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ON THE RIGHT SIDE Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

Jesuit Father William O'Malley's silly letter (Courier-Journal, Nov. 2) is before me. Reading it, I do not react "What has happened to the Jesuits?", but rather, "What has happened to Father O'Malley?" His logic is appalling. Hence a short analysis:

"Father Cuddy is a good priest" (paragraph 9); but he is a slanderer (paragraph 1). A slanderer is not a good priest. Father C. seems stupid: "If I knew as little about the difficulties of persuading the comfortable pagans to be Christians as Fr. C. seems to know, I would be a happy man. Well, at least I'd be comfortably smug in my ignorance." (paragraph 7)

His presumption is that my 42 years of priesthood has been exercised in a cocoon: "His column is read by people who know even less than he does about what goes on in religious education classes in the diocese." Is there a note of snobbery toward OTS readers? Much of my local knowledge about religious education comes from parents, who I hope are not discounted as incompetents; from priests, Sisters and CCD teachers involved in religious education.

Fr. O'M. has slipped on the banana peel of "illegitima illatio." He concludes that an experience with one McQuaid graduate who is a non-believing Catholic is an attack on religion teachers in general, and Jesuits in particular. Nonsense! St. Thomas teaches "Ex uno non disce omnes," which is a concise way of saying "From one particular incident, do not draw a universal conclusion." From one particular McQuaid stray lamb, we cannot logically conclude that all McQuaid graduates are strays

To keep the record straight: My concern has been and still is about religion courses throughout the states. Here is an example. About a decade ago I went to a seminar at Buffalo Seminary in East Aurora. It was the time when catechetics were being dreadfully altered. The director - the seminar was on "communications" - was Father McNutt, OP. He had a staff of two nuns and several lay persons. During the get-acquainted period the first night, I had coffee with two other priests and a taut, middle-aged lady who turned out to be an incognito nun. She was part of the staff to teach us. Out of the blue she pattered angrily, "Too many priests are hung up on the blessed Sacrament." My cognition wheels began to spin "How could one be too hung up on Our Lord?" But the dank climate of Sister's soul was not conducive to questioning the statement

Later I was told, "She is very brilliant, father. She even writes articles on spirituality for Sisters' journals. But she is at loggerheads with her order. We thought if we found a place for her we might save

her vocation." Now, I should gladly have considered her utterance the joylessness of a troubled individual. But that same Fall, at a diocesan catechetical conference held at Mercy High, Rochester, a nationally recognized perita said almost the same words: "Too many Catholics are hung up on the Blessed Sacrament." Hence the legitimate conclusion: termites in the catechetical structure.

You may recall that period of subtle hostility toward the Blessed Sacrament which pervaded our seminaries, religious houses, seminars and even some pulpits. It was so evil and so broadspread that Our Holy Father issued the beautiful exposition of Eucharistic Faith, "The Mystery of Faith." How different from these is Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who declares firmly that the strength of her Missionaries of Charity is derived from devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Tearing a passion to tatters, Father O'M. writes: "He seems to imply that the sole purpose of the religion teachers in the diocese is to tear down the faith of young people." (paragraph 8) Wallowing in his own subjectivity it may seem so to him, but not to those who know my work.

Last week I stopped at the local Burger King for a cup of black coffee and to evangelize. Two lovable children, 4 and 7, were seated in a booth while their mother was at the counter. I sat with them and we engaged in conversation. The mother, a stranger to me, returned, and we became acquainted. Mrs. Hall said, "I belong to St. Mary's in Ontario. We are having trouble getting religion teachers. It was announced that we will have to drop two classes for lack of teachers." I said, "Why don't you teach? Call Mrs. Rick Mattuzzi, the coordinator." Saturday night at the Webster K of C Charity Ball I met Mrs. Hall. She beamed, "Well, I signed up." Does this sound like anti religion teachers?

Father O'Malley has too many talents to be wasting his time rushing into print, proclaiming a simple, well-intentioned and devoted priest to be a slanderer, anti-religion teacher, stupid, naive and ignorant. I share his anxiety that most of his students, to quote himself, are "crypto-pagans," and the reality of the influences which make them so. But I ask him to share in my concern in seeing harm where harm is, and to use his great gifts to edify the Church of God with me; as we are both called to do by our priestly vocations.

Deaths

F. J. Keating

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Paul Brennan at Immaculate Conception Church Tuesday, Nov. 8, for Frank J. Keating who died Saturday, Nov. 5, 1977.

A longtime parishioner at Immaculate Conception, Mr. Keating is survived by his wife Katherine; two sons, Clifford and Gerald; a daughter, Jean Keating, and four grandchildren.

The Church 1977 Fr. Andrew Greeley

Rome - One has to go to Rome to find out how good the American bishops really are. The melancholy Synod of Bishops here was not calculated to raise your confidence much about the future of the institutional church. I left the press briefings each day with a despairing headache that even the Roman "vino bianco" couldn't cure. For the most part, the 204 bishops of the world who assembled to talk about catechesis, especially of the young, spoke meaningless nonsense. In comparison with their colleagues of the first, second and third worlds, the American hierarchy looked positively brilliant.

Nor do I intend to damn with faint praise. There was much about the American delegation's behavior that was flawed (as I will note next week - most of it due to incompetent staff work). Still, both in comparison with the interventions of other hierarchies (running all the way from babble about "liberation" to insistence upon "memorization") and with absolute standards of excellence, the American delegation to the synod performed creditably. The same thing could not be said of some delegations from the United States to previous synods.

First of all, under the astute leadership of Archbishop Joseph Bernardin (whom history will doubtless recognize as one of the most able leaders American Catholicism has even known), the American delegation was extremely well organized. Indeed, the efficiency of its organization was a matter of awe to most others at the synod. The Americans arrived with both personal interventions and group position papers which had been prepared beforehand and which, even at their worst (and as I will note, some of them were pretty bad), were a substantial cut above the contributions of most other hierarchies. The American bishops had done their homework, they knew what they wanted to say and they said it respectfully and concisely. The rest of the world was impressed.

Second, the personal interventions of several of the American delegates were quite impressive. Archbishop Whealon of Hartford, for example, insisted vigorously on the need to relate catechesis to life crisis problems such as loneliness, alienation,

frustration, insecurity, and the fear of death. His intervention was one of the few that I read that seemed to show any sense of the real world and the real life problems which most Christians experience.

Similarly, Cardinal Manning spoke movingly of the "alienation of youth from the institutional Church, their frustrations, hurts, their insecurity, their longing for person-to-person recognition, their desires for some answers to the mystery of life, of their roots and their identity - all these are crying out to us for recognition, response and healing." The cardinal went on to assert in the midst of a synodal environment in which many of the catechetical problems were blamed on the apathy and materialism of young people that truth which is self-evident to anyone who has worked with them, "They are showing a profound hunger for the spiritual."

Furthermore, Cardinal Carberry's comments on the Blessed Mother and catechesis were extremely pertinent, I thought, even though I would make very different use of the Mary symbol. The Latin Americans have rediscovered the importance of popular piety. (It seems to have replaced

liberation theology for many.) They pontificate about it as though they invented it. If we are to admire the Latin American emphasis on popular piety - and, of course, all good liberals think we should - then it has to be said that Cardinal Carberry beat them to it by many long years.

At a press conference the American delegates (Cardinal Manning and Archbishop Whealon in particular) demonstrated a modesty, sincerity, and personal religious conviction which the present writer (no admirer of most bishops) found impressive. They were a refreshing contrast to the superciliousness of some other delegates.

I'll be back next week with some further comments about the American delegation at the synod.

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