

Optional Celibacy Questioned

A respected Rochester pastor purchased space in the local daily papers last weekend and in today's Courier-Journal to make an open-letter statement that began: "I am for celibacy of the Roman Catholic priesthood as it has been traditionally accepted for hundreds of years. . . . I am unalterably opposed to optional celibacy."

Msgr. Joseph A. Cirrincione's brave effort to "speak up in protest" was intended to counter the publicity given to several recent decisions of national and local priests' groups urging the U.S. Bishops to open the question of changing the celibacy rule. He was worried that "many good Catholics will be dismayed" by these actions and might think that the votes represent the will of the entire Catholic clergy.

This call for free choice about marriage is no new phenomenon in young clerical circles. But it has aroused such rebuttal by an older priest because it surfaced with a public splash this Spring at a priest's meeting in Baltimore where official delegates from 122 of the nation's 148 dioceses voted overwhelmingly for drastic change in the celibacy law. The vote was 182 to 23 "that a choice between celibacy and marriage for priests now active in the ministry be allowed and that the change begin immediately."

Such a request is a blunt contradiction of a long series of affirmations by their own bishops individually and as the U.S. hierarchy, the stand of other national bodies, countless popes and the direct orders of Pope Paul himself. But it is supported by figures on trends and current clerical opinions.

Statistics are even more threatening than council votes to men like Msgr. Cirrincione. In February the Gallup Poll found that nearly eight in every ten priests under the age of 40 would like to have the Church drop its ban on a married clergy.

Then there are two studies, sponsored by the U.S. Bishops themselves, which will be discussed next week at their spring meeting in Detroit. These reports, called "the most comprehensive survey of the priesthood of any country," give an imprimatur to the admission that 84 per cent of the nation's priests under 35 think they should be able to marry if they wish. Church authorities will no longer be able to attribute these views to "vocal minorities" because these studies were made among 6,000 priests and former priests selected at random.

The Bishops' survey found that more than half of priests of all ages "are at least somewhat in favor of change" in the celibacy issue and that three out of every five of them "expect" the church to change its policy.

Msgr. Cirrincione and many priests both younger and older will continue to support celibacy as a needed principle for the clergy in general because they believe it pleases God and is good for the ministry they are pursuing. Of course, until a trial period is permitted for the use of the requested option no one can factually prove whether it will do as much good (or harm) for the Church as it will for individuals. But there remains a nagging suspicion that those who argue for the end of celibacy are moving against the restraints of authority and hard obligation rather than toward the welfare of the Family of God.

—Father Richard Tormey

Family Fun

Seldom it is in these turbulent times that one gets a chance for some straight out relaxation while doing a good turn at the same time. But exactly such an opportunity will be provided by the first annual Courier-Journal Family Night at Red Wing Stadium, Wednesday, June 2.

The Red Wings will make tickets available at a reduced rate of \$1 to give parochial school pupils, their parents and all other families a chance to get out together in the wholesome atmosphere of International League baseball. Ticket distribution will be announced shortly.

Although the Courier-Journal co-sponsors the night, this paper will make no money on it. Profit realized, about 50 cents on each ticket, will go for sports activities for underprivileged children.

Bishop Hogan will be there. So will the Louisville Colonels who will face the Wings in a doubleheader. There will be prizes and surprises.

Mark it on your calendar; it should be a grand night.

—Carmen J. Viglucci

Kudos

For Fr. Cuddy

Editor:

For some time we have been meaning to write you, complimenting the diocesan paper on publishing the Voice Crying in the Wilderness (alias Father Cuddy) and his series "On the Right Side."

Personally we think he made several excellent points in his two articles (among others) on Newman chaplains and the New Mass.

The unfortunate part is there are priests and laymen within the church who are quite adept at advocating changes but are hypersensitive to any criticism. They do not have the ability or desire to stand outside themselves and look objectively at the criticism. It just might be the

other fellow has a point and they would have to admit it.

They remind us of children in their anxiety to outdo the other fellow in making changes; it doesn't matter whether the changes are good just as long as they are first.

So, Father Cuddy, continue to write your always fine column and if a few toes are stepped on don't be dismayed. You are expressing the opinion of the not-so-vocal members of the church in a most eloquent manner. Thank you.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Burns
The Highlands, RD 2
Hornell

War as Bad As Abortion

Editor:

Your editorial (Courier-Jour-

nal 4/7/71) discussing U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, was well done.

It recognized the underlying moral issue, which is the strongest argument against our involvement there.

