

Salting the Earth

'Give Me Your Poor'

By Father John Hempel

On my desk lies a letter from a woman who no doubt struck out in anger, but at least most certainly in ignorance of minority peoples. It is a letter not only unpatriotic but moreover, unchristian. Practically every myth and generality attributed to disadvantaged and minority peoples is contained in it.

To indicate that minority peoples should be sent back to their point of origin is to violate the very words on the base of the Statue of Liberty welcoming immigrants to this country. "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses

If we were to follow the dictates of this letter, most of us would have to find our way back to the "old country." How easily we forget the Church's allowing national parishes to exist to help national groups orient themselves to this country. Our very parochial school system was established to help and protect our Catholic constituency.

The Campaign for Human Development is an effort to put into practice the Christian message to help people break out of

the quagmire of poverty. How often Christ warned us of being so attached to the things of this world as to be blind to the needs of others.

But this is one person, one instance of a complete disregard of the Scripture message. No doubt, there are more. However, my office has been most impressed by our people's response to the Human Development collection. Very likely, most people did not understand all the campaign was trying to do. But at least they understood that people were in need, and responded to this effort to develop a philosophy whereby poor people can help themselves rather than being nothing but the recipients of hand-outs.

Incidentally we are most grateful to the Liturgical Commission in its effort to bring the message of poor people to us during the Lenten season.

Too often our efforts in relating to the poor seem so hopeless, but occasionally the clouds of discouragement separate. It is then that we glimpse, at least for a moment, a ray of the possible. We would like to think that this is the "Light of the World."

On the Line

Fancy Facts On Figures

By Bob Considine



Hope you didn't say "Ho hum," or words to that effect, when you learned that President Nixon requested a budget of \$229 billion (plus a couple of percentage points) for fiscal '72.

One can easily become inured to digits followed by a platoon of ciphers, particularly in these days of astronomical costs and "distances" in space, a \$2 billion-a-month war on the other side of the world, colossal welfare funds, and a number of gallons of oil spilled and soot settled on birds and man.

But \$229 billion to run the U.S. government for one year is worth breaking down into a semblance of human understanding.

If you were born the year Christ is believed to have been born, and lived through the intervening 719,542 days you would have had to spend \$314,210 every day, seven days a week, to spend \$229 billion. Or, to put it another way, \$116,100,000 every year for 1,970 years.

We paid France \$15 million for "Louisiana," which, in effect, spread the United States from the Mississippi to the Rockies. This year's budget represents 15,266 "Louisiana Purchases."

Secretary of State William Seward and President Johnson (Andrew, that is) caught hell from the populace for coughing up \$7.5 million to the Czar for Alaska. (A few oil leases on the North Slope of that state went for \$900 million not too long ago.) Mr. Nixon, at those 1867 dollar values, could have

bought 30,533 Alaskas with the budget money he has asked for.

Hold on for the shocker:

If the \$229 billion were changed into dollar bills (there aren't anywhere that number in existence, of course), and laid end to end, we'd be inundated by history's worst case of litter. It would take 10,560 dollar bills, end to end, to reach one mile. The budget, changed into such bills and stretched end to end, would wrap around the world, at the equator, 869 times!

Each of the several hundred guests at a recent distinguished stag dinner in New York found the following engraved notice at his plate:

"BETTER THAN INSURANCE

"Since you cannot refrain from drinking, why not start a saloon in your own home? Be the only customer and you will not have to buy a license.

"Give your wife \$55 to buy a case of whiskey. There are 240 drinks in a case. Buy all your drinks from your wife at 60 cents a drink, and in 12 days — when the case is gone — your wife will have \$89 to put in the bank and \$55 to buy another case.

"If you live 10 years and continue to buy your whiskey from your wife, and die in your boots, your wife will have \$27,025.47 on deposit — enough to bring up the children, pay off the mortgage, marry a decent man, and forget she ever knew a bum like you!"

On The Right Side

Act of Faith A Good Anchor

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Years ago, before the advent of popular TV, there was a funny radio program called "It Pays to Be Ignorant." The technique of the humor sometimes comes through today in the Jackie Gleason-Ed Norton dialogues. In the radio program, a Mame McConnell whose gravelly voice would frequently punctuate a thought with a raucous peal of laughter; her much traveled friend whom we'll call Secundo; and a third character we'll call Tertio, would carry on a dialogue which was preposterously disconnected. It would be something like this:

Secundo: "My second cousin on my father's side, Melify Studson, just bought a nice bronze coffee pot." Mame: "Her husband, Jughead, ought to do something about his. He's gained 60 pounds in two months and it's all in his middle." (Uproarious laughter.) Tertio: "I read in the Purduch Tooter that Spence Zook's nephew's brother-in-law was jailed for selling it. Nice young chap, too." Secundo: "Purduch — I used to live there. Had a good job in a potash plant. It's a small world!" Mame: "Nothing small about Jughead. Did you know that he gave up his seat to a lady on the trolley? Yes, sir! She weighed 300 pounds and was sitting on Jughead's lap. Always a gentleman." (Screech of laughter.)

