

Archie Bunker — A Meditation for All in the Family

Each Saturday evening 35 million Americans are offered 30 minutes of prime television viewing. The value of the show depends on the eye of the beholder.



Years ago the Church recognized the disease which plagues Archie Bunker and labeled it, 'angustia loci,' which might well be translated as 'severe' cramps.' This afflicted was, and still is, regarded as sufficient canonical reason for a dispensation from some impediments to marriage — a concession granted to those whose world of choice for an eligible partner has been severely limited by geographical isolation.

Archie Bunker from spiritual 'angustia loci.' His antics and mouthings reflect the prejudices that cramp his world into a narrow strip that leaves room only for himself and those who agree with him. He speaks 'ex cathedra' — from a chair reserved for himself, and from it looks down on a world of 'ding-bats' and 'meatheads' who do not share his philosophy. His tolerant and lovable wife Edith, who waddles from kitchen to chair-side like a 'Coolie pulling a rickshaw'

(NEWSWEEK, Nov. 29), with well-intended peace offerings to calm the troubled waters, is rebuffed with his constant injunction: "Stifle it, Edith!" The best offerings of the liberal son-in-law, Michael, are quickly thrust aside as the mental aberrations of a 'dumb Polack' whose freedom of speech is especially worthless because he is a parasitical free-loader. Even the squeaky intercessions of their only-begotten Gloria, a featherbrained daughter, wind up with a decibal rating beyond her father's wavelength.

Audience reactions assure us that the show is controversial. Within recent weeks critics have offered an abundance of analyses of the program's value as it continues to rate prime popularity on the Nielsen Scale.

Opponents have called it a new low in taste and question its vocabulary which allows the previously unspeakable to be spoken so freely. They find nothing redeeming in the show's invective and nothing humorous in its stereotypes. Others have protested that Archie is a lovable bigot who makes bigotry tolerable.

A strong defense of the program comes from Dr. Walter O'Connell, a psychiatrist and author of many books on the redemptive value of wit and humor. He sees the show as

a medicine which can cure America's social ills and as the first positive sign in years that a country once noted for its sense of humor is heading again toward a healthy state of mind.

Dr. O'Connell observes: "We have been at a stage in our history where the whole country is uptight about a lot of things. People are divided about race, sex, religion, political philosophies and other subjects. The extremists on both sides of every question have taken a closed-mind approach and every time these topics are discussed it's always in a serious vein . . . Laughing about a serious subject allows us to bring to the surface feelings that can't be talked about any other way. The show does a lot to teach people about themselves."

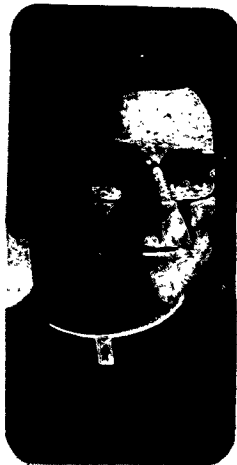
I prefer, too, to cast a vote in favor of the show as a much-needed meditation for all in the human family. For within each of us there is a bit of Archie Bunker that needs to be brought to the surface and laughed to scorn. The show is like a mirror in which we can get a good look at ourselves and the narrow world in which we may have chosen to live in isolation from all who fail to match our own standards of uniqueness and superiority.

Guest Columnist

By Father Andrew Teuschel

Try a Little Optimism

"Everything's Coming Up Roses" was the opening song on the Lawrence Welk New Year's Show, indicating the maestro's wish



for everyone in his audience during 1972. This attitude of optimism might well prove helpful to our own daily living, even though we realize there will always be a few thorns to jeopardize our complete happiness. Perfect happiness is reserved for a better life hereafter.

"Counting our blessings" is one way to help our optimism. If the Lord cared for our needs in the past, what reason is there to doubt His Providence in the future? As He Himself once admonished, living is a "daily" business. We rejoice in the blessings each day brings, and then with a sigh of contentment we add an appropriate "Thank You."

Everyone wishes to be successful and we should indeed have success as our goal. But here again we cannot expect a "perfect" record; we are not always satisfied with our performance. Thomas Edison said, "Show me a thoroughly satisfied man, and I will show

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you a failure." Our very dissatisfaction rectifies our errors and perfects our work. With any task before us, common sense and a determined effort have proven to be a winning combination. Coleman Cox made this wise observation, "Even the woodpecker owes his success to the fact that he uses his head and keeps pecking away until he finishes the job he started."

One day St. John Bosco surprised a beggar by giving him his shirt. The saint commented, "Providence took care of you today; tomorrow He will care for me." Trusting in the Lord will help our optimism, especially on those dark, dismal days of failure, monotony or misunderstanding. Booker T. Washington had his own measure of success, "It is measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." Sometimes God alone knows these obstacles and the effort we have made to overcome them.

At one time or another we all are called upon to demonstrate the Faith of the poor wood carver who worked day after day, alone and unseen, high amid the beams of a tremendous cathedral. One day he did not ap-

pear for work and after much searching his deceased body was discovered at the very scene of his labor. In one of the beams he had carved a beautiful portrait of Christ, together with the words, "God at least will see and understand."

May we all see the value in our daily tasks, no matter how insignificant they appear. As the saying goes, "Variety may be the spice of life, but it's monotony that provides the groceries." Our attitude of optimism will help our courage and perseverance so essential for success. In our Sunday Liturgy we are frequently reminded to "lift up our hearts." Victor Hugo gives the following counsel, "Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones. And when you have finished your daily tasks, go to sleep in peace. God is awake."

As the bubbles of champagne surrounding the Lawrence Welk bandstand dissolve and disappear, so may our daily trials disappear because we have tried to solve them with a spirit of optimism, an optimism arising from the convictions of our Faith. As St. John reminds us, we all can be victors: "Everyone begotten of God conquers the world, and the power that has conquered the world is this Faith of ours." (1 John 5:4)

Smile! God loves you!

Editorial

Irony in Overturning of Parochial Aid

The ironic thing about the nonpublic school aid that was ruled unconstitutional last week by a U.S. District Court is that it was not the bill sought by Catholic educators last year.

The overturned law, known as the Secular Services Educational Bill, provided financial aid toward the salaries of teachers of secular subjects in nonpublic schools.

The State Catholic Committee, representing the state's bishops, and Catholic educators had pushed for passage of the so-called Speno-Lerner Bill which would have provided state aid directly to the parents of parochial school children.

A new bill incorporating Speno-Lerner provisions has been pre-filed and many legislators polled by the Courier-Journal

feel this may be the route to be followed in pursuit of parochial aid. One of the biggest drawbacks, however, is that even if passed by the Legislature it will probably be vetoed by Gov. Rockefeller who made it plain last year that he was opposed to Speno-Lerner.

There are alternatives such as aid to students, tax relief for families with nonpublic school children. Finances already being received under the Textbook Law and the Mandated Services Law will continue.

Some legislators also want a referendum on the Blaine Amendment but the public vituperation such a battle would catalyze is not worth the dubious effect of repealing the law. Besides there still would

be the United States Supreme Court to be considered.

Then, too, there is the possibility that the state will appeal the District Court decision but as one assemblyman pointed out that is a long process and the schools cannot wait.

With the State Legislature now in session and with other issues of great import to Catholics, the Courier-Journal will begin printing with this issue the names and addresses of all legislators in the diocese. Most senators and assemblymen want to echo the feelings of their constituents. To do this they depend on you to let them know where you stand.

Write to them sensibly and often expressing your viewpoints — especially this year.