

FR. HENRY ATWELL
**Toward
Tomorrow**



We hear so much about Mr. Henry Kissinger's secret peace talks in Paris, Saigon and other world capitals, that we are liable to miss other quite public but less publicized peace talks.

Recently a Cardinal from the Vatican went to London to be the guest of the Primate of the Church of England and then smile a blessing at the birth of the new United Reformed Church which resulted from the merger of England's Congregational and Presbyterian Churches.

The Cardinal, Jan Willebrands, who heads the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Primate, Michael Ramsey, towering and shaggy and telling everyone that this was one of the happiest moments in his life, had ample time to discuss the possibilities and the technicalities of a merger between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

This meeting of the Cardinal and the Primate is the climax of many earlier meetings of lesser but still very astute theologians and men of power from both churches. The waters of the Thames and the Tiber might mix after all.

Cardinal Willebrands, as a matter of fact, told journalists that the four centuries of separation between Canterbury and Rome were ending. Union was a certainty, we're well along the road. All we need now, he said, was a bit more patience, generosity, kindness.

But, as Baden Hickman reported in the Manchester Guardian, the Cardinal was reluctant to say when the rainbow of reconciliation would finally shine. Quite likely not in this generation, nor, perhaps in the next, but like the parousia certainly soon. Not even a Cardinal from Rome can as yet schedule the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Both the Cardinal and the Primate stressed that the union the two envisioned did not mean absorption or surrender. Pope Paul made this point

clear when he said two years ago to this day, on Oct. 25, 1970. "There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church — this humble 'servant of the servants of God' — is able to embrace her ever beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin and of faith, a communion of priesthood and rule, a communion of the saints in the freedom of love of the spirit of Jesus."

All such activities and statements are shocking to a generation of Catholics, especially in England (or Irish descent any where), who were reared with the emphatic memory that Catholics up to recent times were second-class Christians in a country where all favors went automatically to the established Church of England, and that many Catholics, like St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More, and scores more, were tortured and martyred because they would have no part of what the Pope himself now calls "legitimate prestige . . . worthy patrimony . . . beloved sister."

Popes before Paul never used words like his. Indeed his predecessors of two or three centuries ago said very much the opposite.

"How can the Catholic Church do a flip-flop like that?" many wonder.

Really it's not so much that the Church has changed as that the situation has changed. You can swim in Conesus Lake in August and go snowmobiling on it in February — not because you change but because the situation has changed. The Germans call this the "Sitz im Leben" — the situation in which you are actually living.

Pope Paul, some of his Cardinals and many other Christian leaders are aware that today's "Sitz im Leben" is vastly different from the "Sitz" of centuries ago. Would that more of their constituents understood this.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY
**On The
Right Side**



On September 25, I was supposed to lead the C.J. Tour to Portugal-Spain. God had other plans. A mean sickness persisted to such a degree I phoned Rochester and said: "I'm just not up to the Tour; but Father Herbert Sturmer can take over very well." So Fr. S. became T.D. for the 15 day Tour; and I began a 17 day convalescence at the Montezuma rectory. Why there? Because Father Robert Kress has been a good companion for years. The rectory would be quiet. The guest room mattress has my professional A-1 rating.

For two Sundays I celebrated 10:30 Mass at the mission church in Port Byron. Seated facing the congregation for the Liturgy of the Word, gave me a good perspective of the parishioners and their participation. There is a big difference between urban, suburban and village parishioners. I have served in Ithaca and St. Anne's, Rochester; but most of my parish service has been in villages: Clyde, Savannah, Canisteo, Rexville, Ovid and Ontario; and during summer months: Sodus, Sodus Point and Port Bay.

There is great talk today about "developing community" within parishes: hardly a new idea. St. Paul frequently uses the term "edification," i.e. building up the parish as a family. This is more difficult in large parishes today. Thirty-five years ago I asked Father Joseph Curtin: "How big a parish is St. Monica's?" He replied: "St. Monica's isn't a parish. It's an empire!" But 35 years ago, even empire-parishes were strong communities, because of the stability of family life, little moving about, and a great sense of parish identification.

Many large parishes today stagger under a multitude of committees. Bureau enthusiasts think: the more committees, the more people involved. Observation makes me a sceptic. Recently I heard a young priest wisely comment, on the occasion of a small turnout for a city-wide Catholic function: "That shows that we are not close enough to the people." It's not through choice most priests are not closer to their people. Rather it is because their time is consumed by meetings with a relatively few people. Better were they free to visit their people's homes, the nursing homes, the hospitals; attend the civic events, the school ball games; be anywhere in the market place where many people assemble and are accessible.

In the Port Byron Church I studied the 180 people who nearly filled the Church. They are typical of most village parishioners. Of the 180 persons a quarter were well-behaved children from less than a year old to 12. Two red-headed parents with three little red-headed children would have inspired Raphael, especially the father as he snuggled his year old son who nuzzled his button nose into the father's cheek without disturbing the parishioners. This was true edification."

Two men in their thirties, obviously hunters, came in a little late and slid into the third pew from the back. I thought: "What an edifying discipline is the Church law: 'Every Catholic must attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.' These men came to Mass at an inconvenience for which God will bless them the more. With the self-centered teaching given by some religion teachers, that you go to Mass if you're so inclined, that you don't if you're not, I wonder will the children of these men have their fathers' fidelity."

The congregation was quite content with a predictable Mass form. They were not anxious to seize the pastor's staff; nor were they wanting to form groups to study the Council Documents. But they certainly were interested in the garage sale and the rummage sale coming up. They listened intently for the names of the sick and the dead for whom they should pray. They were attentive to the CCD program. They even listened to the homily on the justice of God, suggested by the Gospel.

A normal liturgical commission would have been edified by the Mass. Even without the organ accompaniment of Teresa VanDetto, faithful organist for decades, or the musical Jendas, the congregational singing was reasonably good. Two lectors read the Scriptures well. The offertory procession embraced a whole family of five or six persons. The Sign of Peace was given with about the same mixture of humor or enthusiasm or annoyance or indifference as in larger parishes.

St. Paul wrote: "Comfort and edify one another, as indeed you are doing." (Thess. 5:11) And that is the way to build the community which we call our parish.

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