

FR. HENRY ATWELL

## Toward Tomorrow



When the bells of all the churches in Avon rang out at the time of the ceasefire in Vietnam, more than one person, I have been told, stood at their front doors and quietly wept for joy.

I am sure that almost everyone had long, silent thoughts at that time.

I myself rang the big bell in our St. Agnes Church tower, and up there, overlooking the historic Genesee Valley I had many thoughts of my own — thoughts of thanks, of course, to God, for our President and all who worked to attain the peace, for those who died or suffered because of the war, those who sacrificed their freedom or even their homeland rather than wage that war, the deep wounds that will scar our world, our nation and our own personal lives for years yet to come.

There is, I am afraid, a very real hazard that too many of us will now breathe a sigh of relief that the agony is over with and turn our attention to other and far more pleasant topics — and that will only pave the road for yet another war to take root, for wars do not just suddenly erupt but are the evil fruit of many accumulated decisions and acts, both large and small. So also peace doesn't just happen either. It too depends on many people wanting and working for peace.

The urgency for an effective peace movement has long been evident.

President John F. Kennedy in his memorable inaugural said, "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind."

President Dwight D. Eisenhower before him said, "People want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it."

Pope Paul in his historic visit to the

United Nations said, "No more war — war never again!"

The Vietnam war has proved beyond any doubt that even presidents and popes are unable by themselves either to prevent or end war. Ultimately it's people who by default or by decision cause war or cause peace.

We have at hand a remarkable tool to inform ourselves what we as people can do about this matter — it is called the "Network to End War" and provides a program of study and action for small groups. The "network" is not a radical, flag-burning, blood-pouring program but a down-to-earth, reasonable and attainable proposal based on the conviction that "responsibility for work to end war rests with individual citizens as well as with political leaders." Network says, "Laymen as well as experts have a critical role to play in making our country a leader in work to end war."

Some may reply that there always will be war, even Scripture, they say, tells us so.

For centuries people viewed the moon as an unreachable star and they dreamed of fantasy trips there, knowing always that they would never get there — until in the 1960s we made the landing of a man on the moon by 1970 a national goal. Vast resources of talent, equipment and funds were devoted to the effort. Whole segments of our industry were re-arranged to attain that goal. And we attained it.

People who think peace is forever to be an elusive will-o-the-wisp will fulfill their own prophecy of inevitable doom if they opt out of working for peace for only when there is an overwhelming, worldwide, singleminded desire for peace shall we ever have the possibility to attain it.

And if we don't attain it, then there shall be no tears shed in either joy or sorrow at the end of the next war — for we are most likely to be that war's victims.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

## On The Right Side



A sizzling letter came to me with a newspaper picture of a couple priests who were identifiable in clericals, a couple nice laymen who could pass as incognito priests equalling Bing Crosby's cinematic priesthood, and a couple of Sisters without habit. For the sake of identification let us term unidentifiable Sisters as Sisters Incognito. The people pictured were specialists in pastoral counseling.

What touched off the writer of the letter was a Sister Incognito who sat exposing a large section of her right thigh. So she wrote:

"What has happened to our Sisters? When I was a girl, the Sisters were dedicated and modest; and they taught us modesty. Why, those of us who even had our hair bobbed were put in the back of our class picture, because the bobbed hair was considered hardly decent . . ."

Since the writer herself remained incognito, I address her now: Dear Mrs. Incognita,

I remember a sermon thundered by the greatly loved Father Straub at the graduation exercises for the eighth grade graduates of Holy Family School in Auburn. Like Savaonarola he roared: "Imagine the Blessed Mother of God walking down the streets of Nazareth with her hair bobbed!" In 1920 that was an arresting thought. So now we come to the question: What is modesty? Was Sister Incognita immodest in exposing her thigh? or was she just glorifying God in His creation?

In 1955 I met an Irish Franciscan Sister at an orphanage in Casablanca. She had come north from her mission in equatorial Africa to recoup from the dreadful heat which had drained her to sickness. She remarked: "Our people go about stark naked; and we do not try to put clothes on them. The heat of the equator is simply awful." I remember admiring the equanimity with which the Sister Franciscan accepted the culture of her people. Now Sister was not contemplating nudity for herself. But she did recognize that modesty can be relative to a culture, especially at the torrid equator.

Cultural patterns have changed even in our time. Just why Sisters Incognito elect to display their thighs I do not know. Why they reject the habit I do not know; but I do think it is rooted in a rejection of the traditional religious life which the whole world has revered. Vatican II documents are used as the Whipping Book to leather traditional religious life.

Now let's be reasonable. To say, "What has happened to our Sisters" is like saying, "What has happened to mothers?" We have beautiful mothers who are devoted to their husbands, their children and their neighbors with a love rooted in God. And we still have wonderful Sisters who are devoted to Christ, to His Church, to their communities and to those whom they serve. Many of these are caught in the bind of a contradiction, when under the guise of renewal some communities have changed the concept of community, poverty, obedience, while retaining the words.

Take courage. An order which today brings world-wide reverence is only 20 years old, the Missionary Sisters of Charity. Malcolm Muggeridge wrote of it in his book, *A Beautiful Thing for God*. Do get a copy. The Feb. 4 Our Sunday Visitor with a circulation of half a million, features Mother Teresa, the foundress.

This order is faithful to traditional religious life: centered about the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament, community prayer, the rosary, community recreation, devotion to the Church and to the Pope. The Sisters wear a habit, the Indian white sari; their work is hard and dirty; they work long hours. But always the life is centered in Jesus Christ, so emphatically present in the Blessed Sacrament, the poor, and in their own community.

If any reader wishes to extend knowledge of Mother Teresa's community, just send me \$1 at St. James Mercy Hospital, Horne, N.Y. 14843. I will send you four copies of a booklet describing the community and Mother Teresa; and include a copy of Father Vincent Collins' helpful booklet, *Acceptance*, as a bonus.

# Courier-Journal Tour To The HOLY LAND and GREECE



With Father Henry Atwell

A tour to the Holy Land is a travel dream you cherished all your life. The panorama of the religious, historical, cultural and scenic places of interest it presents is truly fascinating. You see with your own eyes the very sources of christianity. On your return a stop is made at timeless Greece to see a bit of fascinating Athens and the nearby areas

This tour to the Holy Land and Greece sponsored by the Courier-Journal will be personally conducted by Reverend Henry Atwell, past editor of the Courier and now pastor of St. Agnes Church in Avon, New York and Chairman of the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries.

A FEW  
RESERVATIONS  
REMAIN  
AVAILABLE

March 13th to  
March 23rd, 1973

ISRAEL, JERUSALEM, GALILEE  
TEL AVIV, GREECE

price \$87500 per person  
complete

MAIL COUPON FOR FREE BROCHURE

COURIER-JOURNAL TOURS  
67 Chestnut Street  
Rochester, N.Y. 14604  
Please send Holyland brochure:  
NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_