

Is Ecumenism Dying or Dead?

This is the week of the "Christian Unity Octave," a period of prayer and public discussion about the ultimate reunion of Christian churches. The following article is by a long-time leader of the ecumenical movement, a member of the Friars of the Atonement.

By FR. TITUS CRANNY, S.A.

Today it is commonplace to ask: Is ecumenism dead—or dying—or in its death throes? Is the ecumenical movement over—a relic of the recent past? What has happened to all the fond hopes of just a few years ago? What does the future hold?

Ecumenism has not come to a screeching halt nor has it ended with a bang or even with a whimper.

Ecumenism has moved to a new stage or level requiring more dedicated work and confident prayer. The short-range hopes of the past were fleeting

and immature, they did not give birth to "instant unity." But the longing for unity is still alive among Christians. One reason for hope is the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity during January 18-25.

More than six decades have passed since the modern ecumenical movement originated at Edinburgh in 1910. By more than coincidence the program of prayer for unity which has developed into the present Unity Week started in 1908. It began as the Church Unity Octave in 1908 under Fr. Paul James Francis, S.A., founder of the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor, N.Y. It prospered and developed into the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity under Fr. Paul Couturier of Lyons, France, starting in 1935.

It may be asked if the Christian churches as such should be involved in ecumenism. The answer must be an unqualified

affirmation. The effort towards unity must be strong and dynamic; it must be concerted and visible. Ecumenism cannot succeed through sporadic effort.

As Dr. Visser 't Hooft recently stated: "If one stops looking for unity between the churches, one destroys the ground beneath one's own feet. Instead of entering history, one places himself outside of it. The world will prove too strong for Christians without churches or in churches which they do not take seriously."

The theme of the Week of Prayer for 1971 is taken from St. Paul to the Corinthians: "The fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2, 13:13). Or to cite the text more fully: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Many Christians use it as a blessing and Catholics employ it in the liturgy.

It is a truism to say that the Holy Spirit is necessary in the enterprise of Christian Unity. Without God's help ecumenism is doomed to failure. But just as surely with God's grace and love it is bound to succeed. The movement has entered upon a new phase of faith, hope and love—and it demands more from Christians than it did 60 years ago, or even five years ago at the end of Vatican II.

Men need to live by faith and all that it implies; they need hope in the future, no matter what structures may crumble, they must love in a way that demands the total giving of self.

There may be a temptation to abandon ecumenism as a kind of religious luxury without importance in modern life. But this would be disastrous. Indeed ecumenism, social concern, and interest in religious questions are mutually related. No one element must cancel out the other two. If the Christian churches cannot resolve the

question of unity among themselves they can offer precious little to a world wearied by divisions and bored by pious rhetoric.

A divided Christian family is a scandal to the world and a barrier to preaching the gospel. It is a contradiction in a confused and unbelieving world.

Christians are faced with the problem of disunity to which a new dimension has been added—that of apathy. People no longer ask how and why Christian unity can be realized but rather why bother to unite at all? It is easier to remain with the status quo. But this cannot be the position of the concerned Christian.

All Christians must have an interest in and desire for unity. Christ would have it so. He prayed for unity on the night of Holy Thursday and that sacred prayer and action is the inspiration for all ecumenical prayer and activity, "that all may be one."

The Slot Man

Hosmer On Target

By Carmen Viglucci



I guess my doubts as to the "business as usual" aspect of professional sports began on that November Sunday two days after the assassination of President Kennedy when the National Football League did not postpone its weekly spectacles.

In order to make my point, I must make it clear that I am a sports bug and have been ever since my early days, the most glorious parts of which were spent in imagining myself as a future Joe DiMaggio while stumbling after fly balls on an unkempt neighborhood field.

Even before that 1963 tragedy, I recognized sub-consciously that something was amiss with some guys chasing a ball around while others were getting killed in World War II or later conflicts.

Still, perhaps in my enthusiasm for sports, I have been almost able to push aside such nagging worries as rationalizing that it is necessary for a people to have diversion, in the midst of, especially in the midst of, the depressing events of our times.

So it was edifying for me recently to hear Howard Hosmer on his weekly WHEC radio commentary, "The View from Here," put this doubt into perspective.

