34 of the Vatican-Italy Concordat of 1929." It was passed "in spite of friendly but clear warnings of the Holy See not to violate the solemn pledges made at the moment of the signing of the Concordat."



**Pupils Tour Courier and Print Shop**

Watching papers roar off the press are 7th and 8th graders of St. Michael's School, Rochester, who toured Courier-Journal offices and the Christopher Press print shop with their teacher, Sister Norbert, SSND, right.

## The Church: 1970

# Sports Violate Kids' Rights

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



One of the more incredible phenomena of American suburban life, a phenomenon that cries to heaven for vengeance, is grammar school athletics. And one of the abuses of the Catholic Church that demands immediate reform is the cooperation of many, many Catholic parishes in this monstrous abuse of the dignity and freedom of children.

It was perhaps not so bad when there were eighth grade and even seventh grade football, basketball, and baseball teams. The deterioration began when it became necessary for these teams to have complete equipment, coaches, spring training, and a winning season. But now the disease has spread even to the earliest years of grammar school, complete with banquets at the end of the season, trophies for the players, parties for the players and cheerleaders, scouting systems, game plans, and all the other apparatus of big-time athletics.

Never mind that this is very unhealthy for grammar school youngsters. They are neither psychologically nor physically capable of sustaining such pressure. For the whole purpose of grammar school athletics is not to meet the needs of children but rather to meet the needs of their parents, and when Catholic schools cave in to the pressure of parents with such disastrously harmful programs they are failing in their duty to protect the rights of children.

I doubt that there is a single psychologist in the country who thinks that elaborate, organized athletics are good for grammar school children. Any priest or nun who works in the grammar schools knows that there is nothing more disastrous for the morale of the school than if a group of athletes win practically all the time. A bad season is one in which you lose all your games but a worse season is one in which you win all your games.

This is not, be it noted, the angry ranting of someone who is opposed to sports (though another bad season from the Chicago Bears and I may give

up completely), but if a clergyman-sociologist cannot be assumed to know anything about athletics perhaps Fran Tarkenton, the quarterback of the New York Giants, might deserve a hearing. In a recent magazine article, Tarkenton wrote:

"... I don't think boys seven to twelve years old enjoy playing in a structured situation. They do it today because all their friends are doing it; it's the thing to do, and no kid likes to be an oddball. But I think they would prefer to go out on the sandlots in the afternoon and play among themselves. Out there they can play any position, they can devise their own strategy, they can be innovative, they can be creative—they can be all these things. But when they go into organized football, they're no longer on their own. They've got to answer to a coach.

"And there's a problem right there. These coaches are all well intentioned, I'm sure, and some probably know what they're doing. But I've found that most of them are frustrated athletes who always wanted to be a head coach. They watch football on television and read about Paul "Bear" Bryant, that tough disciplinarian who has coached Alabama to so many college football championships. And all of a sudden they picture themselves as "Bear" Bryants. And that's the way they try to coach 10-year-old kids."

And Tarkenton puts his finger right on the root of the problem when he says:

"But the biggest phenomenon of all is the attitude of the parents. And I must say, the mothers are worse than the fathers. The mothers yell the loudest — at the referees, at the coaches, at their own kids.

"It's just possible that a kid might have had fun playing in a small-fry football game. But then he comes home and his mother starts in: Why didn't you catch that pass, Johnny? Or, How could you miss tackling that boy, Johnny? And that really finishes the poor kid."

## 'Sweet Lord' Is A Sign of Change

By THE MISSION SINGERS

George Harrison's song, My Sweet Lord, is a sign of change. We think it might even help quicken the rate of change. We better make sure we know where we're going and whether we want to go or not.

Two incidents (and we'll show shortly how My Sweet Lord relates to both) point out the kind of attitude change that's been taking place concerning religion.

About five years ago, we got a letter from a friend of ours. She talked about why she was leaving the Church. "I'm sick of being treated like a child," she said. "I'm tired of being told I can do nothing by myself. Church is nothing but a sop for the weaklings who can't face their inability to achieve. I don't want a God who won't let me be myself. If that's what religion is, forget it."

If this girl can be considered in any way typical of her generation's mood, then things such as the Peace Corps, VISTA, civil rights groups, communes, the interest in Eastern religions, even (to some extent) drugs — all these can be considered typical expres-

sions of the way things were going. The attitude was: "I can do it, or no one can." Or as Peter Fonda once said on The Dick Cavett Show, "We are all gods or there is no god."

In contrast to the story of the girl of five years ago is an incident that happened only a couple of weeks ago. Some of us were attending a meeting at which there were many "Pentecostal" Christians. A few started talking about their faith experiences.

One young fellow got up — long hair, beard and mustache, the whole works — and simply said, "I just came up from Texas, and it sure is good to find some friends here. My faith in Jesus and His spirit has done a lot of good things for me, and I just want to thank Him and tell you that I'm grateful to Him and you."

There are a lot of young folk and older ones, too, like this guy, who have come to understand the value of recognizing someone — some power — outside themselves.

One might argue neither story is typical of what has happened or what is happening.

Yet there are songs "of the times" that reflect on both incidents. We need to look no farther than George Harrison's My Sweet Lord to find one.

Some years ago, Harrison wrote a song that said, "We were talking about the love we all could share when we find it . . . With our love we could save the world — if they only knew. Try to realize it's all within yourself, no one else can make you change . . . Life flows on within you and without you."

Today George Harrison sings a different song. "I really want to see you. I really want to be with you, I really want to see you, Lord, but it takes so long, my Lord, my sweet Lord."

More and more, we are coming to an increased understanding of the fact that religion is more than simply being authentic and moral; it's a recognition of some "sweet Lord."

True, George Harrison doesn't appear to be singing only about Christ (the "Hallelujahs" in the background of the recording are joined by chants of "Hare Krishna"), but his song does show the hunger that more

## THE MUSIC BAG

MY SWEET LORD

My sweet Lord, my Lord, um, my sweet Lord.  
I really want to see you,  
Really want to be with you.  
Really want to see you, Lord, but it takes so long, my Lord.

My sweet Lord, um, my Lord, um, my Lord.  
I really want to know you.  
I really want to go with you.  
I really want to show you, Lord, that it won't take long, my Lord.  
My sweet Lord, my Lord, my sweet Lord.

(Copyright 1970 by Maclen Music)

and more people are feeling for someone, some Lord, to rely on. Other recent songs point out the same hunger.

We don't want to give the impression that the change that's going on is a change from bad to good, or good to bad. Most everyone of us today needs to have even more trust and faith in our own abilities than we have now; we need more confidence that "we can do it." Such a "humanistic" spirit cannot be completely effective, but it is absolutely necessary for any reasonable progress.

At the same time, My Sweet

Lord complements and completes such a determination. The song confesses not an inability to do anything, but an inability to do everything. We can't save the world ourselves. We've finally realized this, because it "takes so long" to make even the very small progress we've made.

We're coming to realize that it's not a cop-out on ourselves to turn to a "sweet Lord." Instead, it's a recognition that there is a God who wants to work with us. The only danger comes when we expect the Lord to be sweet enough to do all the work that needs to be done.