

**The Church 1977**



Fr. Andrew Greeley

The best book on the finances of Catholicism is James Gollin's "Worldly Goods." Originally planned to be a sensational expose, the book instead concluded that the Catholic church was neither rich nor corrupt but not all that efficient, either. The author's honesty and integrity had produced a gray volume, and hence denied him the possibility of a bestseller.

I thought of Jim Collin recently when I read two stories. "Atlas" magazine carried an English translation of the article from "L'Europeo" claiming that the Vatican owned one-fourth of the property in Rome, and "Chicago Monthly" published an article by its editor, Edwin Black, claiming that the educational Catholic TV studio run by the archdiocese had set itself up in highly successful competition with other studios in the business of making advertising commercials.

Neither accusation was denied. Indeed, the vicar general of the Chicago archdiocese defended the policy:

"Monsignor Bracken closed his conversation with the emphatic question, 'Are we not in the United States of America protected by its laws and rights, and allowed to proceed lawfully under the free enterprise system? Aren't we protected by the free enterprise system? Don't we have a right to use our talents and resources the way everybody else can? Is there not free enterprise in this country?'"

"My answer to him was, 'Yes, but not for churches.' My response was wasted. He muttered in disagreement."

"Apparently the thunder of the money changers crashing against the temple floor was not remembered as much as the sweet rattle of the coins."

Whatever one may think of the two stories, they point out the need for a change in church policy. All financial matters should become a subject for total and public accountability. The church in the United States, at any rate, needs something like the Government Accounting Office — an impartial and independent agency that monitors all matters involving the use of funds contributed to the church by its laity.

We need such accountability not because there is great wealth or great abuse but because in the absence of accountability wealth and abuse will always be suspected. In the long run, as the laity grows more sophisticated and more independent, such suspicion will have a devastating impact on contributions. Accountability will dispense the 99.9 percent of church administrators from suspicion and eliminate the scandals of the other 0.1 percent (at the most).

Things can no longer be hushed up. The cases of the Pallottine fathers, the

diocese of Reno, and the money in the Penn Central are now on public record. It is also well enough known that a few bishops have inherited dioceses which have been run into the ground by predecessors whose generosity and vision were not matched by competence. While such matters are infrequent, they have a deadly effect on everyone else — and will continue to do so until public accountability to an independent institution insures that no one will go beyond sound business judgment or intelligent ecclesiastical policy.

It means giving up secrecy, and that's a hard thing to relinquish. But there is no way in the present world to combine secrecy and public trust. The church, of all institutions, should choose public trust.

It will also mean that the highest standards of professionalism and responsibility will have to mark our discharge of the responsibility of stewardship for the money the laity gives us. As I have argued on the question of social research, the church can settle for nothing but the highest quality. I will confess I think that we have even less chance of getting professionalism in financial accountability than we have of getting it in social research — which is to say none at all.

But the alternative is ever more intense investigation by able journalists who will find out our secrets anyhow — and catch us in damning verbal lapses such as the claim that we are a free enterprise commercial institution like everyone else.



**Former Stockbroker Gives Communion**

First Holy Communion for Timothy and Patricia Brennan, 7-year-old twins, was received from their grandfather, Father Henry F. Brennan, as he celebrated his first Mass on the day after his ordination at St. Camillys Health Center Chapel Milwaukee, Wisc. Thirty-one relatives from Father Brennan's hometown, Manasquan, N.J., watched their father and grandfather become a priest. A former stockbroker, he decided for the priesthood in 1973, four years after his wife and one of his sons died in the same week.

**ALL IN THE FAMILY**



Sarah Child

I did not intend to love our little dog as I have come to.

She was to be the children's pet, tolerated for their sake. We would put up with her as best we could.

A mixture of water spaniel and cocker spaniel she was purchased at a nominal fee as a gift for the youngest's birthday against our better judgement. We had been saying No for nearly 12 years to the pleas for an animal, any animal.

Animals, we told our crew repeatedly, were dirty, pesky and an inconvenience. From time to time we allowed goldfish or an occasional turtle in the house and once we allowed the oldest to bring home a pair of gerbils from the classroom for a weekend visit.

We smirked at those pet owners who could not seem to distinguish between pets and children and we worried over reports that some pets ate better than many people.

We were repelled (and continue to be) by most of the pet food TV commercials which pander to people with more sentimentality than sense.

We finally gave in to the idea of a pet when the seven-year-old began bringing in wandering mutts and crying conspicuously, if silently, when they would leave.