This dizzying dialogue reminds me of the dilemma of The People in the Church as they try to unravel the theological and sociological reports they read in the press. Berrigans and satellites are canonized by Critic and National Catholic Reporter. Berrigans are damned by the Wanderer and Twin

Circle. In the spirit of dichotomy the National Catholic Register cautiously praised and dispraised the Berrigans in the same issue. In the Courier-Journal editorial on the Berrigans, "Kidnappers? No!" (Jan. 20) it would take a Philadelphia lawyer to successfully nail down what it was saying. Father Torrey may have been following the discretion of Pius XII, of whom it was written: "On one occasion newspaper men, reading Pius' speech missed the point entirely. The criticism the pontiff had intended was so cautiously phrased that the newspaper men skipped over it." (A Reporter Looks at the Vatican — B. McGurn)

I am disappointed that no one wrote to the Editor of the CJ with an analysis of that mystifying editorial. Both the pro-Berrigans and contra-Berrigans could have written with exasperation.

A few years ago a popular prophet was Hans Kueng whom some Sisters read for spiritual guidance, and emerged liberal laymen read for anti-establishmentarian re-enforcement. Like other folk heroes of the dissolution, Kueng seems to have traveled so far into the forest of dogmatic denials that his recent discussion on the doctrine of Papal Infallibility moved Karl Rahner, who is no superficial theologian, to comment that if this was what his friend Hans held, then he would have to be considered as another liberal Protestant theologian.

Are The People confused? They needn't be if they follow the Teaching Church. Who are the teachers in the Church? They are not the millions of

theologically illiterate among the masses in South America, or other such. Nor are they the small but vocal and cohesive groups who cluster in parts of Holland and other such; relatively few in the Church Catholic, but influential.

Who are the teachers? They are our bishops, with Pope Paul as the supreme teacher. These bishops are charged by Christ's commission to be the teachers.

Recently an older priest (he is about 32) remarked thoughtfully: "You know, people don't say the act of Faith any more. In fact I'm not sure I remember it myself, it's so long since I have said it."

The Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity are wonderful prayers, like a verbal well of living waters. They are good after Holy Communion prayers, for the sick, with the sick, in fact on nearly any occasion. The act of Faith is a good anchor for souls tossed in the agonies of contestation. Even this great prayer is contested by some as inadequate. Nevertheless it is good theology and a soul thrilling profession.

O my God I firmly believe that You are one God in three divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I believe that Your divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches, because You have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

If you would do a lenten good, teach this to the children.

The Church: 1971

There Must Be A Way

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



The New Republic, the moderately left-liberal journal which has managed to keep its head during most of the romantic madness of the last five years, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered "pro-Catholic." Hence, I imagine there was a good deal of surprise in non-Catholic circles when the magazine published an article entitled, "Politics and Parochialism," by Murray Friedman and Peter Binzen.

Ordinary readers of liberal journals would have assumed, of course, that the article would be against parochial school aid, but in fact the two authors made an extremely strong case in favor of it.

There is a strong hint in the article that the opposition to Catholic schools stems from a subtle, deep-seated bigotry. The two authors say, "Catholic resentment at being forced to support public schools with their taxes while getting no public help for their own schools is understandable. They know that the United States alone among Western nations restricts its aid to state schools."

Anyone who has spent any time reading the history of 19th century bigotry knows how powerful suspicion and hatred for Catholic schools is in the nativist soul. That this suspicion persists into the 20th century under the guise of an

elaborate theory about the separation of church and state is not surprising.

I am convinced that constitutional ways to aid parochial schools can be found if people have a serious intention to find them. But I must say that I am astonished with the widespread opinion among Catholics that in the absence of state aid Catholic schools cannot survive.

The evidence of Catholics' support for their schools is overwhelming.

One hears it said repeatedly, "We can't make the tuition too high." But what "too high" is remains to be seen. The only people who can decide that are Catholics themselves. Enrollment has slipped in these years, much to the delight of the headline writers and the liberal Catholic press. Some of this slippage may be due to increased costs, some to dissatisfaction with what goes on in the Catholic schools, but much more of it is due to smaller age cohorts in the early years of grammar school and to the virtual absence of new school construction in the last decade.

It is interesting to note that at the recent "secret" meeting of American archbishops on Catholic schools a good deal was said about "the morale crisis" in Catholic education. It seems to me to be an open question as to how much of

this morale crisis can be attributed to the closing down of some Catholic schools (usually without consultation with the Catholic laity involved) and the failure to open new schools. One spokesman for the bishops advocated visitation by pastors to the people in their parish to reassure them about Catholic schools. I would certainly not be opposed to that, though a deeper involvement with the laity in making school financial decisions might do a good deal more for morale.

It must be time to declare a moratorium on the foolish question of whether there should be Catholic schools in the inner city or in the suburbs. The only answer is that there ought to be schools in both places, and different varieties of financial support. Thus, most suburban schools can be self-supporting if the lay people in the community decide that the school is worth supporting. The inner-city will function only if it is supported by the whole church and the diocese. Presumably, there would be no doubt at all about our willingness to engage in this sort of activity.

The meeting of the archbishops, of course, was something well within their prerogatives, but I regret that they did not see fit to have present some representatives of the students, teachers, and Catholic laity that keep the schools going.