



FR. PAUL J. CUDDY
**On The
 Right Side**

Dear Carmen,

Your "SLOT MAN" article in the Dec. 15 Courier Journal I am cutting out as a PORTRAIT OF A SOUL. It etches your evident peevish and enthusiasms in crisp and sometimes cryptic sentences. Of your Christmas wishes, which you presented, the one that raised top speculation in my mind was this: "That Vice-President Agnew would join the Trappists." Wonderful!

Imagine the impact on the whole nation! First, Mr. Agnew joins the Catholic Church. Then he canonically applies for and receives permission: 1) from his wife and 2) from his Bishop, to separate from his wife for reasons of a celibate monastic vocation. Then he applies to Our Lady of the Genesee Abbey near Rochester, and is accepted.

In uncharacteristic quiet he leaves Washington. It hardly seems decent to depart for seclusion with the bombast of the TV, press and the Navy Band. He is vested in the Trappist habit and cowl. He begins a regimen of prayer, praise and religious obedience; of study and silence; of Monks Bread, noodles, milk—and no meat or cheese or eggs; a hero to the vegetarian block, a scandal to secular humanists, a relief to the Press and TV, and a solution to the dilemma of liberal Republicans.

However, was it Sirach who said: "Things are rarely what they seem"? Like the late Father Louis (Thomas Merton), Spiro prays, he ponders, he feels the Prophetic Spirit and behold a contemporary St. Bernard of Clairvaux thunders throughout the nation from his silent cell. He thunders not with sound. No. The printing press is his voice. Articles roar out like the Lion of Judah; articles in the National Review; articles in Life; articles in the New Yorker, the Atlantic Monthly, the Readers Digest, yes, also in the splendid Catholic Digest. I am not certain that Critic or Commonweal or the primal NCR would find him congenial. And despite his contestations with the press and the TV, he would be for them a diamond mine as they scatter the latest Agnew sequipedalians, under his religious name, Frater Spiritus Agni (Spirit of the Lamb) to an astonished nation.

The Paducah Bugle reports that the Trappists are making some contemporary changes. Two good ones, it seems to me, are: a modernization of the undergarments which were a kind of medieval red flannels; and allotment of tiny, individual cells, solving the snoring problem of the dormitory. I must confess, however, a sadness in the substitution of a vernacular Hail, Holy Queen, which is musically somewhat better than mediocre, but is to the majestic Gregorian, Salve Regina what a piccolo is to the grand organ at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

I do not know what is the singing voice quality of Mr. Agnew, but if your Christmas

wish, viz. Trappist claustration, should come true, I rather think that your hoped-for suppression of his eloquence, or more accurately, his ideas, would doubly boomerang. Not only because of his own peculiar merits and his masterful English, but even more especially because the mystique which envelops holiness still has a hold on the spiritual longings of The People.

The People are justly scandalized by the sociology, secularism, humanism and centered-in-self "theology" which is pawned off as "contemporary and relevant spirituality." The people see it for what it is: a flight to thrill and novelty, and to authentic worldliness condemned by Our Lord. They see it as an escape from prayer, from community, from clarity, from asceticism, from the very Transcendence of God. The people long for the holiness of selfless, God-centered spirituality. Witness the enthusiasm for Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, England and Belfast. Indeed, the People are the Church.

So thank you for your delightful article. If Mr. Agnew does have the grace to join the Church, I should like to be the priest to receive him, and I should like you to be his godfather. And a Blessed New Year (including increased circulation) to you and to all the Staff at the Courier-Journal.

Pope Notes Meaning of Christmas

Vatican City — (RNS) — The feast of Christmas confronts mankind with the perennial and "immense" question of the existence of God, declared Pope Paul VI at his weekly general audience.

The pontiff said that many people today lived in an aura of agnosticism or of "indifference to God" — a kind of practical atheism or theoretical atheism. To many of these people, he said, "science" is the "queen of thought," and, "with its technical applications, the mistress of everything."

"But this is not enough," the Pope affirmed. "Atheism, if it is to be logical," must reach out for some "transcending principle," which will be referred to as "God." Man, because of the need of his rational nature, cannot but strive for the Absolute, he said.

The pontiff observed, however, that "even if man reaches

the certainty of God's existence through his own natural reasoning," the "nature" of God remains "veiled and obscure." He said that the idea that man might have of the existence of God, in the light of reason, is

necessarily "indirect."

That is where faith enters, the Pope said. "In faith we accept the self-revelation of God and learn somewhat to know what He is, for 'The Word was made flesh'—God became man."

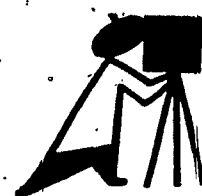
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**Pontiff
 Denounces
 Violence**

(Continued from Page 1A)

use of force, and produce only what has the appearance of peace, the result is inevitably torture and corruption of the human spirit.

"True peace," the pontiff reiterated, "can be founded only on a true respect for man — and that means respect and concern for justice." "Modern man," he said, "more than ever before in history has a dynamic concept of justice, as can be seen in developing countries, that cry for it with a loud voice."

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