

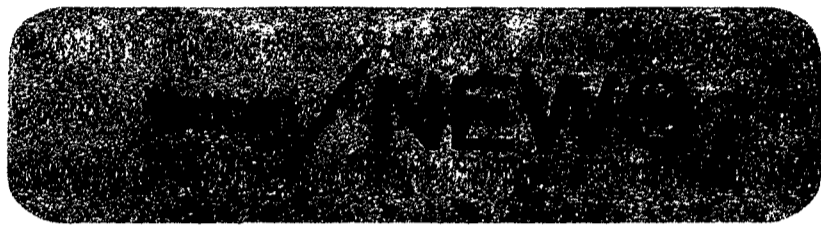
Theologian Lauds Pope For 'Devil' Statement

Vatican City — (RNS) — A Jesuit theologian said here that Pope Paul's recent address on the reality and pervasive influence of the Devil was "important" and "opportune" in its reminder that there is no obstacle to salvation that cannot be overcome "through Christ the Savior."

Father Morris Flick, S.J., a long-time professor of Dogmatic Theology at Rome's Gregorian University, was commenting on the pontiff's remarks at his general audience on Nov. 15.

"One of the great needs of our time," the Pope said, "is a defense against the evil we call the Devil. We know from the Gospels that he is a living, spiritual being . . . truly existing and still acting with treacherous astuteness."

He reminded Catholics that



Push Ecumenical Effort Pope Urges Delegates

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul, declaring that among Christians "passionate for the truth" there are no rivals, encouraged 50 delegates to a top-level meeting on ecumenism here to "intensify their efforts to bring about a reconciliation between Christians."

He pointed out that the delegates — who represent ecumenism commissions of Catholic bishops' conferences and patriarchal synods — must collaborate with the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity to achieve the "reintegration of all Christians in ecclesial unity" desired by Jesus Christ.

Speaking of the necessity of following "in an ecumenical way" the orientations of Vatican II, the pontiff declared that the council's perspective of "realizing community" between men and God must always be the basis for ecumenical effort.

Pope Paul affirmed that progress in the "vital communion of God" must be accomplished by the development of a sense of unity and continuity.

He went on to catalogue various types of unity — that "unity of faith lived," a "proclaimed unity of worship which in diversity of forms is hinged on the eucharistic celebration," and the "unity nourished by sacraments which re-establish our union in Christ or make it more intimate

The Pope also mentioned the "unity of our joint life under the guidance of bishops gathered under the Bishop of Rome, each of whom according to his respective responsibilities is given

union with Christ, the Savior, was the best defense against "the Prince of this world."

Father Flick, interviewed by Vatican Radio, said he felt the Pope's speech on the Devil was very important from two points of view:

"In the first place, it was important that the supreme pastor of the Church should remind us that we cannot let an element of great importance for the Christian world simply fall into a well of silence, without carefully distinguishing between what is of faith and revelation, and what is reflective of cultural conditions.

"In the second place, everyone knows that alongside denials of the reality of Satan today, explanations, superstitious or pseudo-scientific, have cropped up to explicate what some people

look upon as the almost irresistible forces of evil."

"It was quite opportune, therefore," said the Jesuit scholar "for the Pope to remind us forcibly that there is no obstacle to salvation that cannot be overcome with the help of Christ the Savior.

"The genuinely Christian context of the doctrine on the Devil is not one of fear and trembling, but serene faith in the Father, whose sons we have become through Jesus Christ."

Father Flick explained that according to Roman Catholic and other Christian interpretation of the Scriptures, Satan and devils, angels by nature, were created "good" by God.

"It is clear," he said, "that God Who is infinitely good, could not have made perverted beings, i.e., beings who would by their very nature tend towards evil.

"It can be seen from the Scriptures that the Devil and his angels became evil as a result of sin. This doctrine was explicitly reaffirmed by the Lateran Council of 1215."

Asked how it was that even among some Christians "the conviction of the reality of the Devil seems today to have been weakened," the Jesuit theologian replied.

"One cannot deny that for years preachers, many of them at least, almost never preached about the Devil and his snares, and not a few theologians and Biblical exegetes have either questioned or openly denied the existential reality of the Devil."

Father Flick pinpointed what he said appeared to him as two key reasons for this negative attitude.

"The first reason," he explained, "is that the denial or questioning attitude appears as a reaction to speculation, widespread at one time, which deformed the figures of the Devil and evil spirits, imputing to them almost exclusive responsibility for all temptation, ignoring the fact that man himself inclined toward evil, and not taking into account the various psychological, unconscious, factors that influence human activities."

"The second reason," he continued, "is the obvious similarity between the Biblical doctrine on Satan and evil spirits and the religious opinions on demons that were widespread in pagan antiquity."

In the light of this similarity, he said, the conclusion was made, with questionable justification, that the Bible merely "adopted" the then current opinions, as reflective of the culture of the time, without in any way attesting to the reality of Satan and devils as guaranteed by the revealed, saving word of God."

Gift to the Poor

The five homeroom Mission Leaders who turned in the most money at the Aquinas "Dress Down Day" recently are shown with William F. McCarthy, mission moderator at Aquinas Institute, who holds a check for \$300 which was collected from students and sent to the Human Development office as the Aquinas gift to the poor for Thanksgiving.

BLUE ARMY DATES

On Dec. 7, the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima will hold an all-night vigil at Holy Rosary Church, 414 Lexington Ave. The vigil will last from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. and will include a Fatima procession, Mass, rosary, benediction, prayers, and meditation.



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