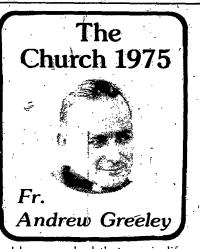
COURIER-JOURNAL

Wednesday, September 10, 1975



I have reached that age in life where I would rather deal with statistics than people.

I know that almost a third of the college-educated Catholics under 30 have left the Church. I know that among those who remain, only a little more than one third go to Mass every week. Those numbers are shattering in themselves—although they don't seem to have produced much in the way of a sense of urgency among our ecclesiastical leaders. But when the statistics turn into real people, whom you have known since they were in second grade, then the numbers turn into personal tragedy.

I found myself at a reunion of a group of young people, now in their late-twenties, whom I had known long ago as first communicants. They were a special class, filled with vitality and enthusiasm all through their grammar school, high school, and college years. Because they were so attractive, I'm sure, my colleagues and I put in extra work and extra personal investment in their religious development.

Still, in the summer of 1975, they mirrored almost exactly the national data. Some of them had "left the Church"—although it was not clear even to them exactly what that meant. Most of them were not going to church, a few of the marriages had already broken up and more were clearly heading for the divorce courts. With a few exceptions, the men seemed confused and befuddled about life and the women were angry and bitter.

And all of them are still short of thirty.

It was not that they turned against God or Jesus. There were, as far as I could tell, no atheists in the group, and a few of them apparently still have intense personal devotion. Nor were they anticlerical in any sense of the word. However, they had turned against the Catholic Church with a vengeance.

The Church had nothing to say which had any importance or impact on the problems of their lives. And in the one area where the Church was speaking to an issue that troubled them—sex they simply did not believe what the Church was saying. "The birth control encyclical", one of them remarked, "turned me off, and then't began to ask what anything in the Church meant. I found out that nothing meant anything."

Somehow the Church has been caught in their more general anger at having been "deceived" by society. I asked one very bitter young woman why she was angry. "Everyone—our parents, teachers, our priests, told us that if we studied hard, lived good lives, married, had a couple of kids, a home of our own and began to climb up the career ladder we'd be happy. We did what we were supposed to do and we're not happy."

"You never heard that from me," I replied defensively.

"Who ever listens to the small voice of a controversial curate?" she said.

They are not completely free from blame for their alienation. There is much self-pity in their stance. If they wanted a different kind of Catholicism they could find it—much more readily today than when only an occasional curate was pushing a preconciliar alternative. But still, I think we let them down badly.

And I include myself. I did my best with them, and clearly it was not good enough. I had to compete with a lot of other voices, and I guess they drowned me out. But while I don't want to shed any of my responsibility, I at least tried, and a' lot of other people did not.

From top to bottom the Church has been screaming for the past decade about relevance. For all the new liturgies, the nuns smoking cigarettes, the priests telling dirty jokes and being called by their first names, and the radicals on the picketlines or pouring blood on draft records, we have lost some of the best of the largest generation of young people we will ever have. We have worried about the Catholic position on the nation-state (to quote the fatuous question in the new "American Catechism"), and we have hardly noticed the tragic loss of bright, gifted, young people who have had 16 years in our own schools.

We lost them not because we were not up to date or "with it," but because we couldn't speak to them about the religious meaning of the struggle for happiness in life, and in particular because of the religious implications in the ambiguities of marital intimacy.

Left, right, and center; Pope, bishops, priests, nuns, parents: we not only failed them, we seem to have almost driven them from the Church. It is not only a disaster, it is a disgrace.



New Guides for SSJ Congregation

Members of the Sisters of St. Joseph administration, recently elected by their colleagues, pray at the altar of the Motherhouse chapel during the installation ceremony Aug. 31. From the left are Sisters Louise Weber, Mary David McCall, Rosalma Hayes, Mary Ellen Cragan, Jamesine Riley, the superior general, and Barbara Ann Foos, Elizabeth Anne LeValley and Loretta Poole. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan celebrated Mass and presided at the installation before a capacity congregation of the Sisters' relatives and friends.

Holy Childhood Meeting Set For Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh will be the site of a National Conference of the Holy Childhood Association Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. In announcing the threeday meeting, Father Francis Wright, national director, said, "The greatest natural resource of any nation is its children. For this reason, the role of the Holy Childhood Association is of paramount importance. We planto review its achievement as part of the missionary activity in America over the past two centuries. Within that context, we have taken as the theme of this conference: 'The Changing Mission Scene: 1776-1976.'"

In addition to diocesan directors from every part of the United States, the meeting will be attended by Cardinal Agnelo Rossi from the Vatican. Cardinal Rossi directs the worldwide mission activities of the Church as prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Cardinal Timothy Manning,

archbishop of Los Angeles, will give the keynote address in which he is expected to emphasize the essential place of mission education in the development of young people. Other speakers will be Archbishop Marcos McGrath of Panama; Father J. Bryan Hehir, member of the United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C.; Father Tran Phuc Long of Vietnam; and Bishop John Sullivan of Grand Island, Nebraska.

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And what's more, no one seems to give a damn.

Richard Institute Programs to Start

The Rochester Center of the Gabriel Richard Institute will offer its personal development course at two locations this fall.

The course opens at 7:30 p.m., on Tuesday, Sept. 16, at Laurelton United Presbyterian Church, and Thursday, Sept. 18, at Mother of Sorrows School. The course is a series of 10 lively, learn-by-doing classes, open to people of all walks of life. It is nondenominational in nature.

The institute, founded by the Christophers, is a non-profit organization which aids people in the development of selfconfidence, discovering hidden abilities and building poise. Classes are conducted by a staff of trained instructors.

Classes are limited to 30 people. Further information is available through Carolyn Epps at 482-8908.

Webster Knights Aim at \$25,000

Webster's Trinity Council, Knights of Columbus, has launched its Ninth Annual Charity Fund Drive, which is one of the largest of its kind in the country; according to the chairman, Frank Lombino. "Our overall goal is \$25,000 and with the economics being what they are, we are preparing to work extremely hard," Lombino said. The Charity Ball goal is \$10,000. The Knights have already pledged over \$2,500 to such groups as the Cancer Society, the Stroke Rehabilitation Group of the Genesee Valley Heart Association, and the Williamson Come-Unity Center. Further recipients will be announced shortly. Information about the drive may be obtained from Lombino, 671-5766; S. Zawacki, 265-0258 or J. Fox, 872-2798.

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Advisement and Registration

| RIT | at R. L. Thomas High School - Webster Monday, September 8, 1975 | 5 - 7 p.m. |
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| RIT | at Xerox Cafeteria #336 - Webster | 2 - 4 p.m. |
| RÎT | at Greece Olympia High School Wednesday, September 10, 1975 | 6 - 8 p.m. |
| RIT | at Xerox Cafeteria #335 - Webster Thursday, September 11, 1975 | 2 - 4 p.m. |
| RIT | at Gates-Chill High School Monday, September 15, 1975 | 6-8 p.m. |
| RIT | | 12 - 8 p.m. 12 - 8 p.m. |

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