

TOWARD TOMORROW

Fr. Henry Atwell

Day-by-day it becomes increasingly, and for many, painfully, more apparent that Catholics are going to Confession less and less.

Yet, paradoxically, more and more books are being written about the sacrament of Penance, certainly scores more than in the days when Catholics were going to Confession almost as often as they went to Holy Communion.

The drop-off in Confessions, however, in my opinion, does not mean that Catholics are any less conscious of sin or less penitent than previously. They are, I am convinced, looking for what can only be described as a more meaningful penitential rite. And in this, they are right on target with what the Vatican Council said ten years ago. But still no action has been taken to put the Council's directives into effect. The present squabble about putting First Confession back before First Communion is a wholly diversionary tactic which still leaves the basic problem unresolved.

The Council, for example, said that all seven sacraments are "not private functions, but celebrations of the Church," that "the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive their grace," and that "a communal celebration is to be preferred to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private."

The Council — and it is well to remember that this includes Pope Paul and the almost unanimous assent of the world's 2,000 Catholic bishops — also stated that "the rite and formulas for the sacrament of penance are to be revised so that they more clearly express both the nature and effect of the sacrament."

The rites for the other six sacraments have, as a matter of fact, been revised and, if not perfected, at least certainly

improved. But Penance, contrary to the Council's clear directives, remains available only if it is private, personal and secret.

And the way a sacrament is administered says a lot about the way it is understood by both priest and recipient. The sins most often presented in private confessions are, like the ritual, private, personal and secret — prayers neglected, personality conflicts, resentments and the notorious "impure thoughts." This situation then, assumes that the priest has the expertise to be a competent psychologist; to do in minutes what a true psychologist would need hours to accomplish.

In the early Church, on the contrary, the three great sins requiring public sacramental discipline were adultery, murder and apostasy — those flagrant attacks against the family, against human life and against the family of God. It was also taken for granted that absolution for such sins would be given but once in a lifetime. Penance was called by some early Christian writers "the plank after shipwreck."

We are, therefore, faced with two massively different outlooks. One stresses the idea of personal sin, guilt and consequent personal and private reconciliation — and bordering very close to a psychological rather than a religious aberration. The other idea is concerned with those sins which strike against the wider community — sins widely ignored and hence a major factor why society is so sick today — and which demand public healing and reconciliation.

In both instances, of course, the individual must acknowledge his own irresponsibility and, in both instances, forgiveness comes through the Church.

An article in the October Worship magazine reviews many articles and books that have been recently written on this subject. All of which indicates that all of us need to be far better informed than most of us are at this time, that what is now available is far less than what should be available if we are to understand better our sin and God's mercy.

CDA ANNIVERSARY

Elmira — The 62nd anniversary banquet of Court St. Rita, Catholic Daughters of America, will be held at Pierce's "1894" Restaurant on Oct. 28.

Father Bartholomew J. O'Brien, pastor of St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads, will be the guest speaker. Invitations have been sent to courts throughout the Southern Tier. Miss Virginia M. Denroche is chairman.

Crossword Answer

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Lutherans Join Pope in Honor Of St. Brigitta

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul left the Vatican on the evening of Oct. 7 to preside at a celebration marking the 600th anniversary of the death of St. Brigitta of Sweden in the 15th Century church dedicated to the saint in Rome.

Among those attending were two bishops and 50 pastors of the Swedish Lutheran Church, the Swedish Ambassador to Italy, and members of the Swedish colony in Rome.

In his address at the anniversary observance, the pontiff extended his hearty welcome to

the "visitors from St. Brigitta's northern homeland."

"You represent many Christian families in Sweden," he said, "and on that account you are doubly welcome," and added "Your witness to the grace of love and understanding among Christians has replaced the estrangement of less happy times — and for this you are welcome even more."

