

The Family Faces the Seventies

Throughout my entire priesthood I have grasped at every opportunity to encourage families in the fulfillment of their mutual responsibilities in a vocation which is basic to a healthy society. My own personal experience as a child of parents who made every sacrifice to bring us to maturity in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect, confirmed me in a conviction seldom challenged — that family life was the key building block to human living. Further experience as a teacher and counsellor of youth strengthened my belief that the good family is a continuing course in better living — a school in which we learn by doing and sharing values and experiences. The problems of growth I encountered seemed hopeless only when there was no healthy family to appeal to for a cooperative solution.



I find it shocking and sickening to read

the abundance of literature pouring forth today from the pens of some of our popular social commentators who are telling us that the family is out of fashion. They are saying that the beliefs, social institutions and thought patterns traditional in our society for years have run their course and we must begin to construct a new and better world, for the past is irrevocably dead. I find their thinking negative and destructive as they focus attention on a problemless future and neglect to face the real issues which afflict family life.

Family life will always be challenging and demanding. Christianity has always viewed marriage as a vocation — a prophetic mission to which men and women are called to live a community of love in the service of life. The generosity required of parents is now more pronounced because the rewards of parenthood are often obscured. There are no easy answers to the problems that afflict family life today. I cite as examples, the drug problem and the generation gap which is born of a philosophy of permissiveness which has undermined the role of authority.

Thank God, we still have a vast majority

of our young couples looking positively and hopefully toward parenthood — willing to face an uncertain future because they regard a child as an individual person capable of bringing new hope and happiness to the entire human family.

This is indeed a moment in history when society must reaffirm its belief in the worth and the significance of children. This was this year's theme of the official statement of the Family Life Directors of the United States. It was prompted by initial attempts on the part of some of our law makers on the national level to withdraw legal protection from the unborn child before the 20th week of pregnancy (a sanctioning of abortion on demand) and to establish the two-child family as the American ideal. All of this reflects a growing attitude that the traditional Christian Community and Covenant of Marriage should be officially declared dead because parents, generous in their mission, are begetting children who aggravate our social problems of poverty, pollution and overpopulation. Indeed, the social prophets of doom seem to be making their voices heard.

Guest Columnist

Those Empty Seats Up Front

By Father William Lammers

I have been told that there is a parish "up north" (it is in a different diocese and I am sure it is Roman Catholic) where the people attending Mass, regularly occupy the front pews first, gathering nearest to the altar, and striving to effect a closely knit group of worshippers.



I do not fully believe this, but I have been repeatedly assured by eye-witnesses that this is true. I want to make a pilgrimage to this place and see for myself the fulfillment of an event that I would never have believed possible. Except for rare occasions and in certain special situations, as with

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funerals, I have never witnessed the celebration of a Mass liturgy where the people visibly sought to be near the altar and noticeably tried to place themselves in the eye range of the celebrant, not even at a clergy conference!

I have never been able to come to any satisfactory explanation for this strange phenomenon. It has been suggested that there may be a real or fancied streak of humility and unworthiness being manifested, as in the case of the publican in the Temple, but I doubt this. Others have indicated it may be due to a subconscious fear or phobia that hinders some people from being in a crowd, especially when that massing of humanity re-

moves them from a convenient exit or seems to stifle their freedom of movement. I have seldom noticed this latter psychological quirk at public banquets or other events where the head table and center of action is eagerly sought, even if it is furthest from the rear or nearest exit. Perhaps it is really nothing other than a basic lack of charity and true brotherhood. I hate to think that this could be the case because that would be a considerable indictment of myself and those I most cherish.

Until I make that pilgrimage "up north" and learn more about the people, and especially the priest, responsible for this modern miracle, I shall continue to pray and preach to empty seats "up front," in the firm belief that I, one day, will see them filled, and then, I will know I am in heaven!

Editorial

A Scorecard for Liberals and Conservatives?

The confusing question as to who is really a liberal and who is really a conservative emerged from a recent survey of United States priests by the periodical U.S. Catholic.

More than 500 diocesan priests were asked (and about 67 per cent responded) what periodicals they read in the religious and secular press and what they think about the overall state of the Catholic press in America.

Some of the results are edifying. For instance, 94.7 per cent read their own diocesan newspaper, the highest percentage of any periodical. Also the intensity of readership of the diocesan newspaper was "very high."

The next highest was National Catholic Reporter, 62.8 per cent, followed by Our Sunday Visitor, 57.2, and Priest, 56.9. NCR also ranked very high in intensity of readership, OSV low, and Priest medium.

As for secular papers, the survey showed that only 67.5 per cent of those

responding read any daily newspaper. Time ranks highest at 71.9, followed by Life, 62.5, Look, 56.2, and Newsweek, 54.7.

There are many interesting findings, such as that more than half felt the influence of laymen in directing the Catholic press in not great enough and that 88.9 per cent felt that the average Catholic doesn't read enough of the Catholic press.

Minor in the survey's intent but perhaps piquing the imagination most are some interesting facts about liberals and conservatives.

Quoting from U.S. Catholic:

"Liberal respondents seem to expect the entire Catholic press to become liberal . . ."

There are other illogical findings, such as:

"Fifty-nine per cent of Twin Circle (conservative) readers read National Catholic Reporter (liberal) but only 25 per cent of National Catholic Reporter readers also read Twin Circle."

"Forty-six per cent of Triumph (conservative) readers read Critic (liberal) while only 17 per cent of Critic readers read Triumph. This same type of correlation held true for other readers of other representative liberal and conservative publications."

Granted that the primary meaning of liberal is one who desires change and a conservative one who resists same. There is also a stereotyped idea that a conservative tends to be narrow-minded and a liberal broad-minded.

Such findings as those in the U.S. Catholic may belie such definition and thus presage hard times for those who believe that the world comes only in black and white.

Imagine not being able to tell a rightist, reactionary, fascist conservative from a leftist, radical, pinko liberal! We wouldn't even know whom to hate.

And heaven forbid if we had to begin concentrating on the issues involved rather than the people who seem to represent them.