

FR. HENRY ATWELL
**Toward
Tomorrow**



Most Catholic publications, including the Courier-Journal, have had articles recently to mark the tenth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council.

It's hard for those of us who were caught up in its scope and hope to realize that these ten years have sped by so rapidly.

I still recall taking the picture for the Courier's page one story about the start of the Council — with Bishop Kearney, Bishop Casey, Monsignor John Maney and Monsignor Richard Burns ready to set off for Rome.

And the announcement in that same issue that Monsignor James McAniff would be in charge of the Diocese while the Bishops were at the Council.

The recently published articles about the Council's anniversary have inevitably asked, "What did the Council accomplish? Have its results been good or bad?"

Nobody can deny that the Catholic Church today is far different from the Church as we knew it before the Council.

Some people say "the changes" have begun, by and large, good; others say quite the opposite, and some say they were "too few too late."

Ten years ago Commonweal magazine asked several lay people to write articles on the general theme of "What the Layman Wants from the Church." Early this month the magazine began a series by those same authors telling their fears and disappointments, their hopes and expectations from the vantage point of today, ten years later. The Dec. 8 article by Philip Scharper, former editor of Sheed and Ward books and now editor of Maryknoll publications, is, in my opinion, not only a chronicle of a turbulent and historic decade, but a true prophetic insight into why we are where we are and where we most certainly are soon to be.

Those of us who were brought up with the idea that the Catholic Church "never changes" have been shocked to realize that quite simply it does change. This notion of a changing Church was expressed by the Council when it called the Church "a pilgrim Church" — a term "canonized" in our new

Eucharistic Prayers for consecration.

"Instructive though that metaphor is," says Mr. Scharper, "it does not really reflect the life of the church now or in the near future."

A pilgrim, he points out, has a home, a fixed abode, from which he sets out to visit a site already made holy by persons or incidents in the past — Jerusalem, Mecca, Canterbury, Lourdes. The destination is known and the route is charted. And after a stay at the shrine, the pilgrim will return home, hopefully with increased devotion and renewed faith.

Mr. Scharper says the Church today really isn't a pilgrim like that, but rather a wanderer — like Abraham, Moses, Paul — summoned to leave home forever in search of a place God will later reveal, a place not yet made holy but to be made holy at a time still unknown.

The destination, then, is unknown, the route is uncharted, and the guidance is ambiguous — so utterly opposite to the former certainties!

All that the wanderer does know with reasonable certainty is that he'll never come back to the spot where he finds himself at the moment.

I think Mr. Scharper's analogy is valuable in understanding the Church, particularly the Church in America as it is today.

Pilgrims travel together, it is true, and they invariably share a faith and a devotion, but when the journey is done, then the pilgrims part company and even tend to forget one another.

Nomads, wanderers, are different. They can survive only in solidarity. They have no home to go to for security. Their security is only when they go shoulder to shoulder, helping others and in turn being helped by them.

Jesus himself once said he too was homeless, that he had "nowhere to lay his head."

Like him, his Church today is a wanderer, a nomad Church, strong when its members are willing to work and struggle together, but its members risk survival itself if they attempt to go off by themselves into individual adventures or lag behind in isolation.



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

Christmas cards are appreciated. Christmas cards which picture friends' children are treasured; and a thoughtfully written letter at Christmas time is a delight. These Christmas letters you may enjoy — and thank God for the writers.

TOM S. was a GI friend with our 409th Bn. Group in France, 1944. He was a technician. He was mild, humorous, steady, intelligent, devout. For years I lost track of him. A few years ago he began to write. Today he is in his late forties, a bachelor, and evidently strong in the Faith.

"What a nice Christmas message you sent. It always amazed me that you still remember to say the right thing!"

"I have a brother who is the father of 11 children, two married and the rest still growing up. You see, my brother is like 'The People' you talk about. He held three jobs in his younger days and through it all he gave the children a good Catholic home and education and yet found time to follow sports and good music. Whenever I go there they give me 'everything.' So my chance of getting to heaven may be to follow them in."

"I read somewhere the present trend is not so much toward converting our brothers in other faiths as it is in trying to bring all Christians into one fold. But one of the main differences is Our Lady. If they can accept the Resurrection and the Power and the Glory and all those beliefs, it is strange that they cannot see Mary as God sees her. But for Christian unity I believe she would be willing to step back as she has done through the ages. But I don't think her Son would like that."

"For me to be talking like this is most out of place but after a lifetime of being picked up by this wonderful Lady after so many falls and being brought back to her Son I could never deny her the right place God has given her. So I guess it will be a big undertaking, this Christian Unity, but without her it will be impossible."

COMMENT: Who loves Mary loves Christ. It is interesting that Tom's thesis that unity cannot come without Mary is expanded in Frank Sheed's book, *Is it the Same Church?* Sheed maintains that Christian unity will be brought about through Our Blessed Mother. I am sure that Tom never read Sheed's book. Yet they come to the same conclusion.

LOUISE X is a receptionist in a restaurant of a Washington Hotel. A few years ago while I was at an Institute in Washington, I became acquainted with her as she took care of my breakfast each morning. In the course of conversation I learned that she was a Catholic, but not going to Mass. Significantly she groaned: "If my mother knew I wasn't going to Mass it would kill her." I followed the comment with: "Do you ever say your rosary?" "No, Father. I suppose I should. But I don't even have a rosary any more." "If I send you one, will you say it?" "Yes, I will." So on returning home I mailed her a beautiful rosary with a note of encouragement; and have heard from her about twice a year since. At Christmas she wrote this.

"Bless your heart, it was very nice hearing from you. I just received your beautiful letter yesterday. Thank you very much for it and for thinking of me."

"Before I go any further, No. I do not neglect the rosary you sent me. I say it faithfully."

"We had a very nice Christmas. Our son got home from Memphis where he attends college. My family was together, and that's all I wanted."

COMMENT: Whether one is a priest or a layman, souls are always around us needing strengthening, encouragement, notice, love. How much good has been done by very ordinary people in their quiet concern and interest in wandering sheep. We Catholics have something special to give and to preserve. Some one said: "Don't just keep the faith. Spread it!" To which may we all say an end of the year AMEN.

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