

Leisure — Onus or Bonus, Part II

Over a century ago a famous student of American culture, Alexis de Tocqueville, saw Americans as constantly and feverishly busy and therefore quite incapable of personally enjoying the quiet moments and filling profitably the gaps of time offered as working hours gradually faded away.



Our society has been marked by a virtuous materialism which inclines us to be totally absorbed in permitted pleasures. We strive for more leisure goods — and we work harder to use them. As Alexis de Tocqueville has said, "He who has set his heart exclusively upon the pursuit of worldly welfare is always in a hurry, for he has but a limited time at his disposal to reach, to grasp, and to enjoy it." Hence, our restless rest from labor.

Leisure, then, is not the same as free time nor need it be separated from work. It is rather an attitude of mind, a condition of the

soul, a state of being. It may be experienced during free time — anytime — even while working. It is not a category of time but an opportunity for an experience of eternity — a spiritual concept.

It is nimbleness of mind and spirit which makes it possible for us to play even when we are in earnest — a mobility of soul which allows us to turn to bright, lovely and relaxing things without losing ourselves in them. Free time is useless without a free spirit — a sense of grace and peace to lift us beyond our busy schedules — to disengage us from our society's materialism — to give meaning and purpose to our work.

Such blessing can never come to 'hollow men' who live without moral and spiritual orientation. Leisure exposes human shallowness, heightens the meaninglessness of life. That is why ennui is the prevailing mood at many an oasis of leisure.

Some have blamed years of constant preaching of the philosophy of hard work for America's present inability to cope with all the free time that has been offered us as a

by product of our technological genius. Some believe that this undue exaltation of toil in our days led to a suppression of any appreciation of leisure-time activities by which mind and spirit live.

This gospel of hard work taught many that leisure was to be equated with the sins of idleness and sloth. This may or may not be true. But it is safe to say that when work becomes an occupation and a constant preoccupation, it becomes too an escape from true spirituality — from direct confrontation with spiritual issues on whose solution our greater happiness depends.

The story of the prodigal son brings home this lesson. As long as he was preoccupied with his consuming interest of enjoying life materially, he could successfully avoid coming to grips with the facts of life. Only after the false props were removed did he enter within himself and begin to think things through, and to discover his emptiness and loneliness apart from his father's house.

(To be continued next week)

By Father Edward J. Lintz

Guest Columnist

Sunday — A Day For Business?

Many people are very much concerned these days because of the opening of stores for Sunday selling. The loaded expression



"Blue Laws" is applied to the statutes concerning Sunday business dealing as another step in the continuing trend to make Sunday just another day of the week. We should remind ourselves that there is a very close and even necessary connection between the Lord's Day as a time of religious worship and as a day of rest from labor. In pre-Christian times among pagans there were indeed days of festival (and rest from labor) which were times of religious observance long before there was a Sabbath or Sunday worship. The Jewish Sabbath was first of all religious and then a day of rest from labor. Among Christians, the Sunday was quickly marked for the Eucharistic worship and, necessarily, rest.

Tertullian (202) is the first Christian writer who expressly mentions the Sunday rest. "We, however, (just as tradition has taught us) on the day of the Lord's Resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling,

Father Lintz is pastor of Nativity Church, Brockport

but every posture and office of solicitude; deferring even our business lest we give any place to the devil." (De Orat. XXIII)

In the fourth century civil legislation appeared consecrating the Sunday to divine worship and to rest. It began with the Edict of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, who forbade judges to sit and townspeople to work on Sunday. The same trend has continued in civil law up until now.

Historically, the practice of religious worship and the day of rest have gone together. In these days the practice of religious worship is the object of much questioning and even attack. There are also other days of rest in the week because of work schedules. The greater concern of the church for the world has served to secularize the sacred at least as much as sanctify the secular world. For these reasons there are many who question the need of a Sunday time of rest from labor. They also question the need of Sunday worship whether it be the Catholic Mass or Protestant Service.

In our concern, we must be aware that the human or secular values of the Sunday came

about because of the religious conviction that men need a special day set aside to worship God, whether it be the Sabbath or Lord's Day. To the extent that God is abandoned, His day will also be abandoned.

We should indeed work without ceasing for the retention of state laws which forbid unnecessary Sunday work and business. We should also refuse to shop on Sunday and strive to get our neighbors to see the importance of doing so. But we must, first of all, ourselves take part in the Sunday worship of God. For us Catholics, this means the joining in our Christian Community Eucharistic worship, the Mass. To think that Sunday can be kept for social reasons without religion is a serious mistake — one for which society will have to pay a serious price in the future.

We can well apply the timeless words of Christ to our present situation, "The children of this world are wiser in their own generation than the children of the light." (Luke 16:8) We must use all the good secular and technical means, (advertising, propaganda campaigns, word of mouth, etc.) to promote the observance of Sunday. Nevertheless, we must realize that God and His worship come first. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given you besides." (Luke 12:31).

Editorial

Door Is Still Open for Nonpublic School Aid

The school-aid decision of the Supreme Court on June 28 deepened our national uncertainty about the future of Catholic school education. Judges across the country now possess legal precedent in deciding cases in many states where taxpayers are protesting the use of public money for non-public schools.

But the high court's ruling shows that five members of the court have deliberately left the door open for further consideration of the constitutionality of many other types of public aid. This majority did not say flatly that aid to education in parochial schools is unconstitutional; they said that paying parochial school teachers' salaries and funding procedures which require excessive entanglement between government and religion could not be allowed.

The one judge of the Supreme Court who wrote kind words in favor of government aid to nonpublic schools was Justice Byron White. He explained in his dissent why he would sustain the Pennsylvania and Rhode Island legislation: "It is enough

for me that the states are financing a separable secular function of overriding importance in order to sustain the legislation here challenged." He insisted that the substantial benefits that flow indirectly from state-financed programs to religious interests do not necessarily convert the laws into the "establishment" of religion.

Public aid which started coming this Spring to Catholic schools in New York State was appropriated for what Albany called "mandated services" and for "secular educational services." From now on, four times a year, each parochial and elementary school will receive a certain number of dollars per pupil for non-religious functions of the parochial school: keeping records for the state, conducting examinations, offering secular subjects required by the state's curriculum. None of these services, nor the manner in which they are accomplished, come under the Supreme Court's recent ban.

In Pennsylvania and Rhode Island the states were directly "purchasing" par-

ochial teachers' services or supplementing teachers' salaries. Both arrangements required continuous supervision to make sure that the public money was not used for religious purposes. But the Supreme Court struck down both states' plans because "the entire relationship arising from the statutes in each state involves excessive entanglement between government and religion."

The Court's delicate line of demarcation between the legitimacy of public money for buses, text books and office services on one hand and teachers salaries on the other has not yet clarified the constitutionality of public assistance provided directly to parents (the Speno-Lerner proposal) or scholarships, tax credits and vouchers. But some advance has been made: a clearer total picture of church-state relationships is evolving. Defenders of the parochial school will learn from each litigation how to draft their next demands to avoid the pitfalls the Court has spelled out.

—Father Richard Tormey