

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

[First in a series]

"We must restore the virtue of fortitude as it is understood in our moral teaching. Yes, fortitude. For is there any justification for the idea of a weak Christianity? A Christianity, without firmness in its convictions, agnostic, indifferent, fickle, opportunistic and cowardly? Motivated by a fear of what people will say?"

"Is it a new and authentic Christianity, one which in practice is ready to conform in every way with the surrounding environment and which is tacitly anxious above all to avoid difficulties, criticism and irony; one which is clearly eager to take advantage of every opportunity to cut a fine figure or gain advantages, to steer clear of trouble and carve out a career?"

"What has become of the old education to personal character, moral courage and social consistency? To the sense of duty? And of responsibility?"

This series of columns will be devoted to articles appearing in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano. It begins with the words of the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, spoken during the general audience Wednesday, May 26, 1975. The faithful, in shirt sleeves and cottons, filled the ample space of St. Peter's Square — and listened."

"Let us keep it clearly in mind: a Christian, a Catholic particularly, must be strong. We mean strong spiritually and morally. A follower of Christ must not be afraid. He has a duty of testimony which frees him from timidity and opportunism

Quoting from St. Thomas Aquinas who wrote "That which

is the cause of itself is free; only beings which move themselves have freedom" (Metaph. 11.9), the Pope declared that Catholics must watch that we do not "become meaningless in the world of the Spirit, and perhaps (become) accomplices in the common ruin. (We must not seek), in undue recourse to our personal freedom, a pretext to surrender to the yoke of other peoples' inadmissible opinions.

"The modern tendency therefore to abolish all ethical or personal effort... is not the prelude to real progress in the truly human sense. The Cross is always straight in front of us, and it summons us to moral strength, spiritual fortitude and sacrifice, which makes us like Christ, and can save ourselves and the world."

The virtue of fortitude. The duty of testimony. The yoke of inadmissible opinions. The Cross. Sacrifice. Moral strength. The words of the Holy Father are clear, and they ring with the beauty of their simplicity. But they are frightening as well, for they illuminate the nagging truth which has always been a part of our human condition — moral weakness.

We are weak. We always have been and we always will be. We pamper the thing called I. We submit to inadmissible opinions with silent inaction, wearing the yoke in place of the heavy Cross. We have replaced sacrifice with personal freedom; and moral courage with moral compromise. We base it all on the superficial logic of technological expediency. And we call it humanism.

The fruits are abundant: avarice, abortion, euthanasia, sterilization, suicide, drug abuse, fetal experimentation, perversion and pornography — and the legalization of each.

But the words of Pope Paul cut through the haze of humanism with the simple call to Christian labor. And for Catholics, that labor starts with the leadership of the Vatican. We must teach the fortitude, the principles, the mercy and the justice of Christ in our own homes. Family unity requires it. Our children demand it.

It is a relief to answer that refreshing call.

Next week: The Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Ireland.

Come - Unity Center — Up, Up and Away?

Twenty years ago, a group of volunteers set up a mobile social service agency for the migrant farm workers of Williamson, distributing emergency rations, clothing and other necessities from the trunk of an automobile.

Now the agency, the Come-Unity Center, has two full-time employes and serves thousands of people from a store at 6 East Main St. The trouble is, the quarters rented for the past six years have been sold, and Come-Unity needs \$30,000 to buy and renovate a nearby building. Without a place to move to, the center may have to close by the middle of August, according to Jed DeYoung of Webster, a member of the board.

Come-Unity operates under the aegis of the Wayne County Rural Ministry, and in recent years has received some support from the Office of Human Development.

It does things that government agencies can't do, DeYoung said, and has handled referrals from the latter in nearly 1,000 family cases. Being free of red tape, it has the flexibility needed for a

quick response to emergency, he said.

The center offers services to all poor people of the area, migrants, settlers, old residents, Hispanic, black, white. The food it dispensed last year amounted to more than 20,000 meals, DeYoung reported. Clothing and household goods were provided for many thousands, he said; transportation, for 400.

Its operations are geared basically to the needs of farm workers, he explained, because often they do not stay long enough in one place to qualify for welfare. He said that government statistics show \$1,900 as the average total earned in a year by a family of farm workers, and that 49 years is the average life expectancy among them.

First-hand information about the center may be obtained by calling Come-Unity, 315/589-8967.

Anyone who wants to write a check should make it payable to Edward Harris, treasurer, WCRM Building Fund, whose address is 113 Prospect St. Newark, N.Y. 14513.

Education Team Meets Today

Elmira — A planning session for the 1975-76 program year will be held today by the educational service team of the Chemung-Schuyler Region at the Neighborhood House.

On the agenda are discussions on what catechists will be doing early in the school year and ways to serve the needs of fourth year students. Everyone interested is invited. Members of education boards, committees or teams are expected to attend.

The regional educational service team will be considering programs with an eye towards regional responsibility. However, local groups can also use some of the regional ideas or implement their own projects.

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