



THE CHURCH 1973
Fr. Andrew Greeley

A Benedictine abbot remarked to me recently that he finally showed up at an abbots' meeting in a sports jacket (borrowed). For a number of years he had been the only man at the meeting in a black suit and finally began to feel out of place. He was somewhat dismayed to walk into the room in his jaunty plaid coat only to discover that everyone else was wearing a habit.

On some Catholic campuses the younger clergy now teach class not only in Roman collars but in cassocks. The students think its great.

The chaplain at a secular university tells me that a number of the young women who are graduating this year are going into the religious orders that wear traditional garb.

And last of all, I am told that in some seminaries the biretta is in fashion once again.

Not only are young Jesuits digging out of mothballs the moldy, ill-fitting, green-tinged cassocks of yesteryear; they are also trying to probe deeply into the spiritual theology of Ignatius of Loyola. Having thrown out most of our traditions in the middle 1960s, we are now somewhat sheepishly trying to rediscover them.

Some middle-aging Catholic liberals are furious. It is a "turning to the right," a "conservative trend," an "attempt to recapture the past," or simply a "sell-out."

I'm not so sure. Undoubtedly there is a strain in the Pentecostal-fundamentalist component of American Catholicism just now to reconstruct past forms, as though one could undo the last decade of history by pretending it never happened and as though one could write off all the uncertainties of the present by recreating the form of the much more certain world of before the Council. Habits, cassocks, birettas, benediction, retreats, the rosary — all of these can easily become little more than a flight from the ambiguous and confusing realities of the present moment.

But they don't have to be. What my middle-aging liberal friends fail to understand is that for a young woman to want to wear a religious habit and a young man to want to wear a cassock represents a revolt against what has become the established wisdom. There was a time when official truth said that priests and nuns had to be different from everyone else — and being different meant looking different. (How could one be different unless one looked different? After all, books are to be judged by their covers, aren't they?)

Presently the conventional wisdom says that priests and religious should be just like

everyone else, so they should look just like everyone else. (And the book is still being judged by its cover.) This conventional wisdom was once dissident and revolutionary; it has succeeded, and like all successful revolutions, it must now face dissent from those who succeed it. The young priest or religious who wants to look different from other people, who wants to put on a guru suit, is as much a rebel against the previous generation as it was against its predecessors.

But is it all a mindless return to the past? Have we made no progress at all? My own guess is that some of those who are so eager to don the habit now are as shallow as those who were so eager to get rid of it ten years ago. In both cases there was little understanding of the role in human life of sacred persons or of sacred symbols. As Langdon Gilkey says in his article in the current issue of Concilium, the purpose of religious symbols is to remind us that the holy is in us and that our lives are symbols of the holy.

Who and what a person is is a far more effective symbol than a veil or a Roman collar, but still they are useful external signs; they are quick, shorthand ways of reminding people of the eschatological reality that breaks through to the world in religious symbolism and in the symbolism of human life. The cleric and the religious shouldn't be like everyone else, but then in the Christian scheme of things no one should be like anyone else. We should all be symbols of the holy.

At least some of those who are re-examining the past may not be immature or reactionary at all. They may be displaying the first signs of wisdom; they may have discovered that our predecessors were not all howling savages or superstitious barbarians, that there may have been truths and insights and understandings in the past that we have lost. They may have discovered that we are not the hinge of history, that the human race did not come out of the trees in 1960, and that great traditions cannot and should not be written off with a flip of the page.

Vatican Bans Variances In Eucharistic Prayer

Vatican City [RNS] — The Vatican has banned all local variations of the "Eucharistic Prayer" or "Canon" of the Mass, decreeing that bishops and priests are equally bound by the formulas as laid down by the Holy See.

In a letter to the presidents of episcopal conferences around the world, the Vatican placed a restrictive interpretation on the Ecumenical Council's liturgical constitution which had given a broad ruling to the effect that both the Holy See and the bishops were responsible for setting rules for liturgy.

