

Fordham Course on Devil Draws Heavy Response

New York (RNS) — Old grads who think the current generation of Fordham University students is going to the devil now have evidence to back up their suspicions.

A course in the devil was offered for the first time this semester and aroused such interest it was filled up — 35 students — within a few minutes after registration opened, according to Father Robert E. McNally, SJ, chairman of the theology department at the Jesuit institution.

Father McNally is teaching the course himself and says he offered it because he thought the fascination of many young people with Satan cults and the like indicated a need. He does not write off all such "devilish" activities as pure superstition, but he does think "90 per cent of it is for the birds."

Beyond that, however, Father McNally sees the danger of mental health problems.

If young people play around with the occult a little just for entertainment, there may be no problem, he says, but serious involvement in it can lead to a "distortion of personality."

Asked if he took the position that the devil is an existing being, Father McNally said he did not have a "well-defined" position.

"There are two main possibilities — to see the devil as a person or as a force of evil," he said. "I tend to vacillate between the two."

Though the devil could be considered a symbol, he added, there must be something beyond the symbol.



TOURNEY SPEAKER

John Bach, basketball coach at Penn State University and assistant coach of the U.S. Olympic team at Munich last summer, will be the featured speaker at the dinner before the Lincoln First Bank of Rochester tourney, Brockport State, Rochester Institute of Technology, Roberts Wesleyan, and St. John Fisher will participate in the tourney.

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In theology the devil is defined as a fallen angel, he said, but the human mind finds it impossible to conceive just what that means and inevitably turns to anthropomorphic descriptions, which then have to be demythologized.

Father McNally, a graduate of Georgetown University with a doctorate from Maximilian University in Munich, said some good material on the devil has been written in German. But he said it was hard to find useful books in English and he had not found a textbook for his course.

On Nov. 15, for the first time in his reign, Pope Paul delivered an address totally devoted to the topic of Satan and his wives. And Vatican City's daily newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, devoted a full two-page special section of

its Dec. 17 issue to the subject of the existence of the devil.

Why this upsurge of interest? "There is a fairly common conviction that the balance between good and evil has been somewhat upset," says Father McNally. "When this happens, people look for an explanation of why evil is so rampant. It is natural then to look to Satan."

He points out that the Scriptures have numerous references to the devil — the snake in the Garden of Eden, Job's accuser, Christ's tempter. And he points out that there is an attempt to give the devil his due in many literary works — the Faustus legends, Milton's Paradise Lost, Dante's Inferno and in such a modern bestseller as The Exorcist. The various ways people have viewed the devil throughout history will be covered in the course, he says.

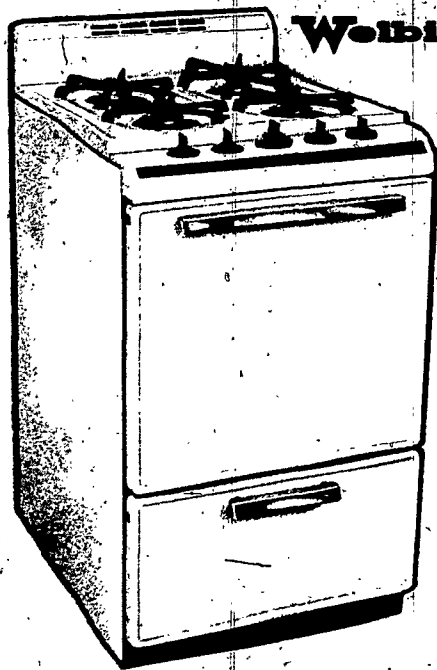


Pointing the Way

United Farm Workers leader Cesar Chavez motions during a Salinas, Calif., news conference as he announces his union will set up picket lines around the nation's supermarkets and lettuce fields to force lettuce growers to sign union contracts. Mr. Chavez made his announcement after the California Supreme Court lifted an injunction prohibiting striking and picketing by the UFW union. At left is UFW counsel Jerry Cohen who disclosed that the union is seeking damages of \$113 million in two suits against the Teamsters Union and lettuce growers. (RNS)

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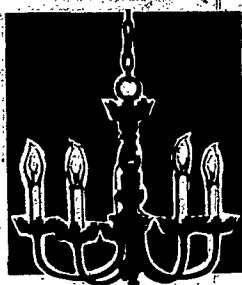
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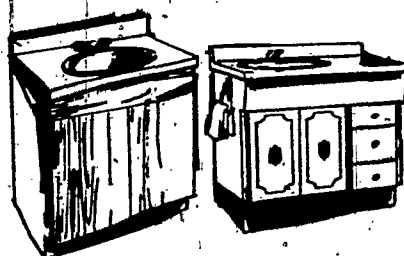
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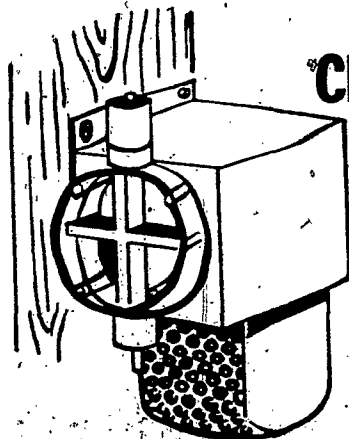
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