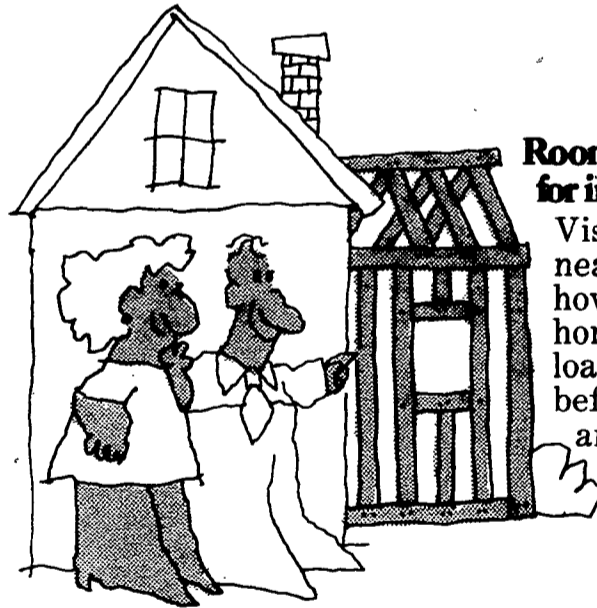
The night we brought the puppy home she fit in both my hands and her tiny heart leaped violently in fear of our strangeness and the absence of her mother. She cried that night and several thereafter and instead of anger and annoyance something else took hold and grew inside this "grandmother" as I was so designated by the dog's seven-year-old "owner-mother."

Perhaps it has something to do with maternal instinct. My own mother, a sister, and several women friends and neighbors all show evidence of the same kind of doggy attitude I seem to be harboring. We are used to responding to tiny, helpless creatures who require love and attention to survive. We are vulnerable it would seem to the needs of the young, sometimes in spite of ourselves.

Whatever the reason, I appear to be smitten. I feel pride when she responds to a command, a sense of wonder to see the graceful, black body dance in enjoyment over the pleasure of the outdoors and a definite tenderness as she greets us wildly after an hour's separation.

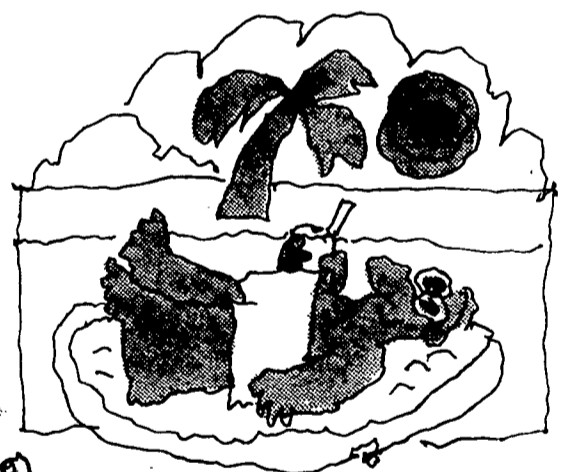
A burden as I feared? Of course. But a small price to pay for the love she lavishes on us and the enjoyment she brings.

**To each his loan.**



**Room for improvement.**

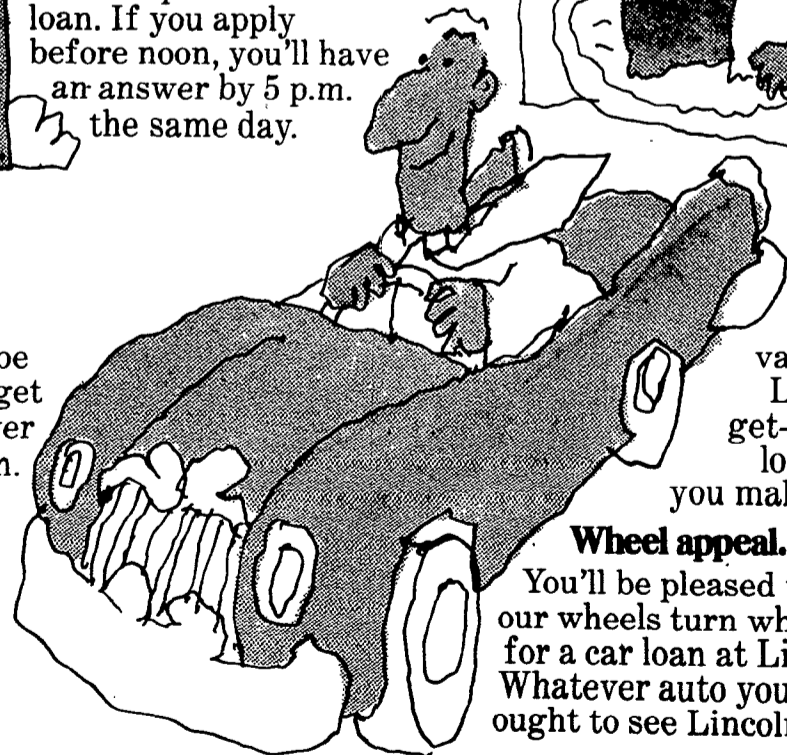
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