

### The Church 1974



Fr. Andrew Greeley

Msgr. George Casey, veteran columnist of the Boston "Pilot," has recently informed us that he is getting "sicker and sicker of this ethnicity business."

Msgr. Casey is sick of ethnicity, apparently, because of the trouble in Cyprus and Ireland, in Nigeria and other parts of the world. He apparently figures that those of us who are engaged in rediscovering ethnic diversity in the United States are going to stir up the same kind of trouble here.

Msgr. Casey's comments on ethnicity show that even a very sensible, wise journalist can fall victim to the monsignorial temptation to pontificate without adequate information.

He tells us there is "no reason why our county should become a crazy quilt of isolated, insulated, introverted, and hostile ghettos, enclaves and 'no neighborhoods'."

I was unaware that anyone was suggesting this was what the country should become. Furthermore, I am also unaware that anyone currently writing about ethnicity would take that as an accurate description of what American pluralism is now or what it has been in the past. There may be one-race neighborhoods — though these are not nearly as common as a lot of people think — but from the very beginning of immigration into this country, there was no such thing as a one-ethnic neighborhood.

Even Chicago's Bridgeport, historically, a classic example of an Irish Catholic community (producing both Finley Peter Dunne and Richard J. Daley) has been multi-ethnic from the start. The Germans got there before the Irish and remained a long time, some of them even to this day. And for at least a half century, Czechs, Poles, Italians and Lithuanians have rubbed elbows with the Irish in Bridgeport. The genius of American pluralism, we have been saying, is precisely that it does not wall people off from one another. No one but a few wild-eyed, crazy-mouthed romantics (black or white) would suggest that change one bit.

But the point is that you do not have to have a homogeneous society to prevent insulated enclaves. American pluralism has worked marvelously well without its becoming homogenized. Those like Msgr. Casey, who think we need homogenization for harmony, have not looked either at the historical facts or at the present situation. We are a fantastically variegated society but the diverse groups in the society do not interact like Greek and Turk, Northern Ireland's Catholic and Protestant, Ibo and Hausa. I fail to understand why people like Msgr. Casey insist on homogenization when the present system works as well as it does.

He tells us that left to themselves the homogenizing forces

#### FOOD DELEGATE

Vatican City [RNS] — Bishop Agostino Ferrari Toniolo, the Vatican's permanent observer to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has been named to head the Vatican delegation to the World Food Congress. The congress opened in Rome, Nov. 5.

"will produce an American type, 'the homo Americanus,' who will be oriented toward the future instead of the past, who won't be dragging after him centuries of the remembered wrongs of his ancestors."

Well, fair enough, but what will this "homo Americanus" look like? Will the Catholics have to give up their religion? Will the Italians have to give up their strong, warm family structure? Will the Irish have to give up their proclivity to politics — and to the creature? Will the Slavs have to give up their fiery temperament? Will the Jews have to give up their humor and their intense intellectuality? Will the blacks have to give up their music and their skin color? Will the Latins have to give up their cheerful freedom from compulsive guilt? Will Texans have to stop talking like Texans and talk like Msgr. Casey's Bostonian parishioners? Or will everybody have to become civilized and talk like us Chicagoans?

Somehow or other, I think we'd be a poorer and not a richer society if all these things were shed to produce Msgr. Casey's "homo Americanus." I think he'd be a pretty dull fellow, to tell you the truth.

Another alternative, of course, is for everyone in the United States to become Irish. That would be much more fun, but it would raise the national liquor bill substantially, make for an awful lot more talk, notably increase the competition for precinct captains, and be very hard on the few people who still wanted to be Anglo-Saxon.

One of the struggles of those of us who are studying American ethnic diversity is to find a different model for viewing our social life. Prof. Robert Higham, in a recent article in the "Center" magazine — which Msgr. Casey would have been well-advised to read before he wrote his column — talks about a theory of "pluralistic integration" which combines the "validity of a common culture" with "the efforts of minorities to preserve and enhance their own integrity."

"In principle, this dual commitment might be met by distinguishing between boundaries and nuclei. No ethnic group under these terms can have the support of the general community in strengthening its boundaries. All boundaries are understood to be permeable. Ethnic nuclei, on the other hand, are respected as enduring centers of action. . . . Both integration and ethnic cohesion are recognized as worthy goals which different individuals will accept in different degrees."

I would contend that this is not merely a description of how the "new ethnicity" might work, but a description of the way the old ethnicity has worked. Prof. Higham admits that it's a messy, imprecise, complex and ambiguous way to run a society, but he also adds that it represents a reversal of "a rigid, absolutistic definition of roles and identities which arose in the 18th Century."

In other words, the rediscovery of ethnicity, in the view of this very distinguished historian, returns to a world view which existed before modern times, one with a "richly elaborated picture" in which a human being could live "in a hierarchy of multiple, overlapping, interesting categories." The rigid, authoritarian mind, of course, cannot deal with such complexity, and is frightened by a society which tolerates, encourages, and even seems to enjoy such messiness.

