

Editorial

Gift of Blackness

Father Clarence Rivers, a black man, puts it well:

"I keep quoting Pope Paul, 'Enrich the Church with the gift of negritude.' Now, Pope Paul isn't talking about doing this merely for the sake of blacks in the Church. He's talking about enriching the whole Church."

Blacks, the same as any ethnic group, have a special gift to share with the rest of the people of the Church. Father Rivers feels that the Church needs this particular cultural transfusion because it has become too "technological" and "analytical" and needs an infusion of "a sacrament of soul."

To be frank, all of us non-black American Catholics must share the blame for excluding blacks from our churches. Sometimes we did this through racism, other times through ignorance, but it is obvious that we did do it. Society, while still imperfect in this regard, has improved in recent years but sadly the Church that is universal lags in this respect right here in our own country.

Pope Paul is providing the leadership. He not only speaks of the "gift of negritude" but has added many black Africans to the hierarchy. His trip to Uganda in 1968 was visible witness of his concern for the black children of our common Father.

When we only see the Church as an American institution we tend to hobble it with our own limitations. We must see the Church as a universal spirit greater than any of its sum parts. We must remember it is catholic by its very nature and to impinge on this role of universality, especially with superficial values, is an error.

In joining Pope Paul in seeking this "gift of negritude," or as Father Rivers calls it, this "sacrament of soul," we must be careful not to demand conformity to white ways.

We realize that there are those who see such a black Church as separatist. "Ridiculous," says Father Rivers, adding that we don't characterize the Spanish-speaking Church in those terms.

While not espousing the idea of a separatist church, Father Rivers believes that if "there is to be an introduction of black culture into the Church, it is black people themselves or a black authority in the Church which must determine how this gift is to be integrated into the Church. No one else can make this decision. It has to be the decision of someone who is both black and Catholic . . . it cannot be made by anyone else."

While Father Rivers did not amplify on this view in the Religious News Service interview, we would like to hear more on it before we can agree. How would this authority be set up and does he mean merely the final decision must be made by blacks after cooperative study or that non-blacks must be excluded entirely from the process?

Regardless, we must find the Church. Surely no one would argue that Holy Mother Church could exclude any people, nor demand conformity to anything other than the eternal laws of God and Church.

Father Rivers implies that a little hand-clapping can be good for the soul. We would add that perhaps a little "soul" would be a welcome tonic for the Church, particularly in America.

Offsides!

It is an imbalance in our values so blatant it would seem to cry out for correction.

New York Jets superstar football thrower signs for \$400,000 a year. At the same time, programs for thousands of schoolboys are being discontinued or curtailed for lack of funds.

Pardon our naivete but we think that professional sports leagues should voluntarily set up funds to aid high school athletic programs.

PS — Keep the government out of it or it will keep private (spelled Catholic) out of it.

Opinion

Mother Agnes Sends Thanks

Editor:

By means of the Courier-Journal I wish to express the gratitude of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester to you, the people of the diocese of Rochester, for your generous support of our ministries in Brazil and Selma, Alabama. This continual manifestation of interest has enabled our Sisters to aid in the growth of the reality of the Christian message among those who, by their very circumstances have known constant injustice and oppression as an integral part of life.

Since we are sensitive to and share the anxieties that accompany downward trends in economic security, your selfless response to the Diocesan Mission Appeal for 1975 calls forth an added degree of appreciation. Such generosity can come only through great personal sacrifice and a deepening realization of our shared commitment to the people of God. Please accept this short message as an expression of living and continuous gratitude from all in the vast interior-Brazil and the equally lonely sections of Alabama whose lives are touched by your love and concern.

May the Lord in His gracious way bless and cause to grow "in light and grace" all your own undertakings.

Mother Agnes Cecilia Troy,
Superior General,
Sisters of St. Joseph
of Rochester

Family Brothers Role Described

Editor:

It may be helpful to add to Father Paul Cuddy's facts about Cistercian family brothers in his column of Aug. 13.

Family brothers are laymen who like to live at an abbey. They are little known to the several thousand visitors whom we have had during our existence, yet they form a big minority of our monastic family. They have always been present at abbeys as long as abbeys ever existed, and resemble our former "lay brothers" with their devotions, spirituality, etc.

Abbot William of Hirsau Abbey, Germany, raised them to the status of lay brothers in the year 1000, allowing them to make solemn vows, which was a new thing in monastic history. Our own order acquired lay brothers in a similar way about 1100.

