

FR. HENRY ATWELL
**Toward
Tomorrow**



Two articles, one in the (U.S.) National Catholic Reporter and the other in Le Monde of Paris, predicted that 1973 will be another year of decline for the churches, even for the Catholic Church.

Church drop-outs aren't really as much against the Church as they are just unimpressed with it. "It doesn't do anything for me," sums up the attitude of the de-churched people.

I think people just don't realize how much they stand to lose if the Church and its message go down the drain.

We are witnesses at this time of the frightening power our nation's President holds when he can turn on or turn off at his own whim the massive destructive forces at his command without consulting or even giving a reason to the American people or their elected representatives. And legislation has been proposed to cut off even the trickle of facts the news media are at present able to provide us.

We need to have at hand a force to remind us that we are meant to be free, that we are not pawns of a few powerful men.

That's not my idea — that's an idea Jesus had long ago.

"As you know," he said, "the rulers of the people oppress their people, and whoever holds power uses it recklessly. But this is not the way it shall be with you." (Matthew 20: 25-26)

He came into conflict with those who held power in his day and they put him to death because he insisted on "power for the people" and not just for the procurator or the president. But even though they killed him, his message passed from mouth to mouth and became a mighty chorus that finally put down the Emperor of Rome from his throne.

Dorothee Solle, a European woman scholar, in a talk at last September's International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion held in Los Angeles, asked, "Why should one still be a Christian in this modern, scientific, technological age?"

She answered her own question,

"I shall attempt to render a simple answer: because we still need liberation."

And then at greater length she explains her answer:

"The Gospel is wonderful. It speaks about my life in the way in which I want my life to be talked about: without any contempt. It speaks with a seriousness that does not permit even a single day of my life to be despised; it speaks of a hope that does not permit even a single person to be omitted. It speaks of a sorrow which does not allow itself to grow blind, and of a joy that is contagious. The Gospel speaks without any contempt about the life of all human beings: every hour counts, every hunger means the right to eat, all the tears will be collected, nobody is talked out of his fear, nobody is counted out.

"The Gospel is beautiful because it abolishes all cynicism, all self-contempt, and all contempt for other people. It does not allow me to accept life only partially — just when it's young or healthy or fit; it confounds those who only love their life to a certain extent or under certain conditions. The Gospel expresses an infinite affirmation of life. It deals with a man who has lived this infinite affirmation.

"He was a worker who wandered about with a group of friends. They shared what they owned, they helped the sick. He told stories which dealt with liberation. Competition and fear were excluded, money and power played no role.

And that is the task of the Church — to keep that message alive.

At a time when life is cheap, when people are despised, when thousands of people are just counted out as not worth our worry, then we need that message of freedom and liberation even more so than when Jesus first said it.

Maybe the Church is reticent at times, maybe shy, but sooner or later it comes back to its senses and, like its Lord, it speaks out, and it suffers for it, but people are set free and that's why we need the Church and why I want to stay a Christian and a Catholic.

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



A month ago I wrote in this column a "Letter to Sue" in reply to her year-old query: "Why don't you ever write about us teen agers?" I said that I didn't feel competent, and asked her to write her thoughts about teen agers and the Church. Included was an open invitation to any other teen ager so inclined also to write.

One boy from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Brighton wrote an impressive letter remarking: "I hope that thousands of other boys and girls will also write to you." This is part of the euphoria which makes youth loveable but exasperating. Anyway, last week I phoned Sue asking about her letter. With gusto she replied: "I have the letter all written but haven't mailed it yet." It still has not come.

Those who have written, however, seem in general agreement about the Church, the Mass and their peers. And many parents, priests and Sisters have asked with interest: "Have you heard from that teen age girl yet?" Now as I wait not over-patiently, I write again.

Dear Sue,

Enclosed is an 8 cent stamp and the request for a prompt posting of your promised letter. The number of people who await your thoughts indicate, I think, their puzzlement.

For years I have been pondering about the so-called generation gap, and have come to the conclusion that the most potent element in bringing about such a more evident conflict is the instant communication of ideas made possible through TV and radio. Wasn't it one of the Beatles who got into hot water for commenting that he was more popular than Jesus Christ? As I recall the incident he was not claiming to be more important, but that the teen agers heeded him and his group more than they did Our Lord. But his comment was so crudely expressed, he was misunderstood.

From magazines, newspapers, TV, radio there is implied a youthful turning to our Lord, Jesus Christ, Superstar was a great hit financially and in

popularity. I confess it did not send me into any spiritual orbit, but it may have given a better direction to some. Miracles do happen. "Jesus freaks" and such groups I think are a bit of faddism, but better that Our Lord be honored extravagantly than not at all.

Starting in the right direction is important. The hard part is the perseverance. As I read the letters which have come, I am thinking of the TV series, The Six Wives of Henry VIII, which familiarized millions with the life of a king who had all the makings of a super-saint. Henry started out as a sincerely generous, intelligent, gifted, religious teen-ager; but he changed directions in his near 30s. Did you know that his marriage to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon was ecstatically happy for many years? To fall in love is one thing. To remain in love is another: whether with a spouse, an ideal, or Jesus Christ. So I commend to any teen agers who are a bit impatient with some of us oldsters, the prayer of Henry's cousin, the beautiful Mary Queen of Scots, who as you recall was beheaded during the reign of her cousin Elizabeth.

Mary's Stuart's Prayer

Keep us, O God, from all pettiness. Let us be large in thought, in word and in deed.

Let us be done with fault finding and leave off all self-seeking.

May we put away all pretense and meet each other face to face, without self pity and without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous.

Let us take time for all things, and make us to grow calm, serene and gentle.

Teach us to put into action our better impulses, straight forward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize that it is the little things of life that create differences; that in the big things of life we are as one.

And, O Lord God, let us not forget to be kind. Amen

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