



THE CHURCH 1973 Fr. Andrew Greeley

In a recent issue of the Thomas More Association newsletter, Overview, there was a "special report" by a former priest that was somewhat more interesting and poignant than most such articles. It was not altogether free from self pity.

He tells us of the rude shock of having to shop in a supermarket. Because he was a member of a religious community, he may never have had to go to a supermarket before, but I can assure him that many in the priesthood became familiar enough with the inside of supermarkets long ago.

The most interesting part of the article is that which gives it its title: his aunt still calls him Father. Try as he may it is impossible to leave the priesthood behind. The tawdry conversation at the chancery office, the secret marriage, the "drumming out of the regiment" that seems to happen inevitably when one leaves the priesthood still does not affect what his aunt thinks. From her viewpoint he is still what he always was, "Father." There is nothing he will be able to do or nothing that will ever happen to him that will change her mind.

The author seems not exactly angry but rather baffled and surprised by her response. Does she not understand that the priest really isn't a sacred person? Does she not realize that one can leave the priesthood, if not quite as easily as any other profession, still definitively and irrevocably? Does she not realize that all of the old mythology about being a priest forever is myth; not intended to be taken literally and seriously? Does she not realize that a man can stop being a priest and should not be called "Father" any longer?

The answer to that is no, of course not. His aunt will never be able to understand why he left the priesthood, and she will never be persuaded that he is not still a priest. Nor will she ever be willing to admit that he will not be a priest forever. After all, that is what she was taught by her priest, and it was what he taught others during his years as a priest. The priesthood used to be a sacred office; it used to be something that one left only with the gravest reluctance; and the title "Father" used to be an honor even if one were not a practicing priest. He may have changed his mind and his attitude, but his aunt has not, and there is no particular reason to expect that she should or would. People like her may be sympathetic with those who have left the priesthood, but as far as they are concerned, a priest is still a priest and that is that.

Is there any "right" or "wrong" side to such a story? Is the aunt wrong to think that once you are a sacred person you are always one? Is the author of the article wrong to think that one can shuck the priesthood as one could law, journalism, or truck-driving? Should you be able just to sign your name to a paper and be free of all the responsibilities and burdens and charismas of the priestly life? It is not a question that is easy to answer.

One can agree that it was once too difficult psychologically and organizationally to get out of the priesthood, and that it still is a painful and degrading process — when it ought not to be either. Yet on the other hand, can one not also assert that the priesthood is inevitably and will always remain a sacred function, and that departure from it can never be easy or smooth?

One can never leave the priesthood without scars — scars for oneself and for others. Is it somehow or other possible to

view the priesthood as a permanent commitment, a commitment that does indeed mark a man (socially and psychologically at any rate) for all eternity and still concede that in certain sets of circumstance it is appropriate to leave the priesthood? Is it not possible that we have swung from one end of the pendulum to the other, and that somewhere in between there lies a balance in which the permanence of the priestly commitment is honored and yet men are permitted to leave with dignity and respect?

I am not sure, though in principle I don't see any reason why this can't happen. Somehow our Episcopalian brothers seem to do it better. One can stop being an active Episcopalian cleric and still be considered a priest, still be called "Father," and still occasionally perform clerical functions. Ought there not to be some way in which we can imitate them in this matter? Ought there not to be some place in the Church for one who is no longer practicing the active ministry, and yet still proud to have his aunt call him "Father"?

I hope so, because to tell you the truth, I have a sneaky admiration for the old girl, and I hope she keeps on calling him "Father."

Nazareth College To Note 50 Years

The Board of Trustees of Nazareth College officially designated the 1974-75 academic year recently as a "Year of Celebration" in honor of the 50th anniversary of the college's founding. The announcement was made after a meeting of the trustees by Judge Emmett J. Schnepf, chairman of the board.

The board asked Dr. Alice L. Foley, president, to involve the college community in planning a year of special events. Focal point of the celebration will be Sept. 24, 1974. On that date in 1924 the college welcomed its

Drinan Hits Brezhnev on Jewish Issue

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — Disappointment that Soviet Communist party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev failed during his state visit here to clarify Soviet policy towards the emigration of Russian Jews has been expressed by Rep. Robert F. Drinan (D-Mass.).

In an open letter to Brezhnev, Father Drinan said he was disappointed "that nothing very clear, convincing or promising was said by you or your associates during your days in the United States with respect to the status or the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union."

Noting discrepancies between Brezhnev's statements while here and estimates of Russian Jewish emigration compiled by other sources, the congressman, a Jesuit priest, told the Soviet leader he intended to vote for legislation which would deny most-favored-nation trade treatment to any nation refusing to grant its citizens the right to emigrate freely.

"I hope that the United States will use the considerable economic leverage available to seek moral and political concessions from your country to extend the frontiers of freedom," Father Drinan wrote.

first class in a section of a Lake Avenue mansion referred to as the "Glass House."

One celebration highlight may be ground-breaking ceremonies for a college-community center. The college trustees have also authorized the building committee and Dr. Foley to "plan, design and prepare cost estimates" for such a center. Approval of architectural plans by the board would kick-off a capital fund drive to build a college-community center and chapel complex as part of the anniversary year celebration.

'74 Bishops' Synod To Study Evangelism

Washington [RNS] — The Vatican has distributed a 23-page document on The Evangelism of the Modern World for episcopal conferences to use in preparation for the 1974 International Synod of Bishops, which will be devoted to that theme.

The Synod, which is an outgrowth of Vatican II and serves as an advisory body to the Pope, has previously met three times — in 1967, 1969 and 1971.

In the preparatory document, the Vatican has presented a survey of the contemporary world situation in relation to evangelism, a summary of the theological principles involved in the topic and a long list of questions for the bishops of the world to consider in relation to their own areas.

In October 1974 some 200 bishops, most of them elected by their colleagues in the various episcopal conferences, will gather in Rome for the Synod.

The secretariat for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops here has distributed the preparatory document to all U.S. bishops. And the NCCB administrative committee is establishing an ad hoc committee of bishops to prepare a tentative response to the document for consideration by the NCCB meeting in Washington in November.

Stating that evangelization is understood in different senses, the document uses as a working definition "the activity whereby the Gospel is proclaimed and explained, and whereby living faith is awakened in non-Christians and fostered in Christians."

In a list of contemporary factors that appear favorable to evangelization, the document lists the search of many people for "a new life style," the Church's becoming less identified with political structures, reaction against "conformism and immutable traditions," increase in the sense of responsibility and search for a more genuine religious experience.

But the document also lists "possible hindrances" such as interpretations of life that are not open to God, secularization of institutions and questioning of traditional ethical principles. The bishops are asked to evaluate the effect such factors are having on evangelization.

Along with such obstacles in society, the document suggests a number of obstacles within the Church itself that may be hindering evangelization. Among those listed are currents of thought such as the "death of God" and "religionless Christianity" theories, uncertainty of faith among Church members and ties between the Church and political forces.

VARGA PRINTING
WHILE YOU—WAIT
100 COPIES \$3.00
8 1/2 x 11
20# Bond — Line Copy — Black
Completely equipped for fast — professional — low cost service on offset printing, typesetting and bindery.
VARGA COPY CENTER
131 North Street
232-1450

OVER 10,000 SATISFIED CUSTOMERS
... in Rochester, Monroe County & Surrounding Area

McCOMBS Co., Inc.
ROOFING • SIDING • INSULATION • STORM WINDOWS • BALCONIES
Registered with Corning Chamber of Commerce • Our Corning Office—936-8524
790 PLYMOUTH AVE. S.
ALL LABOR AND MATERIALS GUARANTEED, FREE ESTIMATES
CALL **436-9696**
OUT OF TOWN CALL COLLECT

Suede-life A New Exclusive Process by ...
for **seneca dyers**
SUEDE & LEATHER CLEANING
SEE US FOR:
• DYEING • FUR CLEANING & STORAGE
• REWEAVING • VINYL & PLASTIC CLEANING
• HAT & GLOVE CLEANING
1227 Maple St.
328 1736

BAKER LIGHTNING PROTECTION
Design and Engineering Service
Approved Materials and Installation
• SCIENTIFICALLY ENGINEERED
• EXPERTLY INSTALLED
• ULPA APPROVED SYSTEMS FOR ALL STRUCTURES
Since 1919
E. L. Baker Sons
WEBSTER, NEW YORK
PHONE 716-872-4000
MEMBER: UNITED LIGHTNING PROTECTION ASSOCIATION NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION LIGHTNING PROTECTION INSTITUTE