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DEATH ROW

The Church: 1971

The Structure And The Word

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



If there is anyone still worrying about the state of American Catholicism, a subject to which they could devote their attention in the next several months is the synod of bishops coming up in Rome in the fall. Foolishly and naively, many American priests are permitting themselves to have great expectations. Those expectations will be dashed and the morale of many of these priests, already low, will sink even lower.

One of the reasons for the expectations is the elaborate process of consultation currently going on between priests and bishops throughout the United States. The consultation is of course an excellent idea, but a risky one, for the process of consultation is bound to raise expectations. Unless there is some reasonable prospect of the expectations being somewhat satisfied, consultation can make a bad situation worse.

One need only talk to priests to know that there are two issues on their minds: the participation of priests in selection of their bishops, and celibacy. In spite of all the publicity over the latter, by far the more serious problem is the former. Most priests do not want to marry, but most priests do object, and strongly, to the way their leadership is chosen. This objection has nothing to do with the quality of the man; it is based, rather, on the principle that, as one priest put it to me, "Even if we make a mistake in choosing a bishop, at least it's our mistake, not someone else's."

No one in his right mind can possibly expect either of these changes to come out of the synod. It is very unlikely that a majority of the synod would be willing to fight with the Pope on celibacy, and even more unlikely that they would vote to dismantle the method of episcopal selection by which

they themselves were selected and which gives them considerable power in the choice of their colleagues.

We will not have major reform of ecclesiastical institutions until the Pope or a Pope determines that such reform is imperative.

However, careful reading of the New Testament ought to have persuaded Catholics that the success of the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed does not depend on human institutions. The most we can expect of institutional structures is that they facilitate our proclamation of the kingdom. The more effective the Church, the better able it is to play the role of the light on the mountain top. But the real light is not perfection of the ecclesiastical organization but the quality of lives led by Christians.

One often suspects that our fixation on structural reform and our ignoring the implications of the message provides a marvelous pretext for not facing the awesome challenge that the joy and hope of the message would bring to our lives.

No one can prevent us from making a commitment; no one can interfere with our proclaiming the Good News. We can be prevented from changing the canonical regulations of the life of the clergy, but the nice thing about the Good News that Jesus brought is that it is very easy to proclaim—if we want to believe in it.

It does seem to me that at this point in the history of the Church after the Vatican Council that all of us, priests and laity, organized and unorganized, should devote a lot more attention to preaching the kingdom and a lot less to agitating for structural reforms which don't have a ghost of a chance.

On The Right Side

Dispelling Myths

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Myth: Before the Council, people didn't know anything about the Mass. Now we have Mass in the vernacular, the people understand it.

Reply: How naive can you be? I ask you a question. Now that the Mass is in the vernacular, do people generally know more about the essentials of the Mass? I doubt it. Why? Because the Ritualist Clubs took over the communications, at first. They suppressed the sacrificial aspects of the Mass, over-emphasized the meal concept, introduced in some places a vaudeville show in the name of relevancy. The result: The people became saddened, uneasy, puzzled. It is true that the community aspect of the Mass needed to be developed. But wasn't that the whole purpose of the Council, namely: to develop and to update and to better understand the traditions handed down from the Apostles?

Myth: But the Mass was in Latin, which people didn't understand.

Reply: Evidently you are not familiar with the Mass books in English. Have you never seen Father Steadman's My Sunday Missal? It was a masterpiece of order, of art, of scriptural instruction, of Mass instruction. We have nothing comparable to it today. Because a man doesn't

know Greek or German or French or Italian does not mean that the Gospels or Goethe or Daniel-Rops or L'Osservatore Romano are buried in a foreign tongue. We do have them in good translations. Before the Council there were many vernacular Missals: St. Andrews', St. Joseph, Maryknoll. I think the People were fairly well instructed. This repetitive yapping: "Before the Council people didn't understand anything about the Mass" is a canard. As Hitler said: "Repeat a lie often enough and people will believe it."

Myth: But the people didn't participate in the Mass.

Reply: Do you really think so? Today people have more motion and commotion, more vocalness in word and song; more share in the readings and response to the prayers. They carry gifts and give the sign of peace. But tell me, do you think because people are sounding words and are in motion that that is participation? It is action, surely. But authentic participation means heart to heart—not just ear to ear, or motion.

Myth: But the people share in the readings.

Reply: It is true that most congregations dutifully read the responsorial prayers as priest and people trudge through the psalm after the First Reading. I'm afraid there is often dubi-

ous comprehension of those beautiful psalms.

Myth: The Sign of Peace encourages unity and love.