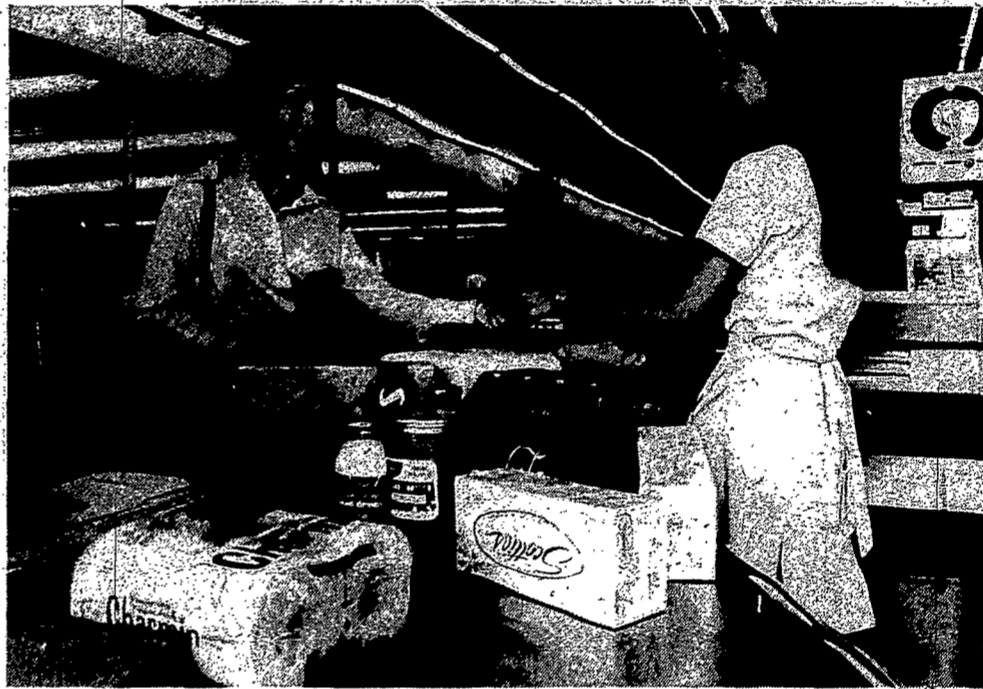
Brigitta (Bridget) was born about 1303 in Upland, the chief province of Sweden. Following the death of her husband in 1344, she applied herself to the founding of the Order of the Holy

Savior ("Bridgetines"). She spent much time in Rome, living very austerely, looking after the poor and the sick, and proffering blunt and outspoken advice to reigning Popes about the serious ecclesiastical and political problems of the time.

NUN'S SHOWER

Victor — The St. Patrick's Rosary Society is conducting its annual shower for the nuns this week. Chairmen are Kate Egan, Kathy Emmons and Carol Norman. The society's October meeting will be 7:45 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 18 at the School of Religion.

RG&E's help for consumers will help you the next time you go to the store



There's a definite art to being a consumer. It's an art that requires a careful unravelling of all the benefits of this brand or model over that one, this store over that one, and one guarantee over another. Confusion is probably one of the major problems facing today's consumer.

There is a lot being done for consumers, however. New legislation seeks to protect him, and companies seek to increase the information available to him. But the consumer should be aware of what is being done so that he will be able to understand how all these acts will benefit him.

For instance, did you know that the Truth in Packaging Law requires that each item in a list of ingredients appears in order of predominance? Armed with this information you can better compare two or more brands of, say, soup. For instance, a chicken noodle soup which has the chicken listed after noodles will have a smaller proportion of

chicken than a can that lists chicken before noodles.

In order to help the consumer understand what is being done for him and what he can do for himself, RG&E's Consumer Information Center for October is featuring "How to Survive as a Consumer." The Center includes a display of many of the aids in the supermarket, such as unit pricing and open dating. There is also a display of what is being done in appliance stores, such as improved warranty, protection and more detailed information labels on appliances. Information is also available regarding many of the avenues of help the consumer can use, such as the Better Business Bureau and the State Attorney General. A slide program at the Center graphically enumerates legislation that has been passed in behalf of the consumer.

Visit the Consumer Information Center any Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you have a special question a member of the Home Service Department will be glad to help you.

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