



"I'M RESERVING TUESDAY NIGHT FROM 7 TO 9 FOR YOU AND YOUR WIFE, TOM!"

The Church: 1970

Bishops Unfair To Pope?

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



Those hearty souls who are regular readers of this column are already aware that I am convinced of the need for bishops. A worldwide religious community such as Christianity simply cannot do without the leadership roles that the bishop represents locally and the pope internationally. I am not persuaded that the present way of exercising both these offices is the most effective way of going it in our time, but I have no doubt that we need such offices.

The example of the Methodist Church is instructive. In England, where it began, Methodism has no bishops. In the United States, where Methodism has flourished, and indeed can lay considerable claim to being the most "typical" of American denominations, it has not only the bishopric, but in fact its bishops have more power within the Church than do other American religious leaders. A Methodist bishop is elected, and for a limited term, but as long as he serves he has the sort of power that would make most Catholic bishops very envious. For example, the Methodist bishop receives each year the resignation of all the pastors under his jurisdiction and can remove or transfer clergy almost at will.

Methodism seems to have learned from American politics that democracy and strong leadership actually require one another. It is unfortunate that American Catholics have yet to make this discovery. If we do not have leadership as strong as we would like the reason is not that we have too much democracy but rather that we do not have enough.

It is in the context of this conviction of mine of the need for a powerful bishopric that I find myself disappointed over the failure of the American hierarchy to decide at its most recent meeting to ask Rome for authority to act in certain marriage and priestly dispensation cases.

Let me make clear the context of this disappointment. I am still convinced that the Church can require celibacy of its clergy. Even though I do not believe that people can be kept in the clergy who do not want to be priests, I see no absolute necessity that the process of getting out of the priesthood should be made as easy as walking around the corner. I do not think that a lifelong commitment should be easily set aside and I do not think that anyone has the right to claim immediate dispensation from the prom-

ises attached to a lifelong commitment.

I am convinced, however, that the process of obtaining such a dispensation ought to be clear, orderly, and predictable even if it does take time. There is no reason why a clear, orderly and predictable process could not take place in Rome, nor is there any reason to believe that Rome would be more rigid than the national hierarchy. Quite the contrary, in some instances one would perhaps be better advised to trust one's fate to the Roman bureaucracy than to sources of power close to home.

The papacy is easily the most difficult, complex and demanding religious leadership position in the world. The man who occupies it never escapes from the spotlight of international interest. He has immense world powers and tremendous potential influence on the course of human events. He needs around him an extraordinarily brilliant and well-trained staff.

He and his staff should be bothered as little as possible with administrative trivia. While decisions of marriage and priesthood are not trivial to the people involved, they are nonetheless routine administrative affairs when compared with the larger mission and responsibility of the papacy. It is not fair for the hierarchies of the world to saddle Rome with the huge burden of administrative detail which it presently must bear.

Without decentralization the leadership position in a human institution is weighed down with an incredible amount of routine administrative tasks. The weight is so heavy, in fact, that the leadership may be able to do little besides carry the weight around. It is unfair to impose such a burden on the papacy. An increase in the size of the Vatican bureaucracy to cope with an ever-increasing amount of routine administrative decisions simply adds to the papal office an even heavier burden.

I've heard nothing but unfavorable comment about the bishops' failure to seek the necessary authority to handle marriage and clerical cases, but almost all of the criticism has argued that the bishops thus were unfair to themselves or unfair to priests and married people seeking dispensations. I am worried about this criticism, but I am even more worried that so few people seem to realize that the centralization of routine administrative decisions is monstrously unfair to the papacy.

On The Right Side

100 Million Readers!

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Reader's Digest has a circulation of 18,000,000 monthly copies in the United States alone. Add to this several foreign editions and we have a readership estimated at 100,000,000 monthly readers! Consider the impact on the minds and lives of these people, many of them high schoolers.

Reader's Digest has been scoffed at by professors of rootlessness. The disdain seems to come partly because of the magazine's unrelenting opposition to smoking; partly because it praises virtues like loyalty, piety, patriotism, stability; partly because it trains its guns on Communism; and partly because it does not make folk heroes of activist radicals.

Unfortunately, like Ann Landers and Abby VanBuren, the 95 per cent good has some 5 per cent baleful. This is especially unfortunate both because of the good quality of most of the magazine and because of its huge circulation. If you will check over the January 1971 issue of the Digest what will you find? On the good side, these:

- A minority report for the President's Commission on Pornography by Charles H. Keating, Jr., a member of the commission. Pornography infiltrates nearly every city and village. In December, I consulted our local postmaster about the long lists of appeals for money which deluge the mails. He commented: "These are a nuisance, but have you any idea of the amount of unsolicited filth which comes through the mails?"

It is unbelievable, and the stuff would curl your hair. A lot of it is directed at adolescents."

- An article, "Era of Negotiation with Russia" by Malcolm MacKintosh. This should be pondered by unilateralists who urge the Government: "Capitulate to the Communists. Then, assured of our non-aggressiveness, they will extend to the world freedom, peace and justice." Such is not the experience of Poland or Hungary, of Lithuania or Russia, of Cuba or the Ukraine. Such was not the experience of yesterday's Czechoslovakia.