Mr. Nixon and our Bishop are in step on the issue of abortion. Both find that abortion does not square with their regard for the sanctity of human life.

However, neither appears willing, or able, to apply the same regard to the hundreds of thousands of innocent people who have been slaughtered in Southeast Asia.

Both seem to be willing to ignore the moral issue which is associated with this barbaric war.

The inconsistency of leadership is demoralizing when it appears that expediency lets the end justify the means.

John J. Cannon
Mumford

A Pledge Of Allegiance

Editor:

Let me thank Father Shamon for his very beautiful words on Easter, Cursillo, and the First Day!

My weekend with Christ a few years ago was an experience that I have never been able to describe fully; but I do have a few thoughts that I feel moved to share.

At Cursillo—I met people. We talked, laughed, cried, sang, prayed, shared, "tasted community"—but most important, we loved. These people were very real.

I met Jesus at Cursillo and He became real and alive to me. I gave my heart to the people and to Him simultaneously, and a tremendous love affair has been going on in my life ever since.

For me, Cursillo was a foretaste of heaven and the view from the mountain-top was peaceful and clear. Gethsemane and Calvary seemed far away. It is quite true that "No Cursillista fears to go back to life in the valley." I believe this because there will always be a revival of the Spirit, a new hope: a constant Advent stirring within all men; a promise of eternal springtime, and finally Easter, the glorious First Day!

I have failed Jesus in many situations, yet He has never failed me. I become "closed" and He opens me to new awareness. I do not love enough the way that He loves, yet, He still loves me. I become discouraged, weak, and I sin, but I will never stop believing in Him, depending on Him or trusting Him. I hunger, and I thirst, and He offers me an oasis of peace.

On my Fourth Day, I joyfully pledged allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth. I am proud today to renew that pledge!

Leona Demena
Hornell

The Word for Sunday

Men Are Called To Witness

By Father Albert Shamon



The first readings for the entire Easter season are drawn from the Acts of the Apostles, one of the greatest books in the New Testament. The Acts is the story of the triumph of the Holy Spirit in the world. At the same time it is the story of how God works in the world in partnership with man. In the opening scene of the Acts, Jesus tells the Twelve: "You shall be my witnesses." In Reading I, Peter is such a witness. Referring to Christ's resurrection, he boldly proclaimed, "We testify to this." In the Gospel Christ foretold that Peter would seal this testimony by his death.

The fact to which the Twelve bore witness was Christ's resurrection. Being a witness to the resurrection did not necessarily mean they saw it. For the only evidence for the resurrection was the empty tomb, with the appearances of the risen Lord. Being a witness meant they experienced the fact of the resurrection, were convinced it was true. And they felt compelled to testify to it because of the implications it had for others. Men's salvation depended on their accepting it.

Thus no sooner did the angels announce to the women that "He is risen," than they issued the order "Go, tell the disciples and Peter." Christianity is by nature altruistic and missionary. The great Easter and Pentecost sacraments — baptism and confirmation — both call man to be a witness.

Baptism was originally conferred at the Easter vigil. It gives divine life, introduces one into the family of the Church — but as a child. After baptism one is more at the receiving end than the giving. He is fed at the table of the Lord, instructed by the word, and generally treated as one who needs caring for. Still even at this early stage, the Church expects even the child to bear witness to others. How? By their love for others. "And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love."

However, it is the sacrament of confirmation that initiates one into spiritual adulthood. The child is self-centered; the adult, other-centered. Confirmation formally mandates a man to mission. God's graces are never given for hoarding. The man who kept his talent lost it.

Confirmation calls man to witness to Christ in the world, to bring the Church to society and thereby leaven it. But the bitter fact remains very little of our society is imbued with Christian principles. Not the theater, nor politics, nor education, nor business, nor civil rights. And why? Because too few have taken seriously their responsibility as Christian witnesses.

There are all sorts of different ways of giving testimony. A father took his son to the movies one day. He asked for one adult ticket and one child's. The child said to his father, "But, Dad, I was twelve last month." Dad winked cannily at his son, "What's a few months?" The boy pondered a moment then smiled and said, "Gee, Dad, you're smart. I hope when I grow up, I can cheat like you."

The most important witness a Christian can give is as a parent at home. There is a banner which reads CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE:

- If a child lives with criticism, He learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, He learns to fight. . . .
- If a child lives with tolerance, He learns to be patient.
- If a child lives with encouragement, He learns confidence.
- If a child lives with praise, He learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness, He learns justice.
- If a child lives with security, He learns to have faith. . . .
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, He learns to find love in the world.

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