

Editorial

A Time to Pray for Vocations

What do we look for in a priest, a Sister, a Brother?

The answer is not simple.

Granted we all respect the pastor who runs his parish efficiently — especially in these inflationary days.

Granted we all admire a Sister or Brother who administers a school or who teaches the three Rs or who labors in other ways in God's fields.

Granted we all admire the priest, Sister or Brother who has a social conscience and works to correct worldly injustices.

But there are laymen who are capable of being administrators, principals, teachers, social workers.

So then just what is the extra we expect of our religious leaders?

In a nutshell, their spiritual leadership. We look to them to hear the drum we miss amidst the hectic sounds of our daily existence — the children crying, the washer or the lathe, the telephone, the automobile, the lawnmower. We hope they use their time to worry about the eternal while we panic over the temporal and that they then find the time to pass on their knowledge to us at our convenience.

Perhaps we expect a measure of goodness in them not allowed to the rest of us engaged in worldly pursuits.

Explaining the reasons for the shortage of religious personnel in the Church today would require such social, psychological, historical, theological, and other expertise as to defy human reason. Attempting to find the remedies along such lines is equally frustrating.

Despite this, solutions of a worldly nature have been tried. We all have seen campaigns ranging from slick advertising in so-called men's magazines to appeals to social conscience. Marketing techniques are used, employing demographics to gauge an audience then directing specialized appeals.

Such efforts are the work of people truly concerned with the shortage of religious personnel and as such should not be belittled. But it is obvious they haven't worked.

Father Gerald T. Connor, diocesan director of vocations, is on a different course. Through his office, each and every diocesan has been asked to put in writing a pledge to pray for vocations.

These pledges ultimately will be returned to Father Connor's office but they will not rest there. They will be passed on to seminarians and nuns in training to show them they are not alone in their aspirations.

But Father Connor also hopes to inspire a concerted and prevailing momentum which hopefully will produce the climate in which new spiritual leaders will grow and be nourished, where they will be acclaimed to the same degree as math wizards or football heroes.

As we sit down to make our personal commitment to prayer we should keep in mind that it not be merely a mechanical response. Think about it. What the world needs now is simple and holy and good men and women to give spiritual direction.

Word your pledge your way but give it some thought. Perhaps you may devise your own prayer.

Here is ours:

Give us good men and women to be our spiritual leaders in these times when this world so needs them.

Opinion

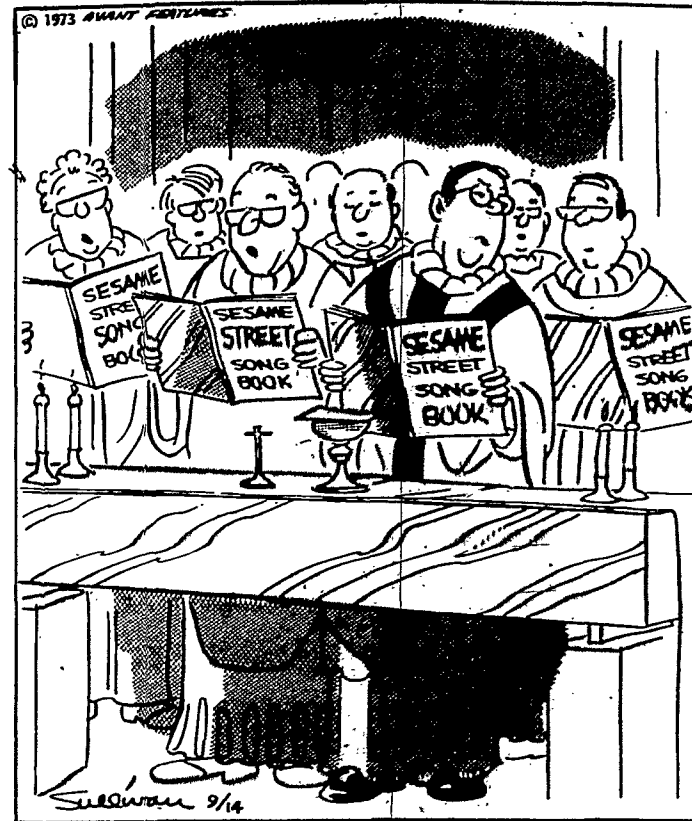
Must Follow Papal Lead

Editor:

I am deeply concerned that the instructions of Pope Paul VI that the experiment of preparing children for First Holy Communion before they have been instructed in manner of confessing faults to a priest be ended, and Penance again be returned to its proper place as second Sacrament, is so lightly taken in our diocese by some religious, and the experiment continued for a while in some parishes. The laity has previously always looked up to the religious to set the good example in obedience to head of the Catholic Church. To erode confidence in the role of Pope Paul VI as Christ's representative with regard to faith and morals is to lessen respect for religious in lower echelons.