To such people, the rich, complex diversity of American pluralism is an affront and the "new ethnicity" (which is merely a rediscovery of American pluralism) is an intolerable threat.

Msgr. Casey is not a narrow or rigid person; on the contrary. But this time he's on the wrong side.

## Business In The Diocese

Dr. Joseph F. Karpinski, of Auburn, was installed as president of the American Society of Oral Surgeons (ASOS) annual meeting in Las Vegas.

Dr. Karpinski is affiliated with Auburn Memorial, Mercy, Willard State, Geneva General, Taylor-Brown Memorial and Seneca Falls Hospitals.

In 1966, he served as president of the Cayuga County Dental Society; in 1970, he was elected president of the New York Society of Oral Surgeons. He is a member of the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology and a founding fellow of the International Association of Oral Surgeons. He is active in the Boy Scouts of America, member of St. Hyacinth's Church, the American Legion and the Knights of Columbus.

## Capitol Letters

From the most recent A.C.C.L. Hotline, Washington, D.C.: "Bartlett Amendment will be dropped from the H.E.W. Appropriations Bill unless Conference Committee back to a new pile of pro-life letters after the elections."

### BARTLETT AMENDMENT

No part of the funds appropriated under this act shall be used in any manner directly or indirectly to pay for or encourage the performance of abortions except such abortions as are necessary to save the life of a mother.

Please urge members to attach Bartlett Amendment to H.E.W. Appropriations Bill. Both Planned Parenthood and H.E.W. are lobbying strongly against it. Your support is vital.

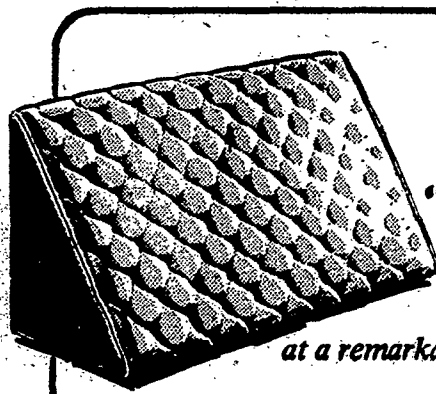
**Senate membership** Warren Magnuson, Ted Stevens, Alan Bible, Harry Byrd, William Proxmire, Joseph Montoya, Ernest Hollings, Thomas Eagleton, Norris Cotton, Clifford Case, Hiram Fong, Edward Brooke, Richard Schweiker, John McClellan, Milton Young. Any Senate member may be reached: U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

**House membership** Daniel Flood, William Natcher, Neal Smith, Robert Casey, Edward Patten, David Obey, Edith Green, George Mahon, Robert Michel, Garner Shriver, Silvo Conte, J. Kenneth Robinson, Elford Cederberg. Any House member can be reached: U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515.

(Compiled by Jeanne D. Sweeney, American Citizens Concerned for Life)

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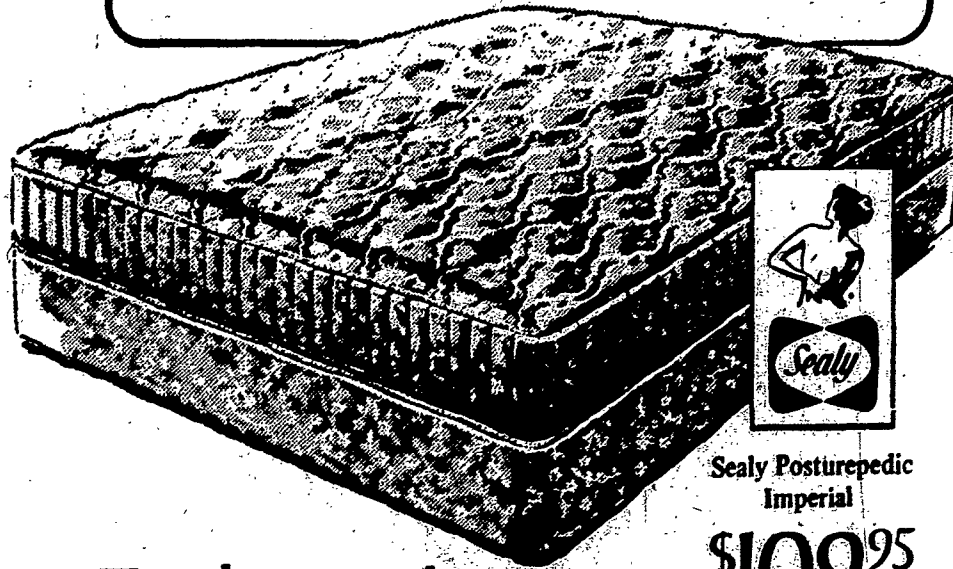


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