



THE CHURCH 1973  
Fr. Andrew Greeley

It may come as a shock to some readers, but I have at least as much trouble with the administration of the University of Chicago as I do with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops — indeed, maybe even a little more.

During one of the more recent conflicts with that august body, I was approached by a sensitive and sympathetic administrator. He pointed out to me that he was quite sure that if I would leave the priesthood and get married, there would be no trouble at all in finding a place as a first-class citizen of the university. Apparently, it would be necessary for me to marry. Just leaving the priesthood wouldn't be enough, because I gathered, as long as I was unmarried, there would always be the possibility of reneging on my part of the deal.

One of my friends to whom I later related the incident asked if I had been tempted. Yes, I confessed, I certainly was — though scarcely to matrimony. However, murder is against both the legal and moral codes, and I resisted the temptation.

When I first showed up on the secular academic beach, I was amazed and impressed by how friendly everyone was. They seemed perfectly delighted to have a Catholic priest around. But with the passage of time, many of those who had been most friendly turned into bitter enemies. I once asked Peter Rossi, who clearly never underwent such a change, what had happened to the others. "It's easy," that worthy Florentine remarked, "they thought you would convert. We've got a great reputation here of converting people away from the priesthood. Once they discovered you weren't about to change, you became the enemy."

I guess I thought convert-making was something that only went on our side, and that we had given it up long ago. Yet when I stop to think about it, I realize that there were certain of my colleagues who had quite a record of convert-making. One man in particular seemed particularly good at taking a priest under his wing, promising him all kinds of academic advantages, and then somehow or other, losing track of him when the man left the priesthood.

My suspicion is that such convert-making was no more effective in reality than our own convert-making. People came into the Catholic Church in the old days because they wanted to, not because of anything we said or did. Priests left the priesthood in the secular academic environment because they wanted

to, not because there were either subtle or obvious pressures brought to bear upon them to do so. I'm sure the administrator who pointed out to me how to confound my enemies in the university knew me well enough to know that there was simply no way I would choose that strategy.

And I should make it clear that while the anticlericals in the academic world are not insignificant either in numbers or power, they are not a majority. On the contrary, there are many agnostic scholars who are profoundly shocked when a colleague leaves the priesthood. They can accept in principle the idea that a man has the right to leave the priesthood and still be offended, for reasons they can articulate too well, when one of their "own" priests resigns. Still, anyone who believes that anti-Catholicism and anticlericalism is not widespread in the groves of academe simply hasn't had to hack his way through those jungles lately.

My response to the suggestion that I seek a wife as a prelude to a university chair was instantaneous and profane. But on reflection I found myself wondering why my reaction was so automatic. I live on the margins of the Church; I get very little support and quite a bit of grief both from the official structure and from my presumed brothers in the priesthood. Most of the ministerial efforts to which I have devoted my life so far have been abject failures. Why not get out and settle down to pursuing a serious academic career, instead of continuing for another couple of decades a fruitless, marginal life? I suppose the only reason for asking and answering these questions in public is that they must occur to many priests, indeed to many Catholics.

This is ordination time in the American Church. When I see the pictures of the ordinandi in the newspapers, I realize that they are very different from me — and not merely because of their long hair and beards. They grew up and were trained in a different world, in a different Church. And by different I do not mean inferior; the ones I know are, on the contrary, very impressive. Whether the things I have written in this column will mean anything or not to them, I cannot say. It is for them, nonetheless, that this column is written.

Correction

In a photograph of the Holy Cross centennial celebration published last week, the Knights of St. John were incorrectly identified as Knights of Columbus.



Teacher Ken Sarkis back in the classroom with kids who made the trip.

At St. Michael's

A Tour Through History

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

Thirteen St. Michael seventh graders took to the open road over the Memorial Day weekend to look for America-past.

Rented station wagons driven by Ken Sarkis, history and language arts teacher, and Mary Mansfield, gym teacher, set out May 24 for two of America's earliest settled cities — New York and Philadelphia.

Since September, Sarkis has been telling his history class of the people and places that played major roles in the colonial and revolutionary days of this country. He described the first cities to be settled, then and now, as well as early settled areas in the Adirondack Mountains and important battlefields such as Saratoga.

Finally, about a month ago, the descriptions became too vivid for the class to bear and two boys, Jose Marrero and Radames Maldonado forced Sarkis, by constant kidding, into really taking a trip to some of the historical places they "traveled to" every day in their lessons.

The class put on a chicken dinner which raised \$364. Most of the money went toward the rented cars since room and board in New York came free. Sarkis' brother opened up his lower east side loft to house the young explorers during their stay, making it possible for them to take a five-day trip for only \$9.50 per pupil.

The Natural History Museum was the group's favorite stop, followed by dinner in Chinatown where they took movies of their "friendly" waitress, and picnics in Central Park.

During a recent visit with the class to hear their post-trip thoughts on America-past and present, they said they also liked the Statue of Liberty, though they felt it was a waste of time to go to the top since the windows are so dirty it was impossible to see the harbor where the first settlers landed.

The 102-story World Trade Center was a site they enjoyed so much they agreed it was worth running six blocks in the rain to make a tour on how the building was built.

When on the 78th floor, trying to view the city through the storm was a bit disappointing. One boy discovered and informed Sarkis, "You know what happens in this town when it rains, the tops of the buildings disappear."

The dormitory living style in the loft was another new experience that got rave reviews.

The boys on the-trip stayed on the fifth floor of the apartment building, while the two girls and their chaperone stayed on the sixth. Meals and evenings spent putting on original plays based on American history were shared by all the students.

"It felt like a family," is the way Donald Leger described their stay.

Sunday morning it was goodbye Manhattan and on to Philadelphia's Independence Hall, Liberty Bell and Elfreth's Alley, the United States' oldest residential street.

Benjamin Franklin and Betsy Ross were just two of the distinguished historical figures

that called Elfreth's Alley their home address, one student explained.

The class admitted rain dampened their enthusiasm for Philadelphia and that they liked New York city better since "there are more things to see." The students also agreed they would like to visit the city again — but none wanted to live there.

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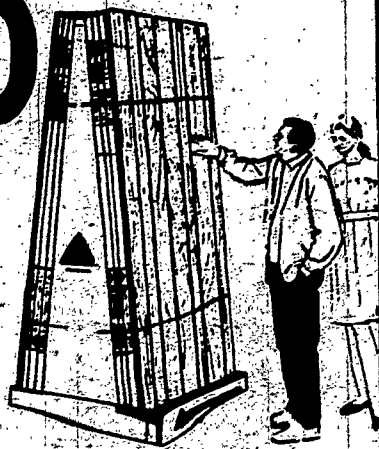
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