

THE CHURCH 1974

Father Andrew Greeley

In their sad, miserable, bland synod document, the American Catholic bishops inform their colleagues that "the emerging question for the Catholic community in the United States may well be whether it will in the future as in the past derive its fundamental beliefs and attitudes from the traditional value system of Catholic Christianity or whether its beliefs and attitudes will be drawn more from the secularistic, humanistic value systems of the society around it."

What a rotten, hangdog, defensive, apologetic stand for the successors to bishops like England, Spalding, Keane, Ireland, and Gibbons to take. Mind you, the leaders of the American Church have much to be apologetic about. Any group which has blown the religious and human opportunities which have been present in the Church and American society for the last decade ought to be ashamed. But they should not blame the Catholic population or the secular society for their own failures.

In fact, the emerging question is whether, for a secular human who is desperately seeking values and meaning by which to live, the Catholic Church — leaders and followers — can respond with a vital, challenging restatement of the Good News that Jesus Christ came to bring. The authors of the synodal document seem serenely unaware of the religious and quasi-religious ferment in American society.

Recreation Poll Planned by AYM

Young people from the Area Youth Ministry will be ringing doorbells in Lyell-Otis neighborhoods this Sunday to talk with teenagers about recreation programs. They hope to find out what facilities the teenagers use and what programs they would like to have.

The survey has the approval of the Holy Apostles Parish Youth Development Committee and the Lyell-Otis Neighborhood Association, according to F. Daniel Caputo, AYM director. Results will be given to these organizations and also to the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Board, local recreation centers and the Maplewood YMCA, Caputo said.

Interviewers will work from 2 until 6 p.m. Aug. 25, if the weather is fair. Rain date is Sunday, Sept. 8.

TO ATTEND MEETING

Sister Mary Judith, Superior General of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester, will attend a national meeting of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, LCWR, in Houston, Tex., Aug. 25-29. The LCWR will explore the theme "Gospel: Vision and Mandate." The inspiration for this year's theme came from the question of Pope Paul VI, "How can the message of the Gospel penetrate the world?"

They apparently are not conscious of the explicit search for symbols around which to organize one's life, and which may be found in such crucial books as Robert Heilbroner's recent "An Inquiry into the Human Prospect," an agonizing search for hope.

They do not seem to realize that the question of goodness or badness of human nature, which is so hotly debated in secular circles these days, is a fundamentally religious debate in which the Catholic tradition — with its moderate hopefulness about man — can make a decisive contribution. They don't see anything of relevance for them in the praise of Marian symbolism sung by such diverse characters as Lyn White, Theodore Roszak and Harvey Cox. They don't grasp the possibilities for the Catholic tradition in the new interest in and the widespread persistence of mysticism.

Or, as the Scripture says, when the blind lead the blind, they both will fall into the pit.

And so they are content with discussing the decline of church attendance (with the hopeful — and unproven — assertion that confession rates are going up), episcopal documents on education, abortion, and the charismatic movement. They conclude with a pious liberal cliché about "atomistic individualism," and suggest that the Church respond to such atomistic individualism by becoming a more loving community.

Doubtless, love always helps, but it would be nice to know what you are loving. "Atomistic individualism" — which probably exists less in America today than it ever did before — is not the problem. The problem is meaning: What does my life in an affluent, comfortable society mean? If the bishops are interested in evangelization, which is what the synod is all about, they might face that question instead of mouthing hollow slogans.

They might also show more awareness of the immense vitality, enthusiasm, loyalty, and cultural richness of the American Catholic experience. The commitment and dedication of the Catholic population and the enthusiasm and creativity of many of the grass roots leaders still make the American Church the strongest and the most dynamic in the world, despite the blunders of our leaders and the treason of most of our intellectuals. (Many bishops know this, but they clearly weren't consulted about writing the synod document.) If we are to evangelize (preach the Good News) we need leaders of vision, courage, faith, confidence, and ingenuity. We don't have many, as any perusal of the sorry "Review of the Principal Trends" makes clear, but if we are ever to get them, great things could still happen.

There is time — not much, but still time. One hopes to God that the Church Universal does not think that the "Review" represents all there is to say about the American Church.

