

Kidnappers? No!

Last August, while still in hiding from the F.B.I., Father Daniel Berrigan wrote an article for COMMONWEAL discussing reflections which filled his days as a fugitive. Claiming that his decision to go underground in April was "a formula which both awakens public response and hottens up the chase," he wrote about the future moves in the peace cause he represented.

His words may have meaning for those who ask today: "Could the Berrigans actually contemplate explosives and the kidnapping of a White House aide?"—

"We must lose more, suffer more, experiment more, risk more, trust one another more. The crisis is of such enormous extent and depth, that all solutions based on the sanity and health and recoverability of current structures are quickly proven wrong, untimely, unmanageable."

"Our task is not crushed; it is simply unfinished. We are summoned to act in unison with our friends; to join in conspiracy, in jeopardy, in illegal non-violent actions, to hotten up the scene."

"What we seek, acting coolly, politically, out of the truth of our lives and tradition is to pull the mask of legitimacy from the inhuman and blind face of power."

Do these sentences reveal a kidnapper or a bomber?

Yet a federal indictment, with its presumptions that dogged investigations would have to find strong evidence to support such an accusation, is no light matter. Our court system cannot be casually waved off by a countercharge that the case was concocted because the government is determined to stigmatize opponents of the Vietnam war as violent and deranged people.

It is inconceivable to me that the Berrigans could be the planners and communicators of such a complex plan while in prison. Since their arrest they have been so carefully watched that they have several times publicly protested an unusually rigid censorship of mail, limitation of privileges and exclusion of visitors. Yet the indictment alleges specific acts of passing messages to and from the Berrigans.

It is totally incongruous with the priestly nature of these brothers to believe that they would cooperate in kidnapping, an act which gets results only when death or physical injury is threatened for the hostage.

Father Dan's phrase cited above, "to hotten up the scene," may be a forewarning of public actions to disturb and confound the government. But physical attacks on anyone, or tragic pain for the family of a kidnap-victim, is simply out of the question. By the ethic of conscience, the Berrigans claim an obligation to be faithful to their inner convictions no matter what it costs them. But it is wholly against all Christian tradition to disregard consequences in which other men may be hurt.

—Father Richard Tormey

Double Talk

Gov. Rockefeller in his recent "State of the State" address garnered himself an extra headline or two by saying he favors reducing the time limit during which an abortion may be performed from 24 weeks to 20 weeks.

Of course, human beings have to be in favor of such a proposal, even if it should save but one life. But don't be misled into thinking the governor is having any other change of mind regarding this intolerable law. Quite the opposite.

For instance, in the same speech, he calls for "further recommendations to protect the health of women, both residents and non-residents, undergoing abortions in this state."

This strongly implies that the governor wants to keep the state an abortion mecca by not providing residency requirements in the law. Even some pro-abortionists see this as a necessary amendment.

First and foremost, Catholics must work for nothing short of repeal of this law. We must let our state leaders know that no other action will be satisfactory.

We are in the unfortunate position of having to support such stopgap reforms as residency requirements, reducing the time limit far below the governor's platitudinous 20 weeks, and making it required by law that all abortions be performed in hospitals.

Looking for some place to join the battle? Contact the diocesan Right-to-Life Committee, Box 4763, Rochester, N.Y. 14612. It needs your help.

—Carmen Viglucci

Courier-Journal

Letters to the Editor

A Real Life

O. Henry Story

Who says O. Henry's stories are improbable? Never was there a more true parallel to O. Henry's "After Twenty Years" than an actual experience that occurred recently in a Midwest American city.

Exactly 20 years ago, an unwed mother took her 2-year-old daughter to a local convent and asked the nuns to find her a good home. That was no problem for the nuns because they knew a couple who would welcome and love just such a child.

Only too soon, the remorseful mother realized her mistake but it was too late for regrets. She did not even know of the girl's whereabouts. For years to come, in sorrow and anguish, she was to feel her loss without the hope of ever finding her child again.

Twenty years rolled by. The daughter had profited by the love of her adopted parents. She is now a dedicated registered nurse, a devoted wife, and the loving mother of a little girl. She is a leader in worthwhile community projects.

She has always searched for her real mother. With the ingenuity of a Sherlock Holmes, she pieced together all possible threads and clues and eventually re-discovered her mother.

Much credit is due to that unwed mother. She respected the right of her unborn child to live. In her desperation, she could have resorted to abortion, but rather than commit murder, she allowed the child to live and when she felt she could no longer care for it, she entrusted it to foster parents who would love the child, educate it, and give it all that a good home can provide.

Sister Marcella Landwehr, O.P.
3600 Broadway
Great Bend, Kan.

Part of Report Unrealistic

Editor:

It was practical of the Diocesan Educational Task Force to suggest (Courier-Journal 1/13/71) that the Sister-drain from the classrooms must be reversed if the parochial system is to survive. I attended one of the regional hearings where parish groups told the Task Force strongly that the laity could not accept the idea of an all-day faculty but would always demand that a few Sisters remain to give the religious image to the school.