- Hostage in Peking by Anthony Grey, a British reporter who was a hostage, who reverifies the fact: Communism is no fiction of the radical right. It is a living, dehumanizing system which has enslaved a third of the world, and works to enslave more.

- Newark's Unholy Alliance records the chilling grip of the Mafia on the city government of Newark, N.J. It records the triumph of justice, through orderly law procedures, over a supposedly impervious criminal organization.

On the zero-minus side are these:

- The Editors' satisfaction over birth control articles this past decade, with the new contribution of articles on vasectomy. Last summer I spent two days with a friend from India. He said: "In a drive to control population the government offered a bonus to males who

would submit to vasectomy. A fourteen-year-old boy in our neighborhood had the surgery done, for the sake of the bonus which amounted to less than twenty five cents"

- A short article on the new meaning of marriage by Rosemary Haughton. Since I have read with wonder some of Mrs. Haughton's elusive logic, I was prepared for her mixture of lit-erate fact and fantasy.

Since each man has within himself the struggle between good and evil, with the seven capital sins: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth warring against our noble aspirations and graces, I suppose we can appreciate the good while being wary of the bad.

Digest humor is always a light. One story gives us the spirit of hope. It seems that a couple of neighbors were getting acquainted. Said Jones: "I'm an optometrist." Said Smith, thoughtfully: "Well, you've got to be one these days."

For the statistically minded, these figures are significant. Ladies Home Journal sells nearly 7,000,000. Better Homes and Gardens close to 8,000,000. Playboy over 5,000,000. The Catholic Digest, sells 550,000. Of the weeklies, TV Guide sells 14,562,000. Life and Look sell 7,800,000 each week. The Catholic weeklies, Our Sunday Visitor, and the Register each sell something less than 600,000 weekly. Have you ever stopped to think what St. Paul would do if he were around today?.

On the Line

We'll Never Make It

By Bob Considine



You might as well face it at the start of the year. You're never going to travel at the speed of light, 186,282 statute miles per second.

Dr. Nicholas Der, of Woodland Hills, Calif., explains why in a letter that I hope some day to understand fully:

"I belong to the doomed tribe that was once honored but nowadays damned and despised in too many high and not so high places," this fine man writes, in regard to a piece I wrote that appeared in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner.

"That doomed tribe's members are called 'former aerospace scientists,'" Dr. Der continues. "In your article you relate future, manned space travel with the speed of light. You know as well as I do from the Theory of Relativity that the inertial mass of any object approaches to infinity when the speed of the object approaches to that of the light. Consequently the resistance to speed changes becomes infinitely large at that speed, therefore no object can ever attain it."

A recent Reader's Digest piece dealing with the brain-boggling distances involved in outer space proposed that some day a crew of spacemen, having reached the end of our Milky Way Galaxy, might ask Mission Control for permission to speed on to the next galaxy, Andro-

meda. I quoted the fascinating article by Ira Wolfert in the column that resulted in Dr. Der's letter.

"And there you stepped on a sticky surface nobody likes to talk about," Dr. Der continues: "I refer to the 'time gap' in communication, meaning the time elapsed between sending a message and receiving an answer to it. For the Moon it is not significant yet. The gap is only 2.6 seconds. But it could have been very critical if Armstrong had to rely solely on terrestrial computers to steer the Eagle away from that menacing boulder.

"As we penetrate farther and farther into space the gap becomes uncomfortably wide. It is minimum 9 minutes for Mars, 70 minutes for Jupiter, approximately 11 hours for Pluto. Stepping out of our Solar System the time gap would mean generations, centuries, thousands of years — still within the boundaries of our Galaxy.

"Now suppose the spaceship was launched in the year 3000 A.D. and reached the opposite edge of our Galaxy in 83,000 A.D. Because it flashed through space with a velocity equal to the speed of light, the crew, instruments and materials did not age. As a matter of fact every movement completely stopped, clocks, biological processes, even the electrons around the nuclei; just as if somebody took movies with a 500,000

frames-per-minute special camera.

"Although the astronauts did not age a bit, we on Earth did. Taking 80 years as one generation (which may be possible in 3000 A.D.), 1,000 generations lived and died here, while the expedition traveled unchanged. During their trip no radio messages could overtake them, nor could they send any due to their extraordinary predicament. For the same reason automatic mechanisms could not operate and retrorockets could not be fired to slow down the craft. They were destined to travel forever."

"The men in the vehicle would be speaking the English of 3000 A.D. but Mission Control would be manned by persons speaking 183,000 A.D. English or some derivative of it.

"I think we will have trouble getting beyond our Solar System by 3000 A.D. One must realize that our very proud race is next to nothing as space significance goes. Our chances of reaching the distant star systems inside of our Galaxy are practically nil.

"I have a pretty sure feeling that out there are millions of Cultures, 'people,' some less, some much more advanced than we are. But all have the common trouble: they cannot break through the barrier of the absolute velocity either."

Sorry.