

FR. HENRY ATWELL

Toward Tomorrow



Two priests did something recently which upset many people.

In one case it was a sermon given. In the other case, it was, in a way, a sermon acted out rather than spoken.

The first case was a sermon by Father Robert Hammond at St. Michael's Church, Newark, and the second was an action which resulted in the arrest of Father Walter Hanss of St. Monica's Church, Rochester.

I didn't hear Father Hammond preach and I didn't witness what Father Hanss did but reports came quite promptly and I believe quite accurately.

Father Hammond gave a strong sermon for Catholic schools and against public school policies, at least as he sees them in Newark. Parents whose children attend public school there and teachers in the public schools there were, understandably, disturbed and in some cases quite angered.

There were complaints against him for "going back to the old Catholic ghetto," or references to his being "un-ecumenical," and for the ancient fear of "divisiveness" in a community where "relationships" had developed so favorably in the past decade.

I am in no position to judge who's right or wrong, or the degree to which justice and righteousness lie on one side or the other, but I think I do understand what might be at the root of Father Hammond's outburst.

Catholic schools are still anybody's favorite whipping boy

Even many Catholics these days consider them disposable, like Kleenex.

And have you ever heard any high-ranking public school official or agency even breathe aloud a suspicion that Catholic schools might just perhaps be doing a decent educational job?

Or take, for example, the remarkable "now-you-see-it-now-you-don't" policy of government educational officials. When it's time to issue orders and regulations, then every Catholic school is on the list, but as soon as it comes time to pass out a trickle of state money, then the Catholic schools get promptly erased from the list.

Every Catholic school in this diocese is currently cut off from funds to do a job the state has ordered them to do. If that isn't tyranny, double-standard, discrimination, then what is it?

And why did Father Hanss get arrested?

He tried to tell people in downtown Rochester what God tried to tell everybody long ago, "Thou shalt not kill." I never heard that God gave the United States government a dispensation to break that commandment. Father Hanss also tried to tell people what Jesus said, "Those who take the sword shall perish by the sword."

Our government, after all these futile years in Vietnam, is now dropping more bombs and killing more people, despite its pretense at "winding down" the war.

And the victims of our massive air-strikes are not just enemy troops. Civilians, women and children, are bombed and burned, killed and maimed, their homes destroyed and their crops spoiled.

Father Hanss, with other concerned people, lay as if dead, as our bombs actually lay low people by thousands; and for that he and his companions were arrested.

And here is another anomaly.

We hear a lot about "separation of church and state."

The government these days is quite sensitive if any clergyman, and especially any Catholic clergyman, speaks for God or Jesus in any public place or against the increasing brutality of Pentagon and presidential policy. Freedom for the Church has turned out to mean letting the government go its own unGodly way, keeping religion inside the church's walls and speaking only on heavenly matters but never about God's kingdom coming "on earth."

These two young priests, in my opinion, have revealed to us that our ancient American ideals — justice and freedom — are too often made a mockery of by our governmental agencies and officials.

And too many citizens either reluctantly or even approvingly comply without protest. I'm glad the two young priests spoke out to jar us out of our complacency and apathy.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



It doesn't take much research in the reading of the Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles to realize what a strong sense of "belonging to the Community of the New Way" was possessed by the new converts to the Faith. A sense of belonging to the Catholic Community, since that is what it was, did not remove the new Christians from the rest of mankind. On the contrary it strengthened the realization that this New Community must keep itself strong, and it must evangelize, and it must be the leaven of Our Lord in the world. But there was no question of identity. These Christians knew they possessed a clear religious identity in their baptism. They were jealous to preserve it. St. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "The man instructed in the word should share all he has with his instructor. . . Let us do good to all men — but especially those of the household of the faith." (Gal. vi)

On Tuesday, April 12, Father Michael Conboy came to give a conference on prayer to our Sisters at the hospital. He cheerfully agreed to take care of Communion to the sick at 4:30 p.m. and Mass at the Chapel at 5. (One of his graces is his cheerfulness, as he

says: "I'd be glad to." It always puzzles me that some people will do some one a favor, but with such reluctance and gracelessness they take the kindness out of the deed. Why not do it cheerfully, and enjoy it!) So I set out for Fr. Carron's at Geneseo. Fr. C said: "Stay for supper." Nina, the housekeeper, and I had arrived simultaneously at 5:30, yet she set forth an impressive repast topped with brownies and candles in less than 45 minutes.

Miraculously, Father Carron had the evening free from meetings and appointments. So we decided to go to Pittsford Plaza to see Barbara Streisand and Ryan O'Neal in "What's Up, Doc?" The movie won't win any Venice Festival award but it was relaxing. I was especially interested that the pie-in-the-face slapstick comedy, and the Keystone Cops whizzaroo still tickles the funny bone of the audiences. Chesterton wrote: "Humor is based on the incongruous."

I decided to stay over night, a chance to test another diocesan mattress. About 11:30 next morning I bade farewell, backed the car out of the driveway, and landed the left hind wheel neatly into a shallow ditch at the edge of the exit. My Dart would go neither forward nor backward. I got out and stared stupidly at the car resting lopsided in the little ditch.

As I stared, the groundsman came forward with a wooden board, and two nice 20 year old collegians came from across the street. They live in a fraternity house there. One said: "I'll get a bunch of my brothers. We will get you out. Last week nine of us lifted a light car out of the ditch."

His kindness was greatly appreciated. But what touched me even more was the tone of his voice as he said "my brothers." Every tonal vibration bespoke affection for his group, security in belonging to them, confidence in their backing, and pride in being one of them.

Within five minutes there gathered eight fraternity brothers, a parishioner who was driving by, Newman Chaplain Father Tom Statt, and a man in a new pick-up with a metal chain. The man with the chain quickly hauled the car out of the ditch. But everyone was there with arms and shoulders and hearts, ready to assist.

After thanking all I drove on to Avon to see Father Atwell's newly painted Stations of the Cross which have attracted some attention. En route I meditated on the significance of the collegian's voice as he said: "my brothers." And I thought: "That lad is applying the message of the Church. He has a sense of authentic community, of affection and charity, of unity, of backing and being backed. And this is what the Church has been trying for 2,000 years to get across to her brothers in Christ. 'Do good to all men — but especially to those of the household of the faith'."

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