

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The "Who? Me?" Game

We begin to play it in early childhood. And most of us seem to enjoy it throughout our lives. It is easy to learn. In fact, no instructions are necessary. The instinct of self-defense makes it attractive and a game for all seasons. Yet, despite its universal appeal, the Lord whose concern is universal has labeled it destructive.

The Pharisees of His day were the pros of the sport. He leveled His harshest words at them and told them to remove their masks (the equipment required for all participants) and quit acting like sly snakes. What the Lord called "hypocrisy" is the same strategy described by psychologists as "projection" and the same "Who? Me?" game I propose as the topic for this Lenten meditation.

Let us see if this sounds familiar to parents, teachers and all assigned to the patient supervision of human growth. Scene I — Junior is under suspicion for some breach of conduct. Circumstantial evidence points to him as the villain. The evidence is strong because of his past performance record or because of his being seen alone near the scene of the discovery. There follows the accusation by the monitor. The defendant, deeply hurt, says: "Who? Me?" The accuser begins to feel overwhelmed by the tears of the defendant and apologizes for the accusation. Guilt is transferred. Score 1 for the accused.

Scene II — Junior is caught in flagrant violation. What now? No need for accusation. It is an open and shut case. But watch now the clever maneuver. "He made me do it." Guilt transferred to a third party or to some environmental factor — sickness, weather, and an endless litany of excusing causes. A personal experience assures me

that this maneuver is appealing long after childhood. A man came to me once with a drinking problem that had afflicted him for years. His slushy speech and his breath offered strong evidence that it was still a problem. But his conversation was a typical case of projection of blame. The wife in this case was the cause. "I beat her and insulted her and I got drunk. But, you would too, Father, if you had had to live with that old witch."

Psychologist Eugene Kennedy in *The Pain of Being Human* includes a chapter entitled "Projection." He tells us: "Projection is one of the defenses dearest to the hypocrites of history. It has had a long and hardy life because it does such wonderful things for the people who employ it. It enables us to look away from our bad points by transferring them to people around us. We need not indict ourselves because we can condemn the fault in our own neighbor. The anger at others is not based on one's own bad quality and he is only giving them what they deserve."

Then he offers two clues to indicate how well we are playing the projection game: "First, the individual seems to find his own problem in practically everybody else in the world. Everybody cheats, is lazy or a liar. Second, and a telling characteristic of those who employ this defense is their attribution of the bad quality in an exaggerated way to other people."

For centuries, spiritual writers have written about this popular human sport without using the terms, defense mechanism and projection. But they knew very well the foibles of the human personality. And they have made this wonderful observation: What irritates us most about other people is probably the fault that we possess ourselves. It is obviously easier to see it in others than to take the time to discover it within ourselves.

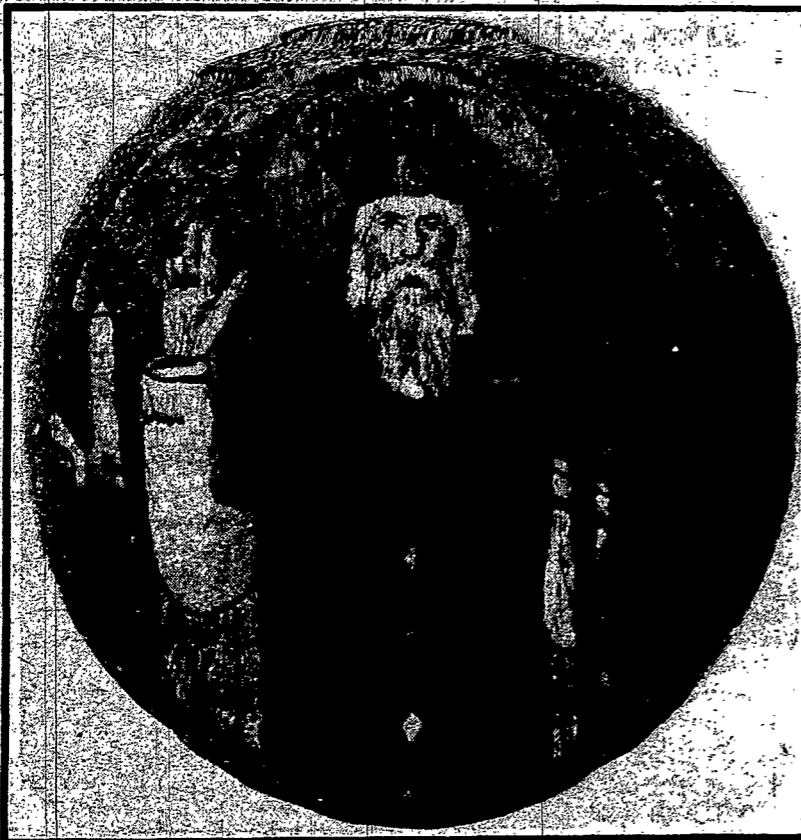
Our Blessed Lord confronted the

Pharisees who were artists at projection of blame. Their indictments and accusations were constantly pointed away from themselves. When in their personal self-righteousness they judged Him guilty of consorting with sinful people, he tried the medicine of irony: "The healthy do not need a doctor; sick people do." Which, translated, means — you have already declared yourselves healthy and guiltless and beyond redemption. I never expect you to seek my help, or to rip off the mask that hides your true self. Or again — "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother 'Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,' when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye." — Luke 6 - 41:43.

