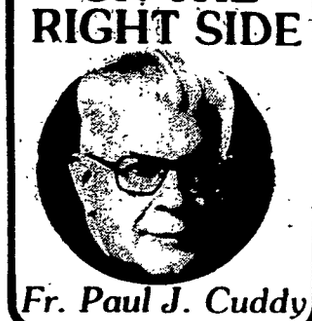
ON THE RIGHT SIDE



Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

A needling friend of mine said, "You have been uncharacteristically silent about the debate on ordaining priestesses in the Catholic Church."

I don't think it is uncharacteristic at all. As a priest, I am characteristically faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Holy Father has spoken clearly. Despite all the protestations of the right to dissent, I think this contestation is evil and wrong for several reasons.

1) If each is going to contest the Catholic Church about our own hang-ups, then Catholics who should be believing in the divinity of Christ and the indissolubility of the priesthood ("You are a priest forever:" secularization does not dissolve the priesthood inherent in the soul of a validly ordained priest) could choose and reject any declared teaching of the Church. Our Lord said to his Church, "Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you . . ." (Mtt. 2:19)- Would it make any sense for Our Lord to say, "Teach what I have commanded, but if they want to reject it, that's all right with me."?

This contestation can roll along, affronting Catholic teaching about marriage, the Resurrection, the Real Presence, the Vicar of Christ, the nature of the Church, the Virginity of Our Lady, et al. In his valuable paperback, Is It the Same Church, Frank Sheed wrote, "There is not a doctrine or practice in the Church today which has not been denied by some priest..."

2) If we are sincere about authentic ecumenism, we must be sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of others, especially those like the Orthodox, the High Church Anglicans and the Lutherans who are closest to us in Faith.

When I was at 40 Hours at St. Casimir's, Elmira, last year, the theology of priestesses in the Church came under discussion among the priests. I asked Eastern Rite Father Stephen Chomko, "What about the Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox — is there much material in the journals and books in Eastern theology?" He replied, "There isn't any, because we do not believe that Christ had any intention of ordaining women to the priesthood. Such is the constant belief of the whole Eastern Church, from the beginning, and everywhere."

We have seen terrible division wrought in the Episcopal Church. Friends of mine are very upset about the intrusion of this new doctrine and practice which they vehemently reject.

God has not revealed why He decided on an all-male priesthood. Priestesses were common enough in the religions in the time of Our Lord. He was not influenced by the "cultural conditions" when He made a decision.

Just as a matter of speculation, I wonder if the exclusiveness of a male priesthood has anything to do with the psychology of women. Women have a quite different psychology from men, with such great gifts resulting from the feminine psyche. Few have presented it more reverently or more admiringly than Pope Paul did when he sent the document on The Veneration of Mary to the bishops of the world in 1975. And the youthful English feminist, Joan Nash, reminds us that no woman either denied Our Lord or deserted Him.

The whole Church would be more tranquil if we had less dissent, and more assent to the traditions of the Church, handed down since the time of the Apostles and held by 700 million Catholics, 90 million Eastern Rite Christians, excepting for a shrill dissenting few, and by most of the 323 million Protestants.

Theologically interested persons can get a fine article about dissent from the Teaching Church by sending a dollar to Rev. Joseph F. Costanzo, SJ, Box 12543 Tucson, Ariz. 87511. It is entitled Academic Dissent: an Original Ecclesiology.

With all the badgering of the Holy Father, who is our center of religious unity, the concluding quotation from Father Costanzo's article is worth pondering. It reads:

"John Henry Newman wrote in 1826: It is said that a man may go on sipping white wine, and then port, 'til he loses all perception which is which. It is a very good fortune in this day if we manage to escape a parallel misery in theology."

AS I SEE IT

Pat Costa

Freezing temperatures and television go together and with the heat wave of the past week viewing must have declined considerably over the northeast as most of us rediscovered patios, backyards and beaches.

Unfortunately the hot weather coincided with the beginning of Channel 21's nine-part series of "Little Women," which began Saturday, May 21 at 5 p.m.

Both this viewer and a 12-year-old daughter were eagerly awaiting the Louisa May Alcott classic and were even more disappointed when it was discovered from XXI's Bill Haley that the station does not have the rights to repeat episodes later in the week, as it often does.

Haley did say, however, that the station will repeat the entire series later on. So if you missed the first episode or so, look for it again in about six months.

There were two film adaptations of this beloved story of the March sisters. In 1933, George Cukor directed Katharine Hepburn, Joan Bennett, Frances Dee and Jean Parker in what is considered a faithful account of the book. A less satisfying remake was done in 1949 with June Allyson, Margaret O'Brien, Janet Leigh and Elizabeth Taylor.

In the TV version, Jo Rowbottom plays Meg, Angela Down is Jo, Sarah Craza is Beth, and Janina Faye is Amy.

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Interviews with royalty, even American-born royalty, such as Princess Grace, are always unsatisfying because the one question that is on every viewer's mind can not be asked, much less answered: Was it worth it? Her serene highness proved to be as lovely at 48 as she was at 26 and the look at some of the palace rooms was fun for those of us who live out our lives in center-entrance colonials or two-bedroom condominiums. But the 90 minutes seen as part of NBC's Big Event did nothing in the way of letting us see the real Grace Grimaldi, nee Kelly. On the other hand it is just as well. An interview some weeks ago with Barbara Walters grilling Elizabeth Taylor and her fairly new husband only pointed up the unsavory aspects of looking too closely at the private lives of celebrities, particularly when the interviewer exhibits the thrust of a mongoose and the cobra turns out to be a garter snake.

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