

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

By Paul J. Cuddy

Three persons have shaped my method of communication, whether this communicating is made by preaching, teaching, conversing, or writing. The three are Cardinal John Henry Newman, historian Hilaire Belloc, and the late Father Thomas Stafford, who was pastor at Ovid and Romulus.

Cardinal Newman wrote that when people have lost their ability to be indignant about sin and evil, they have entered into spiritual decay.

Belloc, writing about history, said that the excitement created by imagination in historical novels pales before the reality of a genuine historical event. For example, that Charles II lost his left foot under an oak tree in Hethropshire fleeing from his enemies has more impact than the best drawn fictional history derived from fancy.

On my return from military duty in 1946, Bishop Kearney sent me to be the chaplain of Sampson College, which was a temporary college near Geneva serving GIs just returned from WW II. I was canonically appointed assistant to Father Stafford. One day he said: "A good sermon is like a moving picture: a series of pictures and illustrations."

The point of most of my preaching comes from the words of God spoken from the burning bush at Sinai: "Moses, Take off your sandals; for the ground on which you walk is holy." From this text we learn the demand of God for reverence. Reverence has many objects: God, man, property, rights, privileges, vocations, parenthood, the Church. To ill-treat God and His creation is an attack on goodness and holiness. Now, people give very little attention to such an explanation. But they come alive and thoughtful with the Newman-Belloc-Stafford method.

To illustrate, one Sunday I preached a homily which had as its focal point reverence for religious symbols, whether a crucifix, a statue, a religious habit or a Bible text. The homily began: "Yesterday I was walking on the south side of Route 104 to visit a neighbor who had broken his leg. The people of Webster are very neat, and they keep their yards trim and neat. As I walked along I came to a yard. What do you think was lying on the lawn? An empty beer can! An empty beer can!" (This is Newman's indignation, Belloc's historical fact, Stafford's picture presentation.)

"This may seem a trifle. It is not!" I continued. "It is symbolic of the beer-can-tosser's contempt for the rights and property of others. It was a vile act of irreverence."

"To remain indifferent to such actions, whether messing up people's yards or scratching lewd graffiti in public rest rooms or tossing a molotoff cocktail into a school, would be a betrayal of God's trust in us."

The homily concluded with the practical affirmation of our Catholic responsibility to treat God, man and the gifts of the earth with reverence.

The homily was repeated at St. Mary's Church, Ontario. During the week, an anonymous voice phoned the Ontario housekeeper and asked: "I want to know: did Father C. pick up the beer can?"

What motivated such a question? Is it Watergate; or suspicion caused by a few religious persons within the Church, like Phil Berrigan and Sister Liz who so sanctimoniously cast a cloud on the integrity of prayerful, selfless priests and Sisters? (This is Newman-Stafford, and implied Belloc.)

The answer to the questioning woman is this:

"Yes, he did pick up the beer can. He carried it down the street and deposited it in the waste can of the household of the sick man. He did not think that in justice he had to pick up the can. He was impelled partly by charity, to preserve a nice law; partly to make an act of reparation for an act of irreverence against rights and property; and partly because the Sisters taught him, when a little boy: 'If you see paper or the like on the floor of our school, don't walk over it. Stop and pick it up. Keep our school neat and clean. And do the same at home.'"

"In 1946 Fr. C. and Fr. Kress visited Fr. Thomas Plassman, OFM, at St. Bonaventure College, and observed this famous friar-scholar-college president picking up papers tossed on the ground in front of a class-building by careless students. Would you have done the same?"

Aquinas Fund At \$49,000

The Aquinas Alumni Drive has brought in pledges and contributions totalling \$49,000. Thomas Falk, chairman, reported this week.

The 1974 goal is \$50,000 and "we're still striving for 100 per cent participation," he said. The drive ends in October.

Falk, of the class of 1948, listed the classes of 1939, 1940 and 1953 as leaders in the July 26 tally. He said that more than 11,000 alumni "all over the world" had been contacted by the 350 graduates working on the fund.

Nuns Group Lauds Ordinations

Chicago [RNS] —A Roman Catholic nuns organization here issued a statement supporting the ordination of 11 women to the Episcopal priesthood in Philadelphia, July 29, declaring that the refusal to ordain women "will one day be considered as immoral as we now view slavery."

The statement issued by the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN), an organization known for its outspoken stands in favor of human rights and social justice issues, said NCAN "praises God for the vision and courage of those Episcopalian bishops who do a just and holy action in admitting to holy orders our eleven sisters in the universal sisterhood of women."

The statement was issued by Sister Margaret Ellen Traxler, SSND, NCAN chairman and former acting director of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice. The 2,000-member organization is considered the first major "feminist group" of nuns in the U.S. Catholic Church.

Urging all Episcopal leaders, as well as Roman Catholic bishops, to "practice that which is right and just by admitting qualified women to the Roman Catholic

priesthood," the statement said that members of NCAN are praying for "an end to immoral sexism in all aspects of society" today.

The organization declared that this should be so "especially and particularly" in religion, which should be "the first institution to repudiate injustice."

The ordination of the 11 women to the Episcopal priesthood took place in Philadelphia's Church of the Advocate. Four bishops, three of whom are retired, conferred holy

orders on the women. The action is expected to produce a confrontation with the leadership of the Episcopal Church and could bring disciplinary action against the bishops and the women.

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