With reference to ability of children to distinguish between good and naughty deeds, the age of 7 has previously been set as age of reason. It has often been said by present day teachers and psychologists that this generation of children is smarter than previous generations, probably because of better advantages in teaching and certification before placement in classrooms. TV programs especially geared for children and audio-visual training have helped increase skills. I have seen news photos of infants learning to swim, children under 7 taking music or ballet lessons, or learning golf or tennis strokes. So small children are easily trainable if instructors are trained and capable. To mollycoddle a child and prolong infant years is unfair to the child and softens him or her, and prevents the child from taking new steps at proper point of childhood.

First duty of parent at home is to see that a firm basis for good behavior is laid down and rules adhered to. So, before a child reaches 7 he or she knows it is wrong to strike another or take a toy that belongs to someone else, and when parent asks child he often will express sorrow for misdeed. The training by parent at home prepares child for first steps in training in religion since baptism. In conjunction with parent, child is prepared to confess his minor faults to a priest and ask for God's forgiveness, so that he can once more try to keep on a line of good behavior. In that manner he is preparing for the 3rd Sacrament, First Holy Communion, which he is told should be received in a state of grace, the soul wiped clean of faults. To present Holy Communion prior to Penance may later confuse children and adolescents as to which should take precedence, and as to necessity for Penance. The confessionals soon will have no



"WHEN THIS IS OVER, I WANT TO SEE THE CHOIR DIRECTOR!"

place in the Catholic Churches, and the Penitential Rite at Mass will take its place, which will raise more questions as to whether person was in proper frame of mind, was willing to endeavor not to repeat mortal sins, etc., etc.

[Miss] Ethel E. Sercu
Apt. 468, Green Knolls Drive
Rochester, N.Y. 14620

Book Marker Available

Editor:

It is unfortunate that charismatics and others seeking communication with God and sanctification too often choose to ignore this very important message from God as revealed by the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan, "oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means (the rosary)!"

This exhortation is contained as part of the 15 promises made by Mary wherein Our Mother promises signal graces, special protection, the light of God and the plentitude of graces during life and the participation in the merits of the saints at the moment of death, etc. attendant to the faithful recitation of the rosary.

A book marker containing the 15 promises with an imprimatur by Archbishop Hayes of N.Y. may be obtained by sending me a self-addressed envelope.

Brother Marius
133 Exchange St.
Geneva, N.Y. 14456

Penance First, Says Teacher

Editor:

I agree with Father C. Stuart Hogan in his opinion (Courier-Journal, 8/29/73) in all things but one — "the program of delayed first confession has won favor and popularity among those who must prepare the children for the sacraments because this program favors the teachers, not because it favors the children."

I am third grade teacher at St. Augustine's and I teach first confession and I have always contended that the Sacrament of Penance should come first. I have found that Holy Communion is more meaningful when confession comes first. Communion with the Father through the Body and Blood of Christ is a holy state and cannot be attained when the communicant is unaware of this obligation.

A child who has reached the state of reason can be taught what sin is and its consequences — how sin can affect his life with God and the people about him. Also, because God loves us so much we owe Him the obligation of living a good and upright life according to His Commandments.

As a teacher of First Penance after First Holy Communion, I have found it difficult to impart the real meaning of the great mercy of the Father and His willingness to forgive us for our transgressions. Besides, how can a child think of disobedience, willfulness, selfishness and lack of charity as sinful when they have already received the Body of Christ without having to be aware of the need to be sorry for their human weaknesses before taking part of the Holy Meal of Divine Life?

The formative years of a child's Christian life are the foundation upon which Christian adulthood is built. Once the bricks (Penance) and the mortar (Communion) are set, greater understanding can grow as the child grows. So let's put Penance and First Holy Communion in their proper perspective. How can one eat without first washing one's hands?

[Mrs.] Lena Nuccio
58 Edgebrook Lane
Rochester, N.Y. 14617

Another Aspect Of Confession

Editor:

The sacrament of Confession, if properly used by both priest and penitent, is an excellent source for healing. To use this sacrament for the purpose of mechanically relating mortal sins alone, is observing the legalistic aspect of this sacrament, forgetting the spirit which gives LIFE to Confession.

When we look at Confession in this light, then we can see clearly how a unique opportunity would be missed in denying a child confession at an early age. Instead of directing our thoughts, negatively, as to whether or not a child is capable of committing a mortal sin, we should re-direct our thinking in using this sacrament as a means to reconcile the child to his environment, to help the child grow in mature Christian every-day living, to help him grow in his spiritual formation and to pour Christ's love and balm on his childish wounds, thus healing him and making him whole. We should emphasize this training in the seminars.

Anne Christoff
154 Crittenden Way, Apt. 3
Rochester, N.Y. 14623

Opinions to the editor should be addressed: Letter to the Editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

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