Reply: The Sign of Peace frequently gives me the willies. One effervescent priest in Brooklyn was instructing his flock on the ceremony. He said: "In making this sign of friendship and love, do what is natural to you. Shake hands. Smile. Nod. Do what comes naturally to you." A big, handsome Pole stood between his wife on the left and a blonde on his right. He gave the blonde a big hug and shook hands with his wife.

If I may speculate personally, I think the sign of peace as we do it does not accord with American male sentiments or mores. Some women do enjoy it. If rubbing noses is an Eskimo way of manifesting friendship and love, it might be nice for Eskimos, but not for the American male. Were I married it would seem pretty sterile to me to shake hands with my wife or my children. Furthermore, it would seem fraudulent to be shaking hands with a dead-beat who won't pay me my money, with a cordial: "The peace of the Lord be with you!" More honest would be to gaze into his eye-balls and say sincerely: "When the Son of Man will come, He will render to each man according to his deeds. When are you going to pay up?"

On the Line

State of State In 1984

By Bob Considine



Hello, folks, this is your beloved Gov. Zilch of the great state of New York with my State of the State message for fiscal 1984. But first a word from the good old sponsor who has made these statements possible for the past several years, the greatest name in New York bourbons, Old Step-Father.

(Ten minutes pass.)

Thank you Wolfgang O'Shaughnessy, chairman of the board of Old Step-Father, for your message on how well Old Step-Father mixes with children's cereals. Now, my fellow New Yorkers, I am happy to state at the beginning of my State of the State statement that personal and corporate state income taxes will rise only 7.2 per cent this coming year. I have been able to achieve this by cutting expenses to the bone and shutting off the heat every other day in the State's two largest welfare shelters, the Waldorf and the New York Hilton.

Legalized marijuana sales show a healthy advance, which also plays a role in this pleasingly low increase in the tax rate. We have hardly scratched the surface of this new form of revenue. I propose to submit to the Assembly at the earliest opportunity my recommendation that it consider off-course opium smoking. This has been needed for a long time, you will agree. It would save the opium smokers of this state an estimated \$3,917,402 in transportation expenses, traveling to and from the legal joss houses.

I am happy to report today

Wednesday, March 10, 1971

that employment is at peak level in all the state organizations that guarantee the rights of the people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as our great Founding Fathers pledged. We now have 17,777 special police watching the 38,038 security guards who watch the 114,661 sellers and cashiers in the state's off-course horse-betting parlors.

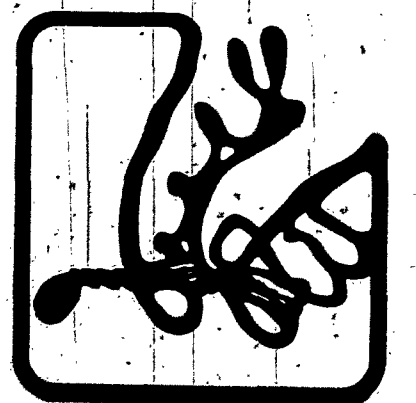
We have expanded our force of madams by 294 per cent, to take care of the boom in state-controlled houses of prostitution, and I have appointed a committee of distinguished citizens to look into the matter of extracting more revenue in this useful field by means of off-course arrangements. This will entail special funding—which we hope to obtain from President Lindsay in his next revenue sharing round—to protect our profitable prostitution investment from inroads by amateurs and other criminals.

I know you hard-working housewives will be pleased to learn that beginning April 1, you will be able to take advantage of the most generous offer ever made by any of the 50 states and the District of Columbia that are now largely dependent on gambling as a source of income. Yes, ladies, on April Fools' Day at any supermarket, for only a little old ten dollar bill, a ticket on the horse of your choice, two New York State Lottery tickets, any three numbers you wish to pick in that day's official Numbers Game, a six-pack of king-sized reefers, and a copy of the April issue of Mad. Let's see

New Jersey and Connecticut top that!

And now a word, via satellite, to our brave sons in Vietnam. Others may have forgotten you, but not Ambrose T. Zilch, governor of the great State of New York. I want to assure not only you New York boys but you boys from all the other states that if I do decide to yield to the millions of fine Americans who want me to run for President, and I defeat President Lindsay's designs on a third term, my first act of office in the White House will be to bring some of you home by Christmas, 1994. My congratulations to all those wounded in the diversionary invasion of Burma in support of our main drive against the new double-decked Ho Chi Minh trail. Got well soon!

FOLLOW SMOKEY'S RULES



ALWAYS hold matches till cold.