COURIER-JOURNAL

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan
President

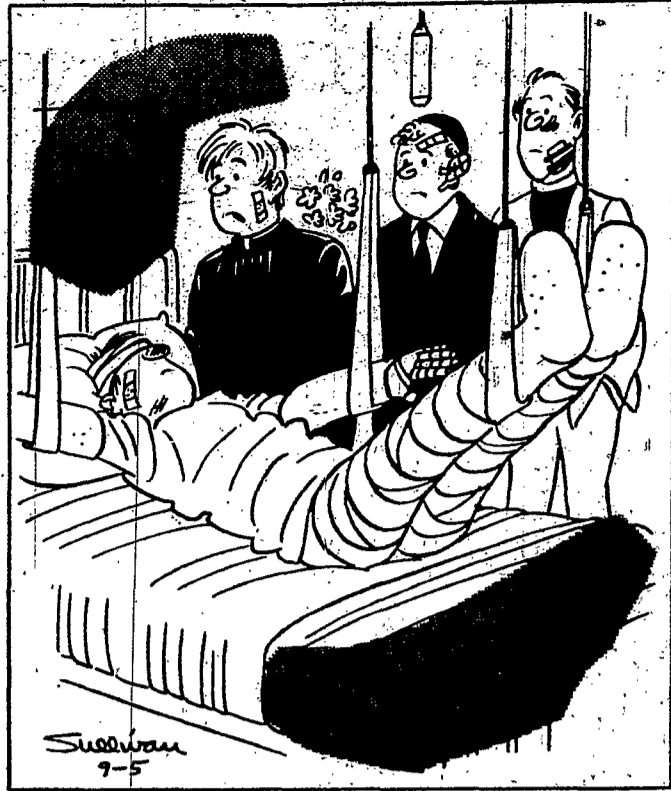
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Vol. 90 No. 17 August 27, 1975

Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 15¢. 1 year subscription in U.S. \$6.00. Canada and Foreign \$10.00. Offices: Richard Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14614 (716) 453-7050. Second-class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.



"WE'VE DECIDED TO DISBAND THE INTERFAITH CLERGY SOCCER TEAM, FRANK."

In our own community they form a happy symbiosis with the monks. They relate with the officers of the abbey rather than with the monks themselves. They help the monks observe enclosure by handling many outside needs each day. At times they can be extremely invaluable. For example, they man all the telephones and entrances when the monks are at a canonical election behind locked doors.

Brother Paschal OCSO
Genesee Abbey
Piffard, N.Y. 14533

Disagrees With Fr. Brent

Editor:

Father Brent's self-righteous defense of the parochial school system managed to evade some cogent points put forth in Ms. Christoff's letter. Such an attitude on his part does little to reassure those of us who share her concern. We had hoped for a more reasoned response from the man at the helm.

Parochial schools ARE on the wane, most especially those in poor black neighborhoods where Christian values most need to be

impressed. (Witness Cardinal John Cody's recent closing of four parochial schools in Chicago's black neighborhood.)

In pointed contrast and with a great renewal of hope, I read in the same issue of the Courier Sister Patricia Flynn's interpretation of the American bishops' pastoral "To Teach as Jesus Did." She manages in far fewer words than Father Brent to put the teachings of Christ back on track — with a few of those miracles she has been witness to in her work among the poor and downtrodden (and with an assist from "Sesame Street") we all just might manage to squeak through — God willing!

Edith Hahn
7296 Dryer Road
Victory, N.Y.

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

St. John Vianney [patron saint of parish priests] in every parish!

Sincerely,
P.A.

Dear Father Louis,

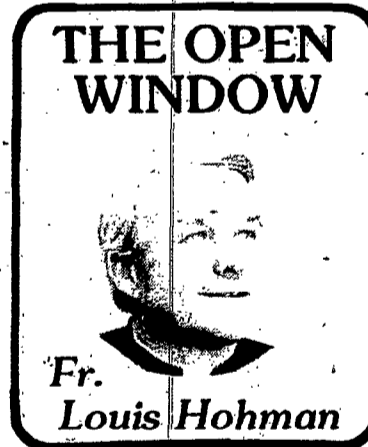
Since you asked for ideas regarding parish missions, I'd like to suggest a mini-weekend for married couples, (since 40 per cent of parishes are married couples) given by a priest and a couple. It's just a little seed right now, but the number of couples coming to an awareness of their call to the Church could really blossom with your interest and support. We'd like to rap with you on this.

T. and S.

Dear Readers,

I am intrigued by the ideas in both letters, the one a sort of several day pulpit exchange and the other an obvious follow up of the good work Marriage Encounter has done.

Something I didn't mention when this whole thing came up was the fact that the Diocesan Pastoral Council chose as one of its tentative Diocesan Goals the following: "To design and initiate and support updated programs of personal spiritual renewal within the parish setting in 50 per cent of the parishes." While this goal is not refined, it shows the concern of the DPC for this matter by ranking it ninth.



Dear Father,

Due to being on vacation two weeks, this letter is a little late in answer to your column of July 23.

Having reached the age of 60, I have had the opportunity to attend several missions in my lifetime and I did like them and I think they helped me. In fact when I was 25, I remember at one mission the priests were urging attendance at Mass during the week. It was then that I started this practice. What I really want to say, though, is that it would be wonderful sometime if our own priests gave the mission — perhaps not a whole week at first. I think we parishioners need the example of our priests. If they are holy, they can help make us that way. If we see that they love God very much, it will help us to love God more. We need holy priests so very much! We need a