



**The Church 1975**

Fr. Andrew Greeley

Who ever heard of a movie made from a bishop's pastoral letter?

I am mostly skeptical of the media work of enthusiastic young clerics and nuns — not because I doubt the power of visual media but because most of what I have seen is a combination of radical chic, posing, and exhibitionism.

However, the Chicago Irish know about loyalty to friends. When the Bishop of Madison asked if I would be willing to see a movie on the priesthood made by one of his young priests, I figured that it had to be better than most such efforts, and besides, if the Bishop of Madison asked a favor of me, he had more than a few coming.

I was not in the mood. My own anniversary (21 years, heaven save us) was drawing near, and I was more than ever acutely conscious of my own failures in the priesthood. (Please don't write me letters on the subject. When you are a failure, you know it.) I did not want to be reminded of what I had set out to be and how far short of that I have fallen.

So I dragged my colleague Bill McCready (who has considerable photographic talents of his own), into the office to watch the Madison film with me.

Neither one of us knew whether to cry or laugh from the first scene (a High Club picnic) until the last. We settled for laughing, but it was a close choice. Father Steve Umhoefer and his cameraman have put together a movie on the priesthood that is probably worth a couple of retreats for any priest who sees it. It is a must for lay people whose contacts with the clergy go beyond the Sunday Mass.

It presents all the loneliness, frustration, bafflement, and discouragement (one shot of a priest collapsing into a chair after Sunday mass is sheer genius) of the priestly ministry. It does not lean over backwards to stress the "humanity" of the priest, as have some recent sensational books and articles. At the end you have

no doubt that the priest is as frail and ordinary a human being as anyone else.

Yet the ministry of the priesthood shines forth like a dazzling light in the midst of the "ordinariness" of the setting and the work of a priest's daily life. The movie doesn't tell you how important and how rewarding is the ministry; it simply shows the work of the priest and lets you draw your own conclusions. But it is a subtle, unobtrusive portrait of the "power and the glory" of the priesthood, and it has an effect that is ultimately overwhelming.

Once the most respected of men, the priest has lost a lot of his "image" because of the well-publicized resignations of the past decade and the bizarre behavior of some priests. The Madison film goes a long way toward restoring that image — at least for the priest himself and probably for most lay people who will see it. You realize — either for the first time or all over again (and they come to the same thing) — what a priest does and what his work means. You understand the origin of the image, however distorted it has become. The film, "Priest-Man," was not intended as a "vocation" film, but it is of infinitely greater merit for "vocation work" than ads in "Time" or "Playboy."

these liturgical swirlings — with or without a smile.

"Recently I had a long listen from a young student who had been in Germany — God gave me the gift of listening to others with interest. As a result youngsters easily pour out their ideas without inhibitions. Deo gratias. I asked him: 'How are things with the Church in Germany?' He gave a lucid description for the area he was in. He awarded no roses to the 'higher priests,' meaning pastors, who are in charge, and who he thinks are over-jealous of their authority and who will not share it with 'the lower clergy,' who I suppose are the assistants. He also feels strongly about the German church tax. He does not object to the tax so much as he does to the fact that no accounting of the spending is given to the people. It does not seem like a system which would be popular in the States. While our chancery offices certainly do tax the parishes, at least the individual is not subject to a church tax as in civil law. The lad has kept the Faith well. God be praised.

"Now to the immediate reason for this letter. A priest sent me a check for \$100 to be used for the Sheen tapes, or anything you might find useful. I was surprised and touched by his thoughtfulness, especially because he is far more liberal in liturgy and in law than my own traditional self. And the Sheen tapes regard Catholic tradition with great honor. So you will be receiving a set of the Sheen cassette tapes from the office of the Gary Edition of Our Sunday Visitor, which distributes them. I was

disgusted with the Huntington OSV headquarters. Some Sisters in Boston sent for the tapes to Huntington. Instead of forwarding the order to Gary, they returned the order to the Sisters. 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you' is grand, but frequently not practiced by those who preach it. It's a little like proclaiming the greatness of motherhood while advocating abortion.

