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FLEA MARKET. 1766 Lake Avenue. Sat. & Sun. 10-9 p.m. Weekdays 11:30-9 p.m. Stamps, coins, antiques, medals. We buy anything.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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What's Good for the Church . . .

Corporate Religion?

CATHOLIC PRESS FEATURES

People who think of the Church as a "kingdom," or as a "city," or even as "a mighty army" have been using the wrong approach all these years.

"We believe there is no better way to think of the Church than as a modern business corporation," says Charles Merrill Smith, a former Methodist minister who made his made as a religious satirist not too long ago with a book titled, How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious.

In a new book titled, The Pearly Gates Syndicate (or, How to Sell Real Estate in Heaven), Mr. Smith takes a humorous (sometimes sarcastic) look at the Church — both Catholic and Protestant — as a major corporation not unlike General Motors.

He writes of conversions as "transfer of brand loyalty." Cathedrals and church structures are "home offices," Ecumenical unions are nothing more than "mergers" with an eye to market expansion.

Looking back historically, Martin Luther was nothing more than "the Ralph Nader" of his day.

Looking back still further, Smith comments on the apostles and disciples of Christ:

"They simply didn't understand the arts of business organization, public relations, promoting the product, advertising, etc. — the very arts, in fact, which are so basic to the success of any corporation.

"It is only right that we should honor and revere the disciples and even make saints out of them, but it would be fatal to the corporation if we made the mistake of imitating their methods.

"If you want your enterprise to succeed — and all right-thinking people do want their enterprises to succeed — then you must find successful men to lead it. The disciples, however good, were losers."

Thinking of the Church as a business corporation will not only make it more popular among business-conscious Americans, Mr. Smith contends, but the other "commonly accepted poetic images" leave much to be desired, he believes.

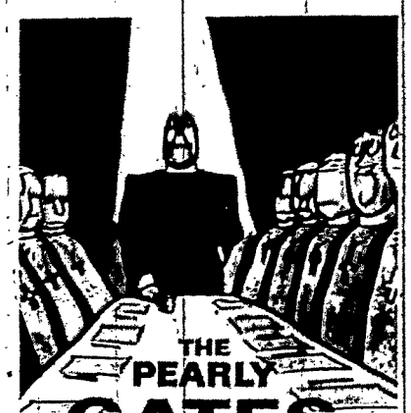
"Comparing the church to a city, which so many of our best-loved hymns do," Mr. Smith suggested, "leaves something to be desired, considering the prevailing conditions in our modern cities.

"Kingdoms were splendid to behold at one time, but kingdom's aren't what they used to be. A rock is a sturdy image, to be sure, but somewhat lacking in viability.

"And we cannot see, for the life of us, why anyone who is not offended by singing 'like a mighty army,' would be offended by singing 'like a corporation.'"

In referring to some ecumenical proceedings and church unions, Mr. Smith notes:

"The Methodist Church has been acquiring, through mergers, smaller sects such as the Methodist Protestants and the Evangelical United Brethren. It is only good corporate practice that, after a number of such acquisitions, the parent company make a small change in the corporate name (to United Methodist Church)."



Mr. Smith credits John Wesley's "farsighted" business sense and his training of "hardy" salesmen for the fact that "Methodism" today is a national brand like Budweiser beer instead of some obscure brand sold only regionally."

Celebrate Life Cuts New Album

Horseheads — Celebrate Life, a singing group from St. Mary Our Mother parish, has recorded its second long-play album of original music and popular songs. The album was released this week.

It includes three new hymns by the group's leader, Ray Defendorf, and two songs by the lead guitarist, Robin Lowe. The hymns were written for the Southern Tier Christian Formation Board's 1970 workshop, and in response to ideas expressed there. Lowe's work includes the group's theme song and Nearest God in Town, a response to a homily by Father Thomas Nellis, an assistant pastor at St. Mary's.

The performers are junior and senior high school students in the parish and a few adults from other area congregations, Catholic and otherwise. Their first recording included Defendorf's Mass for Guitar and music the group had used in concert and at the weekly family folk Mass.

Both albums are available at the church or by mail through Celebrate Life, 816 West Broad St., Horseheads, N.Y. 14845. A song book is being prepared.

Celebrate Life was organized in December, 1968, by Father David Kunz, an assistant pastor, and Defendorf, who teaches in the Horseheads district and is a radio announcer. Father Kunz and Mrs. Vera Pitel assist in directing the group. The sale of records and gifts from organizations that sponsor performances provide operating funds. Bookings are handled by Francis Hayberg, 607/562-8037.

Dr. King Movie To Be Shown Here

A full-length movie on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., will be shown at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 4, at the Auditorium Theatre, 875 E. Main.

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