

Editorial

Word Power

Although he didn't intend it that way, Sen. Hugh Scott recently came up with verbal antidote to the brittle terminology of the Watergate conspirators.

At a time when American ears were being riddled by such grainy phraseology as stonewalling it, the hangout route, give it the deep six, Sen. Scott in an informal talk on the Senate floor revived hope in the beauty of language.

In the course of praising the prayers of Senate Chaplain Edward L. R. Elson, Sen. Scott said:

"When one listens to the works of such as Shakespeare, or to be impressive, rolling cadences of the Book of Common Prayer, he wishes for better conversation, he wishes that people would turn off the television from time to time and simply talk. They would not know what to talk about at first, but practice would help. Perhaps, after sufficient practice, we would regain at least some of the control over that riderless animal, the English language."

Well put, Sen. Scott, with one exception. When we do get involved in conversation we should be careful not to commit the mistake of the Watergate gang. They forgot first of all that words are symbols of thought and reveal something of the speaker. Beyond that, words, as surely as walls or windows, help build moods and often set the stage for ensuing action.

And that is one of the attendant misfortunes of the Watergate conspirators. It wasn't so much that the words were tawdry or profane it was that the speakers seemed to become drenched in banality and they eventually drowned in shallow thought.

Viva the Family

It seems special days and/or weeks have been put aside to honor everything from bubble gum to kaber-tossing, thus denigrating the idea of noting worthwhile enterprises.

The misfortune of such practice is that when a truly worthwhile idea comes along it is diluted by previous inanities.

Measures have been introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, with 79 co-sponsors, to set aside the November week which includes Thanksgiving as National Family Week. The idea is "to honor the family as a unit essential to the continued well-being of the United States."

According to Religious News Service, an Indianapolis man, Sam Wiley, originated the idea "to pay tribute to the vital role the American family plays in the preservation of a free society."

He quotes William Thackeray as saying: "As are families, so is society. If well-ordered and well-governed, they are the springs from which go forth the streams of national greatness and prosperity — of civil order and public happiness."

Normally such a proposal would be viewed as platitudinous but in these days when the family unit is sorely battered as a viable force in society, it would do well to set aside a week to remind us all the virtues of good family life.

Sage Advice

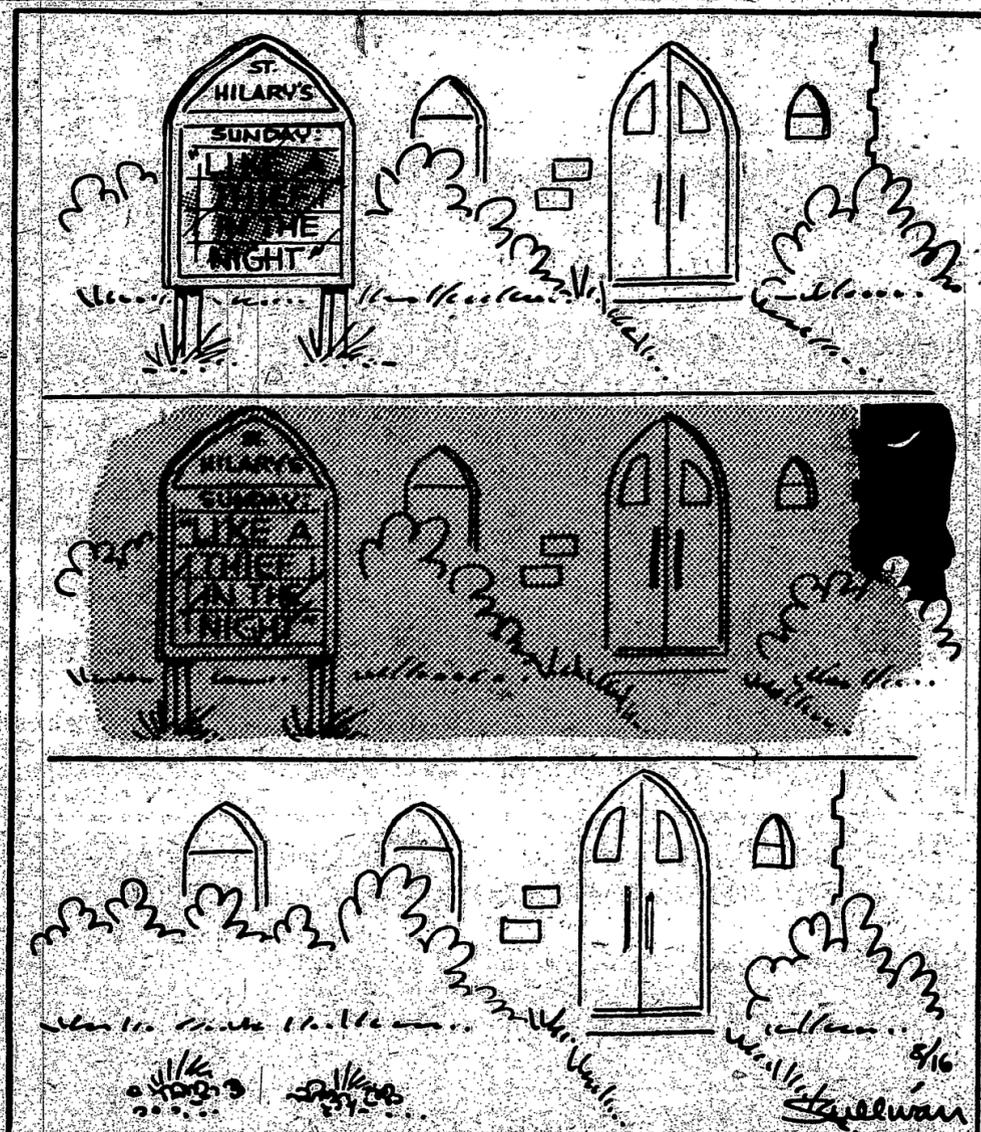
In the light of the difficulties fragmenting its own world, Christianity may seem to be borrowing trouble in considering the evangelization of Eastern nations.

