

FR. HENRY ATWELL

Toward Tomorrow



Today, Wednesday, September 13, is the first anniversary of the Attica prison riot — no date to celebrate.

Many individuals and groups, prior to Attica, had been calling for prison reform. Since Attica, a few more have been added to that number but the vast bulk of the American public has other interests and priorities — and the cost to taxpayers goes up and up.

Perhaps one reason for this "benign neglect" of prisons on the part of the public is just its massive ignorance of the conditions in our penal institutions and the utter inadequacy of present methods of punishment and rehabilitation.

This by no means is an indictment of prison officials.

They are as much victims as are the prisoners.

And we the public are also victims.

Almost 90% of the crime committed in America today is committed by former inmates of so-called correctional institutions.

And almost 50% of American crime today is drug related.

The soaring drug traffic is striking at not just ghetto homes but into affluent suburbs and into families of great wealth — blowing young minds and blighting young lives.

And to pay for this costly habit, thefts and violence are now the weary headlines day after day on our newspapers.

Dr. Karl Menninger in a book now six years old, "The Crime of Punishment," speaks about "the injustice of justice." He rightly states that as Americans, "we abhor crime: we adore justice; we boast that we live by the rule of law . . . yet crime continues to be a national disgrace . . . it is threatening, alarming, wasteful, expensive, abundant, and apparently increasing!"

But then he adds, "Perhaps our worst crime is our ignorance about crime" and, in very close second place, is "our

neglect of preventive steps . . . our prevailing public apathy."

Dr. Menninger wrote his book shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated. Hardly any one of us was not shocked by that event.

Yet only a few weeks before that assassination, another young man, who also had a wife and children, was shot from ambush by a man who used a telescope-sighted rifle. But how many people today even remember the name of Medgar Evers?

Articles and books have been written. Prestigious committees have studied the situation and published their profound conclusions — as the special commission on Attica does today — but the public attitude remains unchanged.

"Why don't we care?" asks Dr. Menninger, "and if we do care, some of us, why not more intelligently and effectively?"

To answer those questions, the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries has set up its Judicial Process Commission — to provide citizens an inside view of that whole intricate, complex process that begins with arrest and can go its whole relentless way through jail, court trial, prison, parole, release — and, sadly, so often back around the circle repeatedly.

Charles D. McAtee, director of Penal Institutions for the State of Kansas, said our present crime problem must be faced "at the grass roots level with community action committees." He is convinced, he says, that "an informed, concerned, and aroused citizenry can have a tremendous impact on the causative factors of crime and delinquency."

I agree with him. I think Americans, by and large, once they are informed, once they become aware that our present system is just simply falling on its face and thereby endangering us all, when at last Americans know the facts then I am convinced they will have imagination and ingenuity enough to begin to change what is a woefully inadequate and self-injuring system.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



In the early 50s I was the Catholic Chaplain at OCS (Officer Candidate School) at Lackland A. F. Base, Texas. The candidates were for the most part, healthy, intelligent, stable and ambitious, ranging from 20 to 25 years of age. The course was six months of intensive study and awful discipline. The student body totaled about 600, almost equally divided into 300 lower classmen, and 300 higher. Most of the 600 were men; but there were about 40 young women in the school. Naturally, romances evolved, and one couple I remember especially.

The girl was a "born" Catholic, devout and knowledgeable. The man was a convert to the Faith, with the zeal and certitude of the intellectual convert of the '40s and '50s who had drunk deeply from Newman, Knox, Chesterton; from Aquinas and the Fathers. (I often smile at one student who is very English in his genes. He became a Catholic at Harvard, and changed his name from "Calvin" to "Bede.") The couple were commissioned second lieutenants. They married. I kept in touch with them for a few years; lost track of them for over a decade; discovered them a couple years ago; and renewed our friendship. Some months ago I received this letter from the girl who today must be 40.

"In response to your note re the storms in the Church — the Church lost me a few years back — not because of modernism — but through more or less a simple loss of my faith. When occasionally I did venture to a Mass, the place had changed — wherever it was — it no longer was 'my' place — it was no longer private enough. Then too my ex-seminary husband had influenced me to the point where I would actually listen to the sermons. Good grief, to say the least! Now I am an apostate and he is the local Episcopal Sunday School director. That's life.

"Out of touch as I am with the Church, from what inklings do still come my way, my general impression is that they've all gone stark raving mad. If you told them tomorrow that now they must walk backwards into church, they'd probably do it. Maybe

they're doing it some place already as an allowable and 'more meaningful' variation.

"Be everything as it may, I do wish you the best."

I think the loss of faith is commonplace today; and weakness of faith even more common. It seems to me there are two main reasons: first, religious instruction de-Catholicized and de-supernaturalized; secondly, a subtle hostility, a strange resentment toward the Blessed Sacrament.

A mother in Kentucky wrote about three years ago: "I went to the school to register the children. On the classroom wall was a great melange of babies, old people, trees, flowers, John F. Kennedy, hippies, squares, Martin Luther King, a lovely bride, a big peace symbol. There was not one picture of Christ or His Blessed Mother or of any saints or even a picture of Pope John. And the crucifix had been removed! There was not a single distinctly Catholic symbol in the room. We have decided that we want our children to be Catholics, and we will instruct them ourselves . . ."

Father Rawley Meyers wrote in the Homiletic and Pastoral Review: "Counterfeit prophets are sowing seeds of discord on every side, robbing these people of faith, hope — and love. It certainly raises havoc in the parishes."

No praisioners want havoc. They do want instruction in the Catholic Faith, as taught for 2,000 years and spelled out again in Vatican II. "Christ the one Mediator, established and unceasingly sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity as a visible structure . . . This is the unique Church of Christ which in the Creed we avow as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. After His Resurrection our Saviour handed her over to Peter to be shepherded, commissioning him and the other apostles to propagate and govern her . . ." (Dg. Cont. on THE CHURCH: no. 8). Why, think you, was the Kentucky melange devoid of Christ, Mary, the saints, of the Pope or the Bishop?

FR. LOUIS HOHMAN

The Open Window

GOT A QUESTION?

GET AN ANSWER!

SEND IT TO FATHER HOHMAN,

THE OPEN WINDOW

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