But it is unrealistic to expect that the Sisters' departure can be halted in the next few years, so crucial for the continuance of the many parish schools. The Task Force should know that:

The religious communities will continue to give their Sisters permission to enter various non-classroom apostolates if they ask for it.

Sisters are not happy to live in a "two-or-three-Sister-convent"; this isn't community life. Consolidation of convents could change this.

There is no evidence to expect an upsurge of vocations to fill the classrooms with Sister-teachers within the next few years.

—A sister of a teaching-Sister, Auburn.

Parish Criticized On Liturgy

Editor:

The "position paper," issued by the Diocesan Music Commission on the use of music during liturgical ceremonies, was both an accurate and timely document.

Indeed, in my observations, I can say with all certainty that a deplorably impoverished musical program exists in our suburban parish. Our parish lacks the following elements necessary for a full liturgical program as envisioned by Vatican II:

A decent Church organ, a professional organist, a professional music director, a choir of any kind, proper congregational singing.

I have been privileged to witness "liturgical celebration" at St. Margaret Mary's Church. Here is a parish where the "joy" of worship is evident from the introductory hymn to the recessional. This parish has developed a "model" liturgical program that many pastors would be wise to study and implement.

Sadly, Father Ehmann does not expect the commission's recommendations to be put into effect immediately because of the Church's new philosophy of "not" issuing orders. Father stated, "You can only wait for the people to say: 'Here, we're not doing this right.'"

Larry J. Leffaglie
Nova Lane
Rochester

The Word for Sunday Reform Begins With the Word

By Father Albert Shamon



A saying among theologians is *Ecclesia semper reformanda* — "the Church is always to be reformed". For the Church is made up of people — sinful and sin-inclined people. Sunday's Readings present two great reformers: Ezra and Christ. To initiate their reform, both started with the word of God. Ezra read from the Law, and Christ read from the prophets. When Vatican II sought to reform the Church, it, too, began with the word of God.

Thus it put the liturgy into the vernacular, for the word of God is read to be understood. Then, to expose her children to more of God's word, the Church based the Sunday readings on a three-year cycle. Finally the lectern has been returned to the sanctuary, and the role of lector revived.

Sunday's first reading offers some beautiful insights regarding the congregation and the Liturgy of the Word. When Ezra proclaimed the Law of Moses, it was to a full assembly; everybody was there who should have been — "men, women, and those children old enough to understand". Numbers are important. For this reason, missing Sunday Mass voluntarily really hurts the Church — the assembly is at least minus one. A multitude inspires worship. What a home crowd does for a football team! A throng inspires the homilist. So often dress rehearsals disappoint precisely because it is difficult to perform brilliantly to an empty hall. Daniel Webster listed three conditions for a great oration: the man, the occasion, and a notable crowd.

Secondly, Ezra preached to an attentive assembly — "the people listened attentively to the book of the Law". Often the Liturgy of the Word does not nourish one's faith, because such scant attention is given it. An artist can paint a rose but not its fragrance. Reading is never enough, it is but the painting of words. To get the fragrance, one must be attentive. The hen that straggles from her nest when she sets a brooding produces nothing. Constant incubation hatches the egg. Similarly, God's pregnant word bears light and action only for the fervently attentive, not for stragglers come late to Mass.

Lastly, Ezra spoke to a devout assembly. "Ezra blessed the Lord — and the people

answered, Amen, Amen!" The Chinese have an expression that conveys the meaning of "Amen". It is "the heart wishes exactly so". Laudable, therefore, is the practice for worshippers to conclude prayer to or praise of God with "Amen." Do we whimper or thunder our amens at Mass?

This Ezra passage and the Gospel also indicate the role of the priest regarding God's word. It is to explain and expound it. Ezra interpreted what was read "so that all could understand." Jesus did the same thing at Nazareth. Yet how contrary were the effects of both homilists. Ezra's homily caused the people to mourn over the contrast between their real selves and their ideal selves as described in the Law. On the contrary Jesus' talk so infuriated the Nazarenes they sought to kill Him. This only confirms how important is the disposition of the assembly.

Regarding homilies, David Lawrence wrote that "the principal criticism heard about lots of sermons today is that they deal with political subjects or discuss public affairs rather than emphasizing the moral principles, essential for building a better society." "Many preachers," wrote Jenkin Lloyd Jones, "have lost most of their religion . . . preaching overheated sermons based on dubious theories of economics and sociology."

Twice blessed — and thrice effective — is the priest whose homilies are always short, to the point, and radiated in the word of God.

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MAIN OFFICE 35 So. St. — 454-7850 — Rochester, N.Y. 14604
BLANA OFFICE 317 Robinson Bldg., Lake St. — BE 2-3488 or BE 2-3423

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