



A Home

A check for \$1200 is presented by members of St. Pius Tenth Church to the family of Nguyen Van Long, his wife and children. This will provide the down payment on a house that the refugee family is planning to buy. With them is Robert D. Brown, the spokesman for the St. Pius Tenth Parish Council.

Scripture Scholar Slated at Fisher



FATHER BROWN

Father Raymond E. Brown, author and noted New Testament scholar, will speak at St. John Fisher College on Monday, Dec. 4 at 8 p.m. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will be held in the College's Kearney Auditorium.

The title of Father Brown's lecture will be: "The Meaning of the Magi and the Significance of the Star — a Biblical Scholar's Understanding of Matthew's Christmas Gospel." He will discuss the question of the literary form of this passage — is it historical fact or pious imagination? Were there really

CIVIL DEFENSE

Men and women interested in training for emergency service with the Civil Defense Auxiliary Police may apply to Phil Wagenhauser, 21 Lawndale Crescent, Rochester, N.Y. 14609. All inquiries will be answered, the organization's announcement said. The minimum age is 18.

Business In The Diocese

Jon Kuppinger of Upland Drive has joined the firm of Geisler Realtors. Both he and his wife Bonnie will be active in residential and commercial sales. Kuppinger is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and has served as president of the Notre Dame Alumni, president of the Northwest Kiwanis Club, has been on the board of directors and is past treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce Greece Council.

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The Church 1974



Fr. Andrew Greeley

The "suppression" by order of the administrative board of the American bishops of William Maher's booklet, "A Question of Values," raises some very neat and complex questions about the nature of the Church as a human organization. My own feeling is that the bishops were right on this one—though right in the wrong way and perhaps for the wrong reasons.

There is no doubt at all that it is a very bad book and its circulation by the National Council of Catholic Laity was ill-advised. The book is intellectually and morally flabby and sloppy in its reasoning—when it bothers to reason at all. It is a mixture of pop psychology and radical chic which is quite popular currently with some badly educated clergy and religious today. It was quite intolerable for a quasi-official organization such as the NCCL to be distributing such a book and the bishops were quite right to be upset about it.

However, on the same grounds, they should also be upset by the bicentennial program, "Liberty and Justice for All," which contains the same phony mixture of radical chic and ersatz religion. They also should disapprove of the U.S. Catholic Conference's "Poverty in American Democracy," of which "WorldView"—no conservative journal (despite Pastor Neuhaus's recent conversion to right-wing ways)—said recently that it was "handicapped . . . by its not very oblique assault upon private property, its preoccupation with redistribution of wealth, and its emphasis on communal values at the expense of personal liberty . . . a highly selective reading of American society past and present, and of church pronouncements on social justice."

One wonders why the boom was lowered on "A Question of Values" and not on the other two books. Probably the reason was that the former had the temerity to suggest that the bishops' rigidity on birth control had hurt their credibility as teachers—one of the few precise and accurate comments in the book.

But if concern over second-rate

work coming out with official or quasi-official sponsorship is appropriate, one must still wonder whether suppression of the booklet was the appropriate response. Might it not have been better, given the present state of things, for the bishops to issue a carefully reasoned statement pointing out the weakness of the publication, citing the scholars they followed in offering criticism, and disavowing the book completely? One would think that in addition to making the bishops look a lot better with such a response, the ensuing discussion would have had some educational value.

Of course, that might have led to more sales for the book which at its present 3,500 circulation is hardly a threat to anyone. Still, intelligent discussion seems to me to be much more useful in the Church today than suppression.

The fate of "A Question of Values"—however richly deserved—proves once again that the quasi-official national organizations of laity are powerless bodies which are, when push comes to shove, completely subject to the hierarchy. Unfortunately for the hierarchy, the result of this subjection is that when the organizations blunder, the hierarchy must undo the blunder—frequently at some cost to its own image. The disadvantage for the laity is that there is no loyal but authentically independent organization which can speak for them—or at least for some of them—in the Catholic community.

There may well be a role for such "company" organizations as the National Council of Catholic Laity and the National Council of Catholic Men—though in the absence of a representative National Pastoral Council (apparently frowned on by Rome) one wonders what use such groups are.

But both the laity and the hierarchy would be better off if there was also some independent organization of laity with strong grassroots support that could enter into intelligent dialogue with the hierarchy instead of subservient obedience—even when, as in the present case, the laity happens to be wrong.

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