Now the Vatican is reserving exclusively for itself the power to introduce changes in the "Eucharistic Prayer," or "Canon," which the celebrant recites in the central part of the Mass culminating in the consecration of the Host and wine.

In a commentary in the Vatican Daily, Osservatore Romano, Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, the congregation's secretary and for several years the main architect of liturgical reform, said this was the first time since the 1962-1965 Ecumenical Council that the Holy See has claimed exclusive power on a specific point from the bishops.

The new regulations confirm Pope Paul's decision to stand firm against the mounting call for change on the basic points of Roman Catholicism.

The Eucharistic Prayer, the heart of the mass, is regarded as the essential part in the sacrament which, according to Roman Catholic belief, turns the host and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ, thus providing vital nourishment for those baptized.

Many priests departed from the strict rules which had for centuries guided the conduct of the Mass after Vatican II called for changes in the 1963 liturgical constitution.

This trend was increased by a 1969 Papal decree which gave an option for choice between four eucharistic prayers for the Mass.

Many celebrants preferred prayers of their own choosing or even improvised one on the spot — sometimes allowing members of the congregation to break in with extemporaneous additions. This has been happening fairly often in Western Europe and in North and South America, especially in small congregations, in the "underground Church" of the United States and similar groups elsewhere.

Archbishop Bugnini described these departures as "intolerable abuse." He said the new rules were intended to get rid of the "jungle" which had grown up in the past decade. The Pope, he said, had acted on the pressing request of "bishops, priests and numerous faithful."

"The Holy See was acting out of pastoral love for unity," the archbishop wrote.



OUR PARISH COUNCIL Bernard Lyons

What would happen if the Church's social doctrine were labeled "Top Secret"?

Maybe nothing. A great number of Catholics already act as if the Church's social doctrine were sealed away in some dark archives.

A 1971 Newsweek poll reported that Catholics who are closely associated with parish life "are apt to be less involved in reform movements of either a social or religious nature."

Perhaps the best way to approach this problem of the lack of parishioners knowledge of and involvement in the implications of the Church's social teachings is to take a little test. This brief true-and-false quiz was prepared by the Division of Justice and Peace of the U.S. Catholic Conference.

1. Papal social encyclicals have treated abortion more frequently than poverty. T F
2. For most people, things are getting better. T F
3. World conditions call for radical change. T F
4. Catholics should wait for instructions from the hierarchy. T F
5. For Christians, capitalism is the best system. T F
6. Free trade is essential to world peace. T F

7. Trade relations between the U.S. and poor nations favor the U.S. T F

8. The world is sick. T F

9. The Church in all conditions supports the right to private property. T F

10. In adversity the Christian should wait in hope for conditions to change. T F

11. Acts of charity and works of justice are one and the same. T F

12. Communism and Christianity both see the need for world government. T F

13. Governments must make their citizens accept taxes to pay for world development. T F

Answers: 1-F; 2-F; 3-T; 4-F; 5-F; 6-F; 7-T; 8-T; 9-F; 10-F; 11-F; 12-T; 13-T.

Some readers will be angry about the answers. Not the they dislike finding they gave a wrong answer so much, but that they vehemently disagree with the Church's social teaching. The supporting material for the above statements will be found in Pope Paul's "The Development of Peoples" and/or "This Is Progress."

It would be interesting to take this little test at your next parish council meeting. Then discuss its implications.

Auto Accident Takes Two Lives

Elmira — Funerals for two 17-year-old accident victims were held here June 12.

Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated at St. Patrick's for Diane M. Twardeski and at St. Casimir's for Mark G. Wodnick. The two high school seniors were killed when their car hit a tree in Harris Hill Park.

Miss Twardeski, of West Water Street, attended Elmira Free Academy, and Mr. Wodnick, who lived in Lovell Terrace, was a student at Notre Dame High School. Fellow students and faculty members attended the Masses.

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