Hosmer, the managing editor of that station, described both this year's Super Bowl and the upcoming Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier heavyweight championship fight as nothing more than promotions to get millions of dollars from a gullible public at a time when there is a desperate need for housing and "bean suppers" for hungry kids.

Describing the fight as the "biggest promotional binge" in the history of sports, Hosmer decried the fact that Americans will spend between \$20 million and \$30 million on the fight... "enough to build a lot of good housing for a lot of people who need it and enough to feed a good many children, who may be half starving."

Notwithstanding, Hosmer went on, we will all fall for the pre-fight buildup, millions of words will be written and read about training camps, the fighters will call each other names for our benefit, and finally we will pay each of the combatants \$2.5 million so we can watch them punch each other for up to 45 minutes.

"And we will love every minute of it," Hosmer declared, when, "very probably we should all be ashamed of ourselves."

"The View from Here" is amen.

Auto Racing

A Form of Suicide?

Vatican City —(RNS)— Vatican Radio scored auto racing as giving the appearance of developing into a form of "suicide."

In a comment on the death of Italian racing driver Ignazio Giunti in a 600-mile auto race in Buenos Aires, Jan. 10, the radio said:

"We are bitterly disappointed to observe that fatalities on the race tracks, including both practice and competition, are increasing instead of decreasing.

"In 1970 alone, 17 racing drivers were sacrificed on race tracks. Risks are an inevitable part of this sport, but the number of victims who have bloodied race tracks has reached such a disquieting

level, that it no longer suggests the idea of risk, but that of suicide."

"What is the use of all this?" Vatican Radio asked. "To make progress in automotive design and performance?"

"But who can speak of progress," the radio continued, "when the lives of men are being so 'lightly' and 'audaciously' put in jeopardy?"

In short, the broadcast charged, if one ignores "official appearances and declarations," it seems that auto racing is, rather, "a race of interests and prestige, promoted and organized at the expense of men's lives."

Keeping Tabs

The Mother of Sorrows school board will meet at 7:30 tomorrow night, Jan. 21, in the school library. All parishioners are welcome.

St. Thomas More parish will hold its annual dance Saturday night, Jan. 23, beginning at 9, in the church hall. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Palvino are general chairmen.

Breakfast will be served at Holy Family Church this Sunday, Jan. 24, after all Masses, under the auspices of the Good-will group.

The Catholic Women's Club evening of recollection starts at 7:30 p.m. today, Jan. 20, in the Cenacle Retreat House. Dinner will be served at 6:30 and Father Albert P. Bartlett, S.J., will speak at 8. Mrs. Charles Schmanke is chairman.

Local alumnae of the College of St. Rose will meet at 8:30 p.m. tomorrow, Jan. 21, at the home of Mrs. Donald Loughlin, 2 Old Brick Circle, Pittsford. They will prepare articles for a sale in February.

St. Philip Neri Women's Club will meet at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26, in the school hall. Jackie Tambe will be hostess.

Members of Seton Branch 80 will meet at 8:30 tonight, Jan. 20, the home of Mrs. Franck Beecher, Fisher Road.

St. Theodore's Rosary Altar Society will assemble for church services at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27. At a meeting afterward Mrs. Gordon Siske will demonstrate candle making.

The Newcomers Chapter, YW-CA, will give a bridge luncheon next Wednesday noon, Jan. 27, at Locust Hill Country Club Jefferson Road. All women who are new to the area are invited. Reservations may be made with Mrs. Phillip Reynolds, 544-7949, or Mrs. Frank A. Braff, 381-1959.

The Rosary Guild of St. Joseph's Church, Penfield, will transform the school hall into "Broken Ski Lodge" for a dinner dance Friday, Jan. 22. Festivities will begin at 7:30 p.m. Bob Stenzel's band will play. Mrs. James Conolly and Mrs. John Crowley are chairmen.

The Henrietta Players, opening their 10th season, will present Gigi at 8:30 p.m. this Friday and Saturday, Jan. 22-23, in Roth School, 4000 East Henrietta Road.

Wednesday, January 20, 1971



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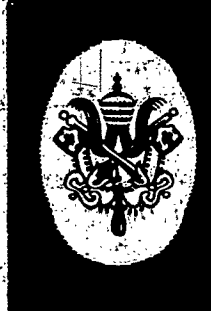
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