Please give the Sheen conferences the widest coverage. Our own diocese tends to be liberal in the higher echelons, but traditional in the grass roots. Hence the collision has shaken the faith of many. A few weeks ago I met a man who works at Xerox in Webster. He said: 'I'd like to have a long talk with you. I am more and more disillusioned by the Church. We did get together. I sent him off with the Sheen tapes. The conferences restored his confidence in the Church he always loved. The next thing is to get him a copy of Frank Sheed's The Church and I. Do you know it? It is good.'

"Fr. Bob Kress would join me in sending greetings if he were here. We often recall our trip to St. Benedict's with great humor. That was 1946! Do you still have the huge night-shirt hanging on the back of the guest-room door with the sign: Let all guests be received as Christ? We chuckle each time we recall that vision. Oh, yes! Do you know Dr. Ken O'Loane? He went to St. Benedict's for undergraduate work, and is a zealous churchman in the city of Rochester. He specializes on the problems of Catholic Education.



**THE OPEN WINDOW**

Fr. Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman,

In reference to your column about changes in certain marriage laws, where do we write or call to present our case? In your column you referred to the Tribunal. Where is it?

In 1944 while in the service, my husband was married in a Catholic Church. Two months later he got a civil annulment which was not issued by the Catholic Church. The reason for the annulment was that the girl did not want to be married.

In 1947 we were married by a Justice of the Peace. For 28 years we have gone to church, observed all the church rules, raised our children in the Catholic religion and they still go to church; but unfortunately we were not married in the Catholic Church so we cannot receive the Sacraments.

This is only a small letter to try to let you know the situation. If there is any way you could help us, please let us know. My husband would be very happy to make an appointment to see whoever he has to in order to try to bring us into the Church.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Mrs. J. C. D.

Dear Mrs. D.,

It is obviously impossible for me to make a judgment about

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whether you have a good case from the facts you give but they do seem to warrant very strongly a further investigation. It should not (and could not) be done directly through the Tribunal. Considering the number of cases even in these 12 counties (the diocese), such a procedure would create a terrible log jam. So the proper way to approach this is through your parish priest. He can show you the proper way to make your presentation, what to look for, and how to get the case to the Tribunal and acted upon with a minimum of delay.

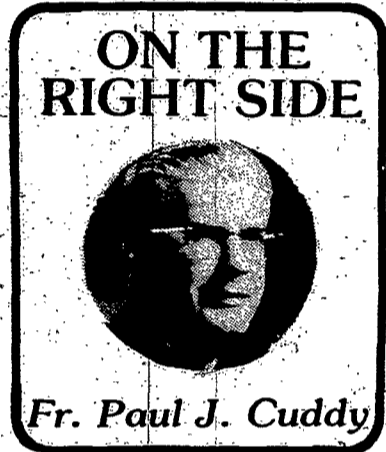
It seems to me you have good solid grounds on the basis of the immaturity of the parties in your husband's first marriage. It is quite unlikely that someone who wanted to "get out" after two months had really made a love commitment or covenant for life. See the priest as soon as you can. It is my guess that you would have no real problem. God be with you.

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**ON THE RIGHT SIDE**

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

Father Eugene Dehner, OSB, is head of the science department of St. Benedict's College, Atchison, Kansas. We became friends in the early '40s when he was working for his doctorate in science at Cornell, and I was an assistant to Father William Byrne at the Ithaca parish. He lived with Father Donald Cleary, and later with Father Joseph McNamara, chaplains of Cornell, and was greatly regarded by everyone: professors, students, employees, clergy. Father Dehner is one of the most Christ-like men I have ever known. He spent a day with me in Hornell four years ago, and I was happy to note that neither secular nor theological scholarship has blunted the simplicity with which he lives the Gospel, even as Mother Teresa of Calcutta lives the Gospel in her unique way. He has nine brothers and sisters, one of whom is a Trappist in Conyers, Georgia. After the death of his Mother in the '50s, his father, who was a cigar manufacturer, entered the Trappists. He is still with them in Georgia, aged 86, and known in religious life as Brother Ambrose. I had the privilege of visiting him in 1954 while being transferred from San Antonio to Morocco. The following is a recent letter to Father Eugene.

That switch of St. Benedict's feast day from March 21 to July 11 tosses me for a loop. I wish that liturgists had left the Saints' days alone. There are so many family and religious celebrations and traditions connected with Name Days. But I was not consulted; so we have to accept

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