

The Church — Rock and River

PART II

Today there are more than 250 different Christian denominations in our own nation, besides countless other sects and splinters in other nations.



Yet Jesus on the night before He died, in the last prayer He said as a free man, only moments before His agony and passion began. He looked down the corridor of centuries. He saw us and prayed for us, and for all His disciples "that they may all be one, even as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe." (Jn. 17: 20).

The Lord prayed that we might be one — and we are 250! Is it any wonder the world does not believe — that world where one-fourth of the population, one billion people, are Chinese; another fourth, another one billion people, teems in India, Japan and the rest of the orient; another fourth, an-

other one billion people, is in Africa and Latin America where, despite churches and missions, most of the people are still little touched by Christian faith or practice; and the final fourth, one billion people, in Europe and America, though calling themselves Christian, and called by their Lord to be one, are divided, and suspicious, and competitive — can three billion people believe us bickering billion who label ourselves Christian?

Fortunately, Catholics and Protestants and Orthodox Christians have begun to realize the scandal of our disunity. Whatever may have been the reasons to justify our going separate ways in the past, God summons all of us today to discover both the unity we already have, and the unity we still must attain.

Numerous Christians, individually and in groups, have been at prayer and at work during the past 50 years to build bridges toward unity. One of the outstanding agencies or instruments in this work is the World Council of Churches, begun in 1948, a United Nations of the major religious denominations, except the Roman Catholics. On our part, thanks to the saintly and so-much-loved Pope John, we had our Vatican Council which met from 1962 to

1965, which opened us from our isolation and set us firmly on an ecumenical path. I can assure you that the American Catholic bishops are firmly committed to this goal of collaboration and ultimate unity — whenever and however God wills it to be.

On a recent Sunday evening in Rochester (March 12), I stood with eight other clergymen, each representing a different denomination, to install a priest of our diocese and a black Baptist clergyman to be the directors of what we call the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries. We have pledged ourselves, our resources, our talents and money, to perform the Christian works of mercy together, rather than separately. We still have much to do to turn the drama of that ritual into every-day reality, but I am of the opinion that we can, because we must, do all we possibly can do together as Jesus prayed we would.

The river-church of God, though now a divided delta, I see again someday will be a mighty, turbulent, life-giving stream — so wide with all the nations nourished by its waters, the waters of faith and baptism, that the world at last will hear the good news of God's infinite love for all and we shall indeed be one, according to the prayer of Christ.

The Slot Man

A press agent for a certain new film recently walked into the office of a newspaper editor (in another town, of course) to get some publicity for the movie, called "Vomit".



"The title doesn't sound, uh, quite inspiring," the editor said.

"But don't let that bother you," explained the promoter. "It's a very honest production gaited to general audience taste."

"Really?" said the editor, whose film expertise was limited to seeing

Gunga Din seven times, though he had been known to surprise house guests by being able to identify Jerome Cowan in TV movies.

"You understand," he tried his blunt manner with the publicist, "we are leery of sex and violence in today's films."

"Don't worry," came the answer, "Vom-

it" has none of that stuff. It's a kind of a documentary on the stomach problems of seven people stranded on a roller-coaster going backwards. The group includes a nun, a teenager, a senior citizen, a peace activist, a black football player and two midgets."

"Well, that all sounds appealing," squinted the editor, trying to look incisive.

"Not only that," said the promoter, warming up to what he saw as a pigeon across the desk, "the picture is just loaded, with, no, positively brimming with redeeming social values, right up to here," he held his hand at his throat.

"Thus the title," said the editor.

"Hey, that's a good one," the publicist guffawed.

"What's the rating?" asked the editor.

"You're going to love this — R for rotten."

"Is that a new category?"

"Well, not really," explained the promoter, "I thought it up to give 'Vomit'

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a little push. It'll look good in the ad we'll run in your paper," he figuratively nudged the editor from across the desk.

Noticing that the editor seemed unmoved, the promoter quickly tried, "How about P for putrid?"

"Sounds more like it should be S for sick," rejoined the newspaperman, summoning his courage.

"That does it!" screamed the publicist, leaping sharply to his feet. The editor, expecting a buffeting, covered his head with his arms but his apprehension was unnecessary.

"S for sick," shouted the publicist, "beautiful, baby! Stick that on it and we'll take a half-page, even without editorial coverage."

Still ecstatic, the promoter started out the door, paused and asked, "What's a guy with your brains doing in this kind of job, anyway?"

The editor answered, "I don't know" but the publicist already out the door didn't hear him.

Try S for Sick

Editorial

Abortion, Vietnam War Separate Issues

A weird sense of logic is used by some people who criticize Church opposition to abortion on demand.

Dr. Mary Daly, who spoke in Rochester last week, echoed this train of thought.

It goes like this: How can the Church be so opposed to abortion when it doesn't take an equally firm stand against the Vietnam war or against capital punishment?

In the philosophical sphere, such reasoning is faulty syllogistically; in trade circles it is known as comparing apples and oranges.

Supposing it were valid that if one strongly opposed abortion then he must also oppose capital punishment and

war as vehemently; then the reverse also would be reasonable, that if one favors abortion on demand then he should also favor the war.

Each of these is a separate issue and must be considered as such. Granted, the Church may be doing too little too late about the killings in Vietnam and thus be open to criticism for it. But that should in no way obscure the question of the morality of the Vietnam War.

Would abortion on demand be less acceptable if the Church had been militantly against the war in Vietnam?

Such reasoning is symptomatic of a contemporary mood in the United States that avoids discussion of the essence of issues in order to engage in blame-

fixing, name-calling, bickering, and the great American pastime of labeling those who disagree with us as either liberals or conservatives, dependent on how we see ourselves.

If abortion on demand is morally wrong, then the Church should oppose it.

If the Vietnam war is morally wrong, then the church should oppose it.

If capital punishment is morally wrong, then the Church should oppose it.

They are three separate issues and each deserves careful consideration on the part of all of us, both as citizens and as creatures of the same God.