Today, projection has not lost one bit of its popularity. The game this year is called **Watergate** for millions of Americans who anxiously await the indictments of a few scapegoats for the sins of all of us. Without attempting to whitewash the seriousness of involvement of the principal actors in the tragedy, I merely suggest that it would be more personally profitable to concentrate on our own examination of conscience. No man is an island set apart from the mainland. For better or for worse, our own ethical conduct has contributed to the present moral climate of America. Better, then, to ask ourselves, "How guilty am I?"

For others it may be named, "Exorcist." I have little doubt that many will find in this film abundant excuse for their own aberrant conduct and transfer their guilt to Satan — or, as Flip Wilson would say, "The Devil made me do it."

Now that Mardi Gras is over, let's all take off our masks — put aside our games — and pray with the blind man who appears in an early Lenten Gospel: "Lord — that I may see."



A Special Time

It's always a heartwarming time of the year when we commemorate two of the most popular saints within three days. On March 17 is celebrated the greening of the world in memory of St. Patrick. The hand-embroidered panel at left was done in the 1940s by artisans of Dublin's famed Dun Emer Guild. Then on March 19, the Church celebrates the Feast Day of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Mother and foster-father of Jesus. This statue of St. Joseph and the Christ Child is in the chapel of the Holy Grace, Altötting, West Germany. [RNS].



Ohio Election

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The day after the Cincinnati Post quoted Gradison as expecting that "it's going to be used to stir up a Catholic vote against me in favor of a Catholic candidate." Gradison is Jewish; Luken, Catholic.

Four days later Gradison was reported by the Post as pledging to decide before the November

general election where he stands on amending the U.S. Constitution to ban abortions.

At that time he brought in Sen. James Buckley of New York, whose amendment to ban abortions is now in hearings to help his campaign.

Buckley's statements on the question at two public meetings were conciliatory.

Chrism Mass

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lead the procession which offers the oils to the bishop for blessing.

Sister Margaret Mary last week also offered her thanks to Father Richard Torrey, pastor of the host church, the priests of the Yates-Ontario-Wayne (YOW) Region, and Southeast regional coordinator Father Roy Kiggins

for their enthusiasm and help in planning the rituals, and to George Walker of the diocesan liturgy commission planning committee.

Also present at the Mass will be representatives of various service organizations in the diocese, to represent the varieties of ministry in the church.

"It took me a month and a half, and some of the top pro-life lawyers in the nation to arrive at my present position," Buckley told reporters, saying he could understand Gradison's declining to support his amendment on short notice.

"The curious part," Gradison told the Courier-Journal, "is my personal view is opposed to abortion."

He also said that he was told by Right to Life that the fliers would not be distributed "if Tom (Luken) and I gave the same answers."

"We most definitely had a part in electing Mr. Thomas Luken — a supporter of a human life amendment — and defeating Mr. Willis Gradison — a non-supporter of a human life amendment," Mrs. William (Norma) Reginald told the Courier-Journal. She is the head of the Eastern Hills chapter of Right to Life, and spoke last week for Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Willke, co-chairman of the group.

"If we do not take action such as this and fill our congressional seats with men and women who promise pro-life support we shall never undo the fatal decision of the United States Supreme Court. Only through our government process can our fight for life be won."

She further pledged that Right

to Life would carry on a similar campaign in the November general election.

The last time a Democrat won in the First District was 1964. The seat that Luken and Gradison were fighting for was vacated in January by William Keating. Keating was a co-sponsor of the Hogan Human Life Amendment.

Father Moynihan

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and the late Jeremiah J. Moynihan to the priesthood, in the church Father Moynihan has been serving as a deacon intern for the past several months.

Father Moynihan will participate in a concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Monica's, his home parish, Sunday noon March 17.

He has a B.A. degree from St. John Fisher College and a B.D. degree from St. Bernard's Seminary. His field education

includes teaching religion at St. Charles Borromeo School and working with the residents of St. Ann's Home and at the Monroe County Children's Center. Father Moynihan's fourth year deacon's assignment was with St. Theodore parish.

He served his clinical pastoral experience at Virginia Baptist Hospital in Lynchburg, Va.

Father Moynihan has also been associated with the Cistercian community of the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard.