



THE CHURCH 1973
Fr. Andrew Greeley

A lot of people around the American Church rejoiced to hear that Notre Dame's first Reinhold Niebuhr Award went to Msgr. John Egan. The "Little Mon-signor," as he is affectionately known by many of his friends in Chicago, is one of the great churchmen of our era. Even if he has to receive the award in a quasi-exile at Notre Dame instead of being honored where he ought to be in his own native city it is still a good thing to see that a prophet is honored in his own time if not by his own people.

There is a bit of irony about Egan's award being named in honor of perhaps the greatest of all American Protestant theologians. Niebuhr wrote many brilliant books about political ethics and philosophy, but he was, if one is to judge by some of his essays on practical political problems, scarcely capable of delivering a precinct if his life depended on it. (I remember his 1960 article, claiming that "most priests" had voted for Nixon. How in the world he knew that escaped me then and still does.) Msgr. Egan, on the other hand, has not written any books, although his newsletter "Link" has proved extremely useful and helpful to many people in recent years. But as far as practical political tactics and strategy go, I doubt that there is a churchman in America who can match Jack Egan when he's moving on all eight cylinders.

I am told that there used to hang in his office a sign that said, "Even if I shall go down to the valley of death I shall not fear, because I'm the toughest so and so in the valley." The man may have done himself a disservice by the word "tough"; if the sign had read, "I am the smartest tactician in the valley," few of us who know him would have been inclined to dissent.

Msgr. Egan's largest contribution to the American Church has been as what the social scientists would call a "gatekeeper." In his many different careers — Catholic Action, marriage education, urban problems, and now pastoral theology — Msgr. Egan has

opened gates for thousands of people, gates that have led them to new, rich, constructive, creative lives. Few people who have come into contact with him for any period of time have escaped his enthusiasm and his instinctive intuitions as to what ought to be done and how. In times of change, uncertainty and confusion, the gatekeepers who can not only open the gates but persuade people to go through them and then indicate the directions of travel are absolutely indispensable. If there is another gatekeeper in the valley as skillful as Jack Egan, I have yet to encounter him.

And yet, as I reflect on his career, I am troubled; for I see no one in my generation or the generations that are coming after me who is capable of playing the same sort of role. Jack Egan opened the gates for me and for many of my generation. I at one time foolishly thought that I might do, the same for those coming after me. Alas, that is clearly not to be; but if there are any people of my age who are playing the same role that John Egan has played so brilliantly for so long, I don't know who they are. And if there is a new breed of gatekeeper coming after us, I am afraid it is invisible.

In any well run church, John Egan would have been an archbishop and a cardinal long ago. That he is not is fortunate for him, perhaps, but a misfortune for all the rest of us. That he had little choice but to impose upon himself an exile from his own diocese is a misfortune for him and for everyone in the diocese. There are not many John Egan's — not nearly enough — and those we have we ought to treat with respect, consideration and care. I am sure that Jack Egan is quite incapable of feeling that he was ill-used by his own archdiocese, but he was. Thank heaven that the University of Notre Dame was able to find a place for him, and thank heaven even more that it honors and respects him. And while we're talking to heaven, it would be nice if heaven would send along some more Jack Egan's — not very many, say, a half dozen or so. To tell the truth, a dozen might be too many altogether!

Father Rosse Director

Pastoral Service Begun at St. Mary's

St. Mary's Hospital announced last week creation of a Department of Pastoral Services "devoted to the spiritual needs of all patients, their families and hospital associates."

Father John V. Rosse, chief chaplain, is the director, and Sister Oliva Cunane, DC, associate director. Offices, now in the process of renovation, are in the chapel wing.

While continuing the emphasis on the sacramental ministry to the sick, the department also will coordinate the efforts of all visiting clergymen, volunteer groups and the hospital's own Sister Visitors, Father Rosse said. It will take part in the orientation of new hospital personnel and in continuing education and in-service programs.

Father Rosse foresees an expansion of the visitor program

PADRE PIO

The Padre Pio Prayer Group will hold its Holy Hour at 8 tonight at St. Philip Neri Church, 1780 Clifford Ave. All are invited.

now carried out by members of the community that runs the hospital, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

He is accredited by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains as a chaplain supervisor, and so is entitled, he explained, to oversee the certification process for other chaplains.

To become a chaplain, Sister Oliva took the Clinical Pastoral Education studies at University Hospital, Ann Arbor, Mich. She has been here since January, helping organize the new department.

Father Rosse, ordained in the St. Bernard's class of 1954, has been chaplain at St. Mary's since January, 1959.

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-CJ 7/18/73

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