

FR. HENRY ATWELL

Toward Tomorrow



I'm sure that just about anybody who can read or watch television is well aware of the fact that the Catholic Church is officially against abortion.

Last Sunday's state-wide observance as "Right-to-Life" Sunday left no doubt what the bishops expect Catholics to believe, and even with a not-too-subtle hint about how to vote in November.

Many candidates for the state Legislature fear a possible strong Catholic vote against those who voted for the present New York State abortion law. Other candidates will run on an almost exclusively "repeal abortion" platform.

The ability of the state's Catholic bishops to mobilize such a powerful grass-roots political force is indeed enviable and has certainly forced the advocates of abortion to wonder how really secure their present legal position is.

Catholics, however, have long been summoned to defend not just the "right to life" but to enhance the quality of life.

Life itself is, of course, a basic gift, but our responsibility cannot be limited just to mere survival. Jesus himself spoke about his coming so everyone "may have life, and have it abundantly."

And here precisely is the nub of the turmoil and conflict in our world and in our communities today — the proportionately few who enjoy in either a material or spiritual way that abundant life, compared to those teeming millions for whom life is mere survival with very little else.

Most of those who read this are those few who do enjoy that more abundant life about which Jesus spoke — a secure faith, education, warm home and friends.

Pope after pope has summoned us who are so gifted to share this gift with others, not so much by giving away our own treasure but by restructuring society so all can indeed be equal, or at least more nearly so.

Pope Leo XIII said this in his famous encyclical "Rerum Novarum" in the years just prior to this century. Pope Pius XI repeated it in his encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno." Pope Pius XII in mid-century said it over and over. Pope John XIII said it again in his masterful encyclical "Mater et Magistra," and finally and perhaps most eloquently of all, Pope Paul VI stated it in his talk at the United Nations.

Locally we have had our prophets, too. Msgr. Francis Burns taught this year after year at St. Bernard's Seminary so that every aspirant to the priesthood could know that theology and liturgy must not be limited to books and sanctuaries but must be translated into jobs and homes and out on the streets. Cardinal Edward Mooney, our fourth bishop, was internationally known as an advocate of the church's social justice teachings.

I myself cannot quite understand why when a pope or a bishop speaks against abortion or birth-control, then massive forces take shape to implement that policy, but when pope after pope, and indeed the nation's bishops also in many repeated official statements, call for justice and mercy, then such calls as these fall so often on such deaf ears.

It is my conviction that if we had listened better to men like Msgr. Burns and Cardinal Mooney and the Popes when they spoke on this issue, then we would by now have built a more humane society where the basic values of life would be respected and shared by all — or at least there would be a more likely possibility of their being shared by all.

But because we ignored them then, we have inherited the whirlwind of a virtually sub-human attitude toward life and now we run around making much noise and championing lost causes and we are forever frustrated and looking for scapegoats to blame.

We really don't have to look far — just in the nearest mirror.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



Last year a fortyish friend (male) wrote:

"What prompts this letter is a recent discussion about the liturgy of the Mass . . . I do not feel my faith has changed at all . . . Yet there's a deep-down feeling that the Church has lost stature: that the Church is not the solid pillar I was brought up to believe it was. It's almost as though one today might reluctantly 'admit' to being a Catholic. I've been to some of the ecumenical affairs and have the strange feeling that people who were genuinely glad to see Catholics there were welcoming us as their separated brothers. We had occasion to go to the Lutheran Church where a new pipe organ was being dedicated. The dedication service was a Mass. That Mass was almost the same as our own Mass used to be. I felt a little nostalgia as it progressed through the Kyrie, the Credo, etc.

"There is also the impression that the combination of changes are not having the effect they were intended to have, like luring young people. From what I read, the opposite may be true . . . But we'll have to muddle along through this depression . . ."

Few doubt that there has been a great falling away from the Church these past few years, and few expect it to ease soon. Many reasons are proposed for the falling away. One which impresses me greatly is that the press, which could be a great evangelist of the Word, is too often the opposite.

