

Study 5029: API + IBM + NCCBI + RS = ?

The National Opinion Research Center decided to label it with the provocative title 'Study 5029.' The above formula is a personal arrangement expressive of my personal confusion which I am trying to share with you.



The project I write about is the sociological study of the American priesthood — an empirical analysis of the face-the-nation challenge and response of our Catholic clergy presented to the American bishops at Detroit for their reflection and meditation. The research monograph was presented by Father Andrew Greeley with the warning that the data uncovered could be used as ammunition for both sides of debate on policy in the American Church. For a researcher may hazard some guesses about the future to add spice and variety to his bland offerings but they have to be so labeled. His work ends with a 'take it for what its worth.'

Let me explain my formula:

API — American priesthood input — the

reponses of 6,000 American priests, each answering 14 questionnaires designed to indicate their work-satisfaction and their happiness indices.

IBM — This synonym for American technological genius represents the cybernetic process which digested the input — with its punched cards, magnetic tapes and discs.

NCCBI — Represents the input to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops offered for episcopal refinement and analysis and for safe passage to Rome for the Fall Synod.

RS — Roman Synod and more reflection and reinforcement by the hierarchy from all over the world. I hope our precious offerings are not intercepted by custom officials. Their value is at least \$100,000.

Here are some of the gems in the cargo entrusted to four of us for safe passage — all heavily bonded, by the way.

1. Our seminary education and vocation decision — There is very little correlation between age and experience before entering the seminary and subsequent attitudes. Seminary training prepared us moderately well — but not for dealing with people. (I used to think

that was what our priesthood was all about.)

2. Personality development — No evidence uncovered (thank God!) that our priesthood has interfered with our personality development. We compared favorably with the self-actualization of college students and with the Peace Corps volunteers (both groups evidently have paraded through the computer). We are not neurotic misfits but not by and large charismatic leaders. (Sorry to note this latter discovery.) Those of us who remain in the active ministry are hypo-self-actualized. This conclusion was arrived at by a formula whereby the "mean scores of priests of the same age as the normative groups were compared with the mean norms". (The value of this gem may not be obvious.)

3. Attitudes and values — "Anomie is seen as widespread in the Church". (I hope we stamp it out soon.) We have no generation gap if you compare priests under 36 with those under 55. This chronological range begets a 'generation slope'. And the direct path between age and modern values is 50, while the indirect path through 'inner-direction' is only 10.

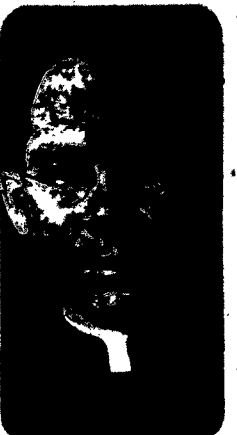
But, now, enough for this week. I end with the threat 'to be continued'.

By Father Francis R. Davis

Guest Columnist

Mary... Through the Eyes of Bernadette

Whenever we look at Our Blessed Lady we look at her through the eyes of others.



The Gospel writers tell us of Mary during her life on earth. But even since then Mary has been seen by some few chosen souls. And to some she has given a message. St. Bernadette of Lourdes in France both saw Mary and heard her speak. Mary appeared to her not just once but nineteen times from February 11 to March 25, 1858, plus two more times in that same year.

Was there ever a more unlikely candidate for a vision of Mary than Bernadette Soubirous? She was unknown to most of the townspeople of Lourdes. In any case, they would not have wanted to know her, because of the name she bore. Bernadette was unfortunate, as the town gossips might see her plight, in both her father, Francois Soubirous, and her mother, Louise Casterot.

The gossips spoke of her father as a wastrel who had lost a mill by his slip-

shod management; they knew him, further, as a man accused of theft. And they talked about her mother as being a drunkard. By 1857 the family had been reduced to living in the abandoned jail, discarded as too unsanitary for the town drunks. Little did the gossips care that their picture of the Soubirous family was unjust and unfair.

That the Providence of God selected a girl from such a family for such a mission proves once more that God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong.

Bernadette Soubirous claimed to see a Lady in a Grotto at Lourdes, a Lady invisible to all else. Discerning students have detected an evident design in the whole series of events surrounding the visions. The Lady was teaching Bernadette and the world a number of lessons. She arranged them to fit the happenings of the time, such as market day to insure the presence of a crowd.

On February 26, for instance, the Gospel was that of the cure of a paralytic by the pool of Bethesda; and it was on that day that it was realized that the spring uncovered by Bernadette might be the means of miracle. The Lady was very much in charge of arrangements.

Despite opposition Bernadette continued to go to the Grotto as the Lady had asked her to do. As to the message, the Lady asked for penance; she asked for a procession and also a chapel. Finally very early on March 25, in response to Bernadette's thrice repeated question, "Would you please tell me who you are?" Our Lady joined her hands, raised her eyes to Heaven and said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

Our Lady appeared to Bernadette for the last time on July 16, 1858. From then on, save for answering questions about the visions, Bernadette recedes into the shadows while Our Lady comes more and more to the fore.

God does not intend for us to forget Bernadette Soubirous. After all, He chose her out of all men for her awesome task. The Church has canonized her not for her visions but for her saintly life. In praying to Our Lady of Lourdes, Mary Immaculate, we must never allow ourselves to forget that frail maiden, St. Bernadette Soubirous. For it is only through the eyes of Bernadette that we have any power at all to see Mary standing in the Grotto by the River Gave.

Editorial

More than Angry Voices Needed to Change Law

The Legislature is racing through the final days of its duties and apparently will not have time to vote on a bill to repeal the present abortion-on-demand law passed in the 1970 session.

But two items last week should give all New York staters pause: One was a State Supreme Court decision against a Manhattan agency arranging abortions for profit which revealed that commercial operators have been exploiting pregnant mothers. The second was a report which showed 478 infant deaths have occurred per day in the first six months of the legalized killing and that abortions for out-of-staters made up more than half of the operations performed.

These facts indicate that our state has become the abortion mill once predicted. Obviously the atmosphere lures the woman with a baby-problem and gives incentive to the pursuer of an easy dollar.

Hopeless hand-wringing over the "barbarism which bloodies this state" and continued letter-writing to persuade legislators that the unrestricted abortions must be curbed seem useless for this Spring. The law, which in the opinion of the Governor and many of the Legislature, should be given more time for testing before restrictive amendments are attached to it, will remain on the books.

But in the past year what have we done to help women solve the abortion-dilemma? The Catholic community of this state — bishops and clergy, physicians, social workers, editors and lay people — have not offered any positive new programs to deter the woman confronted with an unwanted pregnancy.

There has been no strong Catholic leadership for legislation to improve the welfare program, to guarantee minimum family income, or to arrange survival financing

for the family which wants to have and keep their children. Our parishes have not started to develop a more compassionate public opinion toward support of the unwed mothers, but teenage pregnancies are increasing in many neighborhoods.

There has been only slight evidence (the Birthright program, — not yet in the Rochester Diocese) of Catholic counselling services to offer an alternative to abortion of the unwanted child. We have seen no offers from Catholic hospitals to ease delivery charges for those who may want children but are convinced that contraception and abortion are all they can afford.

The Family of God who firmly believes in the sanctity of life have much more to do to meet its responsibility for society than to berate the legislators for leaving a bad law on the books.

—Father Richard Tormey