

More Letters to the Editor

The Necessity Of Habits

Editor:

Nun's garb not essential? After reading letters on this discussion one questions the validity of the statement "They'll know we are Christians by our love." It seems the crisis of faith today is because men are depending on emotional jag rather than the Christ-like mind of discipline and obedience. Simple honesty and common sense gives the reason why nuns should be distinguished from the ordinary worldly hippie. Pope Paul said of the crisis of faith, "The speculative capacity of people of our time is rudimentary and poor. The rules of thought are rigorously respected only in quantitative science."

Let me quote a few excerpts from the National Catholic Register 1-19-72, column "Escape from Confusion," by Father William Most:

"In 'renewing' religious orders, the 'liberals' have really outdone themselves. Many of the 'renewal leaders of nuns,' have renewed themselves right out of the religious life, and in doing so, have not infrequently made a shambles of what was once a flourishing religious community. The trouble is, of course, the 'liberals' are liberal only to themselves; they allow themselves to believe what they wish, in spite of the Church's teaching, and to do as they please, equally in spite of the Church. But this liberality is not extended to others. Others must obey the 'liberals' — or else!"

An excellent example of this: children attending parochial schools are expected to wear uniforms for three reasons, obedience, discipline and identity. Is it not only proper that the teachers of example should practice what they preach? "Be ye as little children."

I don't expect a priest to wear his Roman collar in swimming but I do believe priests and nuns should not be ashamed to identify themselves with Christ through obedience and discipline which is the mark of a true Christian because it voluntarily evolves from God's love not from one's abstract emotional jag.

Mrs. Richard V. Moss
Sawmill Drive
Penfield

Vatican Quoted On Habits

Editor:

The inconsistency of human nature! Father Widman reprimands Father Stuart Hogan for expressing his personal opinion on the "clothing he thinks appropriate" for religious, then proceeds to give his own personal opinion on habit versus secular dress. This is not a matter of personal opinion at all. Lest I be tempted to express mine, let me explain by quotes:

1. Documents of Vatican II, p. 478, #17, reads: "Since they are signs of a consecrated life, religious habits should be simple and modest, at once poor and becoming, etc."

2. Religious Women After Vatican II (Cardinal Antonutti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious) pp. 66-67; Permissible Experimentation: " . . . Ecclesiae Sanctae allows the introduction, for a trial period, of some experiments, . . . provided that the end, the nature and character of the institute are maintained. . . . To cite a particular instance, the Chapter is not empowered to decide . . . on the suppression of the religious habit and the use of secular clothes." "Even if the religious

habit is not essential to consecrated life . . . the habit fixed by the constitutions indicates the character of the institute and so can be changed, but it may not be eliminated, because it serves to distinguish religious life as a sign of the Church's sanctity." Lumen Gentium.)

3. Every Sister in the United States receives a copy of a letter from the Sacred Congregation for Religious, again stressing the facts that "nowhere does the Council grant to Religious unrestricted authority to experiment," and " . . . Perfectae Caritatis does not allow the outright suppression of the habit."

4. Cardinal Antonutti, in a letter dated Aug. 17, 1970, to a group of Sisters in the mid-west, gave special censure for the abolition of the habit. He charged that this demonstrated a tendency to become too "secular" in an attempt to identify with the world.

5. Pope Paul . . . Courier-Journal p. 3, 1-16-70: At a meeting of Mother Superiors in Rome, Pope Paul advised those present to steer clear of fashions and not to give in to the modern mentality in dress.

6. An excerpt from a letter which I received from Rome in answer to my questions: " . . . The mind of the Holy See has been made known on more than one occasion in the declarations of the Sacred Congregation, even in the pronouncements of the Holy Father. After that, it is a question of personal maturity and responsibility, that is to say, individuals must be firmly and deeply convinced of the reality of their religious vocation, and we presuppose that they understand the supernatural realities which underlie this vocation. Then it is up to them to draw their conclusions. If the conviction is not there to start with, then no measures from higher authority will ever be valid."

7. Pope Paul, 6-29-71 . . . "While we recognize that certain situations can justify the abandonment of a religious type of dress, we cannot pass over in silence the fittingness that the dress of religious men and women should be, as the Council wishes, a sign of their consecration and that it should be in some way different from the forms that are clearly secular"

Sister St. Bernard S.S.J.
East Avenue
Rochester

Editor's Note: We feel all sides have been heard on this issue and therefore with these letters we end the present discussion on nun's habits.

Too Much Spent On Schools?

Editor:

Ever since our local school consolidation (Chemung County) I have wondered who speaks for the other priorities which must exist within our church if we are to consider ourselves Christian.

I refer to such things as the religious education of the non-parochial students, the Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation, the role of the church in the war on poverty, the whole gamut of activities listed as Catholic Charities, overseas relief, adult religious education, etc., etc.

Locally we were given the directive by Bishop Hogan through Bishop McCafferty to consolidate our schools with the main objective being financial savings. These financial savings, we were told, would be applied to other priorities where they were sorely needed.

When as much as 65 per cent of some parishes total income goes to the parochial school where perhaps 40 per cent of the children of the parish are enrolled shouldn't it be obvious that some of the other priorities are suffering as a result? With the 35 per cent of parish income remaining little if anything can be done except pay the operating expenses of the parish.

While Christ said go and teach all nations He also said that whomsoever we gave a glass of water in His name we did for Him. I do not think we can long ignore the second directive or misinterpret the first directive to mean teach English, math, science, etc. and still call ourselves Christian.

While I still favor parochial schools it is qualified by the condition that it must not be at the expense of all other priorities. We can consolidate some schools and save money, we can utilize such things as central purchasing, we can tell our legislators to solve the dilemma of tax support to our schools or we will close them (and mean it and close them if necessary), and we can seek other means of support. If we choose instead to continue to ignore the other priorities or pay them lip service I must withdraw my support both on a philosophical and on a financial basis.

I was heartened when I read in this week's issue of the Courier-Journal the response of the five pastors who participated in the panel on the pastor's role in Catholic education. Four of those five pastors were reported as expressing concern similar to the concern I have expressed above.

Walter C. Ervin Jr.
West Third Street
Elmira

Disagreement Is Not Dislike

Editor:

This letter concerns the criticism (1-19-72) of Father Atwell's column (1-4-72) in the Courier Journal.

"Men see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion." John Locke.

I really don't believe that when one man disagrees with another man, he also dislikes that man. This is an unfair conclusion to make as a result of Father Atwell's column. I'm sure we all disagree with people we like (or dislike) at one time or another. I don't mean to speak on behalf of Father Atwell (he's doing an excellent job on his own). But what about man's freedom to speak his own thoughts?

The suggestion was made that Father Atwell should have "admonished us to get down on our knees and pray that the terrible crimes cease in this country." Do we really need someone to remind us to pray for peace? Isn't it enough of a reminder when we read about these crimes on the front page of the newspapers or see them flashed across the television screen? If this country is on a "disaster course" I'm sure it's not because Father Atwell disagreed with Archbishop Sheen.

I would rather have someone disagree with me openly than disagree and withhold his opinion as an "act of charity."

Corinne Jerris
Caledonia

Viet Election Suggestion

Editor:

The world wide peace movement is now in the key position

to help bring about a just peace for the war weary Vietnamese people. On the one hand, the North Vietnamese distrust an election on grounds that it would really be a colonialist trick. On the other hand, people the world over are organizing to insist that they be part of any process which affects their lives. The unique potential power of the peace movement is its good rapport with North Vietnam, and its ability to transcend nationalism. Therefore it seems that mankind on all sides yearns for help from the one group which, unlike any other, is most qualified to mediate the difficulties by helping to guarantee a no-tricks election with more than one candidate!!


The key to implementation of a clean election is the technology of modern communications, a spirit that is not cynical, and the will to try. The movement would be able to offer to North Vietnam a monitoring staff in the south to guard any material

recorded for campaigning and to help in other ways. Certainly the Vietnamese are not naive and do not need or require a "perfect" campaign, in order to express their deep desires, whatever they may be. Surely man's intelligence reflected in his ability to reach the moon, and break the genetic code will not be frustrated by the relatively simple technical problems in the design of a clean, though unusual election. In the name of peace and justice are we not obliged to try?

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