The April 2 N.Y. Times Book Section reviewed three books pertaining to Catholics. The first was by an ex-nun. It was the usual drab expose of "the ghetto mentality of convents" before Vatican II and the stupidity of the Sisters. It told the story of the author's final liberation, and she was pictured beaming at her newly acquired husband. The book seems quite inferior to *The Nun's Story* by Kathryn Hulme. Most of us remember intelligent, dedicated holy nuns who made the Mercy Community, the "Joes" and the Notre Dames in our diocese. They

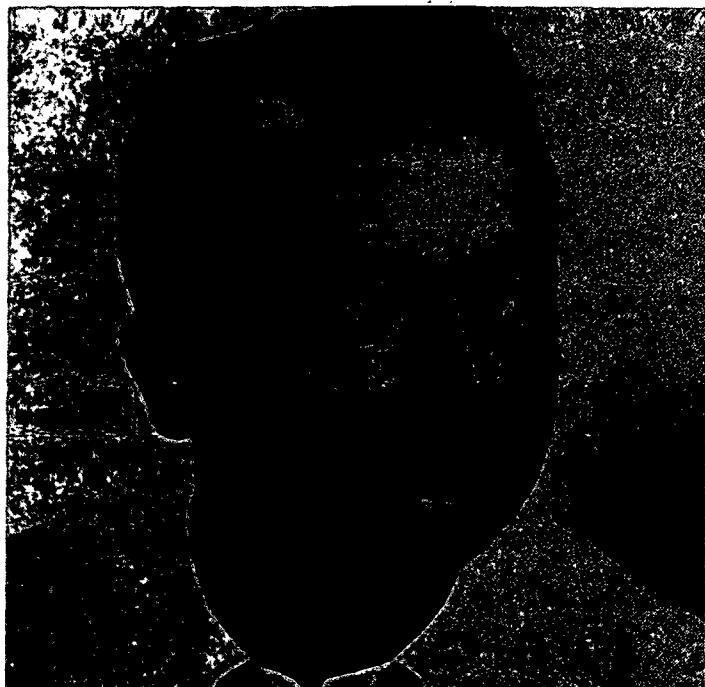
were great and good women. One simple example is the late Sister Francesca, a shining light of Mercy High. And the snooty might ignore Sister Marcella of Nazareth Academy, but her students won't.

The second book is Andrew Greeley's *Survey of Priests in the U.S.A.* Greeley has the gift of making every one mad, but each for different reasons. The survey review is a mixed bag. I suspect that some slight disagreement will be held by many seminaries today inasmuch as he had some praise for the old seminaries as having had effectiveness and sense of direction. He quotes the Protestant scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan: "You people are trying to make the same mistakes in 25 years that it took us four hundred and fifty years to make . . ."

The third review is a book by an ex-Jesuit whose thesis is epitomized in this gem: "Except for Roncalli as John XXIII, no pope (There have been 260 to date) will escape the calm censure of future men . . . They sacrificed the truth to parochial fear . . ." Coming from an ex-Jesuit who denies the Faith, that's not impressive. However, this constant barrage of books, bitter, lopsided, contemptuous, smug, undermining the Church which we love and cherish, has a poisonous effect on the souls of many. Recently I talked with two young adults. One had recently quit college. "Why?" I asked him. "Because the college was trying to brainwash me into accepting values which I don't buy." The second has abandoned his Faith because of the doubts intruded into a mind not prepared for this constant onslaught.

Will some good friend have the kindness to send me the names of books and magazines which have been written these past ten years, which have inspired them to a deeper love of Christ, Our Lady and the Church? In the days of the old Sheed-Ward, we had a deluge of inspiring, educating, enthusiastic Catholic books. Off-hand, the one which stands out in my mind for today is *Something Beautiful for God* (Mother Teresa of Calcutta) by Muggerridge, who is not a Catholic.

Beahon is Back



Beginning May 3rd, Rochester's Renowned Sports Writer George Beahon with his Famous Column IN THIS CORNER will appear regularly on the Courier-Journal's new Sports Page.

WATCH FOR HIM MAY 3rd.

The Good News
COURIER-JOURNAL