

FR. HENRY ATWELL

Toward Tomorrow



If you're poor, get used to it, you're going to stay that way for a long time.

The big "peace dividend" we looked for when the Vietnam war ended will go to the Pentagon but not to the poor.

President Nixon's new budget is soft on generals but real hard on the elderly, the sick, children in school, poor people.

Although Dr. Henry Kissinger told us last autumn that "peace is at hand" and he has since been to Hanoi, Peking and other cities to meet our new friends, President Nixon still budgets the Pentagon \$4,000,000,000 — that's four billion — more than last year's close to \$80,000,000,000 budget.

But he plans to cut health care down \$6,000,000. That means increased costs for the elderly who have to be hospitalized.

Housing funds will be cut by 2,500,000,000 — and thereby cut off hopes for a better home for 2,500,000 American families.

All this will kill jobs for well over 2,000,000 people.

I find scant comfort in knowing that we'll get in exchange for all this loss a \$4,000,000,000 increase in military salaries and weapons.

We've also been told that the President's "revenue sharing" arrangement will channel funds back to local governments to decide how they want the money spent. Even enlightened political leaders will be much tempted to spend sizeable portions of such funds for wider roads, shiny new fire trucks, and other items for display — and leave the elderly, the poor, the sick to suffer quietly.

Commonweal, in an editorial in its current issue, comments on the Nixon budget: "No one claims that all of the present social programs are perfect, but if some are weak, they should be strengthened, not killed. In any case, for every \$25 misspent in a poverty program, there are thousands of dollars down the drain in defense department cost overruns; these Mr. Nixon chooses to ignore. The President has urged public pressure on Congress

in support of his proposals; this makes it essential that concerned citizens of different views constitute themselves a lobby on behalf of the poor, the blacks, the Chicanos the children, the aged and all those unable to speak effectively for themselves."

While we still have the remnants of a government that is "of the people, by the people, for the people," we have a prompt and urgent duty to deluge Congress with a demand to humanize the federal budget, to reverse our priorities from the Pentagon and for the poor. To continue in our present direction is only to invite the wrath of God and the violence of oppressed citizens.

I simply cannot comprehend how Catholics can so casually dismiss their responsibility to respond clearly and forcefully in such critical matters.

We have a shelf-full of encyclicals dating back to Pope Leo XIII's "Rerum Novarum" up to Pope Paul VI's "Populorum Progressio." We have the uncompromising documents of the Vatican Council issued with the authority of the Pope and the world's Bishops with him — especially the long but brilliant statement on "The Church in the Modern World." If we call ourselves even borderline Catholics how can we ignore or reject the most solemn statements of the highest authorities of that Church which we claim is ours. These very people ride about with bumper stickers advising all others: "America — love it or leave it." Maybe we need a new version of that old one: "Your Church — live it or leave it."

Fortunately, the Church is more gracious than are people like me. The Church, instead, repeats patiently, hopefully, in one way or another, as in this statement from the Vatican Council: "The followers of Christ share fully in the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of their fellowmen, especially the poor and the suffering."

And this is but a new way of saying what was said by our Savior so long ago when he told the parable of the Good Samaritan — that we serve God best when we provide for our neighbor in need.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



From a matron of the diocese: "Bitterness doesn't quite describe my feelings. It is more an anxiety accompanied with frustration. I don't want to be melodramatic, but when you once considered yourself a normal Catholic, and now detest going to church, something is wrong.

"Our parish church has become a political arena. If they can't get people to come out for meetings, elections, etc., they utilize Sunday Mass with captive audience to substitute for a meeting or event that wasn't successfully attended during the week. The announcements, pre, during, and post Mass are unbelievable. The homily is a far cry from any semblance of the Gospel of the Sunday.

"I simply do not believe that a lifetime of devotion, that held a uniqueness of faith and comfort, could crumble like a piece of plaster. What is wrong? Does our bishop really believe that this change will attract the young to the Church? Our young are too sophisticated today to tolerate such chaos. My teen-age son refuses to go to religious instruction. He says: 'I learn nothing about God. Last week we talked about witches. We get all that stuff in school when we discuss cultural histories.'

"Is there any hope? Of course we pray and read, but there is such a deviation of thought from the pope down that one wonders if the time has come when each of us must develop our own religion within our individual families, and practice God's teaching as best we know how."

Comment: I have been trying to capsule the personality of the Vandals who work havoc in the Church. Through the psychiatric department of St. James Mercy Hospital I found a phrase: compulsively obsessive.

Their dominant and mutual characteristic is their determination that all shall knuckle under to their present enthusiasm. Today it may be to eliminate the bells and genuflections from Mass rite, despite the preferences of the people. Yesterday it was to get rid of the crucifix. Tomorrow it probably will be a rip-roaring campaign to force an unwilling people to receive Holy Communion in the hand. As one

sensible young pastor said, "I have no feelings one way or the other about Communion in the hand. And if the Holy Father told us to do so, I certainly would. But he hasn't changed the law."

However, the compulsive obsessives are physically agitated to defy the pope, and hold the wishes of the people in complete contempt. In the February issue of the Homiletic Review a letter from a laymen gives food for thought. It reads:

"Recently I read the November Issue of your review. I must say that the attitude expressed in the three letters concerning Communion-in-the-hand escapes me. The three admit, in a left-handed way, that the laity prefer the traditional way of receiving Communion. They admit it would require education, catechesis, explanations, trial periods and what not, to gain the faithful over to Communion in the hand. Then why do it at all? To satisfy whom? Certainly the faithful are quite happy in expressing their reverence to the Body of Christ in the traditional way."

One thing I am pretty sure of the obsessive compulsionists are not terribly interested in what the people want. Their concern is to impose their present obsession on the people, despite their wishes, and despite the wishes of the Pope.

Homiletic and Pastoral Review is available to the laity as well as to the clergy. The address is 86 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10024.

Those who believe de Chardin, Hans Kueng and Katherine Kuhlman are the 20th century substitutes for the Apostles and St. Paul, would not be pleased with the review; but I think that those who believe the Vatican II declarations about the Church, the episcopacy and the laity will find the review giving that "uniqueness of faith and comfort" which the matron who wrote the opening letter once possessed.

In the meanwhile I should suggest that if the Sunday Mass is dismaying with its politics and shenanigans, she should go to another parish and await the return of the Holy Spirit to her own.

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