Yet since universality is innate in Christianity, Church leaders must promote its growth throughout the world.

The recent words of Cardinal Bernard Alfrink must be taken into account in any such endeavor. The Dutch Catholic primate warned that "to Christianize must not be to Westernize."

"We must preserve what is indigenous, such as national, non-religious customs, native architecture, language and music as part of the new Churches, and then there is much in Zen Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism that could be retained."

The wisdom of this approach is obvious. It also applies in more limited situations such as in the United States where the white Catholic Church should learn to respect the different culture of blacks either already in the Church or considering joining it.



OUR PARISH COUNCIL

Thanks to Sisters

Editor:

Thanks to the Diocesan Sisters' Council for sponsoring The Responding Church Institute at St. Ambrose Church during July.

They provided a valuable opportunity for those working in important areas to share in depth their knowledge and experience with others.

Thanks, also, to Sharon Darnieder who attended some of the sessions, and so ably reported them for Courier-Journal readers.

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A frequent question to this column is, "What are some general principles that should guide a council?"

A group of lay people who are active with councils met with me to talk about their experiences and to list some general principles. Here is the result of our meeting.

1. The Holy Spirit, the love of God Himself, unites the members of the Church community. Order, organization, structure and authority are at the service of the growth of love.

2. All members of the Church are equal. Differences in roles are important, but secondary.

3. Councils should be decision-making and policy-setting, but, more important, they are at the service of the parish community and the local Church (diocese).

4. All council meetings should be open to each parishioner. Secrecy destroys community.

5. Council leaders should be representative of the various persons in the parish.

6. The majority of the parish council must be democratically elected. The pastor, as a representative of the bishop, is automatically president of the worshipping community, but not necessarily the chairman of the council.

7. Each council should be governed with the aid of a constitution and by-laws, which are adopted by the majority of the parishioners.

8. Each parish should hold an

annual meeting, at which all parishioners are invited to receive reports from the council's committees, to review the work of the officers, and to vote on policies and other matters affecting the parishioners.

9. In addition to the annual meeting, and the open meetings of the council leadership, there should be a mechanism by which a meeting of all parishioners might be held, or, at least, their views polled.

10. The autonomy and special character of each parish group must be respected by the council, as provided for in Chapter Five of the "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity."

11. There should be an appeal system to a regional or diocesan council when the pastor and the council, or several groups within the parish, reach an impasse on a conflict.

12. The need for training, formation and development must be recognized and incorporated into the parish council structure.

13. The need for competency, including the use of natural talents and occupational skills, must be recognized if the laity are to make their full contribution to the mission of the Church.

14. Although all councils might be guided by the principles above, the specific organizational structures in individual parishes should be flexible and readily adaptable to the needs of the people.

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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