Hypertension Tests

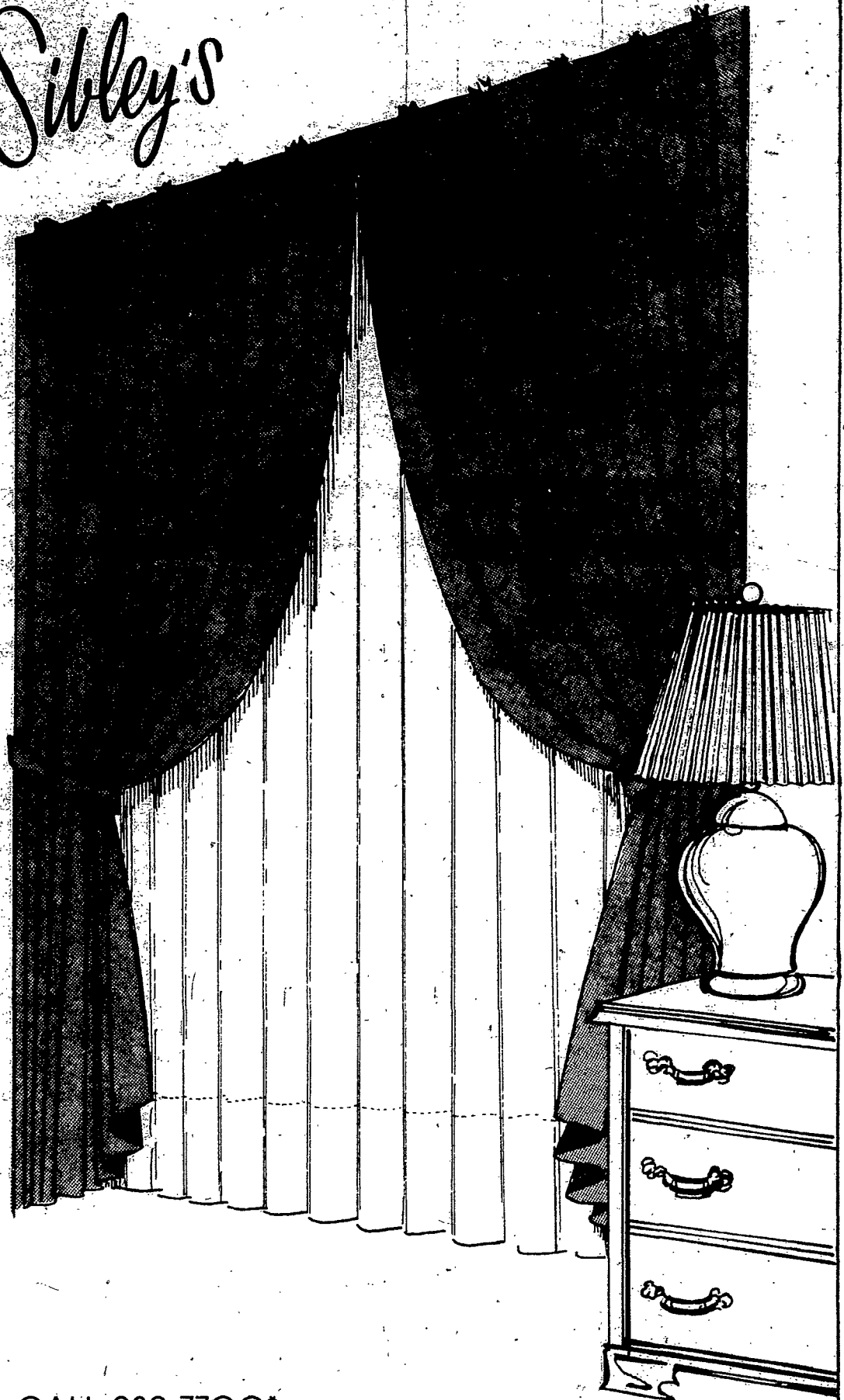
The Genesee Valley Heart Association will be conducting tests for hypertension (persistent high blood pressure) during the month of August. The mobile units will be at the following sites:

Puerto Rican Festival, Jay and Verona Sts., Aug. 21-23; Orlean Housing, Clarissa and Bronson Sts., Aug. 24; Hickey Freeman, N. Clinton and Ave. D, Aug. 27; Department of Labor, Central Ave. and N. Clinton St., Aug. 28;

Brown Furniture, Genesee St. Aug. 29; and Chatham Gardens, Kelly St., Aug. 30.

The hypertension screenings will be available at area churches on Sundays. No appointment is necessary.

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