

Pope Paul Urges Involvement in Man's Needs

Washington, D.C. — Pope Paul's letter calling for renewal in religious communities "relates the various elements of the religious life to society," according to the president of an association of men's religious orders.

A News Analysis
 Father Paul Boyle of Chicago, a Passionist priest and president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men of the U.S.A., expressed his reactions, along with those of his counterpart among women religious, to the 57-page "Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul on the Renewal of Religious Life in Accordance with the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council."

"The total thrust of the letter," said Sister Thomas Aquinas Carroll, R.S.M., president-elect of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Women's Institutes of the U.S.A., "is to cause greater concern for the needs of men."

Sister Thomas Aquinas said she feels the "greatest innovation, or 'strengthenings,' are those in the realm of poverty and particularly the call for us not to be involved in any way with compromise in the case of social injustice."

"It seems to me that a very strong mandate has been given to religious to work for social justice and for peace," she added.

Father Boyle, asked to comment on how the letter relates the vow of poverty taken by re-

ligious to poverty as it exists in the nation's ghettos and slums, said:

"It goes so by pointing up the fact that we are, by our manner of life, to show that man can be happy, free, and master of himself without all of the necessities and consumer luxuries of life; and, by being frugal in our own manner of living we will be able to speak more authentically to others in reminding them of the deprivation and misery of so many millions of people . . ."

"We have to be living as poor people," he added, "if we are going to start talking about the evils of poverty—at least have to in the sense that we would become more creditable."

Sister Thomas Aquinas, commenting on whether the letter seems designed to make religious life more attractive, and thus draw new members, said:

"The position of the Holy Father, particularly at the close of the letter, is that it is by the joyful way in which we try to answer the questions of the world that we will attract others to our kind of life."

"He poses three piercing questions in the document," she said:

- "What can be done at of the poor find an echo in our lives?"

- "How can the message of the Gospel penetrate the world?"

- "What can be done at those levels in which a new type of man is emerging, a man who no longer believes he needs redemption?"

Pope Paul has a "very sensitive insight, it seems to be," Sister Thomas Aquinas said, "into personality development when he talks about charity."

"Sometimes we think of charity as a rather cold thing, but he speaks of it as an active hope for what others can come with the help of our fra-

ternal support. And he asks religious to develop a joyful simplicity whereby all strive to understand what each one has at heart."

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FR. ANDREW GREELEY
The Church 1971

Prof. James Hitchcock is a very dangerous man; he doesn't throw away old newspapers. He clips carefully columns and articles and files them away for future reference. At least I assume he does this because his new book, "The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism", could only be written by a man with an extensive file of clippings from the Catholic press, carefully treasured over the last decade.

None of us who engage in journalism likes to be reminded of what we said five years ago, or even last year; but now Prof. Hitchcock comes along and reminds the Catholic "radicals" of what they said 10 years ago. If these worthies are capable of being embarrassed—and I suspect many of them are not—they would find this a profoundly embarrassing book.

It is also a depressing book. For one cannot read it without realizing that the Callahans, the Novaks, the Mary Dalys, the Rosemary Reuthers, and their countless lesser imitators have uttered a great deal of nonsense—shallow, foolish nonsense—in the past ten years. What is even more depressing than plowing through this nonsense is the thought that it has had considerable influence on an important segment of the Church.

One of the reasons the "radicals" were able to get away with so much is that there were few around who were able or daring enough to question them. If you did try to disagree, you

were damned as a conservative, or an optimist, or someone who wanted to be a bishop. It may well be, however, that Prof. Hitchcock is just the first of many Catholic lay scholars with impeccable academic and political credentials who will dare to suggest that he can see through the clothes of the emperors and the empresses.

They will, of course, try to write Hitchcock off as a conservative, for anyone who dares to disagree with them must be conservative. But Hitchcock is not conservative unless it means that he has a concern for the central question of whether Christianity is dedicated to transcendence and a commitment to the ordinary rules of logic and reasoning in controversial discourse.

I happen to think he is rather too hard on Gregory Baum and rather too soft on the brothers Berrigan, rather too gentle on the old Church and perhaps not enthusiastic enough about the many good things in the new Church. But his clarity, his common sense, his insistence that words must have meaning are a welcome relief at a time when nonsense seems to reign supreme in the American Catholic Church.

If many more writers like Prof. Hitchcock enter the lists, however, the radicals might be forced to argue with instead of just smearing their critics. It will be an unpleasant experience for many of them; most likely—new experiences often are.