

LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor, Courier-Journal, 35 Scio St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

What Priests Should Do

Editor:

We know our priests are sincere and holy when they:

Fight against abortion as they do the Vietnam War.

Teach our children the true faith (not the watered down kind.)

Have the mass in a holy atmosphere (keep the jive for the Saturday night dance, man.)

Lead prayer groups with the Rosary.

Keep frequent confession.

We laymen and women need

it for a while yet (until we are perfect.)

Mrs. Walter Slocum Grotton

Disagrees With Column

Editor:

That the dismissal of the "anti-authority editor of the NCR" mentioned by Father Hayes in (Courier-Journal 6-23-71) and the reinstatement of 40 anti-authority Washington priests likewise mentioned should be hailed as the work of the same spirit seems to be a contradiction both in itself and to the spirit which in the early Church objected to the favor-

able disparity accorded the Hebrew converts to Christianity over Gentile converts.

For the fractious priests were in fact anti-authority priests and the harm done by anti-authority priests could be every bit as damaging to "moving on together in the work of the Church" as an anti-authority editor to 50,000 readers. Why is bishop-baiting considered more offensive than baiting bishop, archbishop and Pope?

The words of the English saint that once you deny the authority of the Pope the Christianity you think you love and keep become illusory is valid for priest, nun, editor and layman.

Louis J. Pasqua Exchange St. Geneva

Beyond the Stained Glass



"IT WAS AT A PARISH PICNIC LIKE THIS JUST SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO THAT HENRY LOST HIS RELIGION!"

FR. ALBERT SHAMON

Word For Sunday



A three-minute film showed a smug woman, impeccably dressed, walking from her apartment to church. On the way she passed a Puerto Rican. He grinned as if to greet her, but she hurried on, spurning him like a stranger's cur across her threshold. Farther down the street she met a young couple in Hippie coiffure and couture. Our churchgoer grimaced in scorn. When she arrived at the church, the black janitor held the door open for her. He did not even elicit the crumb of a thank-you: she felt this was as it should be. As she entered the church, the words flashed: "If you did not find

Him out there, don't look for Him in here."

A young lawyer once asked Christ, "Who is my neighbor?" Christ answered the question not by giving a definition of the word "neighbor," but by describing neighborliness. Neighbor, He said in effect, is not such-and-such a person; because neighbor is everybody. A neighbor is one who is neighborly. Significantly, for Christ the neighborly man was the one who was not afraid to open up his pocket-book to help a man in need. "He took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request: 'Look after

him, and if there is any further expense I will repay you on the way back'" (LIII).

So often we try to shuffle off collections for the poor with myths. We rationalize, "They would not be in need, if they really wanted to help themselves. God only helps those who help themselves." And yet the "they" who need help are often children, infants, and the aged — persons who are victims of society and as helpless as the grievously wounded man in the Gospel.

That the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho went alone was his fault; but that there were thieves on the road was not his fault. Regardless, it matters not how the need arises — from helplessness, stupidity or injustice — we must be neighborly!

Christ condemned the priest and the Levite — the churchgoers of His day — and canonized the Samaritan, the heretic, the schismatic, the man who to the Jews was worse than the pagans. He is the hero, for he alone was neighborly — charitable. "If I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

Did you ever run into such an experience, where the outcast became the hero? It happens constantly in literature, and it happens there because literature mirrors life. Remember Kipling's: "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din." Remember The Unsinkable Molly Brown? She was unsinkable, because she really loved everybody. During the sinking of the Titanic, she gave her own wrap to keep others warm. In The Outcasts of Poker Flat, the libertines — the "Duchess" and "Mother" Shipton — upstage their so-called "betters." "Mother" Shipton dies for lack of the rations she would not eat so that a young girl might live in her stead. "Let me make it clear that tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you" (Mt. 21:31).

It can be some live religion, others just "practice" it. Some separate religion from life, while for others life is religious. Since Christ became a man, and still is, since what we do to the least we now do to Him, God's commands are no longer mysterious and remote (Rt). They are as near as our neighbor. Love of God without love of neighbor is pietism. Love of neighbor without love of God is humanitarianism. But love of God and love of neighbor is Christian realism.

So never you mind who your neighbor is; rather for love of God, just be neighborly. That is all Christ was telling the lawyer. Our neighbor is God within our reach.

Q & A

Q.—What is the basis for our beliefs about Purgatory? My friends claim that the only states of mankind after death will be in Heaven or Hell.

A.—The Catholic doctrine of purgatory does not rest on any direct reference or quotation in the New Testament. It rests rather on the view the Bible generally gives us of God, of man and of heaven. Scripture clearly supports the view that no man enters the presence of the all-holy God in Heaven unless he is totally free from the guilt and the wounds of his sins. But the Bible also reveals that God is merciful. Consequently, at death, one of two things must take place for the soul of a man not totally turned away from God: either God must ignore the sinful record of a man's life and forgives him totally and immediately, or He provides the mercy of a time for purification, not simply for punishment.

The spirit of the Bible's account of God's dealing with mankind favors the expectation that the latter will be God's action. God's justice demands not only that man will get what he deserves for a holy life, but that he will be held only to what he deserves for his sins. Unfortunately we do not know any more today than the early Christians did on this subject of God's judgment. But we probably have less awe and fear of God as a judge because we have less horror of sinfully contradicting His rule.

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